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Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Beyond

A new transnational history

 **UCLPRESS**

Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Beyond

WORK AROUND THE WORLD: STUDIES IN GLOBAL LABOUR HISTORY

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Over the past six hundred years an increasingly connected and competitive global economy has had tremendous consequences for how people have made a living. It has brought unprecedented opportunities for many, but also massive dispossession of livelihoods and natural habitats to this very day. People have moved towards agricultural frontiers and industrial centres in growing numbers and over increasing distances for work. Slavery and other coerced labour regimes have shaped persistent social inequalities, racial discrimination and exclusion. Confronted with exploitation, disenfranchisement, gender inequalities, racism and xenophobia, workers have tried to improve their position either individually or collectively.

Drawing on core research at the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, this series explores the connectivity between changes in work and shifting labour relations, evolving social and economic inequalities that result from or are connected to these changes, and individual as well as collective responses to these inequalities. Situating these historical dynamics within the context of an unfolding global economy that externalizes social and environmental costs, the series aims for global comparisons across time, space and scale to bring out how evolving social inequalities are connected to the development of work and labour relations, and how these histories may help to understand the causes of inequalities in the present. By combining broad diachronic, transnational and transcontinental comparisons, synthetic overviews and exemplary case studies, the series offers a conversant global perspective on how work, and the social and economic relations and contexts in which it is performed, has shaped and defined our world.

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Cover:

People's celebration organized by the Social Democratic Party of Hungary on 21 June 1936 in Húvösvölgy, on the outskirts of the Hungarian capital, Budapest. The photograph shows the tent advertising the magazine *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*, founded in 1905), women activists with their headaddresses carrying the inscription *Woman Worker* in red, and others looking at an issue of the magazine, among them two women wearing peasant-style clothing carrying baskets with goods for sale. Within the tent, the English-language inscription 'Forward! The day is breaking!' can be seen. *Woman Worker* reported that 'Éva Blau took the top position among the subscription collectors, recruiting 13 new subscribers that day. The women shop steward comrades also did their share of the work, since ... they prepared the excellent goulash soup of which large quantities were consumed.' Reportedly, 15,000 people attended the open-air event.

Source: People's celebration. 1936. Photograph. BTM. Budapest, Hungary. Additional information taken from *Népszava*, 'Tizenötezer munkás ünnepe a Húvösvölgyben', 23 June 1936: 6, ADT; 'Találkozó a húvösvölgyi nagyréten', *Nőmunkás* 30, no. 7 (July 1936): 4.

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List of abbreviations

ADT	Arcanum Digital Sciences Database (Arcanum Digitális Tudománytár, Hungary, online database)
ÁFSZ	General Consumer Co-operative (Általános Fogyasztási Szövetkezet)
AFŽ	Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena)
AK E-Medien	E-media of the Chambers of Labour and the ÖGB Publishing House (E-Medien der Arbeiterkammern und des ÖGB Verlags, Austria, online database, open access)
ALO	Austrian Literature Online, University of Innsbruck (Austria, online library, open access)
ANNO	ANNO Historical Newspapers and Journals, Austrian National Library (ANNO Historische Zeitungen und Zeitschriften) (ÖNB online database, open access)
Ariadne	Ariadne. Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938 (ÖNB online database and document repository, partial open access)
ATKF	Federation of Turkish Women in Europe (Avrupa Türkiye Kadınlar Federasyonu)
AUF	Independent Women Action (Aktion Unabhängiger Frauen)
AWO	Workers' Welfare Committee (Arbeiterwohlfahrt)
BDFÖ	Federation of Democratic Women Austria (Bund Demokratischer Frauen Österreichs)
BKP	Bulgarian Communist Party (Bulgarska komunisticheska partiia/Българска комунистическа партия)
BPS	Bulgarian Trade Unions (Bulgarski profesionalni suiuzi/Български професионални съюзи)
BRSDP	Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party (Bulgarska rabotnicheska sotsialdemokraticheska partiia/Българска работническа социалдемократическа партия)
BTM	Budapest History Museum, Kiscell Museum (Budapest Történeti Múzeum, Kiscelli Múzeum, Budapest)
BZhS	Bulgarian Women's Union (Bulgarski zhenski suiuz/Български женски съюз)
CGS	General Council of Trade Unions (Consiliul General al Sindicatelor)

- CGT General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du travail)
- CISC Confédération Internationale des Syndicats Chrétiens (known in English as International Federation of Christian Trade Unions, IFCTU)
- CRZZ Central Council of the Trade Unions (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych)
- ČSDSD Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická)
- CSU DA California State University Digital Archives (Long Beach, California, partial open access)
- ČSŽ Czechoslovak Women's Union (Československý svaz žen)
- CUL Cornell University Library (Ithaca, New York)
- CWK PPS Women's Central Committee of the Polish Socialist Party (Centralny Wydział Kobiety Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej)
- DA Workers' Academy (Dělnická akademie)
- DGB German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund)
- ĐİSK Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu)
- DK Digital Library (Digitální knihovna)
- DSAP German Social Democratic Workers' Party in the Czechoslovak Republic (Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik)
- DZSN Charitable Co-operative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (Dobrotvorna zadruga Srpkinja Novosatkinja/Добротворна задруга Српкиња Новосаткиња)
- ECCI Executive Committee of the Communist International
- ECOSOC Economic and Social Council (of the UN)
- ETD CEU Electronic Theses and Dissertations at Central European University (Austria, online repository)
- FE Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete)
- FESDL Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Digital Library (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Digitale Bibliothek, Germany, online database, open access)
- FSZP Independent Socialist Party (Független Szocialista Párt)

GDR	German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik)
HDA	Croatian State Archives (Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb)
HHC	Hull History Centre (Hull, UK)
HSS	Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka)
IAB	Historical Archives of Belgrade (Istorijski arhiv Beograda/Историјски архив Београда, Belgrade)
IACW	International Advisory Committee on Women (of the LSI)
ICA	International Co-operative Alliance
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
ICW	International Council of Women
ICWG	International Co-operative Women's Guild
ICWW	International Congress of Working Women
IFCTU	International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (known in French as Confédération internationale des syndicats chrétiens, CISC)
IFTU	International Federation of Trade Unions
IFWW	International Federation of Working Women
IHSF	Institute for Historical Social Research (Institut für Historische Sozialforschung, Vienna)
IISH	International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam)
İKD	Association of Progressive Women (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği)
ILC	International Labour Conference (of the ILO)
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO LD	Labordoc, ILO Digital Repository
ILO NL	Normalex, ILO Information System on International Labour Standards
ILOA	International Labour Office Archives (Geneva)
ITS	International Trade Secretariats
ITUCWWP	International Trade Union Committee of Women Workers of the Profintern
IWS	International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern
IWW	Industrial Workers of the World
IWY	International Women's Year
KADOC	Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society, KU Leuven (Documentatie- en Onderzoekscentrum voor Religie, Cultuur en Samenleving van de KU Leuven, Leuven, Belgium)

- KBZh Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени)
- KCLMDA Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives (Ithaca, New York)
- KDAŽ Conference for the Social Activity of Women (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena)
- KDAŽH Conference for the Social Activity of Women of Croatia (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena Hrvatske)
- KDBZh Committee of the Bulgarian Women's Movement (Komitet na dvizhenieto na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на движението на българските жени)
- KHOSZ National Federation of Catholic Housewives (Katholikus Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetsége)
- KPJ Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije)
- KPÖ Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs)
- KSC Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československá)
- KUTV Communist University of the Toilers of the East (Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikh Vostoka/Коммунистический университет трудящихся Востока)
- KŽ ŮRO Women's Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions (Komise žen Ústřední rady odborů)
- LK Women's League (Liga Kobiet)
- LKP League of Polish Women (Liga Kobiet Polskich)
- LSE London School of Economics and Political Science
- LSI Labour and Socialist International (known in German as Sozialistische Arbeiterinternationale, SAI)
- Maden-İş Mine Workers' Union of Turkey (Türkiye Maden İşçileri Sendikası)
- MAK Museum of Applied Arts (Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna, Austria)
- MCKSZ Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary (Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége)
- MME Association of Women Workers of Hungary (Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület)
- MNL OL National Archives of Hungary, Central Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára, Budapest)

MNOT	National Council of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa)
MP	Member of parliament
MPOS	Ministry of Work and Social Assistance (Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej)
MSZDP	Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt)
MSZDP ONB	National Women's Organizing Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP Országos Nőszervező Bizottsága)
MSZDP OOB	National Educational Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP Országos Oktatási Bizottsága)
MSZDP OT	Educational Secretariat of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP Oktatási Titkársága)
MSZDP OV	Board of Education of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP Oktatási Választmány)
MTDA	Digital Archive of Hungarian Social Sciences (Magyar Társadalomtudományok Digitális Archívuma)
MVS	International All-Trade Union (Mezinárodní všeodborový svaz)
NBS	National Library of Serbia (Narodna biblioteka Srbije/ Народна библиотека Србије, Belgrade)
NM	Museum of Ethnography (Néprajzi Múzeum, Budapest)
NOE	National Association of Women Office Workers (Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete)
NSZZ	Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity' (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy 'Solidarność')
ÖGB	Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund)
ÖGB-Archiv	Archive of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Vienna)
ÖNB	Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Austria)
ÖNB online	Austrian National Library online (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek online, Austria, online database, open access)
ORSS	General Workers' Trade Union (Obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen suiuz/Общ работнически синдикален съюз)

ORT	Organization for the Development of Industrial, Artisanal and Agricultural Labour among the Jewish Population in Poland (Organizacja Rozwoju Twórczości Przemysłowej Rzemieślniczej i Rolniczej wśród Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce)
OSČ	Czechoslovak Trade Union Association (Odborové sdružení československé)
ÖSTA, AdR	Austrian State Archives, Archive of the Republic (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik, Vienna)
PCdR	Communist Party of Romania (Partidul Comunist din România)
PIL	Institute of Political History, Archives (Politikátörténeti Intézet Levéltára, Budapest)
Polona	Polona Digital Library operated by National Library (Biblioteka Narodowa, Warsaw)
PPS	Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna)
PSDMR	Social Democratic Workers' Party of Romania (Partidul Social Democrat al Muncitorilor din România)
RILU	Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern)
ROH	Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí)
SAI	Sozialistische Arbeiterinternationale (known in English as Labour and Socialist International, LSI)
SANIC	Service of the National Central Historical Archives (Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istorie Centrale, Bucharest)
SAPMOBArch	Foundation Archive of the Political Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, Berlin)
SBOTIČJ	Union of Banking, Insurance, Commercial and Industrial Officials of Yugoslavia (Savez bankovnih, osiguravajućih, trgovačkih i industrijskih činovnika Jugoslavije)
SDAP	Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei)
SI	Second International (also Socialist International)
SJBVAN	County Service of the National Archives, Braşov (Serviciul Judeţean al Arhivelor Naţionale, Braşov, Romania)

SMBAN	Bucharest Municipal Service of the National Archives (Serviciul Municipal Bucureşti al Arhivelor Naţionale, Bucharest)
SNZDS	Union of Civil Servants' Consumer Co-operatives (Savez nabavljačkih zadruga državnih službenika)
SPÖ	Socialist Party of Austria/Social Democratic Party of Austria (Sozialistische Partei Österreichs/ Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs)
SSDS	Serbian Social Democratic Party (Srpska socijaldemokratska stranka/Српска социјалдемократска странка)
SSSK	Women's Social Self-Help Association (Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet)
SZhKB	Bulgarian Women's Co-operative Union (Suiuz na zhenite kooperatorki v Bulgariia/Съюз на жените кооператорки в България)
SZKL	Trade Union Archives (Szakszervezeti Levéltár, Budapest)
SZOT	National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa)
SZT	Trade Union Council of Hungary (Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Tanács)
SZZ	Union of Health Co-operatives (Savez zdravstvenih zadruga/Савез здравствених задруга)
Tez-Büro-İş	Union of Sales Assistants and Office Workers of Turkey (Türkiye Tezgâhtarlar ve Büro İşçileri Sendikası)
TKP	Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi)
TsDA	Central State Archives (Tsentralen durzhaven arkhiv/ Централен държавен архив, Sofia)
TsDAEA	Central State Audio-Visual and Electronic Archive of Ukraine (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi audiovisual'nyi ta elektronnyi arkhiv Ukrainy/Центральний державний аудіовізуальний та електронний архів України, Kyiv)
TsDAVO	Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchikh orhaniv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy/ Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України, Kyiv)
TSEKP	Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi)

TUR	Workers' University Society (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego)
Türk-İş	Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu)
TÜSTAV	Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, Istanbul)
TÜSTAV OA	Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı, Turkey, online archive, open access)
UČD	Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives (Unie československých družstev)
UDL	UNESCO Digital Library (France, partial open access)
UFDR	Union of Democratic Women of Romania (Uniunea Femeilor Democate din România)
UFM	Union of Working Women in Romania (Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din România)
UGSR	General Union of Trade Unions (Uniunea Generală a Sindicatelor din România)
UN CSW	United Nations Commission on the Status of Women
UNDL	United Nations Digital Library (Switzerland, partial open access)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
URSSJ	United Federation of Workers' Unions of Yugoslavia (Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije)
ÚSČD	Central Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives (Ústřední svaz československých družstev)
ÚVSDŽ	Central Committee of Social Democratic Women (Ústřední výbor sociálně demokratických žen)
VDP	Wholesale Consumer Co-operative Society in Prague (Velkonákupní společnost konsumních družstev v Praze)
VDW	Association of German Economic Co-operatives (Verband deutscher Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften)
VGA	Austrian Labour History Society (Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung, Vienna)
WASI	Women and Social Movements, International: 1840–Present (international, online database)
WASMME	Women and Social Movements in Modern Empires (international, online database)
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild

WFTU	World Federation of Trade Unions
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
ZARAH DB	Online database and document repository of the ZARAH project (Vienna)
ZDG	German Trade Union Confederation in Czechoslovakia (Zentralgewerkschaftskommission des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik)
ZDŽD	Association of Working Women and Girls (Zveza delavskih žen in deklet)
ZfdB	Central Office of Education (Zentralstelle für das Bildungswesen)
ZhSDS	Women's Social Democratic Union (Zhenski sotsial-demokratičeski suiuz/Женски социалдемократически съюз)
ZZZ	Association of Trade Unions (Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych)

Notes on authors

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and Boston, MA: Brill, 2023). Her dissertation is on the history of the International Co-operative Women's Guild and its branches from Central and Eastern Europe.

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Foreword

Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Beyond topples long-standing assumptions about work and activism and recasts narratives in European, global, labour and gender history. In this short preface, I point to just a few of the pleasures and provocations readers will encounter.

The empirical riches and bold analytics of this masterful book are evident in each of its many parts. An introductory essay expertly sets the stage; a stimulating conclusion pinpoints the book's empirical and theoretical contributions and sketches out promising research frontiers for the future. Each of the 10 eye-opening chapters transcends borders, moving expertly between local and global, and up and down hierarchies of difference and power. The energetic archival sleuthing of the book's multi-lingual, multi-talented team of authors is generously shared in ample notes – many with convenient links to original documents – and in the book's remarkable appendices, which include, among other treasures, definitive biographies of notable women activists from Eastern Europe and beyond.

The volume's achievements stem in part from an innovative collaborative approach that required each author to go beyond their 'country' or 'field' expertise. It is a model for how a large-scale academic research project can foster individual growth while also crafting a joint intellectual product that truly advances knowledge.

In 2016, Susan Zimmermann, University Professor of History and Gender Studies at Central European University, began assembling a team of young scholars, and in 2019 won substantial funding from the European Research Council for what came to be known as the ZARAH project on 'Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Transnationally, from the Age of Empires to the Late 20th Century'. From the beginning, the group committed itself to an intensive, democratic process of talking and thinking across nation and region. ZARAH researchers envisioned a volume organized thematically that drew on the (old and new) knowledge of the entire team to investigate a series of cross-cutting questions relying on comparative, transnational and multiscalar analysis. The results are stunning.

Women's Labour Activism reorients us geographically and broadens conceptions of what is 'European'. When the new global history took

off in the 1990s, scholars strove to move beyond Europe and shed their Eurocentric lens. That was – and is – a worthy endeavour. But as this volume brilliantly shows, there is a marginalized ‘other’ within Europe – Eastern Europe – still much in need of excavating. Extending the map of Europe eastwards is a necessity if we are to write European history, global labour history or any comparative or transnational history taking ‘Europe’ as a unit of analysis.

Readers of *Women’s Labour Activism* travel deep into the particularities of Eastern European societies, households and states and ponder the mutually constitutive relation between Eastern Europe and the rest of the world. It is a paradigm-shifting journey. We come to more fully comprehend the evolving and diverse realities of ‘Europe’. We come to better understand the “west” by seeing it through the eyes of the “east”.

Women’s Labour Activism speaks to scholars of labour and gender around the world. It asks: who is the prototypical worker and on whose lives do we build our theories of collective action and social change? It shifts the gaze to women workers and to female realms of labour and calls into question the long reign of the male industrial proletariat atop the pedestal of labour history. The unwaged become as significant as the waged; the informal, community and household spheres emerge from the shadows.

By rejecting narrow sex-biased definitions of work and worker, the authors reveal a more robust story of labour activism. Some chapters offer intricate and ambitious studies of overlooked forms of female activism, including household- and community-based organizing, consumer protests, women’s crafts movements, educational campaigns, and migrant mobility and exit as resistance strategies. Other chapters reveal the power of working-class and non-working-class women organizing locally and globally in co-operative movements, trade unions, communist and anarchist groups, and socialist and social democratic organizations. Still others unpack the peril and potential of women organizing across differences of culture, race, class and religion.

Indeed, not only have women always organized, they may well have done so *more* than men. Our estimates of worker resistance must be revised upwards. We have been underestimating resistance because we have been ignoring the activism of the majority of workers. The extent of women’s resistance should not surprise us. It comes as news in part because gender has yet to be fully integrated into theories of what drives resistance. Both men and women may experience class disadvantage, but all too often men’s class oppression is leavened by their gender privileges.

Women's Labour Activism reveals the inadequacies of theories of collective action linked primarily to the contradictions of wage work and the iron heel of factory proletarianization. The household is just as significant a site of oppression as the market and hence just as significant a driver of resistance. We are a long way from a labour history that spends as much time on the 'point of social reproduction' and the 'point of consumption' as on the 'point of production'. But any theory of labour mobilization that is true to the lives of women as well as men must do so.

Women's Labour Activism tackles the class biases of women's history as deftly as it does the gender blindnesses of labour history. Despite decades of feminist labour history, the standard story of women's activism – including primary goals, forms of organization, and movement peaks and troughs – is still largely based on the lives of middle-class and privileged women. *Women's Labour Activism* rewrites this history by paying close attention to the particular desires of non-elite women and the specific forms of organizing they adopted. Low-income and working-class women sought liberation from class and gender oppression. The multiple exploitations they faced often put them at odds with their elite sisters as well as their working-class brothers. *Women's Labour Activism* takes off the class blinders and opens our eyes to the distinctive dilemmas, repertoires and patterns of non-elite women's mobilization.

Women's Labour Activism respects its historical protagonists. Yet it resists romanticization. The authors engage critically with the politics and choices of the women and men they write about, judging them within the constraints and context of their time and place. They see their subjects as constructed by multiple identities, in conflict with themselves and others, and struggling, as are we all, to find a place to stand that provides dignity, community and meaning.

I congratulate the ZARAH team on your extraordinary achievement. We are in your debt.

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Rutgers University, USA

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Many more colleagues supported and helped the authors' team at various stages, by reading drafts, engaging in fruitful and thought-provoking discussions, directing team members to certain archives and assisting with accessing archival collections. Their contributions speak to a spirit of collaboration that is deeply valued by the authors' team.

Archival and printed sources have been the indispensable grounding of this book, allowing us, among other things, to unearth unexpected forms of labour activism and to discover previously unknown connections between activists and organizations. Access to these sources, stored in more than a dozen countries on three continents, was possible only with the help of archivists and librarians, and in a few cases research assistants, and this was even more the case during the coronavirus pandemic. We take this opportunity to express our sincere thanks to all of them. We would also like to extend our thanks to the women activists who agreed to give us interviews and shared material with us, the value of which for our research cannot be overestimated. Thanks also go to Karen Anderson for her careful and thoughtful native speaker copyediting. Last but not least, there is Lukas Neissl, whose company as project manager and whose imperturbable presence as pillar of support throughout five long years made this book and many other things within the ZARAH research project possible.

A reader's guide

Research collaboration as a credo for the research of the future has been constantly on the lips of many practitioners within the field of global and transnational labour history. Collaboration has been described as an indispensable tool to overcome thematic, linguistic and geographical boundaries and the restrictions of research traditions and perspectives. This collaborative monograph, authored by 10 researchers who, together commanding 16 research languages, have closely co-operated throughout many years of research, is one of the first attempts to put the credo of sustained, large-scale teamwork in research and scholarly writing into practice. We study many types of women's labour activism from a long-term perspective, in a large world region outside what has been labelled the "western world" (we use double quotation marks throughout this book to signal distance from a given term) and look at multiple scales of activism within this region and transnationally. We focus on how gender, class and other divisions shaped various forms of women's activism and examine how such activism responded to highly variegated and ever-changing socioeconomic and political environments.

Writing this collaborative monograph at times felt like travelling a rocky road. The history of women's activism in our region of focus ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)) certainly constitutes a historical *terra incognita* for many readers, raising the question of how to present our findings. The complexities confronting the reader are many, including multifaceted historical and political geographies, linguistic diversity and the coverage of a theme that features numerous names and organizations and bridges diverse scholarships. Our approach to the history of women's labour activism in the region of focus and internationally necessitated deep engagement with terminology, and we had to tackle

a wide range of more technical editing issues, ranging from different conventions of referencing sources in archives in different countries, to signalling how certain terms were translated. We also wanted to make sure to convey our innovative approach in a transparent manner, and to provide a solid knowledge base for readers who enter the historical *terra incognita* of women's labour activism within and beyond the borders of the region of focus. To achieve these goals, this monograph is organized in a somewhat unorthodox manner, including several elements that are less than common in academic volumes, and a few reading aids, while retaining the standard architecture of introduction, chapters and conclusion.

The Vocabulary of concepts and terminology, at the beginning of this book, presents cornerstones of the terminology used in a structured manner. Writing this book as a team of 10 authors, we needed to work with a coherent terminology from the start. In addition, in terms of conceptualization we could not simply rely on existing vocabularies of labour history, with all their male and western biases, nor did we want to invent, in an inevitably erratic manner, add-ons to capture some specifics of what we found. Therefore, we developed a list of the most relevant concepts and definitions for our book,¹ and for a long time considered it just a working tool. Upon finalizing the manuscript, we realized that this Vocabulary constitutes in and of itself a valuable contribution to the development of an integrative and global history of labour activism, and as such can also serve as a guide to the terminology that undergirds this book. The Vocabulary aims to leave behind restrictive, loaded and biased terms, and the attached hierarchies of meaning. It helps to build an analysis that overcomes, rather than contributes to retaining, past and present power imbalances and socioeconomic inequalities. These imbalances and inequalities, which have so deeply shaped the history of labour struggles, include those among working-class people as well as those between these people and the powers they confronted. The inclusion of this Vocabulary of concepts and terminology in the book is also intended to support the flow of reading in the body of the book by making it unnecessary to define and repeatedly cross-reference key terms and concepts in the individual chapters and book sections.

The Vocabulary of concepts and terminology is complemented by the (more conventional) Chronology of political geography, which consists of four historical maps, created for the purpose of this book. The design principles on which the maps are based help subvert teleological ideas about national or regional becoming and belonging. The maps depict the region of focus studied in the book both before and after the substantial

territorial reorganizations in the aftermath of World War I, World War II, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the break-up of Yugoslavia.

The maps are followed by another unconventional element of the book's architecture: the Chronology in pictures. Here, each of the 31 chronologically arranged illustrations, and the factual information attached, is complemented by a short narrative that connects to and goes beyond what is shown by the illustration. Bringing together these visual and textual elements, the Chronology in pictures can serve as a vivid opening into the world of activism studied. It shows connections between these activisms and points to key perspectives and findings of this collaborative monograph. The images in the Chronology in pictures are referred to throughout the book.

Following the [introductory chapter](#), 10 thematic chapters are arranged in three parts, complemented by a concluding essay. In the opening chapter we introduce the key conceptual 'planks' on which this book has been built, highlight some of the most recent scholarship, discuss overarching design principles of the book, offer insight into the making of the book and point to how the book's three parts complement each other. Each part features its own introduction which expands on the conceptual rationale shaping the part and introduces the chapters contained therein.

The chapters of this book feature manifold journal titles in many languages, a plethora of organizations which operated in many different lands and countries as well as internationally, and numerous individuals, many of whom will be unknown to a broader readership, as they were to us when we first delved into this research. To help the reader navigate this multitude of information, and to assemble key information about the actors, institutions and publications in a condensed and well-organized manner, the book concludes with nine tables, several of them quite extensive and connected to more than one chapter, as well as two appendices: the Glossary of select organizations and the Glossary of select protagonists. This added 'apparatus' is meant to unburden the chapters of too much factual detail. It condenses some of the knowledge on which the chapters are built and adds additional information collected during the research process which did not make it into the narrative presented. The tables and appendices offer a valuable knowledge resource, which will support readers and future researchers who want to orient themselves in the world of women's labour activism in Eastern Europe and beyond.

In the chapter endnotes we use short citations only, except for archival material, which we reference in full upon first mention in

each chapter. The complementary bibliographical information given at the end of the Chronology in pictures, the Glossary of select organizations ([Appendix 1](#)) and the Glossary of select protagonists ([Appendix 2](#)) indicates only those sources used in these book sections which are not used in any chapter of the book. Within original quotations, square brackets indicate changes, additions and explanations given by the authors; in rare cases we give the original wording in square brackets. When no translator is given, quotations have been translated by the authors of this volume. All abbreviations used in the book are given in the List of abbreviations (with the exception of abbreviations invented for specific tables, which are given below these tables). The abbreviations are spelt out upon first usage in each chapter and in the Chronology in pictures (except when indicating sources), and are given together with the full name of the organizations in the heading of the entries in [Appendix 1](#). Elsewhere in [Appendix 1](#), and in [Appendix 2](#), the notes throughout the book, the List of figures, the tables and the bibliography, only acronyms or initialisms as spelt out in the List of abbreviations are given.

Finally, birth and death dates of women in history are often difficult to establish, and this is even more true when considering labour activists from our region of focus. These difficulties in part stem from the gendered character of history, including the history of labour activism. Women frequently changed their family names and left fewer sources than men (this is also true for activist working-class women compared to working-class men). Women labour activists repeatedly pursued multiple, short-term or scattered activist careers and have often been forgotten by contemporaries and historians alike. The violent dimensions of European history in the twentieth century add to the difficulties in establishing exact life dates in some cases. Because activists were persecuted, they concealed their identities and aimed to leave few or no traces. Many “disappeared” and were murdered; in later years, others tried to conceal the persecutions of the past. Information about birth and death dates of women labour activists for all these reasons is as precious as it is incomplete. We therefore give this information upon first mention in each chapter of this book and in the Chronology in pictures insofar as we have been able to establish it; in the tables, where we refer to numerous activists in a condensed manner, and in the two appendices we refrain from giving this information, with the exception of the protagonists for whom we give the short biographies contained in [Appendix 2](#).

During the years we were working on this book, we published several multi-author pieces, and individual authors published on their specialized themes connected to our joint research project, ZARAH.²

We reference these earlier publications throughout the book, and indicate – in agreement with the publishers concerned – closer relations to earlier writings where applicable.³

Notes

- 1 As we developed our definitions of women's labour, we engaged with the taxonomy of labour relations created by the *Global Collaboratory on the History of Labour Relations, 1500–2000* of the International Institute of Social History (IISH, Amsterdam, Netherlands), <https://datasets.iisg.amsterdam/dataverse/labourrelations>.
- 2 Information can be found on the website ZARAH, 'ZARAH: Women's Labour Activism'.
- 3 This concerns a few subsections of the [introductory chapter](#), which build on and adapt from Ghiş et al., 'Women and the Gendered Politics', and Çağatay et al., 'Introduction: Women's Labour Struggles', as well as sections of two chapters, which build on or summarize from Tešija, "Millions of Working Housewives" ([chapter 1](#)) and Zimmermann, "The Changing Politics" ([chapter 10](#)).

Vocabulary of concepts and terminology: a contribution to global labour history

This section of the book brings together the definitions of core vocabulary used in our study of women's labour activism in the region of focus and transnationally, from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth. Women's labour activism as studied in this book consists of women's social and political action within and beyond social movements, movement organizations, and social and political institutions in local, national and international contexts, to improve the labour conditions and life circumstances of lower-income and working(-class) women and their communities.

Composing the vocabulary and the attached definitions presented here, we have centred on those terms that require explication because they, in line with the above considerations, are applied in a specific manner likely to be less familiar to the reader or, in a few instances, have been coined specifically for the purposes of this book. We have organized this vocabulary in five thematic clusters: space and (political) geography; political orientation and world view; political regimes; women's work, women who worked; and, by far our most exhaustive cluster, women's labour activism. Within each cluster, the terms are organized alphabetically. The choices made in designing our vocabulary, and the resulting definitions of the terms, while sustaining the approach shaping this book, are inevitably imperfect and in some cases simply pragmatic.

Space and (political) geography

Central and Eastern Europe/European – the region of focus without Turkey.

cross-regional – refers to social and political phenomena characteristic of many lands across the region of focus, and to organized and unorganized collective and individual interaction, transfer and exchange within the region of focus.

Eastern Europe/European – the region of focus without Turkey or Austria.

European periphery/semi-periphery – economically less developed countries and lands within the region of focus.

geopolitics – political and social actions aimed at strengthening, reproducing, challenging or altering power relations and global inequalities, including between different world regions and within social movement organizations, which have characterized the international system and the global economy.

international action/organizing/organization – formally instituted interaction, transfer and exchange across the borders of nation-states and empires.

international system – encompasses the global network of states and empires and those international organizations that, at their core, have been based on state- and empire-related membership.

minoritization/minoritized – a process that results in legal, political, linguistic, cultural, economic and/or social subordination of an ethnic group. Underlines the power relations that shape a subordinate position based on ethnicity. To be distinguished from ‘minority’, which denotes ethnic groups that were demographically in the minority in a given state/territory but were not necessarily minoritized.

multiscale/multiscalar action/organizing – activism that involves, moves between and connects transnational, intra-empire, national, regional and local arenas including the shopfloor. Activist repertoires and agendas travelled, and were negotiated and accommodated, along and between these scales.

region/region of focus – comprises most of the countries and their present-day successor states that incorporated the European lands ruled in the second half of the nineteenth century or thereafter by the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, and present-day Serbia and Turkey. Includes (in addition to Serbia and Turkey) Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine and some lands and countries not specified above that are discussed in the book in connection with the countries to which they belonged in various periods of time.

state internationalism/internationalist – action and governance by international organizations that have been based on state and empire

membership (and have sometimes included formalized representation of social groups and non-governmental organizations).

transnational action/organizing – encompasses formally instituted as well as non-instituted, collective and individual interaction, transfer and exchange across the borders of nation-states and empires.

transregional – refers to social and political phenomena reaching beyond the region of focus.

western-dominated action/organizing – activism dominated by actors with Western European and North American backgrounds and/or activism oriented towards these regions unfolding anywhere in the world and transnationally.

Political orientation and world view

agrarian socialist – world view (informing the politics and activism of those aligned with it) oriented towards the improvement of the working and living conditions of agrarian men and women labourers. Based on socialist, anarchist and social democratic ideas, and sometimes on millenarianism.

anarchist – world view (informing the politics and activism of those aligned with it) positing that society can and should function without a state and other hierarchical and coercive social structures, replacing them with voluntary, individual and co-operative action from below. Characterized by explicit anti-capitalism and the rejection of (state) socialism. Includes anarcho-syndicalists envisioning trade unions (syndicats, in French) as the society's organizing framework.

Catholic – world view adopted by Catholic laypeople and churchmen and -women and informing their activism, which is rooted in the Catholic faith and Christian social values. Initiatives often not (directly) affiliated with the Catholic Church, and carrying the denominator 'Christian' or 'Catholic' in their names.

communist/communist-aligned – world view (informing the politics and activism of those aligned with it) oriented towards radical and instant transformation of the socioeconomic system and working class-based power over the state apparatus, from ca. 1917.

social democratic – world view (informing the politics and activism of those aligned with it) aiming at the gradual, organized transformation of both the socioeconomic system and liberal democracy, with the goal of achieving greater material inclusion and political influence of the majority of the population, from ca. 1918.

socialist – world view informing the politics and activism of all left-wing movements and organizations other than anarchist-oriented ones, before ca. 1917, including social democratic movements and the precursors of the communist movement.

Political regimes

corporatist regimes/political systems – political regimes characterized by the organization of society into a number of ‘corporations’, representing interest groups of both workers and employers, which are subordinated to the state.

right-wing authoritarian regimes/political systems – refers to political regimes defined by the arrival of right-wing politicians to power, and the politics of selective and often racist and gendered social exclusion they pursued.

state socialist regimes/countries – the Eastern European countries, both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus, excluding Yugoslavia, which in the period from 1949 were characterized by state ownership and control over (major) industries and services.

(state) socialist regimes/countries – the Eastern European countries, both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus, including Yugoslavia, which in the period from 1949 were characterized by comparatively high, though varying degrees of state ownership and/or control over (major) industries and services.

statist regimes/political systems – political regimes characterized by a strong or expansive state which pursued developmentalist, socially integrative policies for large or growing groups of the population. Includes the (state) socialist, Kemalist and social democratic regimes which dominated the region of focus in the short twentieth century. Women’s labour activism under these regimes repeatedly took place in state-steered social organizations. Excludes self-defined right-wing authoritarian and corporatist regimes.

Women’s work, women who worked

care work/labour – paid and unpaid labour within and outside the household aimed at providing physical and mental support to vulnerable groups such as children, elderly people and people with

disabilities or illnesses, overwhelmingly performed by women. Part of reproductive labour.

peasant women – working-class women engaged in paid or unpaid labour in the agricultural sector and in households attached to it.

reproductive labour/work – refers to the work performed to reproduce and maintain the labour force. Can refer to paid or unpaid labour within and outside the household aimed at maintaining and perpetuating life processes. Typically includes housework (such as cleaning, washing and cooking) and care work and includes the emotional component and the mental load involved in planning and managing activities.

unpaid labour/work – refers broadly to work performed inside or outside the household without remuneration, including varieties of unpaid reproductive labour, diverse unpaid agricultural tasks performed on family plots, production of household items or clothes for own use, and other similar activities.

wage labour/work/workers – refers to standard, casual or informal paid employment or self-employment (including varieties such as subcontracting) in which workers receive remuneration for their productive or reproductive labour.

women workers – women who belonged to the working and lower middle classes and engaged in wage labour in the industrial and service sectors.

working-class women – women who belonged to the lower social classes and engaged in paid or unpaid labour. Encompasses women who typically had limited or no formal education and limited or no formalized skills.

working(-class) women – women who belonged to the working and lower middle classes and engaged in wage labour in any sector of the economy and/or in unpaid labour.

working women – women who belonged to the working and lower middle classes and engaged in wage labour in any sector of the economy.

Women's labour activism

agendas of women's labour activism – refers to the elements of socio-economic, legal and other societal change to the advantage of the women whom the women labour activists and their networks and organizations addressed. The agendas included:

consumption-related agendas – pertain to the availability, provision and shortages of goods and access to facilities where goods are offered, as well as problems around the affordability of goods, such as high prices and inflation.

education-related agendas – encompass literacy and general education as a precondition for accessing jobs; skills education and other career-advancing opportunities such as apprenticeships, technical and vocational training, on-the-job training, vocational guidance and career counselling, and paid educational leave; trade union training including membership and leadership training, political education and mass education; home economics education pertaining to scientific household management as well as reducing the time women spend on unpaid housework and care work; and knowledge production and dissemination with a view towards the education of women labour activists.

‘quality of life’ agendas – related to living conditions such as housing, social and technical infrastructure, including sanitation and transportation, and environmental pollution. Inform the everyday-focused activist repertoires of women’s labour activism.

‘right to work’ agendas – pertain to the elimination of discrimination based on age, civil status, citizenship, ethnicity or religion, as well as of exclusion from certain industries and sectors based on gender. Also address the exclusion of women from wage labour due to their family responsibilities. Closely connected with education-related and working mother-related agendas.

wage justice agendas – associated most with the notion of ‘equal pay’ or ‘equal pay for work of equal value’. Encompass all kinds of issues around the remuneration of women’s work, including a sufficient wage, a rightful wage, wage increases, recognizing and certifying women’s skills, revaluation of skill, and overcoming labour market segregation and segmentation that cluster women in the lowest-paid sectors and occupations.

welfare agendas – concern access to rights around social security such as pensions and health, disability and death insurance as well as social benefits such as housing, family allowance and paid vacations. Include demands for alleviating or resolving the tensions between family work and income-generating work.

working mother-related agendas – pertain to demands around the provision of childcare and maternity benefits and are part of the politics addressing working mothers.

workplace-related agendas – focus on improving conditions in the workplace. Include good, healthy and safe working conditions such as occupational safety and health, adjusting production norms to workers' needs and capabilities, appropriate breaks, and fair workplace treatment aimed at preventing mobbing and sexual harassment.

inclusive/integrative perspectives (on women's labour activism) – enable, as they encompass the organizational forms, agendas, and repertoires and scales of action discussed in this book, deeper insights into women's labour activism and gendered labour history.

politics of women's work – encompasses the overall ensemble of political action, including all varieties of women's labour activism, as well as local, national and international politics regulating matters related to women's work.

repertoires of women's labour activism – refer to the modes of action and the strategies women labour activists and their networks and organizations employed or aimed to employ to promote and achieve their agendas. These repertoires included:

activism within the state apparatus – refers to activists' participation in state institutions and state-aligned or -led institutions and policymaking as officials or professionals. Includes, for instance, researchers working in such contexts, trade union functionaries in (state) socialist contexts and labour inspectors.

agitation work – activism focused on attracting or recruiting more members to a movement, including spreading the information about a movement/party/trade union, lectures, social events, and production and circulation of printed materials.

boycott – withdrawal from commercial (consumer boycott) or social (boycotting an event, a movement, a party) relations as a tool of protest. Includes house boycott, the co-ordinated termination of leases (or threat thereof) combined with a public denouncement of dishonest rental practices.

community-based/community-focused activism – focused, in terms of its agendas and repertoires, on improving the lot of communities. Includes creating and maintaining access to infrastructure (such as clean water or transport), childcare or basic education (communal childcare facilities, providing education, also in minoritized languages) or healthcare. Took place primarily beyond the workplace.

cross-class activism – bridged class divides among women. Includes co-operation between women of different classes within and across social movements or within the state apparatus, and activism of middle- or upper-class women aimed at the improvement of lower-class women's working and living conditions.

everyday-focused activism – sought to improve the living and working conditions of working(-class) women and their communities that had diminished political and economic resources by addressing the various issues within households and communities, often including 'quality of life' agendas, and drawing claims from women's gendered experiences, building on women's networks and taking place beyond the workplace.

exit – a variety of individual and collective tactics that imply exiting the existing, often over-exploitative or coercive, labour relations. Includes short- and long-range migration, leaving the workplace or leaving the family home to escape unpaid labour.

knowledge production and dissemination – research and reporting on working women's living and working conditions, as well as spreading the results. Included conducting household surveys, labour inspectors' reporting, interviews with women workers, academic research and research conducted by trade unionists or activists from women's organizations. Often aimed at impacting the process of policymaking and could take place within the state apparatus.

labour organizing/organization – women's labour activism that took place within the framework of mixed-gender or women-only trade union organizations, or that aimed at the creation of such organizations. A variety of formal, collective activism that focuses on the strengthening of workers' collective bargaining power as a tool to achieve the improvement of workers' conditions, typically including such agendas as wage justice or improvement of workplace conditions.

mixed-gender organizing/activism – women's activism in organizations and networks comprising women and men. These organizations were mostly characterized by gender constraints and gendered marginalization experienced by women. Women were active on women-only platforms (such as women's committees) and as individual activists within mixed-gender contexts within these organizations.

multi-movement activism/multiple activist engagement – resulted from the fact that women labour activists often combined

affiliation to, or membership in, more than one movement to pursue their gendered, class and other interests.

mutualism/mutualist – refers mainly to co-operative organizing and action that promotes workers' control of the means of production and distribution. Based on the values of self-help, self-responsibility, democracy, equality and solidarity. Mutualist organizing makes use of collective resources to better fulfil the social, economic and cultural needs of workers.

politics of practice – day-to-day engagement on different scales of action with the practical implementation and further development of larger agendas of women's labour activism. Gained traction as activists engaged with translating principal agendas and demands into concrete policies and confronted problems emerging in relation to such policies as implemented.

scarcity management – refers to the practice of assigning the task of household financial management, including smaller or larger portions of the wage of the male partner, to working(-class) women, especially in times of economic crisis. Includes also household accounting and the acquisition of goods carried out under the constraint of insufficient resources.

social movement-based activism – activism anchored within a framework of a social movement, such as the environmental or feminist movement.

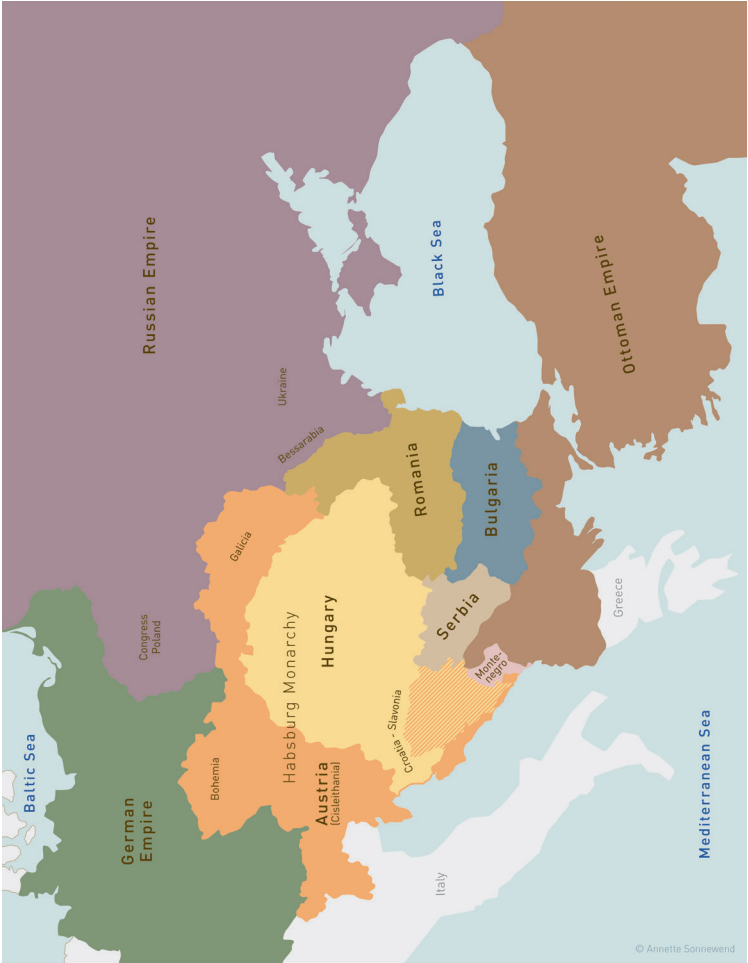
women-only organizing/activism – women's activism in organizations and networks that limited their membership to women. These typically put gendered interests of women at the core of their agendas. Included cross-class as well as class-based activism and organizing.

transfer (of activist repertoires and agendas) – happened via travel, activist exchanges, migration, participation in action/organizing, knowledge conveyed in publications and circulation of other activist communication tools, and other means. Took place across scales and space and could take the form of multiscale activism.

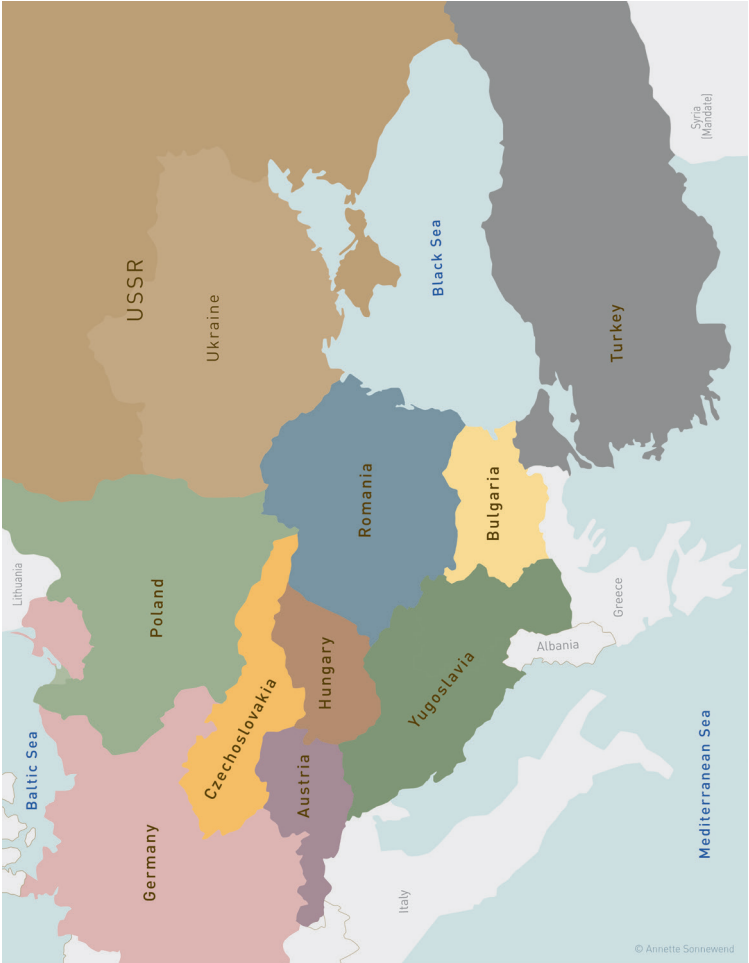
Chronology of political geography: maps

The maps give approximate borders and are designed to serve as basic geographical orientation aids. The territories highlighted in each map show those empires and states which, at the historical juncture indicated, incorporated substantial portions of present-day countries of the region. As an additional point of orientation, in a few cases, names of non-independent territories are indicated in a smaller font.

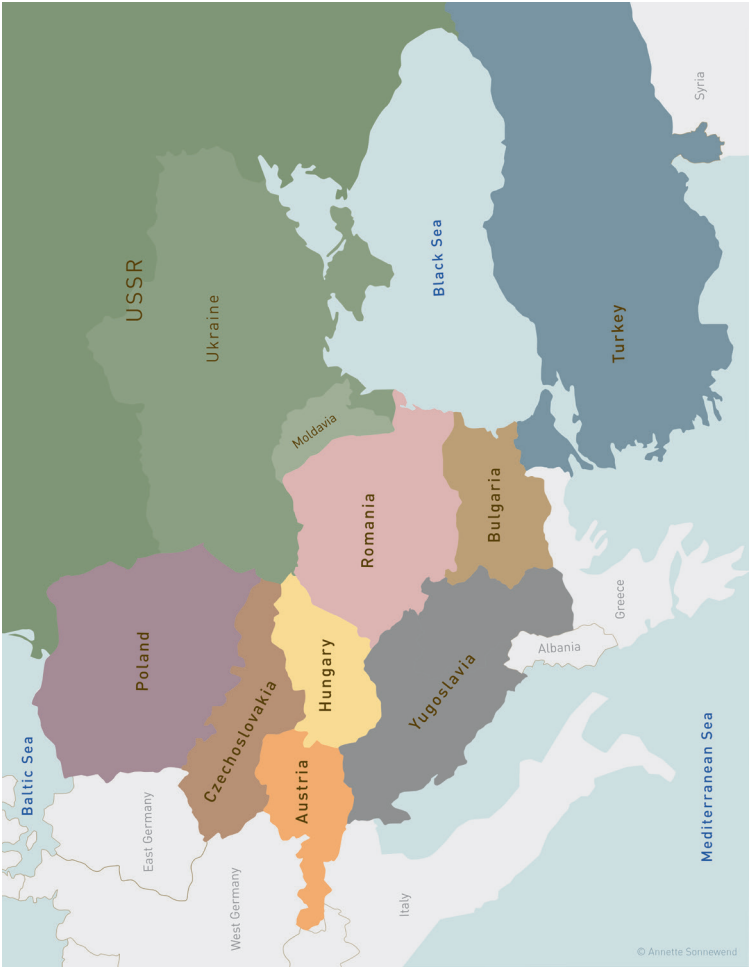
Map 1 The region of focus around 1910. Source: Annette Sonnewend



Map 2 The region of focus around 1930. Source: Annette Sonnewend



Map 3 The region of focus around 1960. Source: Annette Sonnewend



Map 4 The region of focus around 2000. Source: Annette Sonnewend



Chronology in pictures: a very short history

The illustrations collected here are connected to the labour activisms discussed in this book or to complementary instances of labour activism, the latter often studied in more depth in single-authored research by members of the authors' team. In the Chronology in pictures, we romanize names of organizations and institutions where these are originally in the Cyrillic alphabet.

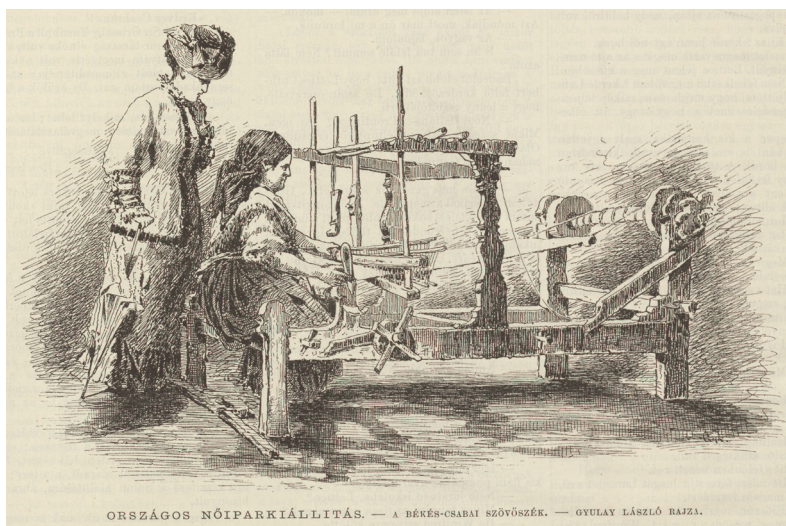


Figure 1 ‘Mrs Mihály Griecs-Tomo, the industrious peasant woman [pórnő] of Csaba, in a festive suit, demonstrates the art of weaving, as it is known in Békés-Csaba’, at the National Women’s Trade Association exhibition of women’s crafts (Országos Nőiparkiallítás). Budapest, Hungary, 1881.

Source and acknowledgement: László Gyulay. Drawing reproduced as journal illustration, with annotation, Central Collection of the National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Törzsgyűjteménye). Quote in caption taken from accompanying article, Mór Gelléri, ‘Az országos nőiparkiallítás: a békés-csabai osztály’, *Vasárnapi Ujság*, 28 August 1881: 554 (ellipses not indicated), ADT.

Arising in the later decades of the nineteenth century and reaching a peak in the early twentieth, the cross-class women’s crafts movement (a term we coined) formed one of the earliest large-scale instances of women’s labour activism. Women’s, and women-led mixed-gender, associations involved lower-class and lower-middle-class women systematically in gainful economic activity in selected trades and crafts. Aiming to raise the material value attached to and the social appreciation of this work, manifold exhibitions displayed (sometimes side by side) modern-style products and exoticized handicraft work. The latter was often produced by minoritized women of the agrarian lower classes or connected to nationalist movements.



Figure 2 Portrait of the agrarian socialist activist and author Mariska Várkonyi. Hungary, likely 1890s.

Source and acknowledgement: Ede Ellinger, Portrait of Mariska Várkonyi. Courtesy Town Museum of Gödöllő (Gödöllői Városi Múzeum).

Women played an active role in agrarian socialist movements, including their socialist, social democratic and anarchist varieties. Mariska Várkonyi, who was active between 1897 and 1905, addressed labour issues of peasant women in the contemporary press and was involved in organizing women's groups aligned with the movement. Compared to Várkonyi, Halyna Kuz'menko and Maria Nykyforova, of the rural anarchist Makhno movement that unfolded in south-eastern Ukraine between 1917 and 1921, are better known. Várkonyi quit the movement early on. In both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, women's trajectories were repeatedly characterized by multi-movement activism and sometimes saw "unexpected" choices, leading to the disruption and fragmentation of activist careers. Such disruptions point to gendered, shifting trajectories and self-identifications in women labour activists' lives.



Figure 3 Rally of striking seamstresses in the Workers' Club in the Vienna working-class district Favoriten. Vienna, Austria, 1907.

Source and acknowledgement: 'Die streikenden Schneiderinnen im Arbeiterheim Favoriten', Photograph, 1907, V1/505, VGA. Courtesy VGA.

The gathering of striking textile women workers in a Vienna workers' club impressively illustrates the size of the strike movements in the 1890s and 1900s in Cisleithanian Austria. Labour migration played an important role in the composition of the industrial workforce in the Habsburg Monarchy. This was reflected in sometimes challenging negotiations of cross-ethnic solidarities during strikes and beyond. Many well-known socialist/social democratic trade union leaders and politicians, such as Amalie Seidl (from a Viennese Czech family; née Ryba, 1876–1952) and Gabriele Proft (née Jirsa, 1879–1971), emerged from these movements.



Figure 4 Servants' assembly, organized by the socialist movement. Speaking, on the right, Mrs Szőke, a cook by profession. Budapest, Hungary, 1910.

Source and acknowledgement: János Müllner, Servants' assembly at the Tattersall horse market. Photograph. Inv. 7997. BTM. Information on the speaker taken from *Tolnai Világlapja*, 'Cselédgyűlés a Tattersallban', 29 May 1910: 1222, ADT.

Activism addressing the life and labour issues of household employees occupied left-wing working-class, feminist and ostensibly 'moderate' – including confessionally organized – middle-class women alike. Many working-class women could be found in labour market sectors characterized by excessive, gendered exploitation and informality, including the domestic employment and home-based work sectors. Beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing throughout the twentieth, women labour activists of all ideological orientations played a key role in advocating change for these vast groups of women workers, whose issues were largely ignored or belittled by mainstream, men-dominated labour and social reform movements. Political competition between moderate cross-class activism and left-leaning activism was a pervasive feature of women's labour activism dealing with the labour issues of these sectors.



Figure 5 ‘Communism brings the liberation of women!’ Participants in the Sixth Conference of Women Communists. Sofia, Bulgaria, 3–4 June 1922.

Source: The Sixth Conference of Women Communists. Photograph. National Academic Library and Information System Foundation (Fondatsiia ‘Natsionalna akademichna bibliotечно-informatsionna sistema’), www.europeana.eu/en/item/2024905/photography_ProvidedCHO_NALIS_Foundation_F13511625160031. Via Europeana.

In the post-World War I period, women labour activists used new spaces of opportunity to expand and sometimes radicalize their activism. Throughout the interwar period, communist and social democratic women continued to problematize wage justice issues and strengthened their stances on women’s access to paid employment while maintaining, with few exceptions, a commitment to women-specific labour protection measures (beyond maternity protection). Communists promoted the Soviet model of large-scale socialized childcare. During the Popular Front period, communist organizations called on women of all social classes and various political allegiances to join activist co-operation regarding many issues, including those focused on work.

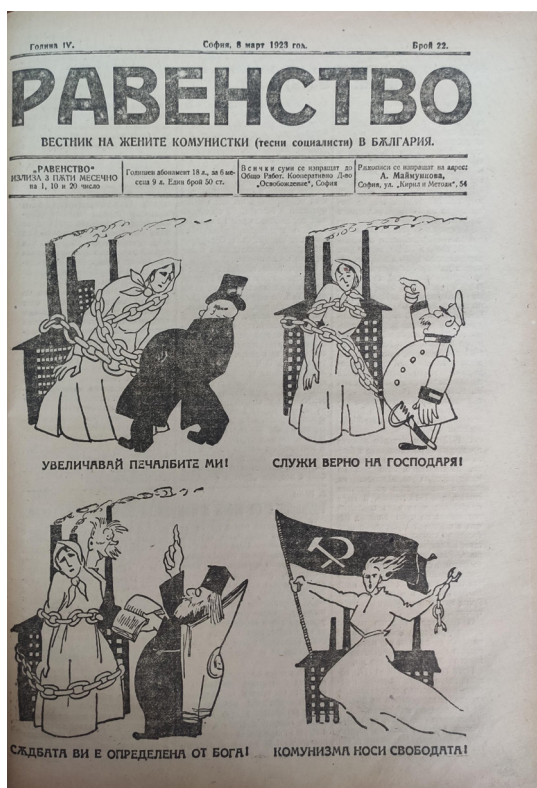


Figure 6 ‘Increase my profits!’, ‘Serve your master faithfully!’, ‘Your fate is predestined by God!’ and ‘Communism brings freedom!’ (from left to right and top to bottom). Title page of the communist women’s journal *Equality* (*Равенство*) on the occasion of International Women’s Day. Bulgaria, 8 March 1923.

Source: Annotated drawings reproduced as journal illustration, *Равенство* 4, no. 22 (8 March 1923): 1.

Equality was published between 1919 and 1923, a tumultuous period foreshadowing and signalling consequences of the political rupture of World War I in many countries. The journal propagated working(-class) women’s political and labour organizing as a means towards radical, revolutionary social transformation in line with the emerging Soviet model. Beginning in the nineteenth century, some women articulated far-reaching critiques of the gender and social order, and directly challenged pervasive gendered hierarchies within the (mostly) mixed-gender left-wing movements to which they belonged. Radical women often advocated for fundamental changes regarding reproductive labour and men’s involvement therein.



Figure 7 Relief campaign for the Burgenland jute workers' strike: children from the neighbouring Burgenland county at a train station. Vienna, Austria, April 1928.

Source and acknowledgement: Ernst & Cesanek, 'Hilfsaktion für den Streik der burgenländischen Jutearbeiter im April 1928: Burgenländische Kinder in Wien', Photograph, 1928, 49575/123, Vienna Museum (Wien Museum).

Members of the social democratic association Friends of the Children Austria (Österreichische Kinderfreunde) facilitated the transport of the children of striking jute workers in Burgenland to Vienna, where workers' families took in and cared for the children. Working-class women's activism often reached beyond or developed apart from the workplace and included everyday-focused and community-based engagement. This was rooted in women's gendered roles in working-class communities. The gendered division between paid and unpaid work within these communities, and women's mostly unquestioned responsibility for the latter – whether they did wage work on top of it or not – deeply impacted the history of women's labour activism.



Exekutiva Mezinárodní gildy družstevnic návštěvou u pana presidenta 6. dubna 1929

Figure 8 The Board of the International Co-operative Women's Guild (ICWG) visiting the President of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Second from right, Marie Nečásková; far left, ICWG president Emmy Freundlich; also depicted, from left to right: Alice Honora Enfield, Eleanor Barton, Meta Hugenholtz and Ferdinand Jirásek. Prague, Czechoslovakia (today Czechia), 6 April 1929.

Source: The Board of the ICWG visiting Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk. Photograph reproduced as book illustration in František Täuber, ed., *Dílo družstevní svépomoci. Jubilejní spis k 25. výročí založení Ústředního svazu československých družstev v Praze* (Prague: Ústřední svaz československých družstev, 1933), 493. The names are given in 'Den pana presidenta', *Československá republika* 250, no. 84 (7 April 1929): 3.

Women in the co-operative movement were conscious of and outspoken about the specific role of women within and for the movement, which included mixed-gender and women-only branches. They engaged with working-class women's education, their family roles and the transformation of the economy, from grassroots to international and transnational action, and involving transfers of agendas and repertoires. Marie Nečásková, secretary of the Central Committee of Co-operative Women (Ústřední výbor družstevnic) of the Central Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives (Ústřední svaz československých družstev, ÚSČD), emphasized the influence of international collaboration and the ICWG on the development of the co-operative women's movement in Czechoslovakia and the specific role of women and their gendered engagement in the co-operative movement.



Figure 9 'Poor women and children receive food from Romanian Workers' Aid [Ajutorul Muncitoresc Român, Red Aid]'. Bucharest, Romania, likely 1929.

Source and acknowledgement: 'Femei și copii săraci primind alimente (Ajutorul Muncitoresc Român, Ajutorul roșu)', Photograph, 1929, Inv. 3493–ISISP Fototeca, 43/1929, SANIC. Courtesy National Archives of Romania (Arhivele Naționale ale României), SANIC.

Romanian Workers' Aid had ties to the communist organization International Red Aid. It focused on prison support, poverty relief, and support for women and children linked to the underground communist movement. The activity of Red Aid illustrates the link between everyday-related activism, focused on ensuring quotidian wellbeing, and large-scale social movements fighting for systemic change. Elena Teodorescu, a future (post-World War II) top functionary of the communist-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), was active in this organization in the mid-1930s. Biographical approaches to the history of women's labour activism help capture how the multiple engagements of many activists were rooted in their dedication to addressing women's complex labour issues in a holistic way.



Figure 10 ‘Women students of the courses for servants organized by the local Women’s Union [Zhinochyi soiuz] in the city of Uzhhorod’. The courses were initiated by Irena Voloshynova, a founding member of the union. Uzhhorod (Užhorod, Ungvár), Czechoslovakia (today Ukraine), 1920s.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph, f. 4465, op. 1, spr. 359, ark. 64–64 zv., TsDAVO.

In these courses women received elementary education and were trained in the basics of home crafts and household economy. The educational exclusion and disadvantage women faced until well into the second half of the twentieth century can hardly be overestimated. Many women labour activists conceived of education – including vocational, trade union and political training – as the single most important precondition for overcoming working(-class) women’s massive, gendered disadvantages. This concerned access to better-paid jobs and fighting against wage discrimination on the one hand, and women workers’ ability to stand up and organize for their labour issues on the other.



Figure 11 'Mária Palánkai seated second from right; Anna Koltói seated fourth from right'. Students at a seminar led by Soma Braun, the head of the Educational Secretariat of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt (MSZDP) Oktatási Titkársága). Budapest, Hungary, 1920s.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph reproduced as journal illustration, with annotation, *Csili* 12, no. 4 (April 1968): 7. Central Collection of the National Széchényi Library (Országos Széchényi Könyvtár Törzsgyűjteménye).

The Hungarian Educational Secretariat offered three-year seminars from the 1920s, in which workers with little or no education could participate. Both Anna Koltói (formerly Kristóf, 1891–1944) and Mária Palánkai (1896–1968) were unskilled metalworkers who evolved into leading social democratic activists. While the publication from the state socialist period, which reprinted the photograph, highlighted the women in the caption, in the interwar period and beyond, workers' education was often a men's affair, reproducing rather than overcoming women's exclusion. Textual sources frequently do not clarify whether any women participated in mixed-gender courses. Repeatedly it is photographs that provide the evidence.



Figure 12 Central Committee of the ICWG: President Emmy Freundlich, Austria, third from left; Agnes Kainacher, Austria, sixth from left; Helen Butuzova, Soviet Union, third from right; Russian interpreter (name unknown), second from right; also depicted, from left to right: Meta Hugenholtz, Mrs Heymann-Coulon, Alice Honora Enfield, Rosa Münch, Maud S. Girvan, Kate M. Callen, Eleanor Barton and Agnes Jonson. Vienna, Austria, 1930.

Source and acknowledgement: Central Committee of the International Co-Operative Women's Guild, Vienna, Photograph, 1930, F. 1456K, op. 1, a.e. 106, TsDA. The names are given in 'Nemzetközi szövethetkezeti kongresszus', *Szövetkezeti Értesítő* 22, no. 39 (August 1930): 297–98, ADT.

In addition to Austria, a cofounder of the ICWG, other branches from Central and Eastern Europe started their affiliation from the second half of the 1920s. Before full affiliation and representation in the ICWG Central Committee, branches corresponded with the ICWG and attended congresses, and some appointed co-opted members to the Central Committee. The ICWG also assisted with establishing national women's co-operative organizations and disseminating co-operative knowledge in the region of focus. The Austrian Emmy Freundlich (born in Bohemia, today Czechia) was a long-term president of the ICWG.



Figure 13 Participants in the Fourth – and largest – International Women's Conference of the Labour and Socialist International (LSI). Among the 126 full delegates, 37 came from the Eastern European countries studied in this book and 20 represented the host country, Austria. In the photograph appear Anna Kéthly (1889–1976) (Hungary) and Anna Boschek (1874–1957) (Austria), among others. Vienna, Austria, 23–5 July 1931.

Source and acknowledgement: Participants in the Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI in the Vienna Concert Hall (Wiener Konzerthaus), Photograph, 1931, Zusatzmappe Gabriele Proft (Nachlass Gabriele Proft), Personenarchiv L22, N19/1, VGA. Courtesy VGA.

The interwar conferences of women from the LSI were forums for policy debate and multi-directional knowledge transfer. Yet the representation of women from Eastern Europe in the leadership of the (chiefly European) party, co-operative and trade union women's internationals of the interwar period was limited, and saw different trajectories after the onset of the world economic crisis and the rise of right-wing authoritarianism in the region. The latter triggered all-European solidarity and helped raise international awareness of issues such as women's (equal) right to work. Future research should look more closely into the intra-organizational geopolitics of women's internationals and compare these with the situation in the parallel, men-dominated international organizations.



Figure 14 Women at a vocational course operated by the Organization for the Development of Industrial, Artisanal and Agricultural Labour among the Jewish Population in Poland (Organizacja Rozwoju Twórczości Przemysłowej, Rzemieślniczej i Rolniczej wśród Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce, known as ORT). Warsaw, Poland, 1930s.

Source: ORT Vocational Training, ca. 1930s, Photograph, RG 380, Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, https://digipres.cjh.org/delivery/DeliveryManagerServlet?dps_pid=IE2839186.

The origins of ORT reach back to the Society for Artisanal and Agricultural Labour among Jews in Russia (Obshchestvo remeslennogo i zemledeľcheskogo truda sredi evreev v Rossii, established 1880). The World ORT Union was founded in 1921. Women labour activists addressed issues related to the condition of women and workers from minoritized groups and the subordination produced by the intersection of ethnicity, race and religion with gender and class. Non-minoritized social democratic and communist party activists engaged only partially with these issues. Minoritized women activists pursued shifting and divergent priorities in how they addressed the multiple marginalizations of the groups with which they self-identified.



Figure 15 'A delegate of the association welcomes and accompanies two girls arriving from the provinces ...'. Volunteer from the Friends of Young Women Association (Asociația Amicele Tinerelor Fete) in the North Railway Station. Bucharest, Romania, 1931.

Source and acknowledgement: Ștefan Ignat. Photograph reproduced as journal illustration, *Ilustrațiunea română*, 23 September 1931: 7. Courtesy 'Lucian Blaga' Central University Library of Cluj-Napoca (Biblioteca Centrală Universitară 'Lucian Blaga', Cluj-Napoca).

The Romanian Friends of Young Women Association was linked to the French-leaning wing of the International Young Women's Christian Association which sought to assist young women arriving in the big cities, with a strong focus on preventing them from moving into sex work. The Romanian association offered young women information about the city, provided safe spaces and became especially active in assistance for young domestic servants. Cross-class action remained important for decades in many arenas of women's labour activism. Informed by (mainly middle-class) women's cross-class gendered sensitivities, and addressing lower-class women's needs (including economic and welfare needs), these activations often remained deeply ingrained in class difference.



Figure 16 ‘Man carries on his shoulders: profession and family. Woman carries on her shoulders: motherhood, household and profession’. The drawing was initially displayed at the exhibition ‘The Woman’, Berlin, 18 March–23 April 1933, printed here in the journal *Woman’s Voice* (*Женски глас*). Bulgaria, 20 March 1933.

Source: ‘Men and Women’s Labour’. Annotated drawing reproduced as journal illustration, *Женски глас*, 20 March 1933: 1.

Women activists participated in and contributed to cross- and trans-regional circuits and transfers of repertoires and agendas of women’s labour activism. Yet specific barriers, including limited foreign-language and activist training, and restricted material resources, made it difficult for many of them to participate effectively. Activists also faced a lack of backing by men comrades and colleagues at home and abroad for their international networking. Repeatedly, women activists chose to prioritize action within their own contexts or focused on region-specific circumstances such as the distinct features of women’s work resulting from the position of their countries on the European (semi-)periphery and/or the (state) socialist model of economic development.

Mme. VALERIE NOVOTNA



Mme. Valerie Novotna was born on 7th March, 1893, and was active in the Women's movement from 1913. In 1918 was elected a Town Councillor. She became Chief Woman Officer of the Social-Democratic Party in Pilsen in

1919 and Chief Woman Officer of the Party for the whole country in 1927. In 1930 she was appointed Chief Woman Officer in the Czechoslovakian Joint National Trade Union Centre, which position she holds at present.

Figure 17 Valerie Novotná, member of the International Committee of Trade Union Women of the social democratic-leaning International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). On 7 July 1936, Novotná participated in the International Conference of Women Trade Unionists. London, United Kingdom, 1936.

Source and acknowledgement: VIIth Triennial Congress London 1936. Souvenir Agenda of the VIIth International Trades Union Congress. Holborn Restaurant. London. July 8th to 11th, 1936 (London: British Trades Union Congress, 1936), 39. Trades Union Congress (TUC) Library Collections at London Metropolitan University.

Throughout most of the twentieth century, social democratic and socialist, communist and Catholic trade union organizations strongly competed for the loyalties of working women, from the shopfloor to the international level. Women organizers and functionaries, who had often been workers themselves, in their organizing and training activities aimed to transform the abstract trade union mantra of bringing women into unions into a policy of systematically addressing women workers' gendered needs and interests. In Austria, specialized women's trade union training was inaugurated early on, and in the 1930s women trade unionists produced and used film, alongside older methods, to attract women into the movement.



Figure 18 Peasant women during a training course organized by the Section of Village Housewives (Sektsiia sil's'kykh hospodyn') of the Farmer (Sil's'kyi hospodar) society in the Kolomyia district. Poland (today Ukraine), 1938.

Source and acknowledgement: Yaroslav Zaishlyi, Photograph, TsFt-006011, TsDAEA, <https://avd.archives.gov.ua/files/foto-doc.php?name=131405>.

The Farmer was a mixed-gender, men-led society which in the 1930s affiliated with the co-operative movement. The Section of Village Housewives, led by Olena Kysilevs'ka (1869–1956), regularly ran courses for peasant women. With the establishment of Soviet rule in western Ukraine, the Farmer, like many other co-operatives, was dissolved and later replaced by state-centralized consumer associations. In the (state) socialist period, Central and Eastern European co-operative women's organizations continued to be active in the International Co-operative Women's Guild.



Figure 19 'Put an end to housing policy and get us a flat, a home and happiness'. Rally of people seeking accommodation in front of a housing office. Vienna, Austria, 1955.

Source and acknowledgement: Albert Hilscher, 'Demonstration von Wohnungssuchenden vor dem Wohnungsamt Bartensteingasse', Photograph, 1955, H 10051 POR MAG, ÖNB. Lower-quality copy available online.

In times of regime change or economic crisis, pervasive housing problems affecting the lower classes became a particularly visible issue in public spaces. Women repeatedly played an important role in protesting and addressing housing problems, such as in the rent strike movements in Vienna and Budapest before World War I. In the post-World War II period in Austria the lack of suitable housing was underscored by women communists as a sign of political failure on the part of the government. Women activists also addressed other subjects related to women's gendered roles in sustaining working-class homes, including household reform (aimed at rationalizing women's household work) and household education.



Figure 20 A works council representative (seated) advises men and women colleagues in the Vienna textile enterprise Altmann-Textilien. Vienna, Austria, likely between the late 1940s and early 1960s.

Source and acknowledgement: Betriebsrätin berät Kolleginnen und Kollegen bei der Wiener Firma Altmann-Textilien, Photograph. Courtesy Austrian Trade Union Federation, ÖGB-Archiv/Kammler.

This (obviously staged) photograph shows (most likely) Anna Teufelhart, a long-serving member of the works council. In a speech at a trade union conference in 1954, Teufelhart proudly explained that 90 per cent of the 2,000-strong workforce of Altmann-Textilien were women and fully unionized, which explained why the company offered some of the best working and remuneration conditions in the industry. In (state) socialist Hungary, high-ranking textile trade unionists regularly, and sometimes harshly, criticized low wages, poor labour conditions and three-shift work. There were local and individual successes but, as in the non-socialist countries, little changed overall in the standing of the industry compared to other sectors.



Figure 21 'Members of the Co-operative Women's Section in Ernestinovo'. Yugoslavia (today Croatia), likely 1957.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph reproduced as journal illustration, with annotation, *Zadugarka: mjesečnik Sekcije žena-zadugarki NR Hrvatske* 1, no. 5–6 (15 December 1957): 3. National and University Library in Zagreb (Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica u Zagrebu).

The (now former) Yugoslav lands played a special role in the history of women's co-operative engagement in both the interwar and the (state) socialist periods. After World War II, Co-operative Women's Sections (*Sekcije žena zadugarki*) were established in Yugoslavia in mixed-gender co-operative unions starting from 1951, at all levels. They were involved in educating peasant women on agricultural production, household economics and matters of health and hygiene. The Women's Sections promoted and contributed to services such as kindergartens and village bakeries, to lighten the burden of women's reproductive and unpaid work.



Figure 22 Mária László, Secretary General of the Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary (Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége), giving a speech. She is flanked by people who are probably representatives of the local public authorities. Hungary, likely 1957 or 1958.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph. NM EA SZK 50, 6. NM.

While (state) socialist countries declared and stood for class-based solidarity and the elimination of racism, continuities in the racialization of the Romani populations could be witnessed. In her official capacity, Mária László travelled widely across Hungary, meeting local authorities and Roma. Addressing the subordination produced by the intersection of ethnicity/race, gender and class, she worked towards the improvement of the working and living conditions and the cultural rights of Roma. We can see part of the interested audience, dressed up for the occasion, peeping from behind the curtain.



Figure 23 ‘The Most Important Thing: “Would you like to have a child, mum?”’ Cartoon by Anna Vasvári, addressing how countless full-time working mothers tried to compensate through private arrangements for the lack of (adequate) childcare institutions. Hungary, 1966.

Source and acknowledgements: Anna Vasvári, annotated drawing reproduced as book illustration, Judit Kovács, *Utazás a női egyenjogúság körül* (Budapest: Kossuth Könyvkiadó, 1966), 168. HUNGART 2024 (print edition). Courtesy Karton Foundation, legal successor Anna Vasvári (print and open access edition).

The esteemed cartoonist Anna Vasvári (1923–90) amused readers in the 1950s and 1960s with illustrations of contemporary ‘women’s issues’. At the time, (state) socialist Eastern Europe was far ahead of Western Europe in terms of moving women into full-time employment, with long daily and weekly hours, often in shifts, and including a high and rising percentage of women with very small children. Responding to this historically new challenge concerning women’s multiple work and family burdens, Eastern European women activists advocated extended welfare measures, including within enterprises. Hungary introduced the new policy model of extended paid childcare leave in 1967, with most other state socialist countries following quickly.



Figure 24 Participants in the 8th World Trade Union Congress of the WFTU. Varna, Bulgaria, 19 October 1973.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph, ChP 757K, 8, TsDA.

In the WFTU, founded in 1945 and fully communist-aligned from 1949, women-related agendas such as equal pay and maternity protection were considered especially suitable to promote the politics of ‘trade union unity’, which aimed to reach out to non-communist trade unions. Women functionaries rose to high positions early on. At the same time, Eastern European women trade unionists’ politics of practice, which addressed women’s old and new problems in the state socialist worlds of work, took a back seat in global WFTU interactions. The ease with which these women saw the politics of equality and difference in the world of work as mutually constitutive was based on their vision that working women’s differences from men and their differential treatment in labour law ought not to translate into discrimination against them.



Figure 25 ‘In the Women’s Year: “Down with the light-wage groups [Leichtlohngruppen]!”’ Workers from the Pierburg plant demanding, during a May Day demonstration, the abolition of special women’s wage groups, euphemistically dubbed ‘light-wage groups’. Neuss, Federal Republic of Germany (today Germany), 1973.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph. DOMiD / Peter L.

The equal pay movement gained momentum in both east and west in the 1970s and was a cornerstone in activism before, during and after the UN’s International Women’s Year 1975. Women migrant workers from Yugoslavia and Greece were at the forefront of the struggle against special (women’s) wage groups – for instance, during the 1973 strike wave at the Pierburg plant, a Ford supplier, in Neuss (Federal Republic of Germany). In Hungary, equal pay activism developed in conjunction with a reorientation of women’s politics towards the workplace, downgrading the women’s mass organizations and enhancing the role of trade unions. This reorientation did not simply constitute a ‘backlash’ against women’s activism (as it might appear when identifying the latter with women-only organizing), since women activists historically played an active role within mixed-gender trade unions and other organizations too.



Figure 26 'A kiss from Irina Nowicka for her colleague Gisela Glas as thanks for her friendly help'. International Women's Day celebration, most likely in the state-owned enterprise VEB Elektro-Apparate-Werke Berlin-Treptow Kombinat. On this occasion, Nowicka, a punch press operator, was being honoured as a socialist labour activist for the second time. Berlin, German Democratic Republic (today Germany), 1975.

Source and acknowledgement: Sigrid Kutscher (née Kubiziel), 'Berlin, polnische Gastarbeiterin', Photograph, 7 March 1975, Bild 183-P0307-0024, Bundesarchiv. Lower-quality copy available via Wikimedia Commons.

Labour migration was strictly regulated and limited in scope in state socialist Eastern Europe, whereas Austria, Turkey and Yugoslavia were part of large-scale 'guest worker' migration circuits. Women workers used exit strategies, including migration, to escape poor labour conditions in their own countries even though they faced discriminatory treatment in their new countries in workplaces, in the social systems and as non-citizens. Women trade unionists across the region either acted ambiguously, ignored immigrant women's issues, acted in solidarity or identified with the dominant labour regime. In the state socialist countries, women migrant workers, mostly arriving from non-European countries, evaded and challenged special social restrictions imposed on them.



Figure 27 Delegates to the 8th Congress of Bulgarian Trade Unions (Bulgarski profesionalni suiuzi). Sofia, Bulgaria, 4–7 April 1977.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph, ChP 757K, 1, TsDA.

The number of women trade union functionaries in Bulgaria nearly tripled to more than 45,000 from 1950 to 1970, and their proportion among functionaries rose from 18 to 45 per cent. In the 1970s and 1980s, they were concerned with a wide range of issues. Following the guiding principle of producing a holistically developed person, educational activities targeting women ranged from vocational training and activists' seminars to offering guidance in care and household work and promoting the health benefits of sport. Activities extended to issues such as promoting comfortable and aesthetically pleasing working environments. In (state) socialist countries, in their day-to-day activities women trade unionists invested a tremendous amount of energy and partly unpaid work in welfare, social support and leisure time activities.



Figure 28 ‘Crèche and kindergarten for our children’. Women in this small town in Turkey picked up on the Crèche Campaign (Kreş Kampanyası) initiated by the Association of Progressive Women (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, İKD) in 1976. The association published this photograph in its magazine *Women’s Voice* (*Kadınların Sesi*). Turkey, 1979.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph reproduced as a journal illustration, *Kadınların Sesi*, no. 46 (May 1979): 14, https://tustav.org/yayinlar/sureli_yayinlar/kadinlarin_sesi/ks_046.pdf. Courtesy TÜSTAV.

Established in 1975, the İKD was the first mass left-wing women’s organization in Turkey active country-wide. Throughout the country, women’s inclusion in paid, formalized employment was significantly less than anywhere else in our region of focus. Lack of public childcare services stood as one major barrier. Women labour activists across the region of focus and throughout the century made childcare issues a central theme of their activism. The association’s Crèche Campaign was a flagship activity, complemented by educational and everyday-oriented efforts to mobilize and support working(-class) women, especially in poor urban neighbourhoods. The campaign attracted attention in left-wing and trade union women’s organizing in many places in Turkey in the late 1970s.



Figure 29 Cover of *Women's Voice (Kadınların Sesi)*, the magazine of the Association of Progressive Women, Turkey. Activists carry banners reading 'No to giving birth at the counter [and] in the fields', 'Our path is the working-class path' and 'Long live world women's solidarity'. Turkey, 1979.

Source and acknowledgement: Journal cover page including photograph. *Kadınların Sesi*, 47 (June 1979), https://tustav.org/yayinlar/sureli_yayinlar/kadinlarin_sesi/ks_047.pdf. Courtesy TÜSTAV.

An 'old left' organization linked to the Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP), the İKD declared demands around women's reproductive labour to be a key political concern for all. A cross-region and long-term perspective helps in seeing connections between women's labour activism across the old left, New Left and second wave feminist movements and organizations. In all these networks we find radical activists, scholars, functionaries and professionals who addressed the disdainful treatment of women workers, and men's prerogatives in the family, rather harshly and directly. In Turkey, Austria and Yugoslavia, far-reaching critique of men's attitudes was one of the issues at the heart of New Left feminism.



Figure 30 Rahime Akdoğan, head of the Türk-İş Women Workers' Bureau (Türk-İş Kadın İşçiler Bürosu), giving a speech at the Fourth World Women's Conference of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Madrid, Spain, 23–6 April 1985.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph, 1985. Personal archives, and courtesy, of Rahime Akdoğan.

Besides Rahime Akdoğan, six Austrian trade unionists participated in the conference, among them Women's Secretary and ICFTU Women's Committee member Gabrielle Traxler (1942–2015) and ÖGB Women's Chair Hilde Seiler (1931–2025). Women's labour internationalism involved trade unions and many other organizations, including the International Labour Organization (ILO), international women's organizations and key UN agencies such as the Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Many actors involved in related multiscale exchanges contributed to the shaping of the politics of women's work internationally and within their own countries. Women civil servants in Austria, for instance, played an important role in the 1960s and 1970s in generating knowledge about part-time work. An inclusive approach to repertoires of women's labour activism, including knowledge production and dissemination, helps in 'thinking-together' all these actors and interactions.



Figure 31 In Bulgaria, in the fourth of a series of ‘mothers with strollers’ protests, participants demonstrate against chlorine pollution from a chemical factory in the Romanian town of Giurgiu, on the opposite site of the Danube River. Ruse, Bulgaria, 10 February 1988.

Source and acknowledgement: Photograph, f. 1455, op. 1, a.e. 34, State Archive – Ruse (Durzhaven arkhiv – Ruse).

Excavating, reconsidering and connecting women’s labour activism over a long period of time and under diverse political regimes, this book brings to light an amazing persistence. The activists responded not only to new challenges but also to always unresolved fundamental issues, including matters related to women’s unpaid work. Because the world of work remained enormously gendered, and because men colleagues took little or no interest in improving women’s conditions, many women labour activists, across class, political and other divides, time and again felt compelled to foreground working women’s gendered issues, including through forms of everyday activism. Through its inclusive approach, this book showcases both the richness of the history of women’s labour activism and the historical situatedness and limitations of *all* activists studied.

Complementary bibliographical information

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A transnational and inclusive history of women's labour activism: general introduction

Why this book

On International Women's Day in 1997, Hungarian women labour activists commemorated the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the first trade union committee of women metalworkers in Hungary in 1922 with a festive event in the country's capital, Budapest. The history of women's organizing among Hungarian metalworkers, so the audience learned, reached back to 1903. During the festivities, special tribute was paid to Anna Kristóf, later Koltói (1891–1944), an unskilled metalworker and trade union trustee under the Hungarian Republic of Councils in 1919, who had served a two-year prison term thereafter. In the interwar period, Kristóf/Koltói took on leading roles as an organizer in the metalworkers' union. In 1997 in Budapest, distinguished trade unionists of several generations celebrated nearly a century of women metalworkers' activism. Among them were: Piroska Szabó (1909–2006),¹ women's secretary of the metalworkers' union in 1947 and elected member of parliament for the communist party; Júlia Turgonyi (1928–2014, [Table 9](#)), senior scholar in the state socialist research institute run by the party; Júlia Nyitrai (born 1932, [Table 9](#)),² long-term president of the central women's committee of the nationwide federation of trade unions – who remarked that the early years in the metalworkers' union were decisive in forming her political personality; and Zsóka (Erzsébet) Szabó (born 1945),³ who was active in trade union women's work until 2020. In 2021, Szabó learned with satisfaction that one square in the Budapest district, where right-wing Arrow Cross fighters had shot and killed Anna Koltói in her apartment in 1944, had been renamed for

Koltói, as an iconic figure of the labour movement. Zsóka Szabó had worked for decades at the Budapest headquarters of the metalworkers' union, located in a street which, at the time, that is during state socialism, was similarly named for Koltói, but had been renamed Magdolna utca once state socialism collapsed.

The women gathering in the Hungarian capital in 1997 ostensibly represented no more than one tiny and narrow cluster of often top-down activist engagement, that of (formerly) communist-aligned leading women functionaries of one branch trade union in a small Eastern European country. Yet the story of the women gathering in 1997 speaks to much more than that. In deference to that complexity, this book excavates, reconsiders and connects the histories of many varieties and types of women's labour activism. The Budapest festivities in 1997 invite us to construct a new history of labour activism. The 1997 gathering itself was meant, in the first place, to point to the longevity of the activism of Hungarian women metalworker trade unionists. Yet, from the perspective of this book, it also highlights that the arc of this activism spanned and was impacted by political rupture and regime change. The women trade unionists assembling in Budapest a few years after the systemic change from state socialism to neoliberal capitalism related differently to their own past and to the systemic change.

The activism of these women was also transnational. In 1997, they greeted a handful of trade union comrades from Austria as their guests. The regular exchanges in the late twentieth century between the social democratic Austrian and the communist-aligned Hungarian metalworker unionists had begun in earnest in autumn 1984, as recalled in recent interviews given by the Austrians Erika Nussgraber (born 1953)⁴ and Monika Kemperle (born 1958)⁵ and the Hungarian Manyi Csík (1952–2023).⁶ In the 1980s, Austrian and Hungarian trade union functionaries collaborated across, yet in doing so also reproduced, the late Cold War geographic and ideological divide. Their mutual engagement boldly outlived the 1989/91 regime change in Eastern Europe. The story of Anna Koltói, who had been active decades earlier, showcases the multiple and changing alignments of activists depending on historical context and the wide range of repertoires of women's labour activism we need to consider when aiming to capture the full history of the latter. In the interwar period, Koltói moved between activisms that were differently framed ideologically and engaged in what might appear as social work – in her own view, her work in the Friends of the Children movement certainly constituted work for the revolution. During World War II, she served as a workers' representative in the

directorate of the Hungarian social insurance institution. Today, the trade union side of Koltó's activism in particular is less remembered, speaking to the fact that many histories of activism remain partial and politically biased. The story of Júlia Turgonyi, a leading researcher and official in state socialist Hungary, and likely the sharpest public advocate of working women's substantive equality, points to the need to embrace the history of labour activism under different political regimes within a common conceptual framework and to consider many different activities, including knowledge production and dissemination, as forms of activism. Finally, the 1997 Budapest festivities and the accompanying press coverage themselves can be read as educational labour activism, which in this case celebrated and harnessed activist histories to motivate working women of the neoliberal 1990s into trade unionism and teach them about it. Women labour activists' strong emphasis on education reflected women's dramatic historical disadvantage in terms of both vocational and political training.

Excavating, reconsidering and connecting these and other dimensions of women's labour activism, this book moves beyond celebratory or denigrating accounts of the various elements thereof. We consider the women gathering in Budapest in 1997 and their many fellow activists who populate the pages of this volume neither heroes nor villains. Employing a critical perspective on all activisms we have researched, we also discuss how activists pursued restrictive or partial visions of women's emancipation.

With its inclusive (or integrative) approach and its long-term perspective, spanning the period from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth, the book overcomes historiographic boundaries between the study of people, movements, organizations and public institutions. It uncovers activisms unfolding under vastly changing historical circumstances and in highly variegated political regimes. It highlights how these activisms evolved within the large region of focus, and how they travelled within and between local, national, cross-regional and transnational contexts. We did not aim to write an overview, something which is in any case simply impossible at the present stage of research. Rather, we discuss selected histories of labour activism in connection with the overall approach pursued in this book. In addition, the focus is on activisms aimed at improving the *labour* and *social* conditions and circumstances of lower-income and working(-class) women and their communities. We do not engage in substance with women's – much better studied – struggles for *political* rights even though many historical protagonists combined these three key agendas in their activism. We do pay attention,

though, to the fact that women's attainment of (various types of) political rights had a strong impact on the history of women's labour activism and discuss these connections in some chapters to a (limited) degree. We are aware that we only touch upon women's wartime activism and that we leave untouched activism which (self-)identified with right-wing authoritarian regimes as well as activism taking place under fascist and comparable far-right regimes. We consider the book a first step towards a new, transnational history of women's labour activism in the region of focus and internationally.

The region studied in this book comprises present-day Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey, Ukraine and some other lands and present-day states which are discussed in connection with the countries to which they belonged in various periods of time ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)). The region thus includes those countries which incorporated the European lands ruled in the second half of the nineteenth century or thereafter by the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires, and Serbia and Turkey ([Map 1](#)). Occasionally the book touches upon other lands adjacent to the region, and it studies transnational encounters reaching far beyond the region. During the century covered, the region experienced frequent political rupture, numerous shifts of borders and multiple regime changes. Even the tiny detail of the street-naming policies around Anna Koltói in the Hungarian capital symbolizes these changes, and we might feel invited to speculate on how Koltói would have related to the institutional openings for a new politics of women's work in (state) socialist Eastern Europe after 1945. At the same time, the lands incorporated in the region (including Turkey and Austria) shared a long-term trend towards statist political regimes; the reversal of this trend began only in the 1980s. All along the way, the region was characterized by distinct linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity, and massive, though fluctuating, gaps and unevenness in terms of economic development. The institutions and regulations governing the worlds of work and labour underwent far-reaching, multi-directional changes and in many instances appeared unstable or ineffective.

Without doubt, these combined characteristics encourage the study of women's labour activism in the region from the inclusive perspective announced here – and explained in full later – if ever we strive for deeper insight into the long-term, common history of the region, rather than reproducing as scholars its ostensible disintegration. Yet, this book does more than that. Moving the region and its working(-class) women to centre stage, the volume aims to leave a visible imprint on the conceptual

tools in use in the historiography on labour activism. Studying women's labour activism in the region of focus, it serves as a most suitable testing ground for conceptual advancement *because* it studies a region where the pendulum of institutional change swung wide in many lands, *because* material scarcity and industrial high modernism existed side by side, *because* labour relations took on many different forms and *because* the institutions of labour governance typical of liberal democracy existed in parallel or competed with forms of labour governance in socially exclusionary or statist regimes. Because the book studies labour activism shaped by and responding to all of these circumstances within a common scholarly framework, it goes beyond adding a vast amount of new knowledge about a direly understudied region, providing conceptual advancement for the canon of the global history of labour activism.

Narrow, andro- and western-centric concepts still hamper the development of a globally inclusive historiography on labour activism. Women's labour activism in our region of focus and the involvement of women labour activists from the region in transnational organizing and action have remained absent, or are touched upon at best, in older as well as most recent relevant handbooks and standard works of global outlook in gender and labour history.⁷ Inclusive thinking about the repertoires and agendas of women's labour activism in the region denaturalizes the received scholarly wisdom. It brings under the purview of global labour history, gendered labour history⁸ and social movement history the story of activism which unfolded in sometimes democratically ruled yet poverty-ridden lands, on large-scale landed property, at the sometimes tumultuous fringes of empires or in the contact zones between their successor states, and within and beyond social movements, institutions and political regimes – to name but a few of the large themes addressed in this volume and the research that sustains it.

Towards a new transnational history of activism: a platform of eight interdependent conceptual planks

The innovative framework for studying the history of women's labour activism advocated in this book might be conveniently described as a 'platform of eight interdependent conceptual planks'.⁹ Women's labour activism moved between different scales of action, connected activists in many lands, and was shaped in terms of repertoires and agendas by activists' positioning and self-identification related to class, gender, ethnic, religious and/or national belonging. In the region of focus we see

both cross-regional variety and common trends. Long-term political and economic change had a visible impact on the character of women's labour activism. A full history of women's activism must capture and connect all these dimensions. The existing scholarship has often studied in isolation selected elements of women's labour activism thus circumscribed (such as, for instance, the struggle for equal pay) and selected groups of activists (such as, for example, communist party women or Christian trade unionists). It has tended to reproduce historical divides between activisms, kept invisible the interconnectedness of different realms of women's labour-related struggles, remained ingrained in national historiographies, replicated ideological battles between "good" and "bad" political regimes and either looked at Eastern Europe in isolation or omitted it from global purview.¹⁰

We have labelled the eight interdependent conceptual planks that serve to overcome these limitations and, *in combination*, conceptually ground and connect the analyses presented in the chapters of this book as follows: settings and crossings: networks, movements, institutions, political regimes; an inclusive and critical reading of repertoires of action; agendas contextualized and historicized; intersecting differences between women; cross-regional trends and variety; activism across scale; the long view; and regional focus and global outlook. Each of the following eight subsections introduces one of the planks and cross-references the others by referring to the keywords given in their titles. Together, these planks help us make sense of the choices women activists made and capture these women's activist histories within a common conceptual framework.

Our conceptual framework builds on many research traditions and the work of many authors. Since we just cannot do justice to all this scholarship, we list in a *summary endnote* in each subsection no more than a small number of selected studies which are of most immediate relevance and are helpful as guides to further research and thinking. Many of these works are relevant *across several* of the eight subsections; when pointing to them directly, we do so by referring to the authors' names *within the text*.

Settings and crossings: networks, movements, institutions,
political regimes

In a 2019 documentary, Johanna Dohnal (1939–2010), who in 1979 was appointed State Secretary for General Women's Issues in the social democratic-majority Austrian government, Dohnal is featured saying:

‘The women’s question is a sociopolitical issue and, in my opinion, not a women’s question.’¹¹ With this she addressed, in a manner typical of her and of more than a few other women labour activists who populate the chapters of this book, the fact that in her politics of improving the position of women, including the lot of working(-class) women, issues of gender and class were inextricably linked.¹² Statements such as Dohnal’s, and a look into her rather radical politics within a social democratic party, open the door to explaining why we include in this book a broad spectrum of settings within which, or political stages from which, women labour activists operated. Women labour activists could be found in various social movements and institutions, including trade unions, political parties, women’s organizations, ‘chambers of labour’ and research institutes. They pinned their hopes on various political regimes – which in our region of focus prominently included (state) socialist and other statist regimes – and considered other regimes as antagonists or addressees of their social movement activism, or else rejected interaction with power straightaway. Quite a few of the activists were involved in more than one movement, institution or political regime, or switched between the various settings from which they could choose to operate; others remained loyal throughout their political lives to their chosen political home, against all odds and in the face of recurring defeats for their activist agendas.

At the heart of the efforts of women labour activists was the agenda to improve the work and life circumstances of working(-class) women and their communities. Whatever their specific political alignment may have been, they pursued a combined agenda similar to that of Johanna Dohnal, which aimed to address the class and gender interests of these women simultaneously. This explains why women labour activists acted within different settings, combined action in different settings and sometimes were not really at home anywhere on the political stages provided by large political movements and various institutional and political regimes: with their combined agenda, they occupied a marginal or subordinate position in the mainstream of all women’s movements and in the labour movements of every political hue. This was because the former tended to prioritize women’s cross-class issues in their activism, were hesitant to address class-based interests of working-class women, and were often disrespectful of, even hostile to, these women’s cultures and ways of life, while the latter prioritized the class question, espoused (in their movement *practices* at least) a tremendous ambivalence regarding women’s liberation, and were often characterized by blatant misogyny and sexism. Women labour activists repeatedly countered this situation by engaging in multiple activist engagement, pursuing different

portions of their agendas, in parallel and consecutively, within different networks and organizations in the hope of combining those activist settings where they could make these agendas resonate the most.

When it came to self-positioning with regard to political regimes, women labour activists confronted similar limitations, even while the degree to which these regimes self-defined as promoters of working-class and women's interests varied greatly. In the earlier decades studied in this book, the political regimes reigning over and the institutions present in the lands in the region were hostile to workers' and women's interests. Yet, they still embarked or could be seen as embarking on a road towards greater recognition of these interests. Many women labour activists thus were highly critical of these regimes while still addressing them with their demands. Later, when statist regimes in their Kemalist, social democratic and (state) socialist guises became prominent in the region and integrated some of the political agendas of workers and women, these regimes in the eyes of numerous activists – who frequently felt that they were contributing to bringing about the transformation – turned from being movement antagonists to platforms of activism. Yet, women labour activists aligning with any of these regimes repeatedly confronted the fact that none of them fully embraced the combined gender and class agendas in support of working(-class) women that were dear to these activists.

Of course, women labour activists could also pursue their interests individually, for example using migration as a repertoire of activism to improve their position ([chapter 6](#)), or turned to informal networking and grassroots activism ([chapter 8](#)). They also had the opportunity to form their own organizations fully dedicated to their combined gender and class agendas. The International Congress of Working Women (ICWW), later the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW), which existed from 1919 to 1924 and in which women from our region of focus participated actively ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 6](#), [Table 6](#)), is a famous example of the latter strategy. Dorothy Sue Cobble has shown that acting via the IFWW by no means constituted the single most auspicious decision activists could take. Women-only labour organizations, which were free to attend to their combined gender and class agendas as they saw fit, repeatedly suffered from the consequences of their isolation from the larger social movements of their time – here the cross-class women's movements and the mixed-gender labour movements – including a scarcity of resources and limited political influence. Conversely, Johanna Dohnal would never have turned her back on her party even though she knew that many men comrades considered her full commitment to

women's agendas to be ridiculous or politically suspicious, and even though a number of activists of the 'autonomous' women's movement (this is how the second wave feminist movement was often labelled in the German language) were suspicious of her party affiliation. Nevertheless, Dohnal was convinced that she could pursue working(-class) women's agendas most successfully within the social democratic-majority Austrian government, with its commitment to improving the situation of working people. She would not shift the focus of her activism to the politically much less influential autonomous women's movement, which was not in any position of governance, and which similarly did not put working(-class) women's labour interests at the core of its agenda. Dohnal, however, steadily sought the support of the cross-class women's movement to foster her position in the government. The historical record of her choices is no less ambiguous than the record of the IFWW.

The core political choices of communist-aligned women in the (state) socialist states in Eastern Europe or Kemalist women in the Republic of Turkey followed a logic similar to Dohnal's. This was so notwithstanding the fact that the political opposition between these activists could otherwise be irreconcilable, for example in the core question of capitalist democracy versus the one-party (workers') state. The Hungarian Júlia Turgonyi ([chapter 3](#)) publicly decried some of the gravest shortcomings of the state socialist politics and realities of women's emancipation and used the positions of authority she had to make change happen. Still other activists, including anarchists and women active in grassroots movements, considered any alignment with all variants of the concentrated power of the modern state as the end of any meaningful women's labour activism. But they too were confronted, within their own contexts and networks, with men's dominance and sexism on the one hand and a lack of movement power on the other.

An inclusive and critical reading of repertoires of action

Women labour activists chose activist strategies and actions in response as much to fast-changing circumstances as to deeper social and economic structures.¹³ In this volume, we investigate activist repertoires – *what* women labour activists did and especially *how* they acted – with full awareness of how gender, class, other categories of difference, and regional specificities influenced the kinds of organizational decisions and actions women undertook. Taking a cue from the pioneers of gendered labour history, we search for labour activism everywhere women worked, with or without wages: in urban and rural areas; in workplaces outside

the home as well as in the home and the community; and in “birth countries” (where women held unequal citizenship) and abroad (where as migrants they had limited citizenship rights which were often also gendered). In doing so, we fully consider the specific historical trajectory of our region: predominantly agrarian, marked by material scarcity for most people until well into the twentieth century, affected by adverse mainstream geopolitics and characterized after World War II (nearly everywhere) by state-driven ‘catch-up development’ that included a complex politics of women’s work.

We pursue and advocate for a broad, inclusive perspective on women’s labour activism, considering differences and similarities with better-researched contexts. Some labour activist practices have received considerable attention in the writings of labour historians in the past eighty years: strikes, long-term mobilization, issue-based campaigns and, to a degree, policymaking. At the same time, precarious working(-class) women, who often had limited political rights and significant family responsibilities or belonged to minoritized ethnic communities, became activists in boycotts, participated in and organized educational and training programmes, and engaged in everyday-focused activism and resistance. Women labour activists made use of broad repertoires in both formal and informal settings (inside and outside formal organizations), with seemingly unplanned actions frequent in contexts where historically more precarious groups of working(-class) women predominated. Activist repertoires were also shaped by transnational entanglements and transfer processes, and moved between different scales of action. Yet the question of ‘organizing women’ – that is, of drawing more women into activism and keeping them continuously active – remained a key issue in almost all organizations across space and time ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 4](#)). Success in organizing women repeatedly rested on attention paid to their gender-specific position and interests.

Women’s gender-specific repertoires of activism and women’s gender-differentiated presence in certain types of activism were thus closely linked to women’s gendered status in society and culture, including their limited educational attainment and their manifold caring duties. The full spectrum of the repertoires of women’s labour activism becomes visible and can be explained only when taking these gendered differences into account.

Such an inclusive perspective on activist repertoires directs attention to three key areas of women’s labour activism, which need to be studied in conjunction with more “classical” repertoires: labour activism beyond the workplace, labour activism beyond the nation-state

and labour activism within the state apparatus. If women's historical role as providers of unpaid care work in low-income communities is fully considered, women's activist actions beyond the place of employment become visible and can be analysed as forming specific types of labour activist repertoires. We show that housewives and 'mother-providers' engaged in forms of everyday-focused activism that built on their work as carers and providers for families and communities. Such activism was as much rooted in gendered experiences of care work as linked to women's exclusion or marginalization as citizens or as members of social movements. Among the many forms of action belonging to the repertoires of everyday activism beyond the workplace, we consider the consumption-related actions of women as members of consumer co-operatives across the region; the high-risk distribution of manifestos by communist agitators happy to be considered by authorities as mere housewives – in interwar Romania just as in post-World War II Austria; the organizing of strike kitchens; the solidaristic taking-in of strikers' children in Hungary; and the protests of Bulgarian civil servants concerned with how the degradation of the environment affected their children ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 8](#)). If, in addition, we consider that minoritized and migrant women had even less access to the mainstream of associational life, paying attention to forms of community-based and community-focused activism ([chapter 6](#), [chapter 7](#)) becomes even more significant. Finally, if we fully consider the role of women in shaping policy within bureaucracies, particularly within statist political regimes, we can grasp the activities of labour inspectors in the interwar civil service of Poland, as well as of dedicated women trade unionists in state socialist Hungary, as falling within the purview of activism. In this volume, we conceptualize this as activism within the state apparatus ([chapter 9](#), [chapter 10](#)).

Inclusivity does not mean we forego critical stances. Women labour activists frequently adjusted their actions to the legal, political and economic contexts in which they operated. Their actions may have achieved the intended results or may have had unintended effects, including repression. Changing political circumstances deeply affected the choice of repertoires of action. After 1948, many women who in the interwar period belonged to radical left movements in our region of focus ([chapter 3](#)) became high-level policy actors under (state) socialist regimes and therefore became activists within the state apparatus. Others chose emigration, insisting on the need for movement-based activism.

As discussed above, women labour activists engaged in a broad range of organizational and activist strategies to develop their political

action – none of them being the ‘better’ or ‘correct’ choice – and a critical approach must keep *conceptual* equidistance from all of them. In addition, as far as activists’ stages of action are concerned, the related choices significantly shaped, and sometimes limited, the agendas that women labour activists pursued. Furthermore, power exerted within and by the movements, institutions and regimes with which women labour activists aligned impacted on the scope and modalities of their action. The engagement with movements and institutions included struggles for funding, autonomy and (formal and informal) decision-making power as well as lengthy processes of political negotiation. These processes involved many powerful actors and could result in, for example, the watering-down of women’s initial proposals. Under many political regimes studied in this book, activists faced legal and political persecution, or acted at the fringes of legality and could be jailed, for example, for participating in rallies. Finally, activist choices were also substantially affected by political competition and divisions both between activists themselves and between them and the movements, institutions and political regimes with which they collaborated. Bringing these complications to light requires both a wider and a deeper engagement with the available sources, especially considering that women’s actions were misrepresented in sources, when recorded in any detail at all – as the section ‘Scholarship and sources’ below points out.

Agendas contextualized and historicized

The inclusive, transnational and long-term approach pursued in this book helps capture and put into perspective conceptually the whole range of women’s labour activist agendas within and beyond the region.¹⁴ Variety in and activists’ debate on the strategies and programmes for improving women’s working and living conditions were ingrained in competing agendas and priorities of social movements, world views, and visions of women’s and human emancipation. The agendas of women’s labour activism touched upon a broad variety of topics. Each chapter in this book highlights a specific selection of these agendas. Overall, this book considers five major clusters of agendas: income and wage justice (such as sufficient and rightful wage, equal pay and education-related agendas); the right to work (including equal access to education, better-paid jobs, positions and occupations, and the delinking of employment from marital and family status); social rights (such as consumption-related and ‘quality of life’ issues), welfare and working mother-related agendas (including demands for alleviating or resolving

tensions between family work and income-generating work); workplace-related agendas (labour protection legislation and standards, protection against sexual harassment and so on); and labour issues connected to other agendas (often involving the struggle for basic political, civic and community rights).

The preference of activists for certain agendas depended on their socioeconomic positions, their organizational and institutional affiliations and their ideas about how personal and work relations should look. National and international legal and political contexts, global inequalities, and regional unevenness also impacted the ways activists framed and prioritized their agendas. Repeatedly, women labour activists did not state fully explicitly or consistently how their thinking and demands responded to the historical context as they construed it (for instance, because they took this context for granted), and sometimes scholars studying these activisms have also neglected to fully consider these contexts and contextualizations. Careful engagement with how the ideas of working(-class) women's emancipation, which informed the choices of *all* the women's activists and activisms studied in this book, were shaped by and responded to specific historical contexts helps to capture regional specificity, moving the analysis beyond partisan views, and avoiding hasty judgement about the world views of certain historical actors. Three large themes, with regard to which such deep and balanced historical contextualization appears to be particularly important for the purpose of this book, can be highlighted here.

The first theme concerns what has been dubbed the equality versus difference contention. The variety in terms of agenda setting regarding 'special' – that is, women-specific – labour protection for working women versus legal equality in labour law has constituted a long-standing feature of women's (labour) activism. Historians Gisela Bock, Dorothy Sue Cobble and Pat Thane have done pathbreaking scholarly work which, systematically taking into consideration the context of women's historical involvement in wage labour and unpaid work, allows us to think beyond the apparent mutual exclusiveness of or paradoxical relationship between women's equality versus women's difference from men.

With a view to our region of focus, a long-term perspective yields important insights in this regard. Many women labour activists who self-identified with left-wing world views and/or had deep knowledge about mundane workplace and family realities of working women developed (in our region and the regions studied by the above-named and other scholars) both flexible approaches and sophisticated policy templates

aimed at making difference *and* equality work, in combination, to the advantage of working(-class) women. In our region of focus, in the earlier decades of the twentieth century, many activists demanded extensive women-specific labour protection in response to highly exploitative labour conditions (chapter 4). At the same time, many of them envisioned a future society in which employers would no longer be in a position to discriminate against women workers, justifying such action with the women-specific protection these workers enjoyed. The ease with which women labour activists in state socialist contexts (discussed below in connection with the global outlook of our regional research) construed women's difference in labour law and their substantive equality as mutually constitutive (rather than exclusive) built on their idea that 'special' protection ought not to translate into discrimination (see also chapter 10). These activists envisioned socialism, and the (state) socialist countries on the road to it, as forms of society in which employers' power was curbed or no longer existent. In this sense, they agreed with their social democratic predecessors that the substantive equality of working women was to be achieved via the combination of women-specific protection and workers' power in society, rather than via gender equality in labour law.

Secondly, historical context influenced how activists conceived the relationship between individual women and their families and communities, and how they conceived women's social and cultural individuation as part of their overarching vision of women's emancipation. Large parts of our region were characterized by material scarcity, which was a decisive feature of the work and life circumstances of the working classes. For many working(-class) women, 'independence', meaning social individuation as building on individual income through direct and social wages which would enable material independence from others, was simply out of reach. Neither the authors of this book nor feminist scholars studying work and welfare are agreed on whether such individuation should form a goal of women's struggles or on whether it constitutes a goal obtainable on a global scale. It would be worthwhile to study how working(-class) women in our region of focus related to these questions. This includes examining how their answers were informed by the pervasive economic scarcity they confronted and by their social and emotional bonding with their families and communities, as well as their (often) subordinated positions within them, and other factors. One thing is certain: women's labour activism in our region of focus has been confronted, with rare exceptions, with material scarcity on such a scale and with such a long-term consistency (considerable improvement

in certain periods notwithstanding) that it tended to remove the idea of individuation from the (most) immediate agenda of many activists.

The demands of many women labour activists reflected the circumstances just discussed. Working(-class) women repeatedly entertained family- and community-oriented ideas on how to temper the tensions between their paid and unpaid work that were not rooted in a vision of (economic) 'independence' to be attained through paid employment, and they repeatedly affirmed gendered divisions of labour in family and community that were not based on the idea of 'equality' (chapter 6, chapter 8). Some women activists responded by developing demands to strengthen the material position of working(-class) women via mothers' pensions and family allowances paid to women. This, they hoped, would in effect raise standards of living and also alter gendered power positions within the working-class family. Various activists saw such policies as a supplement, others as an alternative, to the politics of 'socializing' household and care work, to enable women to take on or expand their engagement in paid employment. Activists seldom addressed limitations of both these policy options *together* in a systematic manner. Policy visions that prioritized the revaluation of women's unpaid work within the male breadwinner family tended to not pay attention to the specific vulnerabilities of single mothers and women's intra-family vulnerabilities. Politics aimed at 'socializing' housework tended to underrate the high value many working(-class) women placed on their unpaid care and family work and their attachment to it. In addition, both policy visions repeatedly came up against material limits, the logic of the economies in which they operated, and adverse priorities of policymakers, employers and working-class men.

Thirdly, ideological competition itself was an important factor that influenced agenda setting related to women's work and women's labour activism. Such competition unfolded within men-dominated labour movements and political regimes (chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4), between networks and organizations in which women played a major role (chapter 9) and between the labour and women's movements. It was a pronounced feature of women's labour activism from the nineteenth century onwards, and was visible in a definite manner on the international scale, where the politics of a limited number of large organizations unfolded before a global membership and public, and geopolitics and symbolically charged political moves played a prominent role. National party and trade union leaderships often also reacted instantly to new activities regarding 'women's issues' in international governance and within competing movement organizations (and aimed

to impact such developments). In the years around 1930, for instance, social democratic, communist and Catholic women activists revitalized and renewed the discourse on women's right to work ([chapter 4](#)) not only in reaction to the world economic crisis and the rise of right-wing authoritarian regimes. Their agenda setting in this regard was also shaped by political competition with each other. Studying the agenda setting regarding various core issues of the politics of women's work within various activist camps in isolation from each other is prone to miss out on important explanatory components.

In the historical long view, movement competition had ambiguous results for women's labour activism within and beyond the region. Activists in the (state) socialist period could make use of the construction of women's issues as a signifier of the progressiveness of (state) socialist politics of women's work. In this way they could expand their scope of action and promote their agendas within the (state) socialist 'bloc' and on the other side of the Iron Curtain. In contrast, the fact that the regimes claimed such progressiveness regarding women's work could help mask and silence the critique of the ongoing special exploitation of women's work, as several authors listed in the section 'Scholarship and sources' below have demonstrated. Similarly ambiguous results of how the 'woman question' was "utilized" for a variety of purposes could be witnessed in contexts where nationalist political agendas and ethnic diversity played a role.

Intersecting differences between women

A few months before the end of World War I, an editorial titled 'A New Era' opened the New Year 1918 issue of the social democratic magazine *Women Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*), calling on readers to rise against social injustice and the lack of freedom. The yearned-for call that was to summon the 'proletarian women ... to battle' would 'resound ... from town to town, from village to village, over hill and dale[, in] factories and offices, among the proletarians of home-based labour and the household; everywhere where there are downtrodden, enslaved women without rights'.¹⁵ The editor-in-chief of the *Women Workers' Paper*, and probably author of the editorial, was the Vienna-born textile worker and leading trade unionist in the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy ([Map 1](#)) Anna Boschek (1874–1957). With reference to Karl Marx's dictum of humankind as a 'debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable' collective, the editorial called upon a collective entity of working-class women that was conceived in universalistic

terms: all women who worked, whether paid or unpaid, and who were kept in a state of servitude and exploitation by an imperialist, capitalist and patriarchal system belonged to the collective 'proletarian women'.

Yet in our region of focus (and elsewhere) throughout the period studied in this book, the idea of the 'proletarian woman' as an all-encompassing collective subject proved to be precarious, even elusive.¹⁶ The study of women's labour activism in the region thus needs to critically address, with Silke Roth, political intersectionality, asking how the positionality of groups experiencing multiple disadvantages shapes the ever-shifting construction of their collective identities and how this has affected the construction of activist agendas and repertoires as they worked in and from various political settings.

In the period studied, many women labour activists across the region in fact responded in a differentiated and differentiating manner to what they perceived as differentiated experiences, and construed as differentiated needs, of women workers depending on their variegated gender, class, ethnic, religious or national position, and other categories of difference. Activists' responses to large-scale labour market changes are one example. When masses of soldiers returned in the aftermath of wars, and at other times when unemployment ratios skyrocketed, more than one activist came to regard the age as well as marital status of working women as factors to be taken into account when attempts were made to remove some women from the labour market.

Women activists repeatedly discussed material difference, and difference between women in terms of labour relations, and voiced dissimilar demands in relation to, or addressing specific groups of, working women ([chapter 6](#), [chapter 7](#), [chapter 9](#)). Yet working women's agendas were not only shaped by the gender and class of labour issues and living conditions, but also affected by the circumstances arising from the multiethnic and multi-faith character of the societies spanning and reaching beyond the (former) Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. In this book, we use the concept of minoritization, understood as a process that results in the legal, political, linguistic, cultural, economic and/or social subordination of an ethnic group. This concept allows us to capture ethnicity-related power relations and the struggle of minoritized women belonging to different social classes as they pursued their interlocking class, gendered and ethnic interests ([chapter 7](#)). In this context, the concept of intersectionality with its focus on interlocking inequalities translates into a method of reading sources created by minoritized women in a manner that throws into sharp relief, as Catharine A. MacKinnon has underlined, dimensions of subordination and labour

struggle that remain overlooked when these sources are read with a focus on one dimension of subordination alone.

The agendas and politics pursued by women labour activists often reveal an awareness of those inequalities in working women's experiences and material circumstances which could not be captured as rooted in class and gendered difference alone. At the same time, activists belonging to dominant populations repeatedly ignored or wilfully downplayed differences between women based on religion, nationality and/or ethnicity, while sometimes these differences moved centre stage for activists belonging to minoritized or otherwise specifically marginalized groups. Migrant women's multiple marginalization resulted from the fact that they were migrants, women and often members of religious groups or ethnicities different from the majority of the "host" society. Migrant women experienced a particularly precarious position within the labour force and in trade union movements, and women activists sometimes played a complicit role in discriminatory migration regimes ([chapter 6](#)). It is important to note, however, that, whatever approach activists took, these were always political choices (even if not always made fully deliberately), that the choices made could well override the typical tendencies associated with the approaches of dominant or minoritized groups ([chapter 7](#)), and that they were always complex. Some minoritized women, such as Jewish communist from Bukovina (Austro-Hungarian Empire, today Romania and Ukraine) ([Map 1](#), [Map 4](#)) Prive Friedjung (1902–2005), subscribed to the universalist narrative of working-class liberation which the *Women Workers' Paper* had proclaimed so emphatically in 1918. Others, such as Polish Jewish educator and organizer Puah Rakovsky (1865–1955), vehemently argued for women-only organizing as the key to the improvement of the social and economic status of Jewish women ([chapter 7](#)). Whether and under which circumstances the experience of (almost) all women of belonging, as women, to a social group that encountered systematic *gendered* discrimination and disadvantage translated into women labour activists' gendered inclinations towards bridging divides based on women's ethnic, religious, national, class and other belongings forms one of the most important questions to be studied in more depth. The findings presented in this book defy simple or straightforward answers to this question.

Cross-regional trends and variety

A cross-regional, as well as transregional, transnational and cross-border, approach is essential for encapsulating, or 'thinking-together' within one

common frame, the history of women's labour activism in the vast contact zone spanning the region of focus in this book – the Russian, Habsburg and Ottoman Empires as well as the nation-states emerging after their dissolution within one common conceptual frame.¹⁷ When studying this region, the unproblematic engagement with a seemingly self-evident and homogeneous space leaves uncaptured insights about diversity and variety inherent to this space and veils creative comparisons. To depart from such an approach, this book proposes an analytical shift by looking into various case studies of women's labour activism in the countries of the region of focus alongside consideration of the broader dynamics unfolding in its adjacent, historically connected lands as well as relating regional developments to global trends. In doing so, we establish the chronology and cartography of important portions of women's labour activism in the countries of the region, tracing both cross-regional and transregional similarities and distinctions. The demands, repertoires and agendas of women activists, despite being developed in divergent social, economic and political contexts or sometimes stemming from similar backgrounds, crossed the boundaries of states and organizations of various political leanings. For instance, from the early twentieth century, women trade unionists in the region repeatedly included in their agenda one of the central labour-related demands – 'equal pay for equal work' – and promoted the establishment of equality in labour rights between men and women. Nevertheless, men-dominated Christian trade union leaderships, and sometimes social democratic ones too, adhered to the vision of limiting women's labour rights and treated equal pay as a measure protecting men's employment ([chapter 2](#)). Likewise, the issue of class divides, and the competition between cross-class and class-based activism played an important role for women-centred labour activism across the region in the first half of the twentieth century. At the same time, within the clusters of women's activism affected by these tensions, we see that the establishment and growth of the women's crafts' movement, the forming of activism addressing and including household workers, and the activities of the gendered labour inspectorate appeared unevenly in time and space across the various countries in the region ([chapter 9](#)).

Insights into cross-regional trends and contacts become particularly evident when explored in a long-term perspective. In the long view, it becomes clear that the cross-regional similarities characterizing women's labour activism in the region did not erode after the post-imperial or post-World War II period but continued to inform the processes in which women labour activists built up alliances, travelled,

exchanged ideas, competed across borders, and participated in transnational networks and international organizing. Similarities and the circulation of activist practices remained important throughout the twentieth century, even though mainstream perceptions of the region and its borders changed considerably in the post-World War I, interwar and post-World War II decades. During the Cold War period, the Turkish Kemalist and the Austrian states displayed characteristics that can be examined in connection with developments in the world of Eastern European (state) socialism and that had a cross-regional impact on women's activism.

Vastly different political and institutional settings notwithstanding, these statist political regimes had in common that a strong or expansive state pursued socially integrative policies for large or growing groups of the population. Responding to these circumstances, many women labour activists shared an activist emphasis in addressing the state to find solutions and improve the lives and working conditions of working women. As in state socialist countries, in the Turkish case, from the 1950s to the 1980s, Kemalist women's organizations advocated for women's inclusion in formal employment as a path to emancipation. They collaborated with the state to shape the policies that regulated women's work. In the concluding decades of the Cold War, in Yugoslavia, Turkey and Austria, feminist women disenchanted with state-led women's policies mobilized in support of women's self-organizing apart from and in opposition to the state, to address, among other things, working women's issues unresolved by the statist regimes. From 1945 to the 1980s, important groups of woman actors in Austria effectively combined state-oriented and social movement-based activism for bringing about important changes in the gendered politics of work (chapter 3). Both the commonalities and the distinctive traits of these developments across the region, as well as the role of the emerging second wave feminist and autonomous women's movements, can be highlighted through the cross-regional and transregional lens.

Activism across scales

When studying women's labour activism, considering scale constitutes one of our research lenses that helps to shed light on the multiscale entanglements of activist demands and practices.¹⁸ Activists' efforts to improve women's working conditions took place on the local, national, regional and international scales, and the place and context of activism had a decisive impact on the agendas, repertoires of action and organizational

forms women pursued. Women's labour activism was shaped in relation to the opportunity spaces enabled by various social movements and institutional actors operating at different scales, and moving between and along scales of action informed the relationality of activist engagement. From the late nineteenth to the late twentieth century, women labour activists addressed everyday matters in the workplace and in their communities, cultivated cross-border relations, intervened in national legal frameworks and participated in the making of the global politics of women's work simultaneously. In the region of focus, interactions within and between the vast territories of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and the repeatedly shifting borders and moving populations after the demise of these empires, followed by several decades of statist regimes, resulted in multiple and overlapping political and cultural belongings of activists and created a suitable ground for intense cross-border activism as well as international collaboration and exchange.

Considering these multi-level engagements and their outcomes on the cross-regional plane highlights two important characteristics of women's labour activism in the region. First, it sheds light on the participation of women from the region in international organizations concerned with the politics of women's work throughout the century. This included, but was not limited to, engagement with the Labour and Socialist International, Comintern, International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), International Co-operative Women's Guild, International Labour Organization (ILO), World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). Eastern European women had much greater involvement in these organizations and made greater contributions to the international politics of women's work than previously assumed ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 2](#), [chapter 10](#)). Women from the region voiced region-specific concerns about gendered labour issues in settings and networks of transnational collaboration, such as in the International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern, the international and regional women's conferences and seminars of the WFTU, and the expert committee meetings on women's work of the ILO. At the same time, Eastern European women activists often found themselves at a disadvantage in the international arena due to material scarcity, the fact that the languages they spoke took a backseat in internationalism, and Cold War policies of pushback against communist-aligned international structures.

Secondly, an empirical investigation of transnational interaction and transfer shows that agenda setting as well as progress in terms of women's work-related rights such as equal pay or access to vocational training

were often co-produced by activists' push for legal and cultural change simultaneously at home and internationally. International, regional and interregional events were not only important for the circulation of activist practices and knowledge but also created a specific environment for translating local experiences and demands into discourses of international policymaking. Yet, this is not to privilege in our analysis the international level of activism when discussing the achievements (and failures) of women labour activists. While many activists drew on the knowledge produced and decisions made around international policymaking – especially by the ILO – in their national and local contexts, attention to the politics of scale also brings to light the instances of non-congruity or lack of synchronicity between different scales of activism. For instance, the formal commitments of governments and trade unions to the international politics of vocational training and trade union education, or the support they expressed for these policies, often turned out to be difficult, even impossible, to implement on the national, local and shopfloor levels (chapter 5). These commitments repeatedly faded when confronted with the perennial problems of women's family responsibilities which left no time for further education, and the sexism and discrimination inscribed in the attitude of men as colleagues, partners and decision-makers. In the long and cross-regional view, the role of international organizing oscillated between its being insignificant and its being a key factor in women's activism at the local level, since not everybody exploited the opportunities that multi-level engagement provided. Some activists found it more fruitful to work locally 'on the ground' or were sceptical of international politics that was "too moderate" (for example, that of the ILO or the ICFTU). Others lacked the financial or linguistic resources needed to partake in transnational endeavours or were explicitly held back from establishing relations with fellow labour activists on the other side of the Iron Curtain (chapter 3). These factors were key in making it difficult for many working-class women in the region to engage in large-scale transnational activism. Nonetheless, even in these cases, women's labour activism was susceptible to and connected to the developments in the international politics of women's work.

The long view

Scholarship that has appeared in the decades following the fall of (state) socialist regimes often reified and reinforced in its narratives the political ruptures that defined the history of the region in the long twentieth century. More recently, historians have convincingly demonstrated how

the adoption of a long-term view can be a productive way to challenge and deconstruct such chronologies.¹⁹ Employing a long-term view of women's labour activism in the region is crucial to position it vis-à-vis the trends and cycles that have been pinpointed globally. Such a perspective helps to construct a regionally specific arc of the history of women's labour activism, starting in the late nineteenth century, when the labour and women's movements crystallized in Europe, and ending in the 1990s, when changes in political and economic regimes and the end of the Cold War signalled a new phase of globalization. Overlapping in terms of the time spans addressed, the book chapters cover more than a century. Taken together, they demonstrate that, far-reaching historical change notwithstanding, and across regime changes and political ruptures, the history of women's labour issues and the key agendas of the activists addressing them have been characterized by a remarkable degree of constancy. While in terms of (vocational) education and a few other issues things have changed rather substantively, key themes such as unequal pay, the politics of 'reconciling' women's involvement in paid work and unpaid care labour, and gendered difficulties encountered in the realm of women's activist engagement have remained at the top of the agenda of women labour activists across the region. While we expand on these and other findings in the concluding essay of this book, we turn here to the discussion of three unique conceptual benefits for the study of women's labour activism in the region stemming from the long-term perspective pursued in this volume.

First, the long-view approach helps – alongside the regional outlook – to deconstruct nation-states as the privileged containers of activists' work and challenge the focus of traditional labour historiographies on national developments. The lingering significance of imperial heritage is one such aspect of this, as it shaped the concrete forms of (state) socialism in the region. Another aspect concerns the international stage. Transnational endeavours of women labour activists, as cases of social democrats in [chapter 4](#) indicate, have often been neglected in national historiographies because these activists were primarily seen as local figures. Secondly, the changing local specificities of women's labour activism in terms of agendas and repertoires can be discerned only in this long view. Combined with our commitment to tracing women's activism across scale, this perspective enables us to shed light on how women activists framed and adjusted their political participation and grassroots activism when engaging with the dynamic landscape of global trade unionism and labour governance, and how these framings shifted over time ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 10](#)).

Thirdly, a long-term perspective facilitates our critical interrogation of the scholarship that has defined waves and cycles in the history of women's and labour movements. Throughout the book, we not only nuance but indeed revise existing chronologies by showing the coexistence of different currents within the labour and women's movements at different periods of time and demonstrating how certain long-term trends in women's labour activism unsettle received wisdom about labour movement waves. For instance, Janina Miedzińska (1891–1976) was a labour inspector in the Second Polish Republic ([chapter 9](#)) and published numerous articles exposing the unsanitary and dangerous conditions for women and underage workers. Forced to emigrate during World War II, she continued to publish on the same topics for the international and émigré audience, demonstrating a remarkable if idiosyncratic consistency between the interwar and the Cold War contexts, both in terms of her activist repertoire (knowledge production and dissemination) and her commitment to focusing on women workers' issues. The persistence of certain issues also becomes striking in the long-term view, as [chapter 5](#) demonstrates in stressing the centrality of education to the improvement of women's status in the world of work, and in highlighting how tenacious the obstacles to women's education have remained. The issue of women's organizing being perceived as difficult and often unsuccessful similarly resurfaces across different periods and contexts.

Regional focus and global outlook

This book moves a large group of people, women who belonged to the labouring majority of the population, and their activist politics from the margins to the centre of historical inquiry.²⁰ The struggles of these women have often been neglected or misrepresented in historical writing because of the confluence of three factors of marginalization. First, our region of focus has been marginalized in the new global history (which does indeed offer a fresh perspective on European history) as well as old and new narratives in European history. Secondly and thirdly, historiographies of labour and gender have tended to reproduce the marginalization of working(-class) women in the various political settings discussed above. The historiography of labour movements has focused on class concerns along with histories of trade unions and other forms of formal working-class organizations, leading to the disproportionate representation of working-class men. The historiography of women's movements has foregrounded women-only organizing and gender-first agendas at

the expense of other categories of inequality such as class, ethnicity and race, thus leading to a disproportionate representation of upper- and middle-class women.

Right from its inception as a discipline, labour history has focused predominantly on so-called core areas of employment, and has privileged workplace-based modes of organizing, such as strikes and trade unions. Gendered labour history and global labour history have since enriched the field by adding new categories of work and workers. Rooted in inclusive women-, class- and region-specific research, this book enriches global labour and gender histories. Combining the expansion of empirical knowledge and critical thinking with a research focus on under-researched, devalued and marginalized historical agents and their repertoires and agendas helps us overcome restrictive “classical” paradigms and biases. This kind of regional study restores important elements to the global history of women’s labour activism and contributes to developing a more inclusive conceptualization of global labour history by overcoming its earlier omissions and conceptual biases.

A look at the activism of communist-aligned women activists in (state) socialist contexts around the issues of socialized care and reproductive work (extended maternity leave, institutionalized childcare, canteens, laundries and other forms of publicly funded institutionalized support) can exemplify this move. In the 1960s and early 1970s the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh) was instrumental in shaping a set of new policies, informed by the ideal of a holistically developed person that could only be achieved by reconciling women’s role as mothers, workers and socially active citizens. The Politburo’s landmark 1973 decision on the role of women in state socialist Bulgaria did not reckon with all the KBZh recommendations for comprehensive and far-reaching labour and social policies. Nevertheless, the KBZh’s activism was instrumental in adopting important women-friendly work-related measures, informed by the understanding of ‘motherhood as a social function’.²¹ Much of women’s labour activism in (state) socialist contexts was shaped by the activists’ position as functionaries or as rank-and-file actors positively inclined towards various state-aligned institutions. Moreover, the context of a centrally planned state-dominated economic system and the prevalence of Marxian ideological discourse that informed their activism produced a particular vision of women’s emancipation, one that displayed both similarities with and marked differences from that of the left-liberal and mainstream social democratic varieties of activism (chapter 10). As mentioned earlier, women activists and functionaries

in (state) socialist countries – building and expanding on important traditions of women's labour activism elsewhere – pursued a politics of women's work that did not conceive of difference and equality as mutually exclusive or paradoxically interwoven concepts. With their policies of moving women's care labour from the realm of unpaid work into the world of paid employment – mostly in large-scale institutions (thinking, for instance, of the work of employees of crèches and kindergartens) – which combined with the societal and cultural revaluation of functions connected to motherhood, they advocated a model of substantive equality of relevance for the study of gendered and global labour history. At the same time, as (state) socialist Europe advanced towards a measure of practical implementation of these policies that was considerably more advanced than in any other world regions, severe limitations of the vision of women's emancipation through paid work – a vision entertained by historical actors around the world – became manifest.

A critical reading of the history of the challenges encountered by the politics of women's work in (state) socialist countries, and women labour activists who aimed to improve it, carries important conceptual implications for gendered labour and global labour history. The above example showcases that, while historical contextualization is important, it is necessary to move from context to concept to grasp the full potential of how a focus on our region can enrich the fields of labour and gender history. Taken together, the double move of recouping and conceptual rethinking of familiar and lesser-known, devalued and/or context-specific repertoires and agendas of women's labour activism results in a third move: the critical re-reading of the historiography of women's labour-related activism in western contexts through the lens of findings stemming from, and conceptualizations appropriate to, capturing the history of women's labour activism in an internationally lesser-known context. This third move can lead to the denaturalization of historical context in other world regions, and open up new avenues and generate new questions for research on labour activism in these other regions. It can entail new thinking and new findings regarding the involvement of women's labour activists and activism with forms of governance such as liberal democracy or colonial empire and economic contexts such as the capitalist free market economy or the welfare state, and a more qualified historicization of their agendas as building, for instance, on the ideas of social individuation and legal equality.

If put to use in this manner, the regional perspective in which this book is grounded can help in thinking-together all the globally

contemporaneous and sometimes rival forms of women's labour activism and in reconsidering from a critical perspective the overarching visions of women's and human emancipation that informed the thinking and actions of the activists. The triple move exemplified in the discussion above constitutes one of the most important conceptual contributions the regional history of a (somewhat) specialized topic such as women's labour activism can make to global labour and gender history. Addressing region-specific issues – such as far-reaching material scarcity, region-specific political encounters with the question of women's substantive equality and other issues – in a globally relevant manner helps in provincializing ideas that have shaped internationally dominant research agendas and replacing them with concepts and thinking that are more balanced and informed by a broader, truly global vision. One step we have taken in this direction in response to our encounter with the history of women's labour activism in the region of focus is the development of our Vocabulary of concepts and terminology; this is included at the beginning of this book and will, we hope, enrich the outlook of global labour history.

Scholarship and sources

Studying the history of women's labour activism builds on inventiveness in finding women in the sources, and on larger scholarship that can be divided into four large clusters: histories of labour and left-wing movements; histories of the women's movement; the gendered social history of work; and the biographies of historical actors. Specialized studies on the history of women's labour activism have tended to focus on specific sectors and varieties of women's labour activism studied in this book. Non-specialized studies belonging to the four larger clusters of scholarship have contributed to the historiography on women's labour activism in a twofold manner. They provide invaluable insight into the larger historical contexts within which women's labour activism developed and offer conceptual tools that help in studying it, and they repeatedly address aspects of the topic directly, although sometimes unevenly and in passing. When addressing the topic directly, some of these historiographies foreground either class or gender, reify historical boundaries that have separated social movements or political regimes from each other, or reproduce the marginalization of women labour activists within various social movements and institutions.

Scholarship on women's labour activism in the region tends to remain quarantined away from major global currents in the historiography of labour activism and women's activism. While this scholarship remains of limited scope, separated by language divides, and aligned with distinct research traditions and research interests, it offers a considerable amount of knowledge and helps in finding and engaging with relevant sources. Very recently, there has certainly been an upsurge of specialized research into the multiple histories of women's labour activism in our region.²²

The four clusters and recent, particularly relevant scholarly developments

In a recent essay published in 2024²³ (and accessible in open access mode), we have identified, and engaged in detail with, the four clusters of scholarship specified above and some of the more specialized studies on women's labour activism. In this section, we expand on this essay (omitting most of its extensive bibliography) and include examples of recent research that signal novel trends in the historiography.

The first cluster of studies, the historiography of labour and left-wing movements in the region, was rooted in institutionalized labour historiography and the dedication of mostly women researchers and (former) activists to studying women's involvement in left-wing movements. The historiographies addressing this vast theme written on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the 1970s and 1980s manifest several similarities. In both contexts, relevant research began by recouping women's presence and action within the organized labour and left-wing movements, and highlighted women's successes along with men's resistance and support. In the historiography published in (state) socialist countries, the pre-World War II labour and left-wing movements were often represented as the predecessors of (state) socialist organizations, legitimizing the communist parties and their political programmes. Mainstream accounts of the history of labour movements and trade unions either treated women as not having specific issues that diverged from the problems of workers as a class or pointed to the deficiencies of their political consciousness and activist behaviour. Addressing these biases, from the 1980s onwards, scholars of gendered labour history in western contexts have deconstructed the androcentric approaches to labour (movement) history, pointing to how such historiographies misrepresented women, for example, as difficult to organize. Since the 2010s, new studies addressing many countries across the region as well

as international developments have scrutinized women activists' complex and complicated relationship to the labour and left-wing movements of the region.²⁴

Revisiting the older historiographies of labour movements through the lens of women's labour activism, especially those originating from the former (state) socialist contexts, can even today contribute to developing new research agendas and lead to new insights as these historiographies provide information on long-term trends in women's labour struggles in terms of temporal waves and the character of women's labour activism. Sometimes, these older studies direct the reader to instances of activism well beyond "classical" notions of what constitutes activism, including its gendered dimensions, for example by discussing women's activities sustaining strikes and the 'strike camp', addressing the transnational links between women labour activists from the region or serving as a guide to primary source material, such as documents kept in branch trade union archives, that is otherwise difficult to locate and not always accessible. The accuracy of the use of sources must be examined carefully for biases and silences – that is, with the same critical eye as all other scholarship.

The second cluster of scholarship that offers knowledge about women's labour activism concerns the history of women's movements. There is a wealth of productive research in this area, much of it conducted in recent decades on organizations and networks dominated by middle-class women. Three broad themes addressed in this scholarship are of particular relevance for moving forward cross-regional scholarly engagement with the history of women's labour activism: the role of the nation and nationalism in the history of the women's movement; the contribution of internationalism to this history; and the engagement of women with state socialist and communist-aligned organizations and political regimes.

Scholars have conceptualized the role of the nation and nationalism in the history of women's movements and activism in the region in vastly different ways. The related debates should be, we propose, considered from the larger horizon of integrating minoritization issues into the study of women's activism. Some scholars have foregrounded how women activists belonging to minoritized groups contributed decisively to generating and sustaining political programmes and rhetoric by which mixed-gender movements associated their struggles against minoritization with politically progressive ideas about women's status within the minoritized community.²⁵ Other scholars have examined the same historical settings more critically, highlighting the limits posed on

women's emancipation by persistent gendered hierarchies within the social movements which aimed to challenge minoritization, and the backlash after achieving a better status for these groups, including, for instance, minority rights or national independence.²⁶ Still others have begun to consider whether and how more recent conceptualizations of 'national indifference' need to be qualified by reference not only to class²⁷ but also to gender difference in relation to nation and nationalism. The emerging new historiography of women's labour activism in the region has a great potential to contribute to these debates, examining, for instance, how working(-class) women aimed to combine struggles against the minoritization of the group to which they belonged with the advancement of their gendered labour interest.

Historians of women's movements have studied in some depth the involvement of women from the region in women's internationalism and contributed to the development of transregional frameworks for the study of women's activism, present already in some of the scholarship produced during the (state) socialist period. From the 1990s onwards, women's and gender historians of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and the early Republic of Turkey have examined the varieties of women's organizations' strategic use of internationalism to advance their agendas. Since the 2010s, following the 'transnational turn' in gender history, researchers studying (state) socialist women's organizations have begun to address cross-regional and cross-Iron Curtain activism.²⁸ The emerging historiography on the international activism of working women and internationalist engagement with working(-class) women's labour issues can build on the insights of these studies. Questions to be addressed include how these women's multiple-movement engagement impacted on the history of internationalism, and whether and how gender made a difference in shaping the geopolitics of international organizations and networks.

When discussing women's activism and the politics of women's work in the region, the scholarly debates on women's political and social action under state socialism, and on the character and achievements of communist-aligned women's internationalism, are of particular relevance. Here, too, we think that the horizon of the debate can be enlarged to include women's activism in other statist contexts and under all political regimes (as outlined above). With a focus on state socialist contexts, protagonists of a "revisionist" paradigm have associated the earlier scholarship indebted to the 'totalitarian' model with 'ongoing Cold War paradigms', pointing to the undeniable fact that anti-communism has played an important role in devaluing anything women did under state

socialism as long as they did not challenge the latter directly.²⁹ A growing body of research has begun to go beyond the revisionist tendencies in an effort to *combine* both (re)claiming the historical relevance and accomplishments of communist-inspired activisms and studying political problem zones and historical shortcomings of these activisms.³⁰ This research examines how in (state) socialist countries and international contexts connected to communist-aligned world views women experts and activists, positioned on various scales in multiple networks of political actors, were involved in formal and informal processes of decision- and policymaking. It shows the variety of ways in which women aimed to exploit the ever-shifting possibilities to advance agendas they regarded as their own within the available policy frameworks. Authors focusing on the history of expert and professional women, as well as women functionaries in trade unions and women's organizations in (state) socialist countries, study these activisms from a perspective that is rooted in a critical, gendered re-reading of governmentality in (state) socialist societies. The creative yet rigorous reading and contextualization of sources that characterize this scholarship contribute conceptually and empirically to the advancement of a new critical history of women's international labour activism involving women from the region of focus. This is so despite the fact that the authors as a rule do not engage with or focus on labour issues.

The third historiographic cluster relevant for researching women's labour struggles is the social history of gender and work. Since the mid-1960s some histories of women's work rooted in both the early stages of western women's and gender history and the work done by women researchers in (state) socialist countries included a focus on labour activism. These histories have contributed to developing inclusive perspectives on women's labour activism, as advocated in this book, as they emphasized the "special" characteristics of women's work, focused on branches in which women's work played a prominent role (such as tobacco manufacturing, the textile industries, domestic service and agrarian labour) and women's mass entry into the labour force under (state) socialism, and considered how women's working and everyday lives were intertwined in a specifically gendered manner. In the twenty-first century, social histories of gender and work located at the intersection of labour history and gender history have begun to draw more systematically on both fields, sometimes weaving them together and developing innovative framings for the study of the gendered history of work. These new studies have also focused on labour control and state policies regarding women's work and the complexities of their

implementation.³¹ Many of the topics addressed by the new social history of work are of immediate relevance for a history of women's labour activism that is written in an inclusive manner.

The last historiographic cluster relevant for the study of women's labour activism is concerned with the life histories of women in social and labour movements.³² Biography, an established genre of women's and gender history, has recently become both more popular and more conceptually sophisticated, involving (self-)critical conceptual reflection on the genre of the activist biography.³³ Biographies and life stories of women labour activists produced in Austria since the 1970s emerged at the intersection of western-centric feminist interest and the growing contemporaneous interest in the history of socialist and social democratic militancy. Book-length biographies of prominent social democratic women politicians active in the period before the Cold War and works on radical and communist women have been published.³⁴ In Turkey, since the 2000s, oral history research with women involved in labour struggles after World War II stands out as an important tool to reconstruct the otherwise undocumented activism of women whose gendered demands were marginalized in the labour historiography dominated by men.³⁵ In (state) socialist countries, where biographies were a key genre of women's history writing, works focused on labour activists from the nineteenth century and the interwar period. While often based in somewhat simplifying thinking about 'foremothers' and heroes of the past, many of these books and booklets contain precious information on activism: they detail workplace circumstances and discuss women's paid and unpaid labour, their gendered involvement in social movement work, and their border-crossing and international engagements. Since the end of (state) socialist regimes, biographical works have continued to be important sources of information about the contexts and dynamics of women's labour activism.³⁶

Inventiveness in excavating sources

Studying women's labour activism confronts the researcher with long-running gender and class biases in historical sources. Even the seemingly basic task of identifying activists is complicated regarding many women from the region. One dimension of the problem is gendered, starting with the fact that women typically changed name upon marriage, which makes it difficult to connect their pre-marriage and later activity, especially in the early stages of research, for instance, on activists such as Anna Kristóf/Koltói, mentioned at the beginning of this introductory

chapter. Another dimension of such difficulties relates to the international presence of the activists. When working with documents such as minutes of international congresses, especially those from the earlier decades of internationalism when records could be based on oral proceedings only, the researcher is often confronted with misspellings that can render the original name barely recognizable. Westernization of names – for instance, recording a participant as ‘Sophie’ rather than ‘Zofia’ – is another, if more manageable, hurdle to connecting the dots between activism on the international stage and in local contexts.

There are obstacles less down-to-earth than the above. State records including police or immigration files – even though sometimes helpful in uncovering traces of marginalized groups – often mirror the sexist and racist biases of the files’ creators or use generic language, making it impossible to detect women or gender ratios. Canonical sources of labour history, such as trade union archives, often prove to be of limited use. Women workers could be entirely excluded from trade union membership; when they were present, their actions were often downplayed, neglected or simply not recorded and subsequently forgotten,³⁷ or the documents pertaining to their activism were marginalized. The *de facto* archives of both the interwar IFTU and the post-1945 WFTU are contained within the archives of national trade union federations across Europe. In several of these archives, key documents on international activities related to women cannot be found in the prestigious ‘international files’ series attached to the files of the national central leaderships. The team of authors of the present volume has tracked down extremely rich source material regarding the WFTU’s women-related activities not in the leadership files, but in the files of the overlooked women’s office of one national trade union federation, where the material recording international women-related activities is dispersed in a disorganized manner among the material pertaining to national women’s trade union work ([chapter 10](#)).

Two strategies we use in this book help to tackle these challenges: recalibrating one’s reading with a focus on marginalized women labour activists and widening the range of sources used.³⁸ Placing women labour activists at the centre of historical inquiry necessitates an inventive reading of the traditional labour history sources, such as strike reports or the writings of labour inspectors.³⁹ A careful critical contextualization is needed to address the explicit and implicit biases of those who produced knowledge about women workers, both within and beyond the labour movement. For example, understanding who exactly was meant when

workers were discussed as a group, deconstructing gendered tropes such as ‘workers and their wives’ (where the ‘wives’ were also ‘workers’, paid and or unpaid), and seeing through the bias when the police assume activists are ‘just housewives’ (see [chapter 8](#)) are some of the challenges of this enterprise.⁴⁰ Specificities of working(-class) women’s position, defined by the concurrence of unpaid reproductive labour and (under) paid wage work, could easily go unrecorded unless explicitly addressed in questionnaires and interviews with women workers.

As for widening the range of sources beyond trade union and women’s movement documents, this strategy not only leads to uncovering additional information, but also gives an opportunity to ask new research questions. For instance, including autobiographies and memoirs in the analysis along with archives of organizations offers insights that otherwise remain elusive ([chapter 7](#)). They not only foreground women activists’ own perspectives, but also serve as sources to reconstruct trajectories of multiple belongings, reflecting the fact that the activists’ interlocking class and gender interests were hardly addressed in full by a single movement or organization and pointing to many activists’ multi-movement engagement. The study of certain topics also requires an inventive way of thinking about possible sources: for example, in the 1930s, when workplace sexual violence against women remained unaddressed in official governmental publications, the Polish labour inspector Maria Przedborska (1888–?) used a local daily newspaper in Łódź to print anonymized testimonies of women workers and draw public attention to the issue.⁴¹ Smaller-scale publications from factories with majority women workers can highlight the role of women as activists on the shopfloor, and provide details of women’s organizing that were glossed over in the narratives of the men-dominated labour movement.⁴² In other cases, photographs depicting a few women workers amid many striking men are the only trace of the presence of women workers and their activism.

Sources about the most precarious women labourers, such as poor peasant women or those employed in small workshops and home-based industries, are particularly scarce. Their dispersed voices can sometimes be found in the form of letters to prominent activists – whose personal correspondence has made it into the archives – and show how women’s solidarities could bridge class divides, and the limits thereof.⁴³ This volume showcases how using these methodological approaches and including the voices of women labour activists can nuance, complicate, challenge and go beyond conventional narratives of labour struggles.

The making of collectively written labour history and the originality of this book

Building on the individual and collaborative research expertise accumulated by the team of authors who together command 16 research languages, this book is more than an extract of or an add-on to what each of us has researched individually. Reconnecting the fragmented histories of women's labour activism, and offering eye-opening cross-regional histories, the book moves the historical writing on labour and gender towards a new type of collectively written, transnational history. Rather than assembling chapters that discuss or compare individual national contexts, this volume is grounded in 10 region-wide chapters, each organized around a specific theme. These chapters are connected by our collectively developed conceptual approach and the introductory and concluding chapters. Each of the 10 chapters transgresses historical political ruptures and/or political divides between women labour activists and their organizations, embodying our move beyond inherited historiographic and social movement compartmentalizations. Some chapters span shorter, others longer periods of time, reflecting thematic yet sometimes also pragmatic considerations (including the scholarly expertise available in the authors' team).

In the following, we share insight into some of the strategies employed in the making of the book which might help move forward studies in global labour and gender history towards a new type of transnational history.

The first main decision in designing and planning the volume was to build the book on cross-regional chapters throughout. This was followed by deliberating how to *make directly visible* in the book design two further essentials that have shaped our work towards this collaborative monograph: the inclusive approach that brings together within one conceptual framework the study of many types of activism; and our approach to addressing key issues in the history of women's labour activism in the region of focus and transnationally. In considering these essentials, the foundational idea for framing the book emerged. It was to have three parts, each addressing, from various angles and in cross-regional perspective, a core problem zone in both the history of and the research on women's labour activism: women in the men-dominated world of labour movements – who were, together with their agendas, constantly marginalized; gender as an important factor driving and shaping a range of actions of women's labour activists – actions which were often not even perceived and acknowledged as part of activism; and

the differences between and sometimes struggles among women – which have been downplayed by some and construed as insurmountable by other actors, and the historians of these respective actors.

Building on these foundations of the book, we set about defining the subject matter of each of the 10 book chapters. The chapters, while grounded in our collective insights from years of working together on our theme, should each be based in and lead beyond the individual expertise of two lead authors,⁴⁴ rather than aiming to cover ‘everything’. The chapters were to address, in close consideration of the place assigned to them within the threefold structure of the book, key themes in the history of women’s labour activism. **Part I** of the book would put centre stage women’s activism in the realms of men’s worlds of labour activism, including the co-operative movement, social democracy, trade unions aligned with different world views and radical women of different political persuasions. **Part II** would foreground understudied key gendered dimensions of women’s labour activism, studying education, migration, minoritization and the everyday. **Part III** would examine themes central to how gender, as it connected women across class and political divides, informed women’s labour activism.

We knew from the start about three elements of complexity of a book design which prioritized our wish to convey, and follow through with, our foundational vision of a new transnational history of women’s labour activism. Many topics, “stories” and actors in the history of women’s labour activism would appear in more than one part of the book. Themes central for our vision of the history of women’s labour activism, while clearly bound to find their place in either **Part I**, **II** or **III** of the book, could be adequately (re)presented only if the overall conceptual thinking which made us go for the threefold arrangement of the book in the first place were brought to bear on the study of each of them. Finally, the book as a whole would not be organized chronologically or around “classical” themes in the study of women’s labour activism – such as the iconic strike waves in the interwar textile industry – which could make it into a somewhat complex read.

The book uses a set of practical devices to meet these challenges. These include the Chronology in pictures, where extended captions accompanying each illustration taken together give a very short account of what we consider core dimensions of the history of women’s labour activism in the region of focus and transnationally. The Chronology in pictures can serve to orient readers within the book, and also direct them towards surprising elements in it. Two appendices giving information

on select organizations and select protagonists, and the Vocabulary of concepts and terminology at the beginning of the book, can also help orient the reader. Chapter introductions not only explain what the given chapter does but also point to issues which, while pertaining to the chapter theme, are not addressed or are addressed more fully in other chapters. Finally, peer reviewers, besides helping us to sharpen the titles of the three parts of the book (and giving important additional comments), advised us to write introductions of a few pages to each part of the book. These explain the rationale that brings together the chapters in the given part of the book, bring home the scholarly ideas and backgrounds in which each part is grounded and its connections to the other parts of the book, expand on the conceptual planks introduced in the present chapter, and guide the reader to individual chapters as situated within this larger context.

Once the book design work was done, the ‘travails of the plains’⁴⁵ of bringing this book to life followed. Each chapter from the start and throughout the writing process was based on the work of the lead authors and input by all other members of the authors’ team. Internal chapter abstracts devised by the lead authors and fine-tuned in various rounds of team discussion, and the ‘negative list’ – occasionally infamous within the authors’ team – attached from the very start to each chapter proved helpful as we moved forward; the negative lists spelt out which aspects, sub-subjects, historical figures and organizations would not be discussed in substance in a given chapter. In a multi-stage process, the lead authors asked all other members of the authors’ team to make accessible sources and secondary literature in all languages and from all parts of our region of focus for specific chapter sections and sustaining or modifying specific points made in the chapter. Innumerable text portions were delivered, adapted, complemented and revised. Our document-oriented and document-based, highly curated research database ZARAH DB⁴⁶ was one of the tools that facilitated the bringing together of specialized and collaborative knowledge. It goes without saying that all chapter drafts went through multiple rounds of team discussion. In the end, there is no portion of the book that will not have been co-written by the entire research team.

The eight conceptual planks of the inclusive history of women’s labour activism advocated in this book are present as cross-cutting themes and interests in all parts of the book. [Part I](#) revisits the “classical” sites and types of women’s labour activism in – mainly mixed-gender – social movement organizations, the home of many women activists dedicated to overall social transformation. It aims to go beyond belittling

and heroizing approaches and excavating unknown histories. Women activists challenged the limitations arising from their affiliation with these movements, carving out spaces for themselves and their activism through a broad range of strategies, and contributed to making change happen within and beyond these movements. Focusing on the (at times unexpected) character and spirit of women's labour activism, [Part II](#) highlights its expansive gendered repertoires and agendas. Women's gendered positioning in the world of paid and unpaid work and in political and social institutions was impacted by various dimensions of social and cultural difference. Women's downgraded position in the world of paid work and the gendered lifeworlds of working-class communities called for a special emphasis on certain themes and types of activism and translated into the specifically gendered character of others. Activists' engagement with these lifeworlds was mirrored in their visions and practices. [Part III](#) addresses a large theme that has been contentious in both the history and the historiography of gender and labour: women's collaborations across class and political divides. The identification of women activists, of many political persuasions and belonging to or self-identifying with different social classes, with working(-class) women's specifically gendered concerns mattered when it came to the question of crossing these divides.

Each chapter revolves around a specific argument, developing it in a more explicitly concept-driven mode or spending more time on discussing organizations, individuals or action. In addition, each chapter addresses a selection of the seven overarching questions that have guided our research for the book and returns to these in the chapter conclusion. The overarching questions are: Which activist repertoires and agendas characterized women's labour activism in different periods and spaces within our region of focus? Which cycles and major tendencies characterizing women's labour activism can be determined once explored from an inclusive perspective as to agendas and activist repertoires? How were women's labour activism and its agendas part of or apart from local, national, cross-regional, transnational and international labour and women's activism and their histories? How, and because of which circumstances, were class, gender and other major categories of difference involved in women's labour activism at different points in time? How did women's labour activism contribute to the formation of key trends in the politics of women's work within the region and internationally? To what extent and in what ways was women's labour activism shaped by continuity and change in post-imperial and nation- and state-building policies, and how did it contribute to these processes? How does

developing knowledge on our focus region's history of women's labour activism change the chronology and cartography of European history as well as the global historiographies of labour activism and women's movements? The essay that concludes this book will also engage with these questions.

The concluding essay situates the findings of this book in the global and gendered histories of labour, in dialogue with recent developments in these fields. We also return to the reflections on the book design contained in the introductions to the three book parts, discussing what we have gained by designing the book in the way we have done and what we have missed, and point to directions of future research.

The approach pursued in this book belongs to all members of the authors' team. We have deeply engaged with and mutually appropriated the multitude of interpretation contained therein. As a rule, we refrain from signalling minor differences in individual emphasis, or individual unease with this or that argumentative figure and element of the terminology used. Only occasionally, and where we feel this might stimulate the community of gender and labour historians to embark on exciting new research, do we signal that a question has remained (perhaps) unresolved within the authors' team. We have allowed for some variety regarding certain elements of the language that sustains the book, which mirrors individual co-authors' preferences. Together, all of this constitutes the definition of the collective 'we', appearing on the pages of this volume. We hope that our enterprise of excavating, reconsidering and connecting histories of women's labour activism will stimulate colleagues and students with an interest in these histories to critically and in a thought-provoking manner engage with and move beyond the approach suggested here.

Notes

- 1 ZARAH DB, 'Szabó, Piroska. Special Record (Person)'.
- 2 ZARAH DB, 'Nyitrai, Júlia. Special Record (Person)'.
- 3 ZARAH DB, 'Szabó, Erzsébet. Special Record (Person)'.
- 4 Nussgraber-Schnabel, interview.
- 5 Kemperle, interview.
- 6 ZARAH DB, 'Csík, Manyi. Special Record (Person)'.
- 7 Examples include Boris, Hoehtker, and Zimmermann, *Women's ILO*; Smith and Robinson, *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*.
- 8 We use this term throughout the book when talking about the field because we consider the term 'feminist labour history' a label too narrow to capture all varieties, historiographical trajectories and self-identifications of practitioners of historical study that have contributed to the field.

- 9 The term, adapted from Marilyn Lake's 'The Independence of Women', in the original reads 'platform of three interdependent planks'. In some subsections we use and adapt the argument contained in Ghiş et al., 'Women and the Gendered Politics'.
- 10 For a discussion of the scholarship, see Çağatay et al., 'Introduction: Women's Labour Struggles'.
- 11 Derflinger, director, *Die Dohnal* (documentary film).
- 12 Works that are helpful in thinking about the settings in which activism unfolded and the overlaps between such settings include: Briskin, 'Autonomy, Diversity, and Integration'; Franzaway and Fonow, *Making Feminist Politics*; Cobble, 'A Higher "Standard of Life"'; Bereni and Revillard, 'Movement Institutions'; Sen, 'Gender and the Politics of Class'; Van Goethem, 'On the Wings'.
- 13 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Bier, *Revolutionary Womanhood*; Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*; Donert and Moll-Murata, 'Special Issue: Women's Rights and Global Socialism'; Caligari, 'The Strike, the Household'; Burek, 'Women Workers' Protests'.
- 14 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Bock and Thane, 'Editors' Introduction'; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Orleck, *Common Sense*; Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*; Grabowska, 'Bits of Freedom'; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*.
- 15 'Eine neue Zeit'.
- 16 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Morokvašić, 'Birds of Passage'; Nakano Glenn, 'From Servitude to Service Work'; Koller, 'Weiblich, proletarisch, tschechisch'; Roth, 'Intersectionality and Coalitions'; MacKinnon, 'Intersectionality as Method'; Todorova, *Unequal under Socialism*; Bader-Zaar and Zimmermann, 'The Politics of Social and Political Inclusion and Exclusion'.
- 17 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Jonsson, Neunsinger, and Sangster, *Crossing Boundaries*; Çağatay, 'The Politics of Gender'; Hadler and Middell, *Handbuch einer transnationalen Geschichte Ostmitteleuropas*; Boris, Hoetker, and Zimmermann, 'Introduction: A Century'; Cobble, *For the Many*; Feinberg, *Communism in Eastern Europe*; Inglot, Szikra, and Raţ, *Mothers, Families or Children?*
- 18 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Bantman and Altena, *Reassessing the Transnational Turn*; Dietze and Naumann, 'Revisiting Transnational Actors'; Naples and Desai, *Women's Activism and Globalization*; Soule and Roggeband, 'Diffusion Processes'; Donert, 'Women's Rights and Global Socialism'; Jarska, 'Forum: Women's Activism and State Policies'.
- 19 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Silver, *Forces of Labor*; Cobble, 'Worker Mutualism'; Livezeanu and Klimó, *The Routledge History of East Central Europe*; Brunnbauer, 'How and Where'; van der Linden, *The World Wide Web of Work*.
- 20 Helpful works on the theme addressed in this section include: Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society*; Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures*; Cobble, 'The Promise and Peril'; Grama and Zimmermann, 'The Art of Link-Making'; Middell, *The Routledge Handbook of Transregional Studies*; Cucu, 'For a New Global Labour History'; Betti et al., 'Introduction: Thinking the History'.
- 21 Комитет на българските зheni, 'Концепция за осигуряване на оптимални условия за съчетаване задълженията на жената като производственичка, майка и общественичка – 1-ви проект', 1971, f. 417, op. 4, a.e. 61, TsDA. The Politburo decision was published in English translation as 'Enhancing the Role of Women'.
- 22 Examples (mostly in English) include: Sati, 'Working-Class Women'; Gülenç, 'DİSK ve Kadın İşçiler'; Archer, 'Inside the Factory, Outside the Party-State'; Grubački, 'Women Activists' Relationship'; Trode, 'The Sarajevo Tobacco Factory Strike'; the chapters contained in Çağatay et al., *Through the Prism of Gender and Work*; and our own individual publications collected at 'Publications of ZARAH Team Members'.
- 23 Çağatay et al., 'Introduction: Women's Labour Struggles'.
- 24 See for instance Jarska, 'A Patriarchal Marriage?'; Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*; Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*; Sati, 'Working-Class Women'; Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot'; Dyakonova, '"Through the Dictatorship of the Proletariat"'; Taber and Dyakonova, *The Communist Women's Movement*.
- 25 More recently, such emphasis can be found in Verginella, *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks*.

- 26 Examples include: Bahenská and Malínská, *Ženy a politika*; Saygılıgil, *Kadınlar Hep Vardı*.
- 27 Kučera, *Rationed Life*.
- 28 Examples include: Grabowska, 'Beyond the "Development" Paradigm'; Bracke, 'Women's Rights, Family Planning'; Artwińska and Mrozik, *Gender, Generations, and Communism*; Hüchtker, *History as Performance*; Dudeková Kováčová, 'Between Transnational Cooperation'.
- 29 De Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms'.
- 30 Examples include: Jarska, 'Modern Marriage and the Culture of Sexuality'; Gradska, *The Women's International Democratic Federation*; Todorova, *Unequal under Socialism*; Donert and Moll-Murata, 'Special Issue: Women's Rights and Global Socialism'; Zimmermann, 'Dance around a "Sacred Cow"'; Çağatay et al., 'Introduction: Women's Labour Struggles'.
- 31 Examples include: Nacar, *Labor and Power in the Late Ottoman Empire*; Testen Koren and Cergol Paradiž, 'The Excluded amongst the Excluded?'; Strele, 'Tobacco Workers in Ljubljana'; Wernitznig, 'Rauchzeichen: Tabakproduktion und Gender'; Akgöz, 'Between State Feminism and Work Intensification'; Bartha, 'Emancipated or Excluded?'; Akgöz, *In the Shadow of War and Empire*; Rolandi, 'Female Public Employees during a Post-Imperial Transition'; Verginella and Strele, *Women and Work in the North-Eastern Adriatic*.
- 32 Popova and Helfert, 'Putting Activists Centre Stage'.
- 33 Daskalova, 'A Woman Politician in the Cold War Balkans'.
- 34 Recent examples include: Rosdolsky-Kreis, *Mit permanenten Grüßen*; Duma, *Rosa Jochmann*; Trausmuth, *Ich fürchte niemanden*'.
- 35 O'Brien and Deris, *The Struggle for Modern Turkey*; Saygılıgil, *Kadınlar Hep Vardı*.
- 36 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*; Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*.
- 37 Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*.
- 38 This has been discussed by Helfert and Popova, 'Finding Women'. Other blogs within this and two more blog series, as well as a guest blog series, published on the ZARAH website also give new and surprising insight into source-related issues.
- 39 Quataert, 'A Source Analysis'.
- 40 Helfert, 'What Do Police Records Reveal?'
- 41 Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors'.
- 42 Ghiț, 'Re-Reading Local Sources'.
- 43 Zimmermann, 'Female Agrarian Workers'.
- 44 Selin Çağatay served as lead author for [chapters 3 and 5](#), Mátyás Erdélyi for 1 and 5, Alexandra Ghiț for 4 and 8, Olga Gnydiuk for 2 and 10, Veronika Helfert for 6 and 8, Ivelina Masheva for 2 and 3, Zhanna Popova for 6 and 7, Jelena Tešija for 1 and 9, Eszter Varsa for 4 and 7, and Susan Zimmermann for 9 and 10.
- 45 This is from Bertolt Brecht's poem 'Observation' ('Wahrnehmung', 1948) ('The travails of the mountains lie behind us/Before us lie the travails of the plains'): Brecht, *The Collected Poems*, 415–16. In German, Brecht's 'Mühen der Ebene' have become proverbial.
- 46 ZARAH DB.

Part I

Women in mixed-gender labour movements: transgressing and confronting limitations

This first part revisits the organizing and activism of women who identified with and worked within, or in close partnership with, various branches of the “classical” labour movement, namely co-operatives, trade unions and political parties, including anarchist, socialist/social democrat, communist, New Left and Christian organizations and networks. Women’s activism that was aligned with these movements responded to a whole range of economic, social and political upheavals. This included the demise of empires, the turn to right-wing authoritarianism experienced in many countries in the 1930s, and the developments when after 1945 (state) socialist regimes were installed in Eastern Europe and statism gained ground elsewhere too. During the century-long period discussed in this book, many women who identified with the needs and interests of the lower classes as they construed them chose to work in mixed-gender organizations. In this opening part of the book, we discuss why women made these choices even though they experienced many gendered constraints and limitations when doing so, and we describe their activist histories as a significant contribution to labour and social movements and public institutions within the region of focus and internationally. Chapters highlight the variety of organizational settings in which this activism unfolded and the activist repertoires the women employed. They foreground region-specific approaches to agendas pursued transnationally by women labour activists, contributing to a new historiography which captures the complexity and interwovenness of activist engagement with central themes in the history of women’s labour activism. Both the politics of scale – from the local to the transnational – and competition and entanglement between activistisms associated with different world

views impacted on this engagement. Looking at activists' individual biographies and expanding on selected instances of activism, the chapters also bring to light the manifold and shifting self-identifications of women. This included intersecting memberships of individual women in multiple working-class organizations, and in turn we find women whom we identify as more or less radical and more or less "mainstream" present across ideological and political movement and institution boundaries.

Chapter 1 discusses how the specific gendered responsibilities and interests of working-class women shaped women's activism and place in the co-operative movement from the 1900s to the 1940s. Co-operative women were active in both mixed-gender and women-only organizations. In terms of organizational set-ups and repertoires of action to which they turned, they enjoyed more autonomy than many women activists in trade union or party contexts. Their agendas ranged from actions related to women's role as family and community members with erstwhile responsibilities in the sphere of consumption to educational initiatives targeting mostly working-class women. Not least because many men comrades considered these spheres of action as (at best) of secondary political relevance, co-operative women developed far-reaching visions of economic change and engaged in practical initiatives to bring about such change on the grassroots level.

Chapter 2, pursuing a long-term perspective and discussing activisms identified with different political visions, turns to trade unionism. Trade unions engaged with the question of women's organizing and pursued ideologically diverse gendered agendas. Women's activism within trade unions, while often sidelined, ignored or belittled by contemporary men trade unionists and trade union historians alike, was a lively arena of women's labour activism. It attracted women from working-class backgrounds, who brought to their trade union activities first-hand experience of drastic gendered difference, marginalization and exploitation of women workers in many sectors of the labour market. The wish to bring about practical change in the workplace constituted one of the driving forces of the political choices of these women. Equal pay formed one of their core agendas and was a theme in which tension with men-dominated trade unionism weighed heavily.

Chapter 3 focuses on radical left women in anarchist, communist and New Left movements who held views about, pursued a politics of practice regarding and demanded policies of far-reaching change to transform labour and gender regimes. By combining a long-term and multiscalar perspective on these different activist worlds with an interest

in individual women and their political biographies, we can establish overarching trends. A radical critique of deeply rooted male prerogative and sexism in left-wing movements and the lifeworld of working-class communities was always present in these women's activisms. How women expressed their views on these matters changed over time, often responding to the shifts and ruptures in the political regimes in their respective national contexts. Cross-regionally, the presence of such critiques was more pronounced in the period from the 1900s to the 1920s, in the immediate post-World War II period – though perhaps to a lesser extent – and then again in the 1970s and 1980s. Radical women's thinking and action contributed to a deeper understanding of flagship demands such as wage justice and the recognition of the value of women's unpaid labour at home.

Chapter 4 engages with the labour activism of women who put their energies into working for socialist and social democratic parties from the late nineteenth century to the 1930s, paying close attention to the politics of scale connecting the activism within the region with international socialist women's politics. Just like their trade union comrades (who made their appearance repeatedly in party contexts too), the party women faced the scarcity of material resources characteristic of Eastern European countries and, like women activists everywhere, a lack of interest on the part of many men comrades in generating a more equal sharing of these resources. In all Central and Eastern European countries, left-wing women activists faced mounting political repression and deep economic crisis and transformation in the 1930s. All these circumstances impacted on the framing of the labour-related agendas they pursued and the priorities they set in this realm of action.

Some of the activisms unfolding in the region of focus discussed in this part of the book enjoyed tangible attention in scholarly works published during the (state) socialist period and in scholarship inspired by second wave feminist thinking. If many of the former works tended to employ teleological conceptual frameworks equating human emancipation with working-class liberation, some of the latter highlighted how labour movements marginalized women, and paid mere lip service to working women's gendered labour interests. Other elements of women's labour activism addressed in this part of the book – including the contribution of labour activists from the region to international movements and organizations as well as women's co-operative and anarchist activism and women's engagement with communist-aligned trade union internationalism – so far constitute largely uncharted territory which this book begins to address.

Together, the chapters collected here highlight the complex motivations, stemming from simultaneous, yet varying engagement with the issues of social and gender inequality, that informed women's choice to pursue labour activism in mixed-gender organizations of different political outlooks. Within each of the movements and institutions discussed, on each scale of activism and from their often hard-won organizational platforms, women activists pursued – with varying degrees of success – their gendered labour interests. The limitations and constraints they experienced were strongly connected to how the movements and organizations approached both the subordinated position of women in the world of paid work and the gendered division of tasks within working-class households. The limited – though growing over time – representation of women workers in the organizations of the labour movement, the gendered discrimination against women members and their absence from leadership positions, and the often minimal financial and other resources mobilized for women's organizing and activism reflected these tendencies. In turn, these intra-movement circumstances prevented labour organizations from addressing gendered difference in the worlds of paid and unpaid work more critically and energetically.

Undeniably, in all the movements and organizations studied, women activists took the lead in demanding a turn to more realistic modes of fostering working(-class) women's activist involvement, addressing their lack of free time and engagement with family and care work. Women activists' intimate knowledge of the often unstable and always specifically exploitative nature of women's employment and their deep understanding of women's gendered responsibilities for unpaid family and care work – simultaneously imposed on and valued by many of them – shaped these activists' labour-related agendas. They understood that equal pay could not be discussed in substance without reference to women's unequal position in paid and unpaid work, and that household matters were key to the emancipation of women and the working classes.

In the long run, women who found their political home in the various branches of the mixed-gender labour movement created, along the various scales of their activism, better opportunities to represent working(-class) women's labour interests. They utilized different organizational settings, including but in no way restricted to women-only structures within and in close alignment with men-dominated organizations. Women from the region brought their agendas and circumstances to international organizations, which could function, in turn, as instruments for the convergence of agendas and repertoires and as

(partial) remedies to organizational constraints and limitations that women from the region experienced in their national and local contexts.

Against the background of the information collected and the analytical cornerstones laid down in this part of the book, [Part II](#) turns to realms of activism, the relevance of which for an inclusive history of women's labour activism has so far been only partly recognized.

Economy, education, re-evaluation: women in the co-operative movement, 1900s to 1940s

Introduction: a special platform for women's activism

This chapter explores the history of the co-operative movement from a transnational and long-term perspective and focuses on how the gendered responsibilities of women in the working-class household gave rise to and impacted women's labour activism within the co-operative movement in Central and Eastern Europe. The agenda and regional presence of the International Co-operative Women's Guild (ICWG) played a crucial role in the development of co-operative women's activism in Central and Eastern Europe and made the international and transnational scale an integral part of this history, although not all co-operatives treated in this chapter were part of the ICWG. In addition, co-operative mutualist organizing offered various types of support networks and resources and partook in the process of empowerment and emancipation of working-class populations in Central and Eastern Europe. Due to a scarcity of sources and secondary literature on activism, the case of Turkey is not discussed in this chapter. Furthermore, to the extent necessary for understanding the international scale, the discussion in the chapter touches on the Soviet branch of the ICWG.

Women pursued work-related activism in different types of co-operatives and models of organizing – both mixed-gender and women-only – and across various political ideologies in Central and Eastern Europe. We consider co-operatives and co-operative organizations in which women were active and gender as an issue was relevant. The history of co-operatives is analysed here from a gender perspective with a specific focus on how the activities of co-operatives aimed at improving the life circumstances of working-class women. Although co-operatives

with other ideological leanings are not neglected, social democratic and communist co-operatives stand out in our narrative because they played vital roles in women's co-operative organizing in the region discussed in this chapter, and they were internationally the most active. Evidence shows that women became more and more important actors locally and internationally in the co-operative movement between 1900 and the 1940s, but women's involvement started to be particularly significant in the aftermath of World War I, when women's organizations and branches were formed across Central and Eastern Europe and women started to enter decision-making positions in the movement in greater numbers ([Map 2](#)).

The agendas and repertoires of the ICWG and co-operatives in Central and Eastern Europe showcase women's activism in the co-operative movement, how women tried to transform the economic order, and how their activism connected to the everyday (see also [chapter 8](#)). Women's everyday-focused activism included relief activities by women during strikes and major upheavals and education-related agendas ([chapter 5](#)) to improve women's position in co-operatives, labour and society in general. The chapter argues that the co-operative movement provided women with a specific opportunity for work-related activism, significantly different from those offered by political parties and unions. In a transgressive way, women's co-operative activism challenged and confronted the binary divisions of public and private spheres and paid and unpaid labour in the labour movement. The activities of the ICWG helped women activists in national co-operative movements in this regard through international gatherings and knowledge production and dissemination. International congresses provided a platform for identifying and discussing common issues of co-operative women across political divides.

The international organization of the co-operative movement, the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA), formed in 1895, defines co-operatives as 'people-centred enterprises owned, controlled and run by and for their members to realise their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations'.¹ Historically, the co-operative movement has been diverse in terms of models of organizing (such as consumer, credit, producer, worker), sociopolitical ideologies (such as nationalism, liberalism, socialism/social democracy, communism, agrarianism), context and place (they developed in both rural and urban areas) and its relationship with the state, religious groups and the rest of the labour movement. This empirical diversity influenced historiographical accounts of the co-operative movement, reflected by the interdisciplinary body of

scholarship used for this chapter. It builds on histories of co-operatives, workers' movements, agrarianism, the economy and nationalism, to name but a few. The lack of a gender perspective, with some exceptions,² is a common feature of this historiography. Yet, approaching the history of co-operatives from a gender perspective brings to light the hitherto unmapped social functions and contributions to social change that the movement, and especially women co-operative activists, generated.

A gender perspective on the history of the co-operative movement illustrates how the specific (gendered) responsibilities of working-class women within the working-class family limited, but also asserted, a role for women in consumer and other co-operatives. Such a perspective puts women's labour activism centre stage in one of the "classical" branches of the labour movement and showcases how co-operative women activists attempted to re-evaluate women's reproductive labour. As working-class women were most often assigned the task of household financial management, consumer co-operatives used this gendered division of labour within the household to attract women into the movement. Day-to-day scarcity management, the microeconomic role of working-class women especially in times of economic crisis, was turned into a matter of activism that both benefited recruitment into the labour movement in the short term and was understood as helping to transform the capitalist system in the long run. With the aim of negotiating and reshaping the politics of women's work locally and internationally, a focus on everyday struggles became part of the repertoires of women's labour activism. Co-operative women's activism also demonstrates the close links between different sites and types of women's "classical" labour activism. Activists such as Marie Nečásková (1890–1971) from Czechoslovakia and Emmy Freundlich (1878–1948)³ from Austria were not only active in the co-operative field but also participated in and sometimes influenced developments in other branches of the labour movement. This was true the other way around as well. When Szeréna Ladányi (1884–1940) from Hungary planned educational courses for social democratic women activists, the co-operative movement was always included, and an expert was invited to give a lecture on consumer co-operatives ([chapter 5](#), [Map 1](#), [Map 2](#)). The integration of women's guilds into the ICWG demonstrates how international organizations in the post-imperial context of the interwar period took up the role of supporting and assisting the development of consumer co-operativism on the national level, and therefore creating a bridge between national and international labour movements in Western Europe and Central and Eastern European labour organizing.

Co-operative women by the numbers

It is particularly difficult to establish the number of women in the co-operative movement in different countries and internationally. Co-operatives rarely published data on the gender of members and printed only overall membership numbers. In addition, the gender composition of co-operatives would be, in general, a misleading indicator of women's involvement. The basic organizational unit of the co-operative movement was often the family, and it was the husband who usually deputized for the whole family and thus appeared as the sole member of the co-operative. Women proposed various solutions to this problem (family membership, two members per family), but none of them were widely implemented in Central and Eastern Europe during the period considered here.⁴

The other, more reliable indicator of women's activities is the number of women in the administration and management of co-operatives. This number grew steadily between 1900 and the early 1940s. At the General Consumer Co-operative (Általános Fogyasztási Szövetkezet, ÁFSZ) in Hungary, a woman clerk and a woman trade assistant were employed in 1904 (out of 10 employees in total), a number that grew only modestly in the next decade until a steep rise during World War I. By 1923, 54 women clerks (83 men), 123 women trade assistants (303 men) and 81 unskilled women workers (258 men) were employed at the ÁFSZ.⁵ According to a report by Emmy Freundlich, there were 1,659 women officials at the Central Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives (Ústřední svaz československých družstev, ÚSČD) in 1927, a figure that increased to 3,736 by 1934.⁶ Such growth in the number of women office employees was, however, not a unique feature at co-operatives in the first decades of the twentieth century, as more and more women were employed as private clerks and in the tertiary sector in general at this time.⁷ In 1932, the Association of German Economic Co-operatives (Verband deutscher Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften, VDW) in Czechoslovakia had four women on its Society Boards, 79 on Supervisory Councils and 1,648 on Members' Committees.⁸ *The Free Co-operator (Der freie Genossenschaftler)*, the journal of Austrian consumer co-operatives, proudly reported in 1927 that 4 women sat on the executive board and 4 on the supervisory board, and 37 women chaired branch committees, while in total 680 women were employed at the co-operative, alongside 489 male employees.⁹ Despite the steady growth in women's participation rate in co-operative memberships and decision-making bodies, women still formed a minority of co-operative membership and were

marginalized in leadership positions throughout the interwar period. This, however, did not mean that women were relegated to a passive role in co-operative work; on the contrary, women's guilds promoted an active and emancipatory role for women in the movement.

At different scales: the ICWG and its branches in Central and Eastern Europe

Co-operative women from Central and Eastern Europe showed strong interest in joining the ICWG, the predominantly social democratic international co-operative women's organization. Once connected to national branches, the ICWG played a catalysing role in the regional and local developments of women's co-operative organizing and, in turn, these branches participated in shaping and implementing the ICWG's policies. The international and national scales were interconnected in encouraging women's organizing and the production, translation and dissemination of knowledge. Co-operative women also used the ICWG debates and information flow to express different ideological positions and to fight battles at home.¹⁰

Encouraging co-operative organizing

The ICWG was established in 1921 as a committee on the initiative of co-operative women from Austria and England and transformed, in 1924, into an international organization of women who were mostly active in consumer co-operatives.¹¹ Even before becoming affiliated, national branches participated in the activities of the ICWG as co-opted members. This meant that they had consultative representatives participating in the work of the Central Committee. However, full voting rights for national delegates at the conferences came only with official membership.¹² The influence of the ICWG and its relationship with co-operative women from Central and Eastern Europe were uneven in the different lands in the region discussed in this chapter. However, several national branches from this part of Europe gradually joined the ICWG throughout the interwar period. Austria was among the founders of the ICWG in 1921, and the Czech organization in Czechoslovakia became a member in 1927. Unusually, given the political polarization of the period, the Soviet Union became fully affiliated in 1929. The German organization in Czechoslovakia was affiliated in 1930, Bulgaria in 1931, the Ukrainian organization in Poland in 1933 and finally Poland

in 1936 (Table 1, Map 2). Until 1966, the ICWG existed as a separate organization with its own rules, although financially and administratively it was still closely tied to the main men-dominated international co-operative organization, the ICA.¹³ These international co-operative organizations (both the ICA and the ICWG) were unique in the interwar social democratic labour movement in having a strong Soviet branch and in providing a platform for debate and collaboration between social democrats and communists.¹⁴

From the very beginning, the ICWG dealt with the issues of co-operatives' economic role, women's unpaid reproductive labour and world peace.¹⁵ In addition to these agendas inscribed in the organizational rules, it also advocated for women's political rights and a better position for women in the co-operative movement. In the 1920s, the ICWG engaged intensely with promoting women's organizing in the co-operative movement. It invested resources in establishing connections in the countries where women's co-operative organizations did not yet exist and helped initiate national co-operative women's organizations that would be eligible to join the international organization (in multi-lingual and multiethnic countries, separate branches were formed along these lines).

In the interwar period, the ICWG considered the issue of establishing national women's co-operative branches as relevant for advocacy activities. It proposed and adopted resolutions that urged national co-operative societies to assist with the formation of women's guilds, commissions and sections.¹⁶ In addition, the ICWG assisted in establishing women's co-operative organizations at the national level. The ICWG corresponded with many co-operative women in Central and Eastern Europe, and leading ICWG women travelled to meet local co-operative women. In 1928, the ICWG secretary from the English Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) Alice Honora Enfield (1882–1935) travelled to Hungary, Yugoslavia, Romania, Poland and the Soviet Union.¹⁷ In Warsaw, the capital of Poland, she met with Polish co-operative leader Maria Orsetti (1880–1957). Orsetti often used examples of women's co-operative organizing in other countries to promote co-operativism in Poland; she later became the Polish representative at the ICWG (Table 1). Poland officially joined the ICWG only in 1936, but it was during the 1928 trip that 'a women's initiative promoting co-operative activities was established'.¹⁸ Similarly, although the Yugoslav branch joined the ICWG only after World War II, Enfield visited Slovenia (part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, hereafter simply referred

to as Yugoslavia) as early as 1928 (Table 1, Figure 21).¹⁹ A report on this visit was published on the cover page of the *Women's Journal: Journal of the Association of Working Women and Girls* (*Ženski list: glasilo Zveze delavskih žen in deklet*), a journal of the Association of Working Women and Girls (Zveza delavskih žen in deklet, ZDŽD), a women's organization connected to the social democratic consumer co-operative movement in Slovenia.²⁰

Women activists in national contexts used the international women's co-operative press to argue for and promote women-only co-operative organizing. Emmy Freundlich, the long-time president of the ICWG and a prominent social democrat in the co-operative movement in Austria and internationally, claimed in her 1936 history of the ICWG that reports about other national branches in the *Review of International Co-operation* served as inspiration and encouragement for Bulgarian co-operative women while they were trying to set up a national organization in the 1920s (Table 1, Table 6, Figure 8, Figure 12). They successfully established one in 1928.²¹ In the report from the ICWG conference in Paris in 1937, Kosara Avramović, a Yugoslav visitor and wife of the most prominent ideologist and practitioner of the co-operative movement in Yugoslavia, Mihailo Avramović, promoted the establishment of a women's organization there.²² Similarly, in order to encourage the establishment of women's co-operative organizations in Romania, a student at the Co-operative Academy (Academia Cooperatistă) there, Maria Bălăeș, listed examples of women's organizing in the co-operative movement all over Europe that she had come across in the international co-operative press.²³

Knowledge production, translation and dissemination

The ICWG's materials and publications by the most prominent international representatives, such as Emmy Freundlich, were translated and distributed in Central and Eastern Europe, contributing to the development of the women's co-operative movement in several countries. In Bulgaria, leading members of the movement, particularly its President Stoianka (also called Stoiana) Ivanova, published materials on foreign and international co-operative women's movements, such as the Bulgarian translation of Freundlich's *The Role of Women in the Cooperative Movement*²⁴ but also histories of the English and other foreign women's co-operative movements (Table 1).²⁵ The social democratic Bulgarian Women's Co-operative Union (Suiuz na zhenite kooperatorki v Bulgariia/Съюз на жените кооператорки в България,

SZhKB) joined the ICWG in 1931, and the activities and agenda of the ICWG were routinely discussed at its congresses.²⁶ In Czechoslovakia, co-operative activists paid much attention to the activities of the ICWG and the international scene in general. The second-largest workers' co-operative alliance in Czechoslovakia, the Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives (Unie československých družstev, UČD), published the works of Dora Staudinger (1886–1964) and Emmy Freundlich, and the social democratic ÚSČD published several volumes by Freundlich in Czech.²⁷ Her pamphlet *A Word to the Housewives* was translated and printed in 10,000 copies by the ICWG's Czech branch in 1927.²⁸ The journals the *Co-operator* (*Družstevník*) and the *Proletarian Co-operator* (*Proletářsky družstevník*), published by social democratic co-operatives and communist co-operatives respectively, produced extensive reports and discussed the meetings and activities of the ICWG.

Other than the ZDŽD, the only co-operative alliance in Yugoslavia that consistently reported on women's issues and women's international co-operative organizing was the ideologically mixed Union of Civil Servants' Consumer Co-operatives (Savez nabavljáčkih zadruga državnih službenika, SNZDS). In both its official journal *Co-operatives: Gazette of the Union of Civil Servants' Consumer Co-operatives* (*Zadugarstvo: glasnik Saveza nabavljáčkih zadruga državnih službenika*), published between 1929 and 1941, and its twice-monthly magazine that targeted mostly women, the *Co-operative Flag* (*Zadružna zastava*), published from 1935 to 1941, it encouraged separate women's organizing with the objective of joining the ICWG.²⁹ The ICWG's propaganda also travelled outside the women's co-operative movement, with one of its crucial publications, the *Housewives' Programme*, being translated and published in the Yugoslav feminist women's magazine *Women's Movement* (*Ženski pokret/Женски покрет*) in 1934.³⁰

Politics of scale

The ICWG debates and examples from other countries were used by co-operative women to emphasize different ideological positions (social democratic and communist) at home or to criticize their own national co-operative movements. In Czechoslovakia, communist co-operative women were very critical of both the ICWG and the Czechoslovak social democratic representative in the ICWG Central Committee, Marie Nečásková (Table 1, Figure 8). Communists brought up the ICWG's debates to show their own disagreement with Nečásková and Czech social democrats. For Czechoslovak communists, the main conceptual

problem with the policies of the ICWG and the ÚSČD was that they planned to reach gender equality in society via the evolutionary transformation of capitalism from below and did not aim at the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.³¹ Communists discussed the ICWG debate on family allowances that took place at the ICWG conference in Vienna, the capital of Austria, in 1930 (Figure 12; see also chapter 4). In this debate, Nečásková advocated securing weekly allowances for the working mother ‘so that she can be relieved of the need for undertaking paid work until such time as her children no longer need her’.³² The *Proletarian Co-operator* sharply criticized the paper presented by Nečásková at the ICWG conference and portrayed her as a conservative. With her paper, the article stated, the ‘bourgeois’ side (the social democrats) wanted to ‘blur the image’, to confuse proletarian women and to lure them away from the revolution. ‘Women will be a constitutive element in the rise of the revolutionary movement among co-operatives’, concluded the article.³³

In its reports, the ICWG paid special attention to the progress in each member state concerning women in decision-making positions in the co-operative movement. According to the reports, the Soviet Union was very active in educating women to take up decision-making positions.³⁴ The ICWG’s secretary, Theo Naftel (?–1949), visited the Soviet Union in 1939 and used her travel report to criticize the British co-operative movement by giving an example of how women’s position in the movement was promoted in the Soviet Union:

One of the questions asked me was ‘what measure[s] are taken in Britain to ensure that married women will be able to fit themselves for administrative and business posts in the Movement?’ I explained that the general view still was that once a woman was married her main pre-occupation must be her home and family. If she could manage to combine home-making with public work, well and good. But nothing much was done to make such a combination easy! To my listeners, the men as well as the women, this seemed a strange point of view and they felt that the Movement must be wasting a good deal of talent!³⁵

The case of the Soviet Union, which was used by co-operative women from other countries as an example of good practice in their own contexts, showcases how transnational ideas travelled in all directions, and not necessarily from “west to east”. It adds a new layer to the literature on international transfer in the case of Great Britain, especially

England, with its long history of a very strong women's co-operative movement, both nationally and internationally.³⁶

The economy

Co-operatives played an economic role from their inception and functioned as economic institutions, 'like businesses under capitalism'.³⁷ The writings and activities of women co-operators in Central and Eastern Europe showcase the concept of women's 'purchasing power' as an avenue of consumption-related activism in the first half of the twentieth century. Women played an essential, although often invisible, function in co-operatives' economic activities in the region discussed in this chapter and beyond, from the second half of the nineteenth century. Agrarian credit co-operatives, for instance, accepted women as a second drawer of a bill of exchange in addition to her husband or a relative from the 1900s.³⁸ Prominent women co-operators often addressed the role co-operatives should perform in the economic life of members, providing various conceptualizations of the relationship between women, the economy and work. This included the discussion of the concept of women's purchasing power and the role of the housewife-manager as well as the efficient use of women's purchasing power to contribute to the economic liberation of women and the working class. As early as 1905, in Austrian Partition Poland, the first Congress of Polish Women (I Zjazd Kobiet Polskich) established an economic programme that involved the idea that women should establish their own enterprises based on co-operativism and democracy, instead of trying to replace men's work and thus constantly being exploited.³⁹ The programme was expounded on by Henryka Starzewska in 1906 in a pamphlet titled *Food Co-operation and Its Application in Our Country*, which promoted consumer co-operatives to satisfy the needs of women to earn money by creating a new field of work and eliminate competition with men. Such a restructuring of economic life could contribute to cheaper and better consumer goods as well as job opportunities for women.⁴⁰

Women's 'purchasing power' and the housewife-manager

Consumer co-operatives were the most important pillar of the co-operative movement from the perspective of women's labour activism. Women activists in many countries in interwar Central and Eastern Europe energetically promoted similar ideas about women's much-needed

contribution to the consumer co-operative movement. Social democrat Emmy Freundlich, Polish co-operative activist Maria Orsetti, social democrat Marie Nečásková and Mrs Emil Désics, the president of the women's guild of the ÁFSZ, all took the housewife's position as the starting point of their discussions on the role of women in the co-operative movement.⁴¹ The starting point of their thinking was the idea that the task of providing basic goods (foodstuffs, clothes) for the family most often fell to the housewife (whether a wage earner or not), and her job was to supply the best for the family by using the available (generally meagre) financial means of the family, for example the salary of the husband. Two key concepts were repeated by these authors. Women were the 'organizer[s] of family consumption'⁴² and, in that capacity, they were responsible for the shopping basket of the whole family. A Hungarian article even called the housewife the 'finance minister' of the family.⁴³ In the view of co-operative women, all the shopping baskets combined represented enormous economic power, which, if channelled in the right manner, could form the basis of women's activism in consumer co-operativism and could force the reorganization of the capitalist order through the economies of scale in consumer and producer co-operatives and the bargaining power shopping baskets together represented. The purchasing power of the household – the second key concept – could thus be increased only if consumer co-operatives provided many (ultimately all) items for individual shopping baskets. This line of thinking, of course, was not invented in the interwar period; it was part of the ideology of the Rochdale Pioneers, the first consumer co-operative in England, which all co-operatives liked to reference, and was often recycled by co-operative women in Central and Eastern Europe.⁴⁴

As working-class housewives, women activists took a specific role in consumer co-operatives that resulted in a limited but significant contribution to the transformation of capitalist economic relations according to the social democratic press. A 1931 pamphlet on how to popularize consumer co-operatives, published by the ÚSČD, described women as 'housewife shoppers' and 'mother housewives' and the members of the family responsible for maternal and domestic care. In this capacity, they controlled the economy, as millions of Czechoslovak crowns went through their hands every year. The pamphlet concluded with a call for all women to become 'the mother of a co-operative branch', which presumably corresponded to the role they played in the family.⁴⁵ *Women's Paper: The Newsletter of Slovenian Socialist Women* (*Ženski list: glasilo slovenskega socialističnega ženstva*), a social democratic women's journal published in Ljubljana (Laibach, Carniola/Cisleithania, later Yugoslavia,

today Slovenia) (Map 1, Map 2), urged women in 1913 to join consumer co-operatives (Table 4):

It is clear and without dispute that the wife is the master of the family. She buys the necessities for the family – she goes to the market, she goes to the butcher, she goes to the baker, she goes to the shop. Her husband gives her a certain sum at the end of the week, and now it is left to the wife's art to balance expenditure and income.⁴⁶

Polish activist Maria Orsetti noted in 1933 that the 'Cooperative Women's Guild is predominantly an affiliation of women who are not gainfully employed outside the home'.⁴⁷ She envisioned establishing a professional standing for housework, which was severely underappreciated and not considered a proper occupation. What is common in all these approaches is that they did not challenge the gender division of labour within the family but wanted to provide women with better resources and a better standing for women within the family, and to improve the situation of the working-class family as a result. Social democratic co-operative women combined these approaches, acknowledged women's role in the domestic sphere and advocated for a re-evaluation of women's work within this sphere, viewing it as a practical means to attract a greater number of women to the labour movement. Women bore the task of scarcity management in this context, especially in the ensuing economic crises of the postwar period and during the Great Depression.

'The woman with the basket' was envisioned as the housewife-mother, implicitly considered as doing only unpaid labour by the English Co-operative Women's Guild.⁴⁸ Accordingly, still in the interwar period, 'the majority of Guildswomen were not engaged in paid labour'.⁴⁹ Yet, activists in Central and Eastern Europe thought of 'the woman with the basket' as *both* a stay-at-home housewife and a working woman. In this vein, Freundlich wrote about the 'working woman' who is a 'housewife, mother, and industrial worker at the same time',⁵⁰ and the *Proletarian Co-operator* emphasized that consumer co-operatives should serve the needs of working women because they composed 'more than 30 per cent of wage earners' in Czechoslovakia.⁵¹ At the same time, Freundlich also wrote about the *Housewives' Programme* in the context of 'the woman at home, who is not a wage-earner'.⁵²

Liberating women: the social democratic and the communist alternative

In the social democratic perspective presented above, the household represented the smallest economic unit, one that was vulnerable to big business and exposed to 'private capitalist exploitation'.⁵³ Emmy Freundlich and Marie Nečásková planned to transform the capitalist order gradually with the help of consumer co-operatives. For Nečásková, 'Co-operativism had great goals. It wanted to reshape the whole of human society into a better world order by way of development. In this utopian world, there would be no oppressed and no hunger, and it would provide every working man a worthy life.'⁵⁴ In Czechoslovakia, communist and social democratic activists endorsed a different function for co-operatives in the class struggle and were clearly antagonistic to each other. Still, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československa, KSČ) also considered consumer co-operatives to be an 'economic organ of the class struggle'. It was the duty of all communists to join consumer co-operatives, which should be the 'school of the working class'.⁵⁵

In this vein, the *Proletarian Co-operator* aimed to bring working-class women into communist co-operatives. 'Women will form a constitutive element in the rise of the revolutionary movement among co-operatives', stated the communist co-operative activist Betyna Kaninská.⁵⁶ The solution of communist co-operatives to the problems of capitalist rationalization and exploitation differed from social democratic views. For communists, the idea that women should fight for a better world through the shopping basket was seen as a "petty bourgeois" perspective. In their eyes and according to the foundational idea of communism, the exploitation of women (both at work and in the family) could end only with the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism. The equality of women, they claimed, could be achieved only through the collective class struggle of workers, including both men and women.⁵⁷ The most crucial shortcoming of the ICWG, and consequently of non-communist consumer co-operatives, was that they collaborated with capitalists: 'The politics of the International Women's Guild is about co-operative reform, co-operative illusions, peacefulness, and about the collaboration of co-operatives with capitalist economic organizations and capitalist regimes.'⁵⁸ These policies tried to improve the position of women, and yet ultimately resulted in worsening it from the communist perspective. However, it is important to note that there was a difference between rhetoric and practice: women from communist

co-operatives in capitalist systems carried out activities very similar to those of their social democratic counterparts, such as education and help with everyday living. For example, communist women who joined co-operatives as a part of the Popular Front strategies in the mid-1930s aimed to assist their members economically. The women's co-operative Consumer Co-operative of Young Girls (Nabavljачka zadruga mladih devojaka/Набављачка задруга младих девојака) was formed in Belgrade (Yugoslavia, today Serbia) (Map 2, Map 4) in January 1940. Closely connected to the illegal Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ), it represented one form of communist women's efforts to operate within legal organizations. Like two similar co-operatives, founded later in 1940 in Skopje and Bitola (Bitolj) (Yugoslavia, today North Macedonia), it supplied its members – working-class women – with clothes, cosmetics, books and other items.⁵⁹ Additionally, communists from the Soviet Union and England remained active in the ICWG in the interwar period, and collaborated – not without tensions and disagreements – with social democrats on topics concerning women in the co-operative movement.

The shopping basket as a means of activism

For women in (social democratic) consumer co-operatives, the most important means of activism was the shopping basket, and women activists actively promoted the products of consumer co-operatives. In 1934, the resolution of the ICWG conference in London stated that the most important tool of co-operative activism was the marketing of co-operative products through consumer co-operatives. The ICWG encouraged national branches to pick up topics discussed at the international level and turn them into campaigns in their contexts. The Czechoslovak relationship with the ICWG was particularly fruitful. As Nečásková explained, the Czechoslovak Guild and the ÚSČD were eager to implement these policies.⁶⁰ In Czechoslovakia, co-operative goods – for social democratic co-operatives – were produced by a large-scale producer co-operative, the Wholesale Consumer Co-operative Society in Prague (Velkonákupní společnost konsumních družstev v Praze, VDP), which produced more than 180 different products by 1934, while an increasing number of co-operative shops stocked only co-operative products.⁶¹

Nečásková emphasized that women played a crucial role in the activities of the ÚSČD, as they were the ones who purchased the products. In a 1936 speech, while praising the products of the VDP,

she pleaded for members to buy the co-operative's canned fish, which she noted was cheaper and better than those offered by competitors. She encouraged members to use Dukat margarine and even explained specific recipes in which it could be used. She called for all the delegates to treble their consumption of three co-operative products: chicory (a coffee substitute), Vera spice and coffee.⁶² In a similar vein, women at the ÁFSZ in Hungary organized regular 'tasting days' in Budapest to promote Hajnal coffee, also sold by the co-operative. A short report published in 1935 discussed the activities of the 'co-op aunties', who organized a co-op day in a resort near Budapest, where children were offered Hajnal sugar, Hajnal coffee and bread rolls throughout the day. A co-operative journal reported on one happy boy who declared enthusiastically: 'Auntie, I drank two mugs of coffee, but I also told my mother: there is no better thing in the world than the co-op coffee; don't give me anything else ever!'⁶³ The Austrian Women's Guild also ran family-oriented propaganda activities to promote the products of consumer co-operatives.⁶⁴ Such activities had both promotional and networking benefits for consumer co-operatives, but also pushed to the forefront women's activism with the aim of improving the material conditions of working-class families. Such creative retailing strategies formed part of co-operative activism – also revolutionizing retailing overall – while marketing activities clearly had important non-marketing benefits for the labour movement in general.

Reforming the everyday

In women's co-operativism, marketing co-operative products was not the only repertoire of action connected to the everyday (see also [chapter 8](#)). Other repertoires and agendas from the domain of everyday- and community-focused activism were often a part of co-operatives' gendered policies and co-operative women's activism in Central and Eastern Europe (see also [Figure 7](#)). Co-operative women tried to reform the everyday, addressing it at different scales, from international to local. Co-operatives in Central and Eastern Europe implemented many ICWG campaigns with 'quality of life' and welfare agendas. Additionally, co-operatives' activities emerged to address the specific acute problems women faced in the context of the existing gender order and the lack of knowledge of hygiene and reproductive health, especially in rural areas.⁶⁵

Provision of food during famine and strikes

The provision of food played a crucial role in co-operative women's activism. Emmy Freundlich extensively reported on the relief work of co-operative women in Austria during World War I. Women activists informed the administrators of provinces about the serious disorganization of the food supply and the terrible misery of women and children. They participated in the distribution of nourishment, and got involved with different public projects for collecting and distributing goods.⁶⁶ Women such as Freundlich herself were also consulted at the highest level via the Nutrition Advisory Board (Ernährungsbeirat) in the Prime Minister's Office for National Nutrition.⁶⁷ A co-operative delegation of English women noted the harsh conditions in Austria after the war and praised the activities of co-operative women.⁶⁸ As they put it, 'the clothes in Vienna are worn out and there are no more', and 'the bread is abominable'.⁶⁹ Most of the population lived on insufficient rations: Margaret Ferguson and Alice Honora Enfield emphasized that it was only 'the Co-operative Movement that can save Austria'.⁷⁰ During the Austrian councils movement ([chapter 3](#)), as soon as tasks related to food supply were understood to be crucial for a successful revolutionary restructuring of society, men became involved in their organizing.⁷¹ Lessons learned from World War I would also be used by the ICWG⁷² towards the end of World War II for drafting measures for postwar relief and the reconstruction of society.⁷³

Food was at the centre of women's involvement in support of strikes. One notable case in Central and Eastern Europe is the aeronautics workers' strike for higher wages that took place in Belgrade in April 1940. During the strike, communist women from the SNZDS actively helped the strikers.⁷⁴ A writer and communist activist, Milka Žicina Šakić (1902–84),⁷⁵ recalled that women from the SNZDS collected contributions at the co-operative headquarters and then made up food packages for the strikers who had been arrested or conscripted because of the strike.⁷⁶ The provision of food for strikers and their families occurred in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe as well. In 1933, the *Proletarian Co-operator* reported on a successful miners' strike in Liberec (Reichenberg, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) in which two communist workers' co-operatives, the Bee (Včela) and Forward (Vorwärts), actively supported the strike.⁷⁷ A pamphlet by the ICWG mentioned that the social democratic German co-operative organization VDW in Czechoslovakia provided food to its members out of the general resources of the society during strikes and other

industrial conflicts.⁷⁸ Similarly (see also [chapter 8](#)), during the strike of book printers in Klagenfurt (Celovec, Austria), in 1922, the social democratic consumer co-operative distributed 'flour and sugar to the members of the association with many children who were on strike'.⁷⁹ All these activities point to the fact that retailing was only one of the main activities of consumer co-operatives besides other, more general goals to serve the working classes in Central and Eastern Europe.⁸⁰

Reproductive labour

One of the most important topics of the ICWG's activism was women's reproductive labour. The ICWG wanted to re-evaluate the housewife's position in society and reform her everyday life. To showcase the hardships and great importance of her reproductive labour and with the aim of negotiating the politics of women's work, the ICWG covered issues such as leisure time, washing clothes, childcare, food preparation and nutrition.

The ICWG recognized leisure time as something important for co-operative women's wellbeing, and it was part of the ICWG's *Housewives' Programme*, written in 1933, which demanded 'recognition of the right of mothers and housewives to freedom and holidays'.⁸¹ In the report on holiday homes where women could spend a week for free organized by the Swiss branch, it was highlighted that 'for once they can enjoy food cooked by someone else, they can sleep as late as they like, and go where they please and can be sure of being left undisturbed'.⁸² In the 1930s, the topic was picked up by national branches from Western and Northern Europe,⁸³ but also from Central and Eastern Europe. For example, local branches of the Bulgarian and Polish guilds established holiday homes for their members.⁸⁴ There are also traces of how the idea was spreading in other parts of Central and Eastern Europe. The co-operative press in Hungary reported on a German initiative that fought for housewives to have their own vacation and encouraged Hungarian housewives to go on holiday from time to time.⁸⁵ Another article called for women's attention to the importance of gymnastics and excursions for their health.⁸⁶ Thus, not only the ICWG but also co-operative women elsewhere understood the household as a workplace and reproductive labour as an occupation like any other, from which one sometimes needs to take a break.

Emmy Freundlich, one of the most committed economic and social thinkers and practitioners of the co-operative movement and a nutrition expert, brought together issues of democracy, the economy and the reorganization of everyday life in her work.⁸⁷ The ICWG itself provided

a platform for a very lively discussion on different solutions to the hardships of reproductive labour in the interwar period. In several debates within the ICWG, activists proposed solutions to the burden of women's unpaid reproductive labour, such as the socialization of childcare, the introduction of labour-saving devices and the provision of family allowances for women who stayed at home and raised children.⁸⁸ One of the early topics addressed in this field, brought up and discussed separately at the ICWG conference in Stockholm in 1927, was doing laundry. *The Family Wash*, a detailed study on washing clothes, described the harsh reality of this part of housework and advocated for measures that would lighten the burden of women.⁸⁹ The Polish guild was internationally praised for implementing this campaign and taking the initiative in establishing mechanized co-operative washhouses that helped women do the laundry.⁹⁰

Co-operatives in Central and Eastern Europe engaged with the issue of childcare and proposed several solutions to ease the burden of this work for working-class mothers. In the 1930s, the SZhKB organized summer children's camps as well as co-operative kindergartens in several Bulgarian towns. The Sofia women's co-operative society and its president Rusa Lavchiiska were particularly active. They opened an establishment for children of lower-class families who suffered from tuberculosis in the village of Vladaia (near Sofia) and set up a children's summer camp for 50 children of co-operative activists (increased in the following year to 150 children) in the town of Pirdop (Bulgaria).⁹¹ In Kharkiv (Khar'kov, Soviet Ukraine, today Ukraine) the main co-operative organization had a crèche for employees' children,⁹² and the health co-operatives (*zdravstvene zadruge*, *здравствене задруге*) in Yugoslavia also organized daycare centres for children.⁹³

Hygiene and health in rural areas

General hygiene and women's reproductive health were relevant co-operative agendas in rural areas in Central and Eastern Europe. The health co-operatives mentioned above, which first emerged in rural Serbia in the 1920s, are described in the literature as one of the most original forms of specialized co-operatives in Yugoslavia and the one that served as the model for organizing similar co-operatives around the world, for example in China, Japan and India but also in Bulgaria, Romania and Poland.⁹⁴ The ICWG also recognized them as relevant.⁹⁵ Ideologically agrarian,⁹⁶ health co-operatives were supposed to meet the health needs of the rural population. They were complementary

to agrarian agricultural co-operatives that were supposed to meet the economic needs of the population.⁹⁷ Health co-operatives had women's sections that oversaw the education of peasant women on hygiene in the household, including the topic of health during childbirth (see also [chapter 5](#)).⁹⁸ *Health Movement (Здравствени покрет)*, the journal of the Union of Health Co-operatives (Savez zdravstvenih zadruga/Савез здравствених задруга, SZZ), which was formed in 1922 in Belgrade, covered the topic of abortion. The journal voiced criticism against all unhygienic and dangerous abortion methods.⁹⁹ Similarly, publications issued by the SZZ addressed the unacceptable negligence of women's wellbeing in peasant families:

During pregnancy, a woman does not take much care of herself and goes about her regular work as if no changes were happening to her. The cattle are almost in a better position than the woman ... When a cow is about to calve, the peasant cleans the barn better than usual, spares it the yoke for a certain time before and after calving, spreads fresh straw so it has a good bed; he coos to it and pets it. His wife, however, is not spared at all.¹⁰⁰

Health co-operatives were also of interest to communist women during the Popular Front period of building alliances with movements of different ideological positions. These co-operatives received coverage in the communist women's magazine *Woman Today (Жена данас)* with an explicit call to support them. The author, who had visited the SZZ exhibition in Belgrade, claimed that the number of health co-operatives was not large enough to deal with many problems peasants faced in Yugoslav villages and concluded: 'Therefore, all relevant stakeholders should take interest in this kind of work and fully support the expansion of health co-operatives.'¹⁰¹

Women's education in co-operatives

As indicated by co-operatives' work concerning hygiene and public health, education formed a crucial part of the co-operative idea irrespective of ideology, ownership or type of activity of the given co-operative, and it was widely regarded as a key component of any co-operative's long-term success. Maria Orsetti summarized the ICWG's programme in this spirit: 'first educate yourself; then educate others!'¹⁰² The VDW decided to nominate one woman to each of the supervisory boards at the 1918

association meeting and allocated a specific task to women: to organize educational work for women and oversee propaganda activities.¹⁰³ At the 1924 co-operative conference of Austrian consumer co-operatives, Emmy Freundlich argued that the 'best intentions of an association's leadership remain useless if its members are ignorant of even the simplest co-operative principles'.¹⁰⁴ The Czechoslovak Guild reported in 1937:

The constant increase in the number of women who take part in the administrative work of the Movement is undoubtedly largely the result of the great expansion in educational work noticeable in recent years. Schools and courses for women held in Prague and other co-operative centres are becoming more numerous and are better attended each year, and a proof of their success in training capable propagandists was the winning of 16,000 new members for the Movement by the women's organization during 1935.¹⁰⁵

Education, though, did not simply aim at training for administrative work and producing able propagandists for the movement; it also sought to improve the conditions of working-class women at home, in the workplace and in society. The diversity of educational and training initiatives in the co-operative movement showcases how women contributed to the creation of such opportunities, in both mixed-gender and women-only settings, and how women comprehended them. Two characteristics of these educational endeavours can be highlighted: training for work within co-operatives (administrative work, propaganda activities and management) and educational initiatives that focused on the general (cultural-economic) advancement of co-operative women. [Chapter 5](#) deals in detail with other types of education (vocational, political, general) and actors (associational, trade unionist, employer, state and global governance initiatives). Co-operatives formed another important sector of women's educational activism, characterized by a keen focus on how gendered differences at work were rooted, among other factors, in the educational marginalization of women.

Education for co-operative work

The management of co-operatives required huge numbers of personnel, and this was well understood by co-operatives from the beginning. An example is the VDW. Shortly after its establishment in Prague, the association started to train administrators and established a business management school (Geschäftsführerschule) in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary,

Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) in 1921, a training school for auditing and management in Teplitz (Teplice, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) from 1927, and a boarding school in Böhmisches Kamnitz (Česká Kamenice, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) from 1930 that trained shop assistants, auditors and store supervisors in two- to four-week courses.¹⁰⁶ We have not found specific data on the participation of women in these courses, but the VDW considered it extremely important to include women in the association from early on. On the 1922 association day (Verbandstag), a resolution was passed that stated the importance of women's work for the movement and committed to the recruitment of women to all positions at the co-operative. The VDW organized 'women's evenings' to present the goals and work of consumer co-operatives and to attract them to the movement. In Teplitz, the local branch of the VDW organized special courses to train women for administrative work and management. By 1931, there were 80 women on supervisory boards and 1,650 women on membership committees in the 153 consumer co-operatives that functioned under the aegis of the VDW.¹⁰⁷ The VDW also published a journal that became the mouthpiece of the women's section, the *Consumer Co-operative Family Paper* (*Konsumgenossenschaftliches Familienblatt*), and joined the ICWG as the German branch in Czechoslovakia in 1930.¹⁰⁸

Women's participation in mixed-gender courses was significant, but overall they remained a tiny minority. For instance, a photo of the participants in the accounting and administrative course of the Higher Co-operative School (Vyšší družstevní škola) at the ÚSČD in 1929 shows only 3 women out of 38 participants.¹⁰⁹ Between 1929 and 1932, in total 1,735 students attended a course at the Higher Co-operative School, and there were 181 women among them.¹¹⁰ Similarly, the Slovak co-operative school offered 11 different courses in 1937 that were attended by 1,329 men and 162 women.¹¹¹

Local women's branches were quite successful in attracting women to educational courses and parts of training programmes. The Austrian guild was especially active in this regard and reached out to large masses of women. During 1932, around 18,000 women attended one of the 'co-operative afternoons' in the auditorium of the STAFA (a co-operative department store in Vienna). In these sessions, women heard lectures on the economic, cultural and social goals of the co-operative movement.¹¹² Freundlich was a pioneer in organizing co-operative education for women. By 1929, the co-operative women's course of the Austrian guild was held in Vienna and Graz (Austria) and welcomed 30 to 40 women, all chosen by local co-operative branches. Emphasis was put on economics and trade. Students learned about the functioning of

co-operatives, so that, for example, they understood how co-operatives were able to pay more to their employees and still sell goods cheaper than private traders.¹¹³ The Hungarian ÁFSZ organized a course for women warehouse clerks in 1916. This was a six- to eight-week practical course that guaranteed follow-up employment for women who had six years of elementary education and were able to pay a 1,000 kronen deposit.¹¹⁴

Educating women beyond the co-operative world

Co-operatives pursued educational initiatives related to their activities, but they also aimed at providing all-round and comprehensive instruction to women. Milka Kodzhasheva, a co-operative activist in interwar Bulgaria, defined co-operative schools as institutions 'where the brotherhood of people will be fostered and where all individual and social virtues will be developed'.¹¹⁵ The emerging circle of women's co-operative organizations in Poland in 1930, in a similar manner, outlined the dual goals of educational work at co-operatives encompassing both women's economic and cultural interests, and the furthering of co-operative awareness. In this way, women would be no longer 'just housewife-buyers' but 'full-fledged partners' involved in decision-making on important matters.¹¹⁶ The activities of the Women's Social Self-Help Association (Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet, SSSK) in Poland demonstrate how these principles translated into concrete educational activities. The SSSK was established in 1935 in Warsaw on the initiative of social democrat Zofia Moraczewska (1873–1958) and, according to its statutes, it attempted to conduct 'co-operation in education and self-education in the form of lectures, public readings, and open discussions, as well as reading rooms and dayrooms for members'.¹¹⁷ The educational activities of the SSSK were indeed quite diverse: at 'Life Counselling Centres' women were guided on how to bring up children in a rational way and how to organize their marriage in a joyful way; they were provided with civic self-education targeted to raise social, legal and political awareness; and the economic self-help section offered advice on forming labour co-operatives and joining the co-operative bank as well as running courses in knitting, weaving and tailoring. The latter was a quite successful endeavour as, in only two years, the majority of the 50 women who received training found employment in factories in Warsaw or in the knitting workshops of the SSSK.¹¹⁸ During the Popular Front period in Bulgaria, communist women collaborated with social democrats in co-operatives (see also [Figure 5](#)). In her autobiography, Dona Bogatinova

(1896–1988) described how communists in Bulgaria reached women through the social democratic Co-operative Women's Guild and the Iuchbunar Popular Bank (Iuchbunarska populiarna banka/Ючбунарска популярна банка) in Iuchbunar, a neighbourhood of Sofia, capital of Bulgaria. Communist women obtained the list of small savers and invited them to meetings with topics such as 'Women and the Co-operative', 'How Co-operatives Will Unburden Women' and 'The Co-operative and Big Capital'.¹¹⁹ The communist-aligned Consumer Co-operative of Young Girls in Belgrade mentioned above organized sewing and knitting courses, established its own library and educated its members about communism, the economy and co-operatives, and similar topics.¹²⁰

This comprehensive approach to educational goals was found in other instances such as the women's committees of Economic Harmony (*Gospodarska sloga*) in Yugoslavia between 1935 and 1941.¹²¹ The committees formed part of the agricultural peasant co-operative movement led by the agrarian nationalist Croatian Peasant Party (*Hrvatska seljačka stranka*, HSS), whose main goal was to economically organize the Croatian peasantry.¹²² In the late 1930s, these women's committees offered courses for peasant women (see also [Figure 18](#)).¹²³ The women's committees' tasks were described in a comprehensive manner in *Economic Harmony (Gospodarska sloga)*, the self-named official journal of the co-operative organization: 'The task of the women's committee is to create among peasant women a sense of common work in everything that is necessary for a woman, housewife, and mother as a faithful and responsible member of society and the Croatian nation.'¹²⁴ These included household-related courses, health courses, gardening advice, handicrafts and in general 'everything that can improve and facilitate economic life in the countryside and improve the position of a woman'.¹²⁵ Just like the SSSK in Poland, Economic Harmony offered women spinning and weaving courses in order to provide better opportunities and economic progress to peasant women in the countryside.¹²⁶ Women's committees under the aegis of the ÚSČD in Czechoslovakia organized a diverse set of activities for women members in order to bring them around to the co-operative idea. These included courses on the education and feeding of children, healthcare and hygiene, practical courses on knitting, sewing and cooking, and collective visits to theatres and other cultural events.¹²⁷

Co-operativism served as a platform for women labour activists to move between different organizations of the labour movement. Women activists did not limit their activities to one organization or branch in the labour movement but had ties with party organizations,

trade unions, co-operatives and other labour-related organizations on the national and international level. When Szeréna Ladányi drafted the educational programme for the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSZDP) (chapter 5), she dedicated a unit to the dissemination of co-operative ideas in all parts of the labour movement.¹²⁸ Emmy Freundlich was a regular contributor to the social democratic *Educational Work: Paper for Socialist Education* (*Bildungsarbeit: Blätter für sozialistisches Bildungswesen*). Co-operatives also provided a space for political education during informal women's gatherings. In one of the earliest land-leasing co-operatives in Hungary, where landless agrarian peasants from Cegléd organized at the beginning of the twentieth century, the women of the co-operative sat together during the winter evenings reading novels and the socialist newspaper of the MSZDP.¹²⁹

Conclusion

Women's co-operative activism in Central and Eastern Europe, characterized by multiscale organizing, aimed to improve working-class women's position in co-operatives and society in the first half of the twentieth century. It addressed the relationship of women, work and the economy in theory and in practice by educating women in co-operativism and beyond and striving to reshape, reform and re-evaluate women's reproductive labour and everyday-life activities in the fields of consumption, childcare and hygiene standards. Women's opportunities and frameworks for activism in co-operatives significantly differed from women's activism in other parts of the labour movement. Co-operative women were certainly not the only ones discussing reproductive labour. Their arguments were typically shared with women labour activists of the same ideological positioning in the other branches of the labour movement – parties and trade unions (chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4). However, co-operative women's activism was most pronounced in its in-depth and innovative approaches that helped bridge the binaries of the public and private sphere and paid and unpaid labour within the labour movement. Building on and broadening English guildswomen's thought on women's 'isolation' at home,¹³⁰ Central and Eastern European women activists in co-operatives focused on the "private" sphere, aiming to transform its privateness. They sought recognition for women's reproductive labour and attempted to re-evaluate this type of unpaid work, while at the same time advocating for women's engagement in co-operatives and in

the public sphere. It can be argued that social democratic co-operative women activists contributed to reifying the gender division of labour within households and communities by not challenging either it or women's primary roles as mothers and housewives. At the same time, their efforts were directed at reassessing the value and significance of reproductive labour as such. Consequently, they highlighted its crucial role in the economy, striving to change the politics of women's work and working-class women's overall position in society.

Consumer co-operatives and their activists mostly provided tools for housewives to supply the family in the best possible way with the means available. Thus the 'shopping basket' became a crucial concept in their agendas, which included the provision of cheaper goods through producer and consumer co-operatives but also the rationalization and modernization of the household through courses, lectures and the co-operative press. In Central and Eastern Europe, the 'woman with the shopping basket' included both the housewife engaged only in unpaid labour and the housewife engaged in wage labour too. In the long run, consumer co-operativism would play a key role in the labour movement by transforming supply chains and capitalist production to favour the working class.¹³¹

The ICWG became a crucial vehicle for women's organizing and acting within the co-operative movement in Central and Eastern Europe, similarly to the ways the history of consumer co-operatives was 'shaped by the connections and entanglements between co-operative organizations across time and space'¹³² in other parts of the world. It provided knowledge and expertise in terms of agendas, propaganda materials and modes of organization, functioned as a catalyst for activities and created a platform for debates, especially between social democrats and communists. The relationship was fruitful in the other direction as well: the ICWG could rely on national branches as a source of ideas, political capital and activism. Together with its national branches (and their activists) as well as women's groups that had been linked but not (yet) officially affiliated, the ICWG aimed to change women's position in the co-operative movement through educational initiatives, by the creation of legal equality within the movement, and by the inclusion of women in the administration, management and membership of co-operatives. The co-operative movement in Central and Eastern Europe prospered in the interwar period and increased in size and influence until 1938 (except for Austria after 1934), in mild contrast to the English WCG, which was in a 'qualitative decline' after 1920¹³³ but quantitatively continued to grow until World War II.¹³⁴

Women's activism in the co-operative movement in Central and Eastern Europe is a huge, underexplored field. This chapter is among the early attempts at writing this history. Future research has to investigate co-operative women's activism during World War I and the interwar period as well as in the changing political and economic landscapes during and after World War II. Additional research is needed on the conflicts and collaborations between social democratic and communist co-operators to understand how they lived and envisioned co-operativism. Co-operatives were also business enterprises, meaning that the role of co-operatives as employers, and of co-operative employees as women labour activists, are valuable topics for historical analysis. The role of state, ethnicity and religion¹³⁵ in shaping co-operative women's activism and the differences in co-operative agendas connected to different types of co-operatives are two additional ventures worth exploring. This new research would provide a nuanced understanding of the complexities of gender and labour histories of women's activism in Central and Eastern Europe.

Notes

- 1 International Cooperative Alliance, 'What Is a Cooperative?'
- 2 Notable exceptions include Chyra-Rolicz, *Wspólnymi siłami*; Reich, *Von der Arbeiterselbsthilfe*.
- 3 ZARAH DB, 'Freundlich, Emmy. Special Record (Person)'.
- 4 Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions', 179; Chyra-Rolicz, *Wspólnymi siłami*, 44–47.
- 5 Soós, *Húsz esztendő*, 21.
- 6 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*, 51.
- 7 Appelt, 'Gendering of the Service'.
- 8 ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 1934, 4–6, U DCX/3/6, HHC.
- 9 'Vier weibliche Mitglieder'.
- 10 The first subsection of this section summarizes and builds on the argument that was first developed in Tešija, "'Millions of Working Housewives'".
- 11 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*.
- 12 ICWG, 'Draft Rules of the International Co-operative Women's Guild', 1924, U DCX/2/2, HHC.
- 13 Watkins, *International Co-operative Alliance, 1895–1970*, 333; Tešija, "'Millions of Working Housewives'", 322–25.
- 14 Rhodes, *The International Co-operative Alliance*; Tešija, "'Millions of Working Housewives'".
- 15 ICWG, 'Draft Rules'.
- 16 ICWG, 'The Report of the International Co-operative Women's Committee, September, 1921–June, 1924', 1924, U DCX/3/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Resolutions Passed by the International Co-operative Women's Conference at Ghent in 1924', 1924, U DCX/2/2, HHC.
- 17 Enfield, 'Glimpses into the Co-operative Movement'.
- 18 Chyra-Rolicz, 'Kobiety do spółdzielni'.
- 19 'Tajnica internacionalnih ženskih gildov'; Tešija, "'Millions of Working Housewives'", 324–25.
- 20 Vidovič Miklavčič, 'Zveza delavskih žen in deklet'.
- 21 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*, 43.
- 22 Avramović, 'Међународни конгрес жена-задругара', 457.

- 23 Bălăeș, 'Femeia și cooperația'.
- 24 Freundlich, *Рольота на жената*.
- 25 Ivanova, *Азбука на английската женска кооперативна гилда*; Ivanova, *Кратък преглед на женското кооперативно движение*.
- 26 Simeonov, 'Съюз на жените кооператорки'.
- 27 Staudinger, *Žena v družstevním hnutí*; Freundlich, *Slovo k hospodyňkám*.
- 28 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*, 53.
- 29 Ivanova, 'Жене у задружном покрету'.
- 30 M. Ž., 'Zadružni savez žena i domaćica'.
- 31 'Může nákupní koš být prostředkem'.
- 32 Nečásková, 'State Allowances for Mothers at Home', 8.
- 33 Bark, 'Naši přátelé a nepřátelé'.
- 34 ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 11.
- 35 Theo Naftel, 'A Trip to Eastern Europe' (ICWG, September 1939), 4, U DCX/4/17, HHC.
- 36 Scott, *Feminism and the Politics*; Hellawell, "A Strong International Spirit".
- 37 Van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, 147.
- 38 Erdélyi, 'Experts in the Bureau', 270–322.
- 39 Chyra-Rolicz, *Wspólnymi siłami*, 102.
- 40 Chyra-Rolicz, *Wspólnymi siłami*, 102–4.
- 41 Emmy Freundlich, 'The Place of Women in the Co-operative Movement' (ICWG, 1924), U DCX 5/12, HHC; Nečásková, *Žena v družstevním hnutí*; Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions'; Désics, 'A nő és a nőgilde'.
- 42 Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions', 172.
- 43 Borsodi, 'Asszonyok a szövetkezeti mozgalomban'.
- 44 Daszyńska-Golińska, 'Through Cooperatives', 146–47; Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions', 174–77; Vorberg-Rugh, 'The Unit of the Co-operative', 91–95.
- 45 *Naše propagační akce*.
- 46 'Našim ženám', 4.
- 47 Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions', 183.
- 48 Gurney, 'Redefining "the Woman with the Basket"', 190.
- 49 Hellawell, "A Strong International Spirit", 100; see also Gaffin and Thoms, *Caring and Sharing*, 20 and 89; Vorberg-Rugh, 'The Unit of the Co-operative', 92.
- 50 Freundlich, 'State Allowances or Communal Services', 16.
- 51 Vobecká, 'Práce mezi ženami'.
- 52 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*, 23.
- 53 Freundlich, 'The Place of Women', 2.
- 54 Nečásková, 'Proslov na schůzi'.
- 55 *Rudé právo*, 'Resoluce a směrnice přijaté', 9.
- 56 Kaninská, 'Ženy a revoluční oposice'.
- 57 'Může nákupní koš být prostředkem'.
- 58 'Proletářské družstevnice v ČSR', 7.
- 59 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 357–59; Cvetić, *Жене Србује у НОБ*, 68–69.
- 60 Nečásková, 'Proslov na večírku k propagaci družstevních výrobků'.
- 61 Nečásková, 'Proslov na večírku k propagaci družstevních výrobků'.
- 62 Nečásková, 'Proslov na večírku k propagaci družstevních výrobků'.
- 63 'János és a "Hajnal"-kávė'.
- 64 Strommer and Strommer, *Im Vertrauen auf die Macht*, 90–93.
- 65 The second subsection of this section summarizes and further develops the argument taken from Tešija, "Millions of Working Housewives".
- 66 Freundlich, *Housewives Build a New World*, 29–31.
- 67 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 101.
- 68 Strommer and Strommer, *Im Vertrauen auf die Macht*, 64–65.
- 69 Ferguson and Enfield, *Fortnight in Austria in 1920*, 20–21.
- 70 Ferguson and Enfield, *Fortnight in Austria in 1920*, 32.
- 71 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 289–95.
- 72 Emmy Freundlich and Theo Naftel, *Post-War Relief and Reconstruction* (London: ICWG, [1945?]), CO 1/01/1d C, ILOA.

- 73 For more on World War I and postwar hunger and scarcity management, see Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 93–96.
- 74 On communist women and their activism in this co-operative union, which was their employer, as well as their connections with the communist-aligned trade union, the Union of Banking, Insurance, Commercial and Industrial Officials of Yugoslavia (Savez bankovnih, osiguravajućih, trgovačkih i industrijskih činovnika Jugoslavije, SBOTIČJ), see Musić, 'Službenice, potrošačice i komunistkinje'; Lekić, 'Štrajk u Savezu nabavljачkih zadruga'.
- 75 On Milka Žicina Šakić, see Grubački, 'Kaja's Path and Milka Žicina's Path'.
- 76 'Memoari Milke Žicine Šakić', n.d., 12–13, 1885/MG XXXII-342, IAB.
- 77 'Valná hromada VDP'.
- 78 ICWG, 'Low Prices or High Dividends?' (ICWG, n.d.), 11, U DCX/2/3, HHC.
- 79 'Klagenfurt'.
- 80 See also Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, 'A Global History of Consumer Co-operation'.
- 81 ICWG, 'Housewives' Programme – Adopted by the Committee of the International Guild at Its Meeting of June 24th and 25th, 1933', 1933, U DCX/5/46, HHC; see also Tešija, "Millions of Working Housewives", 331–32.
- 82 'Information Bulletin' (ICWG, May 1938), 3, U DCX/4/17, HHC.
- 83 'Information Bulletin' (ICWG, March 1939), 4, U DCX/4/17, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 4–5.
- 84 ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 5–13.
- 85 'A háziasszonyok vakációja'.
- 86 'Óvjuk egészségünket'.
- 87 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 265–72.
- 88 Tešija, "Millions of Working Housewives".
- 89 ICWG, *The Family Wash: An International Study* (London: ICWG, 1927), U DCX/2/3, HHC, published in ZARAH DB, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/254>.
- 90 ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 13; Emmy Freundlich, 'Popular Nutrition and the Housewife. Memorandum to Be Submitted to the International Labour Office', 1936, 14–15, U DCX/8/4, HHC.
- 91 Simeonov, 'Съюз на жените кооператорки'.
- 92 Naftel, 'A Trip to Eastern Europe', 6.
- 93 Vučković, *Istorija zadružnog pokreta u Jugoslaviji*, 168.
- 94 Vučković, *Istorija zadružnog pokreta u Jugoslaviji*, 164–65.
- 95 Letter, Theo Naftel to Monsieur Colombain, 8 September 1935, CO 1/01/1d C, ILOA.
- 96 On agrarianism in Serbia, see Daskalov, 'Agrarian Ideologies', 339–47.
- 97 Vučković, *Istorija zadružnog pokreta u Jugoslaviji*, 164–68. On public health and eugenics in interwar Yugoslavia, see Dugac, "Like Yeast in Fermentation".
- 98 Stefanović, *Наше здравствено задругарство*, 37–43.
- 99 Blagojević-Bovolini, '...Опет један живот мање'.
- 100 Stefanović, *Наше здравствено задругарство*, 40.
- 101 Almuli, 'Sa izložbe zdravstvenih zadruga', 8.
- 102 Orsetti, 'Woman, Whose Name Is Millions', 182.
- 103 Reich, *Von der Arbeiterselbsthilfe*, 314.
- 104 'Genossenschaftskonferenz', 3.
- 105 ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1934–1937', 7.
- 106 GEC-Verband, *Die deutschen Konsumgenossenschaften der Tschechoslowakei*.
- 107 GEC-Verband, *Die deutschen Konsumgenossenschaften der Tschechoslowakei*.
- 108 Reich, *Von der Arbeiterselbsthilfe*, 313–30.
- 109 'Kursy odboru výrobních a pracovních družstev', 11.
- 110 'Čtyři léta Vyšší družstevní školy'.
- 111 'Vyšší družstevní škola', 23.
- 112 'Szövetkezeti asszonyok összejövetelei'.
- 113 'Az osztrák szövetkező nők'.
- 114 'Felhívás női raktárnokok (fiókkvezetők) alkalmaztatási ügyében'.
- 115 Kozhabasheva, *Един метод на новото възпитание*, 7.
- 116 Chyra-Rolicz, 'Kobiety do spółdzielni'.
- 117 Piwowarczyk, 'Cooperative as a Form of Education', 8.
- 118 Piwowarczyk, 'Cooperative as a Form of Education', 8–12.

- 119 Bogatinova, *Трудно и славно мишло*, 116–19.
- 120 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 357–58.
- 121 On the specific character and role of Economic Harmony and its co-operative associations in the Yugoslav co-operative movement, see Vučković, *Istoriја задружног покрета u Југославији*, 175–78; Daskalov, 'Agrarian Ideologies', 337–38.
- 122 Šute, *Slogom slobodi!*, 114.
- 123 Šute, *Slogom slobodi!*, 301–9.
- 124 'Pravilnik ženskog povjereništva'.
- 125 'Pravilnik ženskog povjereništva'.
- 126 'Život u zapadnoj Bosni'.
- 127 Burešová, *Women in the Czechoslovak Co-operative*, 27. For a Hungarian example of a women's handicraft course, see 'Kézimunka kiállítás'.
- 128 Szeréna Ladányi, 'Előadástvázlat az MSZDP országos oktatási bizottságának alakuló ülésére', 8 July 1933, Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 39, PIL.
- 129 Hídvégi, 'Egy agrárproletár földbérlet-szövetkezet'.
- 130 Madden and Persky, 'Economic Thought of the Women's Co-operative Guild', 162–65.
- 131 Nečásková, *Žena v družstevním hnutí*.
- 132 Hilson, Neunsinger, and Patmore, 'A Global History of Consumer Co-operation', 4.
- 133 Scott, *Feminism and the Politics*, 5.
- 134 Gaffin and Thoms, *Caring and Sharing*, 90.
- 135 For more on the role co-operatives played in national movements and conflicts, see Lorenz, *Cooperatives in Ethnic Conflicts*.

2

Trade unions: gender politics and women's organizing, 1900s to 1980s

Introduction: women and trade unions in long-term perspective

This chapter historicizes and re-evaluates the long-term trends in the complex and shifting relationship between women and trade unions in the region of focus, concentrating on the dynamics of the trade unionist politics of women's work and the patterns of women's organizing. From the early twentieth century, women activists from the region strategically and persistently pushed their way into the mixed-gender unions. They used all opportunities and struggled to overcome challenges that they encountered in their efforts to improve the work and living conditions of working(-class) women within the mixed-gender and men-dominated spaces of the "classical" labour movement. Maintaining this focus, the chapter only marginally addresses the separate sphere of women-only trade unions and professional associations. Eastern European women trade unionists managed to navigate the hierarchies and shape the structures of mixed-gender trade unions, pursuing their work within women's sections and committees or participating in the broader decision-making processes of the trade unions. They played significant roles in promoting women-friendly labour organizing landscapes and agendas on local, international and global scales of the labour movement. They co-operated and collaborated in trade union internationals such as the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), Red International of Labour Unions (RILU, Profintern), International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (IFCTU), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), as well as on institutional platforms such as the United Nations and

its commissions, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), which functioned as hubs for the translation of ideas, repertoires and agendas between the local, national and international scales. However, the possibilities and limitations for advancing women-friendly labour and social policies and the number of women active internationally varied greatly throughout the century. At the same time, the international plane witnessed confrontation and ideological struggle between women trade unionists of different political backgrounds and thinking.

Starting at the beginning of the twentieth century, the chapter pursues a long-term historical perspective exploring the relationship between women and trade unions until the geopolitical transformations the region underwent in the late 1980s. A wide range of contextual shifts, including regime changes, economic crises, wars and Cold War competition, unfolded in the region during this period. These changes inevitably had an impact on trade unions and women's activism, often simultaneously limiting spaces and opportunities for certain types of organizing, yet creating new spaces and opportunities for advancing demands and agendas for improving the labour and living conditions of working women. Throughout this long period, trade unions with varying political affiliations – including syndicalist, 'national', Christian (generally Catholic), social democratic, communist and other politically affiliated trade unions, underground and corporatist trade unions under (right-wing) authoritarian regimes, as well as state-steered trade unions under (state) socialism – competed on both the international and national scales over the organization of women workers. In the 1980s, systemic change in Eastern Europe and the end of the Cold War led to a radical restructuring of trade unions and fluctuation in unionization rates both within the region and internationally.

Highlighting selected key moments of the history of women's unionization and activism in trade unions from the early twentieth century to the post-1945 decades in each section of the chapter helps us to dissect the complexities of the evolving relationship between mixed-gender trade unions and their Eastern European women activists. Unionization of different categories of women workers was a first major concern of women activists and sometimes of their fellow men trade unionists on various scales. The evolution of policies towards unionizing, thus, is a first step to understanding the roles and scales of actions women had in the trade unions. We then examine the possibilities and limitations of women's activism within the (international) trade unions' power structures and decision-making processes. Finally, we trace the

evolution of trade unions' gendered agenda and policies, focusing on the issue of equal pay.

As gender-specific agendas, the demands for wage justice and equal pay (alternatively 'equal pay for equal work' or 'equal pay for work of equal value') – that is, the struggles to close the wage gap and to eliminate gender-based discrimination regarding remuneration – form a particularly suitable lens to investigate when, how and to what extent unions represented the interests of women workers. However, equal pay cannot be studied in isolation, since the demand was inextricably interconnected with a number of other issues, including job and skill evaluation systems, gender-based work discrimination, politics addressing working mothers, segregated labour markets, access to vocational training and other career-advancing opportunities, and the fight for (but also against) protective labour legislation. The chapter captures trade unions' ambiguous historical record in relation to the question of gender wage justice and discusses to what extent actual trade union practice reflected formal commitments to protecting women workers' interests.

Despite their significant contributions, activities of women trade unionists in mixed-gender trade unions have been underrepresented in primary sources and marginalized in the scholarly literature. The wide range of sources dedicated to the trade union movement often devalue, leave out and/or misrepresent women's activism. In many instances, activism of women from the region of focus and gender issues are sidelined or omitted as insignificant.¹ In recent years, however, more and more research has been done to overcome this marginalization and bring to light the multifaceted contribution of women activists to the trade union movement and the development of the gendered politics of work and life.²

Women's organizing and the international labour movement

In the long view, the history of the unionization of women workers mirrored the shift in strategies that reflected political divides and challenges arising on the path to organizing women within the labour movement. In the aftermath of World War I, the question of women's integration into organized labour emerged as a focus of programmes, conferences and actions. After World War II, women trade unionists increasingly asserted their presence and influence internationally,

participating actively in mixed-gender trade unions and international labour forums. Throughout the whole period they often had to deal with the impact of their marginalized position, of political divides and of other constraints on activism, but they nevertheless made use of the varied possibilities of advancing women-friendly labour and social policies and navigating ideological conflicts.

Programmes of international trade union organizations

The question of women's organizing gained significant visibility in the agendas of internationally organized labour in the post-World War I period. The constitution of the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW), adopted in 1921, stated that its first aim was to 'promote trade union organization among women' as a means to fulfil its overall objective of raising the 'standard of life of the workers throughout the world'.³ Organizing (industrial) women workers was also the very first item in the agenda of the first meeting of the IFTU Women's Committee in 1925 and continued to be at the forefront of their efforts throughout the interwar period.⁴

The 1922 programme of the IFCTU put an increased focus on the politics of women's work. This programme – informed by Christian social values – made demands related to (gender-specific) labour protection measures and a social wage that took into account workers' family obligations and the cost of living, as well as an intention to work for the withdrawal of married women with children from salaried employment in the long run.⁵

In the communist camp, RILU (Profintern) also put organizing women workers on the agenda right from its foundation stage.⁶ In 1922 a special circular was issued outlining that RILU 'must pay most serious attention to bringing women workers into the revolutionary movement'.⁷ Furthermore, the 1922 Profintern programme stressed the need to give women workers – 'the most backward category of workers' – access to trade union membership but also to put women's work 'on a completely equal footing with men's work'. In an early attempt to weaponize (un)equal pay in the ideological struggle between the different strands of the labour movement, the 1922 programme also called out their rival social democratic trade unions on supporting unequal pay practices in collective bargaining.⁸ In the following years the need to reach women workers was repeatedly professed, especially after the mid-1920s when a broad reorganization of the work of the communist movement put increased focus on trade unions and prioritized work in factories

over neighbourhood-based political organizations, although with an ambiguous record of success (chapter 3).

From the perspective of women trade unionists, women workers' unionization was regarded as the single most important prerequisite to the solution of most problems of women's work: from raising wage levels and improving working conditions to increasing the scope of protective labour legislation and social security coverage. Conversely, from the perspective of men trade unionists, women's organizing was often framed as a necessary step towards achieving working-class unity and as a means of preventing women from 'ruining' men workers' established wage rates.⁹

After World War II, a new trade union international emerged – the WFTU – with the intention of fostering wartime co-operation between east and west. Despite the WFTU's calls for the unity of labour movement in Europe and beyond, the American Federation of Labor and the IFCTU refused to take part.¹⁰ From the late 1940s, more than two decades since the IFWW, ICFTU and RILU had started to promote women's unionization, the WFTU considered this matter to be one of its central concerns. The report discussed by the Executive Committee in May 1948 in relation to the issues of equal pay called for trade unionists to 'undertake a great campaign to encourage women to join trade union organizations in large numbers'.¹¹ When discussing the issues of equal pay, the WFTU stated that, by joining trade unions, women workers could directly participate in the fight for their agendas and strengthen the whole labour movement.

The WFTU existed as a labour international that seemingly crossed political divides for only a short period; by 1949 it had split into the communist-aligned WFTU and, opposing it, the ICFTU, reflecting the growing global Cold War tensions and controversies. Both organizations were concerned with the issues of bringing women into trade unions. The communist-aligned WFTU continued to argue for organizing women actively, although before 1953 it worked towards real action only to a limited degree.¹² Over the course of time, however, its programmes, conference documents and reports increasingly and repeatedly underlined that 'to win and defend the demands of women', as outlined in the WFTU's World Trade Union Congress's resolution on women workers of 1965, full effort must be put into organizing women workers in the trade unions and supporting their training and promotion to the leading bodies.¹³ The WFTU saw this as an important initiative and called on working women to organize, formulate and protect their demands on the local, regional and global scales. Training courses for women and propaganda for 'raising trade union consciousness' were recognized as

crucial and efficient means to push women to act and join trade unions, as the 1957 annual report emphasized ([chapter 5](#)).¹⁴ In campaigning for the unionization of women, the WFTU received support from the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). During the WFTU's Third World Trade Union Congress in 1953, Marie-Claude Vaillant-Couturier, General Secretary of the WIDF, promised to disseminate ideas on the importance of unionization 'through discussion ... to get women to understand the necessity of joining a union to defend their demands'.¹⁵

The WFTU's First World Conference of Women Workers, organized in 1956 in Budapest, the capital of Hungary ([Map 3](#)), marked the start of an active campaign for women's unionization on various levels of responsibility, reaching up to the top. In 1957, the participants in the WFTU's Fourth Trade Union Congress concluded that

the trade unions should see women workers' problems as an integral part of trade union activities as a whole. Considerations of their aspiration and demands will greatly help in the successful organization of a wide recruiting campaign among women workers. This would make it possible for women to take their rightful place at all levels of the trade union.¹⁶

This vision remained central to the unionization policies developed by WFTU leaders and members in the following decades. In addition to all the efforts the trade unions put into organizing women, it was expected that women workers themselves should express initiative and take an active part in trade union life.

In the 1960s, the numbers of women in trade unions had increased in various state socialist countries, although this process was uneven ([Table 8](#)). The WFTU's Second International Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women, which took place in 1964, in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, reported that women already constituted 40 per cent of the members of the trade union federations affiliated with the WFTU. In reports on unionization progress within state socialist countries, specific examples highlighted the Slovak trade union council with 25 per cent female membership, Hungarian workers' committees with 30 per cent female representation, and regional bodies in which women comprised 25 per cent of the membership.¹⁷

Women's trade unionism became linked with the 'unity of action' politics advocated by the WFTU and aimed to reach beyond communist-aligned unions with the goal of bringing together the widest number of workers into active participation. This strategy promoted involving

unorganized women workers in union activities and fostering broader collaboration across various union affiliations. The WFTU's goal was to transcend ideological divides and create inclusive, large-scale worker movements under its umbrella.¹⁸ The top leadership of the WFTU advocated for the active participation of women in trade union life as a means to promote and ensure unity across the Cold War divide. Louis Saillant, who served as the WFTU's general secretary between 1945 and 1968, declared:

New categories of organized women in the world and the growing number of women trade union leaders at all levels represent a new feature in the discussion on unity. Apart from the fact that the majority of these women were not directly involved in the trade union splits from 1947 to 1950, there is the important fact that they represent new forces and elements who add to the discussion on ways and means of establishing unity, a tone of their own and the desire of seeking the road to unity which is specific and typical for the will and tenacity of working women.¹⁹

This view continued to frame women's unionization in the policy of unity of action in the 1960s and 1970s.

Developing the WFTU's vision on the roles and activities of women trade unions further, WFTU official documents underlined that women should not only be engaged with the problems of working women but also become involved in a wide array of issues critical for the labour movement. This was reflected in the key document outlining the WFTU's basic programme in fighting for women workers' rights, the Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights of Working Women, adopted in 1964 and revised several times.²⁰ The Charter emphasized that 'the active participation of working women in the life activities and struggles of the trade unions as well as their promotion to the leading bodies are decisive factors for winning and extending the economic and social rights both of working women and the entire working class'.²¹ Trade unions in turn were asked to take particular care to involve women in trade union activity, provide educational and promotion opportunities, organize propaganda and promote the rights and demands of women.²² The WFTU conceived of the strategy of drawing more women to the trade unions as an important means towards achieving unity of action and the empowerment of the trade unions in their fight for workers' rights, as the organization repeatedly emphasized.²³

Unionization of women workers remained a topic of discussion at the international meetings and conferences organized in the 1970s. Delivering a keynote speech at the regional seminar 'The Place of Working Women in Europe', convened in 1978 in Budapest, Daniela Kubátová (Table 9), a Czechoslovak trade union activist, representing the WFTU at the seminar, outlined the persistently low number of women in leadership and decision-making roles within trade unions and underscored the necessity of expanding trade union work among women who were not yet union members, especially those in sectors with low unionization rates, such as agriculture. She emphasized the importance of unity of action policies for a successful unionization campaign, suggesting that these challenges could be addressed through the exchange of experiences and insights among trade unions across various countries.²⁴

The ICFTU was as preoccupied with the issue of women organizing as the WFTU. The ICFTU's 1975 Charter of Rights of Working Women²⁵ dwelt on women's organizing and mirrored the WFTU's main points regarding unionizing women, their trade union training and their promotion to leading positions. It called for working women to be encouraged to join trade unions to improve their status: 'Decisive progress will only be accomplished when women themselves understand that they need trade unions, and should join them and take part in their activities.' Women were to be represented on all levels, including the executive one. 'The knowledge and experience of women trade unionists should be fully utilised', emphasized the ICFTU's Charter. It continues: 'They should be encouraged to assume responsibilities and to act as spokesmen [*sic*] of the trade union movement at all levels and not be confined simply to dealing with women workers' issues.' In this context, the delegations to trade union congresses were supposed to include women, although the ICFTU's Charter did not go into detail about the proportion of women delegates.²⁶

Women trade unionists from the region in the international labour movement

With the emergence of the social democratic IFTU in 1919, the Christian IFCTU in 1920 and the communist RILU in 1921, the early interwar period set the scene for the international labour movement's clear-cut division along ideological lines. Each of these strands of the labour movement handled women's inclusion in trade union bodies differently, but the approaches of all three strands also underwent marked evolution

throughout the interwar period. In addition to the separate institutional structures for women that existed at various periods, all three major trade union internationals organized conferences dedicated to the problems of women's work and women workers from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s (Table 6), when the spread of right-wing authoritarian regimes negatively affected women's institutionalized representation in the international labour movement.

In the immediate post-World War I period, women trade unionists and labour women from many countries set up a separate organization, the International Congress of Working Women (ICWW), renamed the IFWW in 1921. In both ICWW and IFWW bodies and events there was a strong representation of women from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Austria (Table 6, Map 2).²⁷ After the dissolution of the IFWW, the IFTU Women's Committee was founded in 1924–5. In the 1930s Valerie Novotná from Czechoslovakia was first an alternate and then a full member of the committee, and women trade unionists from Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland actively participated in the international women's conferences of the IFTU (Table 6). In 1937 the status of the Women's Committee was downgraded and its scope of action limited by the IFTU's Executive Committee.²⁸

The Christian IFCTU had a distinct institutional policy with regard to women, inscribing their right of separate representation in its statutes. Maria Baers from Belgium and a Miss Vurthmann from Germany served as women representatives in the IFCTU's Executive Bureau in the early 1920s.²⁹ Institutionalized representation of women workers at the top of the international trade union organization was a distinct feature of the IFCTU, which at the time was not present in either the IFTU or RILU. As researchers of the Christian labour movement have pointed out, Catholic trade unionism's traditions of gender segregation worked for the greater autonomy of women activists since they not only fostered a culture of separate women organizing, but also guaranteed a minimum level of representation for women in governing bodies.³⁰

IFCTU women held separate women's conferences in 1921, 1922, 1925, 1928, 1931 and 1932. As a rule the conferences were held in conjunction with IFCTU congresses and submitted their decisions to the general congress. Women (and sometimes men) activists from the region participated in most of the IFCTU conferences, though in small numbers and coming from a limited number of countries (Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary) (Table 6).

In 1927, the IFCTU set up a Committee for Women's Work, headed by trade unionists from Belgium, Germany and France. Its goals were

to carry out research within a context of growing concern about the consequences of rationalization (as the process was called at the time) on men's and women's work and to serve as a means for the IFCTU to promote its stance on the issues of women's work within the ILO.³¹

The Action Programme, passed during the 1921 Founding Congress of RILU, contained a section on women's organizing, which stressed the need to prevent separatism by repressing the formation of separate women's trade unions.³² In the early and mid-1920s it was the International Women's Secretariat (IWS) of the Comintern that took the leading role in shaping Profintern's policies regarding women workers. Communist women played a crucial role in setting up a trade union structure for women in 1928 – the International Trade Union Committee of Women Workers of the Profintern (ITUCWWP), which included strong participation from our region (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania and Yugoslavia) (Table 6).³³ The ITUCWWP was particularly active in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Its status and role declined in the mid-1930s, until it was finally liquidated as part of international communism's readjustment to Popular Front tactics.³⁴

From the end of World War II the number of women trade unionists active on the global scale was gradually rising. In 1948 women were still scantily represented at the WFTU's Executive Committee, with only 1 woman 'enjoying equal powers' with the 23 male members.³⁵ Until the late 1980s, women remained in the minority in the mixed-gender trade union internationals but gradually increased their presence in both leading and non-leading positions. As early as 1956 Elena Teodorescu (1908–?) (Table 9), a member of the Executive Committee of the General Council of Trade Unions (Consiliul General al Sindicatelor, CGS) in Romania, became the first Eastern European woman to be elected to the leading position in the WFTU's Secretariat; she remained in this role until approximately 1964, when she was replaced by Stana Dragoi (1922–?) (Table 9).³⁶ In the 1970s, Drahomíra Hanzalová (1931–) (Table 9) from Czechoslovakia, serving on the Central Council of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí, ROH), held this position. In the late 1980s, Marie Frýbortová (Table 9), also from Czechoslovakia, was listed as one of the leading functionaries working in the WFTU's central Secretariat. Participating in various meetings and events on the regional and international scales (Table 9), these women pushed forward agendas and demands aiming to bring about profound changes in the economic, political and social life of working women.

The international meetings, such as the WFTU's conferences of women workers, that took place in 1956, 1964, 1972, 1979 and 1989

functioned as platforms where women trade unionists from various countries discussed working women's problems and formulated and advanced repertoires and agendas related to the improvement of women's life and labour conditions. These ideas and agendas travelled from the national to the international scale and back. This was complemented by regional gatherings, conferences and seminars, attended by women trade unionists from the region (and beyond), at which women exchanged regional experience and engaged with the related politics of practice ([chapter 10](#)).

Eastern European women trade unionists participated in the debates and meetings of the international organizations such as the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW, a commission of the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC)) and the ILO. They believed that their trade unions' international expertise on working women's problems and first-hand information about the situation on the ground would help international bodies to develop a progressive politics of women's work. In November 1956, for instance, Teodorescu was a member of the WFTU delegation that met with the Director General of the ILO to discuss 'problems of mutual interest concerning women workers'.³⁷ She also took part in the WFTU's meetings with the ILO's Director General in 1958, 1962 and 1964, raising early on the question of the establishment of a tripartite – and top-level – committee on women's work and pushing the ILO to include the problems of working women on the agenda of the International Labour Conference.³⁸ In 1975, Hanzalová attended the UN World Conference of the International Women's Year in Mexico City in the role of a leading functionary of the WFTU.³⁹

Challenges and trends in women's unionization

Trade unions' policies regarding recruiting women evolved between the early twentieth century and the 1980s together with the changing characteristics of women's gainful employment, as well as with institutional and ideological transformations within the labour movement and the region. Exploring the trends in women's organizing in the region, especially for the pre-1945 period, is complicated by the specificity of national contexts and the scarcity and, at times, unreliability of the available data (although see [Table 2](#)). Looking beyond the political and geographical divides, this section investigates the general trends and cycles that characterized the relationship between women workers and trade unions

against the backdrop of the economic, social and political transformations in the region such as regime changes, economic crises, wars and Cold War competition. Competing gendered visions of trade union organizing influenced, interacted with and/or counteracted one another between the 1920s and the 1980s.

The development of women's unionization rates

The issue of women workers' unionization arose together with the growing trade union movement in the late nineteenth century. In our region the highly uneven process of industrialization, the varying proportions of women in gainful employment and their distribution among different branches of the economy were reflected in the diversity of approaches towards the incorporation of women into the labour movement and the uneven manner in which women workers gained access to trade union organizations.

In the Habsburg Monarchy ([Map 1](#)), women workers joined (some) trade unions and workers' associations from the 1870s onwards. The Congress of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei) held in 1889 in Hainfeld recommended that women and men should be organized together in trade unions. Nevertheless, four years later a third of social democratic trade union organizations still refused to accept women.⁴⁰ Christian workers' associations also began to form in the last quarter of the nineteenth century with an increase after the papal encyclical *Rerum Novarum* in 1891, which allowed the establishment of trade unions for Catholic workers. Although much smaller in number, Christian trade unions successfully organized some women workers, among them domestic servants ([chapter 9](#), [Table 2](#)).⁴¹

Facing informal impediments to mixed-gender labour organizing – and in certain cases formal membership bans⁴² – women labour activists, including (in the early period) the Austrian social democrat Anna Boschek (1874–1957), contemplated organizing women workers into separate, women-only associations. Some attempts, such as the Trade Union of Seamstresses (Gewerkschaft der Näherinnen) in Austria were short-lived and were absorbed into the general mixed-gender union.⁴³ In other cases, such as women bank clerks in the Habsburg Monarchy, mixed-gender and women-only professional associations coexisted, each offering women workers a different set of opportunities and limitations to advancing their labour interests.⁴⁴ In Habsburg Hungary ([Map 1](#)), socialist men and women agreed that women and men should be organized in trade unions together. After the turn of the century, they

pursued this goal with a measure of success (even though women, overall, remained a tiny minority among the trade union members). On top of this, women socialists took the initiative to establish trade union-type organizations for domestic employees, generating a de facto women-only trade union ([chapter 9](#), [Figure 4](#)), and for washerwomen. They also launched women's committees within the trade unions (and the party), but with very limited success. In 1914, the socialist journal *Woman Worker* (*Nómunkás*) had a circulation of around 3,300, out of which ca. 500 copies were delivered to and distributed by the trade unions.⁴⁵

In the less industrialized areas of the region, trade unions (and consequently the question of women's inclusion in them) appeared later. In Bulgaria, the first unions were established in the 1880s and nationwide trade union federations in the mid-1900s. Women were listed as members of the 'revolutionary' (later communist) General Workers' Trade Union (*Obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen suiuz*/Общ работнически синдикален съюз, ORSS) in 1905 (a year after its establishment), yet their numbers remained low until World War I.⁴⁶

The disruption caused by World War I and the mobilization of large numbers of working men into the military, as well as the redrawing of borders and population exchanges that followed its end, changed the patterns of women's work in our region. The number of women employed in sectors with strong labour organizing and, in some countries, also the overall number of gainfully employed women increased during the war. Combined with the context of general radicalization and mass strikes in the later years of the war and its immediate aftermath (see also [chapter 3](#), [chapter 8](#)), this contributed to a sharp increase in women's unionization rates in many countries of the region. In Austria the number of women organized in the 'free' – that is, social democratic – trade unions skyrocketed from 30,260 (or 12.6 per cent of the total membership base) in 1914 to 193,163 (25.0 per cent) in 1919 and to 261,540 (23.9 per cent) in 1921.⁴⁷ Even in the less industrialized countries of the region, where these trends were generally less pronounced, there was a marked increase in women's unionization rates: in Bulgaria the ORSS, which had had a stable membership of a few hundred women members in the 1900s and 1910s, reached 5,463 women members (18 per cent of its total membership base) in 1919 and 7,412 women members (21 per cent) in 1922 ([Table 2](#)).⁴⁸

The initial upsurge reached in the immediate aftermath of World War I proved ephemeral, and by the mid-1920s the number of unionized women in many countries of the region had already dropped

considerably. In Horthy's Hungary (Map 2), following the defeat of the Republic of Councils (1919), the numbers of organized women workers in 1925 (15,746) had dropped by almost half compared to 1919 (30,415).⁴⁹ Christian trade unions fared relatively better in the more conservative political climate of the mid-1920s⁵⁰ compared to communist ones, which during various periods in the 1920s faced persecution in a number of countries including Hungary, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, Romania and Bulgaria. In the 1930s the spread of right-wing authoritarian regimes – already present in some countries from the 1920s – went hand in hand with the repression of existing trade unions and the introduction of corporatist models of labour organizing. While many of these unions outwardly subscribed to traditional gender roles and did not prioritize women's organizing, mandatory or semi-mandatory membership often led to an increase in women's unionization rates. Thus, the Bulgarian Workers' Union (Bulgarski rabotnicheski suiuz/Български работнически съюз) was able to reach 39,374 women members in 1938, rising to 55,424 in 1942, with women constituting approximately a quarter of its membership base.⁵¹ Compared to the proportions recorded by communist and social democratic trade unions in the late 1920s and early 1930s (Table 2), these numbers display an impressive increase.

In the post-1945 decades women's unionization rates increased in most lands in the region. In 1945, the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB) was established to encompass 16 branch trade unions. From the start, the ÖGB's women's department was preoccupied with organizing and institutionalizing women within mixed-gender trade unions of different branches by creating women's departments, sections and committees. By 1965 almost two-thirds of all branch trade unions had a women's department; however, for some of the remaining trade unions it took one to three decades to create formal structures for their women members.⁵² The general ÖGB unionization rate did not fluctuate much between the 1950s and the 1980s, hovering between 25.9 and 31.1 per cent (Table 8), but the numbers of women active in trade unions diverged considerably in different branch trade unions. As in many other countries of the region, the highest unionization rate of women was within trade unions of the sectors of economy where traditionally many women were employed. The Trade Union of the Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry (Gewerkschaft Textil-Bekleidung-Leder) encompassed between 65.2 and 72.6 per cent of women members in the 1940s and the 1980s respectively. Women activists belonging to this union paid particular attention

to recruiting young women workers and, as numbers indicate, gained success in this endeavour (Figure 20). Two other unions with high rates of women's participation were the Personal Service Workers' Union (Gewerkschaft Persönlicher Dienst), in which women accounted for 78.9 and 92.3 per cent of total membership in 1940 and 1970 respectively, and the Hotel and Restaurant Workers' Union (Gewerkschaft der gast-gewerblichen Arbeitnehmer), which was 59.3 per cent women in 1970. These two unions merged in 1978, forming the Hotels, Catering and Personal Services Union (Gewerkschaft Hotel, Gastgewerbe, Persönliche Dienste) in which the share of women was 72.4 per cent in 1980. Women trade unionists accounted for a little less than 50 per cent in the Union of Private Sector Employees (Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten).⁵³

In state socialist countries the increasing share of women in formal gainful employment (Table 7) was a decisive factor contributing to growing numbers and proportions of women entering trade unions. The record was different in Turkey, where women's participation in formalized employment remained low in the second half of the twentieth century. The decades after 1946, when the government liberalized to some extent the laws on labour organizing, witnessed an expansion of trade unionism and union-based activism there. Between 1948 and 1960 the number of trade unions increased from 73 to 432 while the number of unionized workers rose from 52,000 to 282,000. Yet, the unionization rates of both male and female workers in Turkey remained low, with only 34 per cent of all workers in formal employment belonging to a trade union in 1960.⁵⁴ While reliable statistical data on unionization rates of women are not available for the period, from the mid-1960s onwards women became visible in workers' unions in textile, food and beverages, in petrochemical industries, and in the fields of education, retail and office work. Although the Turkish state encouraged women to enter wage labour, societal discourse around women's employment and their involvement in labour union activism stigmatized factory work, discrediting the reputations and virtue of women who worked there. Nevertheless, working-class women utilized real and fictive kinship relations to improve their status as respectable workers and trade union members and achieve some of their labour-related demands.⁵⁵ The time span between 1973, when the Kemalist Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) won the elections, and the 1980s, when the military coup in Turkey came as a major blow to the trade union movement, witnessed the peak of women's participation in the workers' movement, during which they organized and took part in many strikes. However, still only a small number of them formally belonged to trade unions.

In the state socialist countries, the drive towards the unionization of women was initially strongly motivated by an interest in increasing women's productivity and gaining politically loyal workers. The question of how best to organize working women was not resolved in a stable manner in Eastern Europe during the state socialist decades. Political leaderships and top women functionaries repeatedly seesawed between a preference for trade union settings on the one hand and the political arm of communist 'mass organizing', namely the women-only general women's organizations, on the other. How to design and define the relationship between women's role in trade unions and their organization in the women-only mass organizations was debated time and again. In the early period, in Hungary, top-level regime decision-making was sometimes erratic in this regard. From 1970 onwards, with tensions at work growing due to the ever-stronger presence of working women, including mothers of small children (Table 7), there was another turn to an increased emphasis on trade union- and thus workplace-focused organizing and activism. The mixed-gender world of trade unionism now saw an array of women's committees, regular women's meetings and women's trade union training courses, and a constant flow of reporting on the status of working women as well as activities aimed at its improvement. Most of these activities were present on every level, from the shopfloors and enterprises, to regional trade union groupings and local and national branch trade unions, to the top-level National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT).⁵⁶ Our research has begun to show that politics and activism on behalf of working women in state socialist contexts could flourish in mixed-gender trade unions as much as within the women-only mass organizations – and that the limitations and problems encountered were not by definition fewer in one or the other of these contexts. These included changes of direction driven from the top which could disrupt promising avenues of activism, attitudes in the state socialist regimes' top leadership ranging from lack of interest to obstruction, and limited decision-making power of the given organization.

Statistical data produced by the Polish Association of Trade Unions (Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych, ZZZ) demonstrate that the presence of women in trade unions grew from an 11.2 to a 40.5 per cent ratio in the period between 1946 and 1977 (Table 8). In Bulgaria, newly established state-controlled trade unions reported a high unionization rate of around 95 per cent among all workers by 1949, at a time when women workers constituted about 25 per cent of trade union members.⁵⁷

Milada Netušilová (1911–99) from the Czechoslovak ROH reported during the WFTU's Second International Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women in 1964 that 92.6 per cent of working women in her country were unionized, reaching 40.6 per cent of total membership.⁵⁸ These figures on trade union membership provide an understanding of unionization tendencies and development in the region, but also must be critically evaluated. The history of trade union membership was not always well documented or, by contrast, it tracked employment – in other words, all workers were given trade union membership once they started to work. For some workers, trade union membership was nominal, while for others, living and working in more repressive contexts, it was a way to resist or accommodate the situation. Finally, when reporting unionization rates, trade unions could present the data selectively to demonstrate improvement in the numbers of women recruited.

Like in other state socialist countries, women's emancipation, mass inclusion in the labour market and organizing became a main goal of trade union work in postwar Poland. The women's section in Polish trade unions was created in 1946, and its programme emphasized the call for involving women in trade union activism. By 1965 there were more than 6,800 commissions established in regional and district trade unions and in workplaces, encompassing around 32,000 women activists.⁵⁹ Women trade unionists repeatedly explained the advantages of working within mixed-gender trade unions. In 1975, Zofia Bazanowska (?–2010) (Table 9), a leading functionary in the Working Women's Commission at the Central Council of the Trade Unions (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych, CRZZ) in Poland, explained to the participants in an international meeting for the exchange of experiences on the topic 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women', held in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria:

In our country, the commissions for the problems of working women also include men. But I can say that they participate with full seriousness in the work of these commissions. For us, this is completely natural, because no women's organization and women themselves could not successfully solve the problems of working women on their own. But these are, by their nature, problems that affect the entire society ... The problems of working women, which are mainly related to the family, health and happiness of the younger generation, are universal problems and concern the entire nation.⁶⁰

Starting from the 1950s, while state socialist basic principles of the equal right to employment and of women's emancipation and organization remained, the state socialist regime established in Poland did not push towards radical emancipation demands ([chapter 3](#)).⁶¹ Political, legal and institutional transformations led to a shift towards an emphasis on traditional family structures, hierarchy and a gendered division of labour in the social and political vision of women among male experts and top political decision-makers. Yet, this tendency was not necessarily synonymous with 'stagnation' or 'backlash' in the advancement of women's activism, as women trade union activists and experts continued to address gender policies and push for women-friendly social policies and benefits.⁶² The 1960s and 1970s brought an array of studies on the position of women workers, while women activists in the women's mass organizations addressed the inequality that still existed in the paid and unpaid work of women ([chapter 3](#), [chapter 8](#), [Figure 16](#)).⁶³ Polish women trade union activists also engaged in generating knowledge production on women workers in Poland and took part in regional and international seminars and gatherings, where they exchanged their experiences in addressing working women's problems with women activists from other state socialist countries ([Table 9](#)).

In Romania, the reports presented to the Central Committee of the Romanian Communist Party (Partidul Comunist Român) in 1946 indicate 1,000 to 2,000 women in trade unions and up to 6,000 in the area of the Jiu Valley (south-western Romania), a stronghold of women's social democratic organizing since the 1930s.⁶⁴ During the first five years after the war, efforts that aimed to include more women in trade unions led to a women's unionization rate of about 30 per cent. Of 400,000 women organized in different trade unions, the majority belonged to trade unions in the textile industry.⁶⁵ In 1952 a decision of the Central Committee of the General Confederation of Labour (Confederația Generală a Muncii) emphasized that more women needed to be unionized and attracted to trade union work.⁶⁶ In 1974, Romanian delegates Teodora Sersun ([Table 9](#)), Elena Floareș ([Table 9](#)) and Fani Strujan ([Table 9](#)) from the General Union of Trade Unions (Uniunea Generală a Sindicatelor din România, UGSR) attended the symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood', which took place in Budapest. The report that they⁶⁷ presented indicated that women constituted 31 per cent of the total number of elected trade union representatives, and 18.5 per cent of the membership of the executive boards of trade unions in the country. This report underlined that numerous women's commissions organized at different levels within the structures of trade unions not only played

significant roles in 'solving social problems' of women workers, such as medical care, home or hospital visits to sick comrades, and institutional childcare, but also were actively preparing and conducting various political, cultural and educational activities.⁶⁸

Women's unionization and ideological rivalries within the labour movement

In the post-World War I period, trade unions of various political and ideological affiliations were in acute competition with each other, and women's unionization was part of their struggle to gain influence and control over workers and the working class. On the local level, rivalry between the competing strands of the labour movement over organizing women was reflected in their efforts to win influence in industries such as textiles and tobacco where women formed the overwhelming majority of the labour force. In 1936 the 40-day strike in the Tivar textile factory in Varaždin (Yugoslavia, now Croatia) was led by the United Textile and Clothing Workers' Union (Ujedinjeni savez tekstilno-odjevnih radnika), a branch union belonging to the social democratic United Federation of Workers' Unions of Yugoslavia (Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije, URSSJ).⁶⁹ However, the Croatian Workers' Union (Hrvatski radnički savez), which was close to the Croatian Peasant Party (Hrvatska seljačka stranka, HSS), disputed the URSSJ's leadership. The two unions attacked and tried to discredit one another in an attempt to gain control over the bargaining process.⁷⁰ In the Hungarian textile industry, communist organizing was attempted in earnest from 1928, in fierce competition with mainstream social democracy, and starting from the building of 'cell[s]' and massive propaganda work within the factories.⁷¹ The document cited here was created only a few weeks after RILU had committed, in a decision in principle, to create an international women's committee and intensify its work among women workers locally and internationally.⁷²

By struggling to take control of strikes in majority-women industries, trade unions hoped to recruit new members from among the strikers. Yet, in reality, gains in numbers of members during strike waves most often either did not materialize or were temporary. In 1909, the Bulgarian 'revolutionary' (later communist-affiliated) Workers' Textile Union (Rabotnicheski tekstilen suiuz/Работнически текстилен съюз) observed that its membership numbers fluctuated depending on the intensity and results of the strikes.⁷³ Swings in trade union membership numbers (strike-related and otherwise) were often characterized by gendered differences – namely, they were much more pronounced with

regard to women workers as compared to men. In Hungary, over the course of the year 1902, 35 per cent of women members (new and old) quit their trade unions as compared to only 18 per cent of men. During the year 1903, 39.9 per cent of women members left trade unions, while for men the percentage was only 10.7.⁷⁴ As late as the second half of the 1930s, in the majority-women textile industry in Hungary, annual fluctuation numbers were several times higher than the membership figures, mostly due to the seasonal character of the women workers' occupation as well as dismissals because of trade union organizing and labour conflict.⁷⁵

Political rivalries reflected regional specificity and involved additional categories of difference besides gender and class. The case of the Czechoslovak Christian trade unions' activism in majority-women industries is indicative of the complex, entangled nature of the labour movement's division lines. Regional and ethnic/national differences played a crucial role, as Christian trade unions were much stronger in Slovakia (in comparison, for example, to Prague or Bohemia) where there was also strong overlap between the Christian trade unions, political Catholicism and the Slovak nationalist movement.⁷⁶

In many Catholic countries, Christian trade unions tended to have a particularly strong influence among women workers. In Poland in 1925, for example, the highest share of women as percentage of the trade union membership base was recorded in the Christian camp, followed by the Polish Trade Union (*Zjednoczenie Zawodowe Polskie*), with 'class' (communist and socialist) unions having the lowest share of women members.⁷⁷ The high percentage of women in Christian trade unions can be attributed to the fact that these were particularly successful in organizing sectors, such as domestic work, where women formed the overwhelming majority of the labour force.⁷⁸ In Czechoslovakia, the Christian trade unions also had the highest share of women workers, but due to the country's multiethnic composition there were also significant variations depending on nationality, with German-language trade unions having higher shares of women than Czech-language ones ([Table 2](#)).⁷⁹

The advent of right-wing authoritarianism in the 1930s – and in some countries already in the 1920s – resulted in the spread of corporatist trade union models and the suppression of strikes and other forms of militant labour struggle. Some (women) trade unionists – particularly communists who were well versed in working illegally, but in some countries also social democrats – were inclined to build underground trade unions, ones which acted outside of and in opposition to state-backed trade unions. Some activists joined both underground and legal

trade unions, forming dissenting groups and trying to influence policies from within. In the 1930s and 1940s in Turkey – as well as in Bulgaria – underground communist trade unions organized strikes among tobacco workers in an attempt to raise their low wages and improve the notoriously bad working conditions.⁸⁰ By contrast, other women labour activists, such as Romanian social democrat Paraschiva B. Ion, likely chose the path of co-operation with new regimes. Navigating the complex political landscape from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s, Ion tried to further (women) workers' wage- and welfare-related interests in the state-owned Belvedere Tobacco Factory, but was also involved in labour control practices, and possibly in repressive ones.⁸¹

Despite the all-encompassing leadership of the national trade union federations over workers' issues and demands in state socialist countries, where "classical" activist forms of expressing dissent were taboo, instances of workers' mobilization and organizing outside or in opposition to the institutionalized structures of trade union negotiation emerged. During the 1971 strike of workers in the textile industry in the Polish city of Łódź, women comprised the forefront and a significant majority of the strikers, accounting for 70–80 per cent of the participants. Organizing the strike and putting forward their demands, they refrained from relying on factory trade unions, which they believed were useless for advancing their goals.⁸² The Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity' (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy 'Solidarność', NSZZ, or Solidarność), is the most widely known example of workers' successful organizing in opposition to the state socialist regime in the region. In the period 1980–1 its membership numbers grew quickly, reaching 9,500,000 members; another 2,350,000 members belonged to Rural Solidarity (NSZZ Solidarność Rolników Indywidualnych).⁸³ Women activists constituted a significant proportion of the Solidarność trade union, accounting for nearly 50 per cent of its membership. They played an active role in the 1980 strike at the Gdańsk shipyard, which started after Anna Walentynowicz, a crane operator, was fired for participation in an underground trade union; this resulted in the birth of the Solidarność trade union and subsequent civil society movement.⁸⁴

The ideological and political rivalries of the Cold War translated from the international realm to the national scale. In Turkey the first confederation of workers' unions, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, Türk-İş), which was founded in 1952, adhered to anti-communist politics, and rivalled the left-wing Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, DİSK), established in

1967. Both federations, and the trade unions affiliated with them, started to develop women-related policies actively in the 1970s, reproducing the dynamics of the politically competitive activities of the ICFTU and WFTU. Türk-İş was affiliated to the ICFTU and supported by US labour organizations. From the 1960s onwards, Türk-İş collaborated with the ICFTU and the US labour organizations on gender politics, particularly trade union women's education.⁸⁵ Meanwhile, DİSK followed a gender politics inspired by the example of the Soviet Union and familiar to trade unionists in Eastern Europe, for instance by advocating for provision of institutional childcare that helped to ensure women's participation in wage work and emancipation.⁸⁶

Problems of and impediments to women's unionization

Despite the repeatedly professed commitment to unionizing women workers by the international union federations and unions across the region, women's organizing was consistently assessed by trade unions' national headquarters as well as by the international organizations as difficult and lagging behind that of men. Statistical data on the share of women in trade union membership – though with great variations depending on national context, political affiliation and time period – confirm the fact that in virtually all trade unions in our region the number of unionized women was several times lower than that of men (Table 2) and in most cases it was well below women's share of the overall labour force. Searching for the cause of the problem, in a 1929 resolution on the 'woman question' (which followed the 1928 decision in principle mentioned above), the Central Council of the Profintern identified three fundamental reasons for the weak organization of women workers: the negative role played by social democratic trade unions, women's "backwardness" and a lack of systematic activity among women by communist trade unions.⁸⁷

Apart from signalling the mutual distance between working women and trade unions, the often-repeated trope of women's perceived "backwardness" was also used by women labour activists in the pre-1945 period to justify a special approach towards women workers, in which education often played a major role (chapter 5). Moreover, in some of the educational circles, organized as a means to attract working women, the topics of workers' rights and women's rights were tightly intertwined. In 1913, the Bulgarian ORSS sent a circular to local sections instructing them to pay 'particularly serious attention' to work among women and young workers, recommending literature as well as sending

a list of suitable topics for discussion. These included a unique blend of socialism and feminism, with topics ranging from ‘The Role of Women Workers and Working-Class Women in the Labour and Political Struggles of the Proletariat’ and ‘Woman and Socialism’ to ‘Feminism as Theory and Practice’.⁸⁸ Similarly, in Bucharest in 1923–4 the police closely monitored the formation of ‘feminist communist circles’, organized as part of a campaign to attract women in communist trade unions. Among labour-related issues, such as piece-rate work or hygiene in factories, these women’s circles also discussed divisions in the international labour movement, recited poetry and tried to hold a lecture titled ‘Woman’s Enslavement’, which was interrupted by the police (see also [chapter 9](#) on related activities among domestic servants).⁸⁹

Women activists, when discussing difficulties in unionizing women workers, tended to highlight the complexity of the issue and the need for comprehensive and holistic strategies. During the 1922 ORSS Congress in Bulgaria, Tina Kirkova (1872–1947)⁹⁰ gave a comprehensive report on the current problems of women’s trade union organization. First, she pointed out the scarcity of trained and experienced women trade unionists ([chapter 5](#)) and stressed the need to appoint more women (including inexperienced but promising young activists) into the low-level trade union organs where they would gain vital experience. Secondly, trade union work should be reorganized to accommodate women, for instance by not convening trade union meetings in the evenings when women could not attend them. Thirdly, Kirkova called for greater visibility and attention to women-specific agendas such as equal pay, bans on night work and paid maternity leave in order to interest women in trade union work. ‘These demands’, she stated, ‘should not remain a dead letter in our statutes.’ Finally, Kirkova outlined the need to overcome men trade unionists’ passivity and lack of interest in attracting women workers, which she attributed to the fact that ‘they think it’s women’s work’.⁹¹ On the large stage of the IFTU’s 1927 International Trade Union Women’s Conference, the Austrian social democratic politician and activist with a focus on women’s work Käthe Leichter (1895–1942) emphasized, in connection with the struggle for equal pay, that recruiting women into trade unions was not in itself sufficient. ‘It is also necessary to find ways and means to tie the organized woman worker to the trade union and to educate her to become an active trade unionist.’⁹² In the following year, Leichter’s colleague and leading trade unionist Anna Boschek gave a much-noticed speech at the national trade union convention in Austria. In the early days of her 34 years of trade union activism, so Boschek recalled, she had

to ‘very secretly, here and there ... (Chairman Hueber:⁹³ Well, well! – Lively laughter) ..., try to get some of the women’s wishes through’. The time was now for the comrades to realize that women needed their own ‘forum appreciated by them’, where they could talk about their specific ‘women’s interests’, besides their interests as workers.⁹⁴ The marginal status of the issue of women’s organizing in trade union work was discussed along similar lines in the 1930 Trade Union Council of Hungary (Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Tanács, SZT). Anna Kristóf, later Koltói (1891–1944) (Figure 11) – the metalworker mentioned in the [introductory chapter](#) of this book, who was elected co-president during the congress together with Sándor Rády⁹⁵ – attributed the lack even of reliable statistical data on women’s labour to the disregard for trade union work among women labourers.⁹⁶

In many countries in the region, women, in contrast to their low unionization rates, played crucial roles in a whole range of strikes (Figure 3).⁹⁷ Researching labour activism in the Polish textile town of Żyrardów between the 1930s and 1950s, Jan Burek has shown that, in their pursuit of workplace interests related to wages and work, women workers developed alternative independent working-class cultures beyond (but also sometimes within) trade unions, centring on self-organization and direct negotiations with factory management and local authorities.⁹⁸ Benő Gál (1879–1945), a man representative of the SZT leadership in Hungary, addressed the special difficulty of organizing uneducated women workers in the textile industry. He noted that women workers turned up in high numbers in strikes and in organizing around wage demands. The fact that this did not translate into (stable) trade union organization was attributed to women textile workers’ distrust of trade unions’ ability to further their interests beyond what they could achieve through strikes and other forms of self-organized activism.⁹⁹ Conversely, in contexts where women workers saw an improvement in their working and living situations as a result of trade unions’ actions, higher unionization rates were indeed observed. In the immediate post-World War I period Karla Pfeiferová (1886–1969) – a communist trade unionist active in Czechoslovakia and internationally – noted that her work in organizing women textile workers was made much easier by the fact that trade unions had managed to deliver substantial improvements in working and living conditions by negotiating higher piece rates and lower rents for factory-owned accommodation.¹⁰⁰

After World War II, in mixed-gender trade unions ambiguity and a lack of interest by the bulk of men in women’s unionization could still be witnessed. In Turkey, men leaders and members of textile trade unions

had long been reluctant to encourage women to join unions, believing that they were not deemed “suitable” for union work. At the same time, they portrayed women as lacking interest in joining trade unions and organizing around social and political issues.¹⁰¹ This, combined with women’s gainful employment in large numbers in traditional home-based manufacturing or small-scale production enterprises rather than in factory industry, led to the small numbers of women active in trade unions, evident even in the 1970s at a time of increasing general unionization rates.¹⁰² In the independent and democratic *Solidarność* trade union in Poland, where women’s activism and contributions were recognized, male members sidelined women from key leadership roles.¹⁰³

The mass unionization of women continued to face numerous hurdles, resulting not simply from the resistance and reluctance of male members and leaders, in the post-1945 period. A significant and ongoing challenge was the limited time that working women, especially those with family responsibilities, could allocate to trade union activities. This issue was a recurrent topic of discussion among trade unions and women activists in both international and regional settings, underscoring the persistent difficulty in engaging women in trade union work. In 1957, the Fourth WFTU Congress emphasized that, to be successful, unionizing campaigns activists needed to ‘pay careful attention to finding appropriate ways to overcome the practical difficulties met by women because of their numerous family duties’.¹⁰⁴ At the WFTU’s Second Conference of Women Workers in 1964 and then again at the Fourth Conference in 1979, participants discussed the lack of trust in the competence of the women activists in the mixed-gender trade unions as well as the limited time women have for trade union activism. To address these issues, participants in both the conference and the congress suggested that women trade unionists should actively utilize work breaks for organizing activities and educational sessions on the shopfloor.¹⁰⁵ During regional Roundtable Dialogues organized by the WFTU in Vienna, the capital of Austria, between 28 February and 2 March 1989, women activists discussed the responsibility of trade unions to create favourable conditions for working women to engage in union activities, emphasizing that ‘[t]he scheduling of union meetings’ time and location should take into account the dual role and responsibility of women in work and family. If necessary, childcare arrangements should be made to enable women to participate in the activities of the basic organization.’¹⁰⁶ The seminar participants sent their conclusions to the WFTU Secretariat as suggestions for topics to be debated at the WFTU’s Fifth Conference of Women Workers.

In the long view, despite all efforts of trade unions and women activists, the issue of how women's gendered time commitments hampered women's trade unionism remained unresolved everywhere. As in the case of the WFTU, the activists of the ICFTU referred to women's marital status and childcare and family responsibilities as specific challenges in women's organizing efforts. In 1977, at the ICFTU's 'Seminar on the Integration of Women into Trade Union Organizations', the activists emphasized these main obstacles to women's unionization.¹⁰⁷ The seminar's working document also indicated that the impediments to unionizations varied depending on the context in which trade unions were active. For instance, 'dispersion of workers in small firms makes it more difficult to organise commercial and office employees and restaurant workers', while the 'fear [of] los[ing] employment' could hinder women working in precarious or 'repressive' conditions from joining trade unions. In addition, the ICFTU women were concerned that women tended to join organizations outside the trade union movement 'for the purpose of finding solutions to labour-related problems'. They also observed that 'groups of trade union women, under the influence of the women's liberation movements, tend[ed] to develop into pressure groups, more or less foreign to trade union organisations', which potentially could replace the trade unions in the struggle to represent women.¹⁰⁸

Evolution of gendered agendas and policies: the equal pay principle

The problems regarding women's work which informed trade unions' gendered agenda in the long period from the early twentieth century to the 1980s were both numerous and diverse: wage justice; women's right to work; (gendered) labour protection and improved working conditions; social, healthcare and welfare rights; access to education and vocational training; and working mother-related demands. Among these, (women) trade unionists in our region and beyond often singled out the issue of wages as of the highest importance. The Austrian Anna Boschek during the 1928 congress of the Independent Trade Union Federation stated that 'the most serious injustice lies in the totally unworthy remuneration of women'.¹⁰⁹ The approach of women trade unionists to the 'injustice' was twofold: first, they pursued the aim of raising women's wages, a goal widely shared by women trade unionists across ideological divides; and, secondly, they engaged with the more divisive issue of how

to address unequal pay between men and women. The complexity of the issue of gender wage justice was mirrored in its close connectedness with a vast array of interrelated agendas that (women) trade unionists from the region subscribed to, including wage increases, equal pay, minimum, living or sufficient wage, rightful wage and family/breadwinner wage.

The framing of trade unionist agenda setting in relation to women's low(er) wages as well as the envisioned path to its solution varied with historical and geographical context and ideological divide, and women activists prioritized different mixtures of women's gender- and class-based interests. Through its long historical trajectory the equal pay demand underwent profound evolution: initially used as a demand aimed at protecting men's jobs from 'the cheap labour of women', it turned into a women's demand in part because with the evolution of socioeconomic and cultural context over the course of the first half of the twentieth century it became progressively less likely that women would be displaced if paid the same as men – that is, if they were no longer cheaper and more cost-effective. In the post-World War II period, equal pay became an official legal norm in many (state) socialist countries, and women trade unionists from the region consistently advocated for its practical application in national settings. Women labour activists continued their struggles to reveal and address unequal pay through promoting and/or enacting policies that diminished gender-specific wage inequality.¹¹⁰

Gendered wage-related trade union agendas

In the aftermath of World War I, issues of women's work were highlighted in debates around constructing a new, more equitable and peaceful postwar social order. The first annual labour conference of the ILO in Washington, DC, the capital of the United States, in 1919 passed conventions on limiting working hours in industry, on maternity protection, on the prohibition of night work for women and young people and on restricting child labour.¹¹¹ Moreover, the labour provisions of the peace treaties and the constitution of the newly founded ILO also included the principle 'that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value'.¹¹²

In October 1919 around 200 women labour activists from 19 nations, including newly independent Czechoslovakia and Poland (Table 6), converged in Washington to attend the International Congress of Working Women. The discussions and resolutions adopted by the congress centred around the issues of the eight-hour day, maternity

protection, child labour, night work, unemployment and emigration, as well as employment in the so-called hazardous occupations. During discussions on gender-specific labour protection, Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1969) from Czechoslovakia raised the issue of equal pay, siding with Scandinavian activists in favour of equal legal treatment of women (excepting issues related to maternity). In Czechoslovakia, so Landová-Štychová pointed out, men used laws prohibiting women from working with lead to exclude them from ‘the more advanced and much better-paid’ jobs in the printing trades. She argued against excessive protection ‘of woman which cripple her individualistic development. It is necessary to protect the rights of women and to afford them a free choice of occupation, and to secure for them equal pay for equal work.’¹¹³

In the post-World War I period, issues of women’s work gained increased visibility within the mixed-gender labour movement. In the social democratic camp, the international conference of trade unions held in Bern in February 1919 formulated a broad reform programme, one that placed a strong emphasis on the right of association, social security schemes, the eight-hour day and equal pay for equal work for women.¹¹⁴ From its establishment in the mid-1920s, the IFTU Women’s Committee continued to uphold the principle of equal pay for equal work. This was done as part of a larger wage justice programme and combined with other demands such as raising women’s wages and ensuring that the closing of the gender wage gap was not done at the expense of lowering men’s wages.¹¹⁵

Women trade unionists of socialist leanings – together with other activist groups such as feminists endorsing legal gender equality¹¹⁶ – were also involved in debates around the ILO Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery Convention C026 (1928). The contentious issue was whether the mechanism to ensure a minimum living wage should involve the principle of equal pay or, if such a link was missing, whether to allow the setting of a gendered minimum wage to continue.¹¹⁷ Polish trade union activist and politician Eugenia Waśniewska (1881–1944) (Table 6), in her capacity as adviser to the Polish workers’ representative, was an active figure in the debates during the 1928 session of the International Labour Conference of the ILO. Waśniewska was an ardent proponent of setting a minimum wage standard that would ensure ‘a certain level of life, and it must provide for equal wages for men and women’, in this way combining the vision of decent (higher) wages with the equal pay principle. Furthermore, as a member of the Union of Intellectual Workers (Związek Zawodowy Pracowników Umysłowych), she argued for the Minimum Wage-Fixing Machinery instrument to have a broader

scope, one that included salaried employees.¹¹⁸ Yet, concerns that a strict application of the principle of equal pay would lead to non-adoption of the convention at the conference resulted in invoking the equal pay principle only in the non-binding recommendation, not in the convention itself.¹¹⁹

In the 1930s, the consequences of the rationalization process that in many industries put men's – skilled – jobs in danger of being replaced by cheaper women's labour again moved the issue of equal pay to the forefront of (women) trade unionists' concerns. During the IFTU's International Trade Union Women's Conference in 1933 in Brussels, the capital of Belgium, Austrian Anna Boschek outlined the beneficial effect a mixed-gender workforce in modern factories had on wage equality. Boschek described the significantly higher wages that even 'unskilled' women workers received in the new assembly-line factory jobs as compared to wages in traditional majority-women industries such as textiles and clothing, where even skilled workers received low wages.¹²⁰

During the IFTU's International Conference of Women Trade Unionists held in London in 1936, the report of Valerie Novotná (1893–?) (Figure 17) emphasized the argument that the application of the equal pay principle was a necessary prerequisite to raising the standard of living of the whole working class. In addition to equal pay, Novotná also defended the enactment of legislation on minimum wages, arguing that it would be particularly beneficial to working women, since they were clustered in the lowest-paid segments of the labour market. Furthermore, Novotná's report put an emphasis on collecting data to document unequal pay as a necessary first step to start correcting wage injustice. She proposed concrete points and research questions, which included collecting information on propaganda and actions in support of equal pay, on the support from men trade unionists, and on results achieved both with regard to wages and in terms of women organizing.¹²¹

In the communist camp, the Profintern formulated early on – in 1921–2 – a multilayered comprehensive agenda regarding women workers, in which the principle of equal pay for equal work featured very prominently from the very beginning.¹²² Throughout the interwar period, equal pay continued to be at the top of the communist labour movement's gender-related agenda, not only on the international level but also on the national level in the region of focus.¹²³

The Christian trade unions differed substantially in their take on the issues of wage justice. In the 1920s the programme adopted by the IFCTU included a demand for a minimum family wage, namely 'a minimum wage which will permit him [every adult worker] to provide for himself

in a way conformable to human dignity and to maintain and bring up a family'.¹²⁴ The IFCTU agenda with regard to wage justice linked the demands for a minimum wage and for a living wage, while simultaneously envisioning the worker exclusively as a 'he' and as a head of the family. Yet the women trade unionists within the IFCTU repeatedly made clear that their ideas about married women's wage work were not about banning it but about a wage level (and social allowances and benefits) that enabled women to choose, and that this idea was not to be confused with accepting wage inequality. In 1925, the international conference of Christian women trade unionists (Table 6) passed a resolution calling for a breadwinner wage, so that married women with children would not be 'forced' to go out to work, emphasizing at the same time that this demand was in line with the principle of equal pay for equal work. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, when the combined effects of the world economic crisis and ongoing rationalization of work led to increased unemployment and decreased wages, calls for a ban on married women's right to work intensified. At this point, the leading IFCTU woman trade unionist Maria Baers, mentioned above, while continuing to 'oppose any measure that seeks to arbitrarily eliminate' women from employment in industry, would consider positively legal measures against married women's paid employment.¹²⁵

In national and local contexts too, women trade unionists on occasion disagreed with mainstream trade union ideas and pursued different agendas. During the period of austrofascism, Grete Daurer (later Rehor) (1910–87) – at the time a young assistant secretary in the Christian textile workers' union – publicly positioned herself in favour of the right of women to gainful employment and thus against the dominant Christian trade union line. At the first national conference of the textile workers' union in 1936, the then 26-year-old activist formulated her demands for women: no overtime, respecting working hours, the establishment of trade inspectorates with women inspectors, equal pay for equal work and the creation of women's sections. These demands, as Gabriella Hauch has noted, were very similar to those of social democracy in the late nineteenth century.¹²⁶

After 1945, at the time of transition from war to peace, the questions of equal pay and economic and social rights of women gained a new intensity in the investigations and debates on the national and international scales. The reliance on women's labour during World War II, problems of women's employment in the light of demobilization, and the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, brought the discussion on equal pay back to the agenda of the

trade unions and international labour organizations. The debates over equal pay, and the recognition of the principle on the international level and its local application took place within and reflected the Cold War controversies.¹²⁷

The WFTU report submitted to the UN CSW, and forwarded to the ILO in 1948, played a key role in initiating a new wave of international discussion about equal pay, which culminated in the adoption of the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention C100 in 1951.¹²⁸ Convention C100 was eagerly ratified in the region, including in Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Yugoslavia and Romania in the 1950s, with Turkey following in 1967 (Map 3).¹²⁹ Internationally active and organized women trade unionists played a key role in the debates and policy processes around the question of equal pay and ILO Convention C100. These interactions took place in the UN CSW and the ILO's consultative bodies on issues of women's work.¹³⁰ After 1951 women trade unionists across the political spectrum focused on the interpretation of equal pay notions and principles and the push towards ratification and implementation of Convention C100.¹³¹

Equal pay was the first agenda item on the WFTU's First World Conference of Women Workers in 1956: 'The united struggles of working women and the trade unions for higher wages, for application of the principle "equal pay for equal work", against all forms of discrimination'.¹³² The memorandum adopted by the conference participants and addressed to the Director General of the ILO actively supported the ratification of Convention C100, and emphasized that this process should 'go hand in hand with its implementation'.¹³³ The conference's speakers agreed that wage discrimination and the lack of social rights and benefits for working women was a reality in many countries.¹³⁴ In September 1956, Elena Teodorescu, newly elected to the post of one of the six secretaries (key functionaries) of the WFTU, was a member of the WFTU delegation that met with the Director General of the ILO. Among other questions, they raised the issue of equal pay and Convention C100, conveying principles outlined in the 1956 Conference memorandum. The delegation requested that the Director General take 'speedy action on the part of the [International Labour] Office to get the ratification and implementation' of the ILO's Convention C100.¹³⁵ It also asked if the ILO could 'call a Conference of the different world trade union organisations' and adopt a resolution that would help to push governments 'to ratify or implement' Convention C100.¹³⁶

In April 1962, Teodorescu was again present at the WFTU delegation meeting with ILO Director General David A. Morse. In the

conversation, she emphasized that the ILO's Equal Remuneration Convention C100 'was one of the most popular conventions', and that the issue of women's salaries more generally was important.¹³⁷ The 48th session of the International Labour Conference, convened in 1964, addressed the problems of women workers, including equal pay. The resolution adopted at the conference underlined that, despite some improvements, in many developed countries gender employment and wage discrimination persisted; it called for urgent ratification and implementation of the ILO instruments related to women's employment, such as Equal Remuneration Convention C100.¹³⁸ The principle of equal pay together with the call for 'ratification and effective application' of the ILO's Convention C100 was laid down also in the WFTU's Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights of Working Women of 1964 and subsequent revised versions.¹³⁹

For women trade unionists from state socialist contexts the wage inequalities that still existed and the problems with the practical implementation of the equal pay principle constituted a major political concern not only in the national but also in the international context. In tune with the rhetoric of the political and Cold War divides, the WFTU regularly pointed to these persistent issues in the capitalist and (former) colonial countries, asserting that economic and social equality between men and women had been achieved in state socialist countries, often guaranteed by the constitution, and was the basis of economic and labour rights of women living in these countries. In the early period, Milada Netušilová, the president of the Women's Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions (Komise žen Ústřední rady odborů, KŽ ÚRO) in Czechoslovakia, claimed that 'the people's democratic government in our country promotes women – gives them equal rights in the political, economic, cultural and wage fields. The fight for the elimination of differences is basically over, and for us the only thing left to do is to organize and consistently realize equal rights on all fronts.'¹⁴⁰ Yet, as the state socialist economies developed, women from these countries became increasingly outspoken about unresolved problems. Delivering a speech at the WFTU's Second Conference of Women Workers in 1964, Netušilová pointed to existing prejudices regarding women in leading positions as well as the need to improve women's education to enable them to obtain high qualifications and meet the requirements for better-paid jobs.¹⁴¹

The equal pay principle from theory to practice

When examining trade unions' attitudes towards equal pay and gender wage justice, it is crucial to go beyond official trade union documents. The possibility of achieving higher wages through strikes and collective bargaining was one of the main driving forces for women's unionization and their joining of mixed-gender trade unions or, conversely, their seeking of alternative forms of organizing if men's (and men-dominated) trade unions were reluctant to tackle women's wage issues. Trade unions' official endorsement of the equal pay principle could constitute a major attraction for working women to engage in trade union work and influence their political choices. Zehra Kosova (1910–2001) joined the Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP) and its trade union, attracted by their demands for an eight-hour workday and equal pay between men and women.¹⁴² In Austria, Angela Zagorski, describing the establishment of the Austrian Association of German Women Employees (Verband deutscher weiblicher Angestellter), stated that in 1913 the impetus to form a women-only professional association was the situation of women white-collar workers who were 'perceived more as competition by the men and generally by the employers as the cheaper "unskilled" worker with more modest living standards than her men colleagues'. In the post-World War I period, however, the association opted to join the mixed-gender Association of German Commercial and Industrial Employees (Deutscher Handels- und Industrieangestelltenverband) 'for purposes of collective bargaining, administration and a number of other practical reasons'. The decision had significant results in terms of equalizing women's wages with those of men, through introducing minimum rates, which could not be waived and which automatically increased with each year of service.¹⁴³

In collective bargaining, however, the principle of equal pay was often disregarded by trade unions, including those which officially endorsed it in their programmes. Deeply rooted social attitudes towards women's work in the labour movement sustained those attitudes by which trade unions systemically reproduced historical patterns of gender wage inequality in collective bargaining. Writing in 1954, Magda Aranyossi (1896–1977) – an eyewitness and participant in the 1919 Hungarian Republic of Councils – was highly critical of the regime's gender politics (chapter 3). Aranyossi pointed out the discrepancy between the regime's official endorsement of the principle of equal pay and its failure to enshrine it in the new constitution. The lack of legal and constitutional

decrees in turn meant that in practice workers' and local councils often set women's wages far below those of men.¹⁴⁴

Conversely, strikes and collective agreements, while not explicitly mentioning the gender dimension of unequal pay, could nevertheless demand or contribute to approaching wage equality, for instance through wage increases for the lowest-paid occupations (mostly employing women or other disadvantaged groups), which effectually diminished the gender wage gap. As a communist trade unionist, Zehra Kosova helped to organize several strikes among Turkish tobacco workers, where the issue of wages featured prominently among the workers' demands. While not mentioning the gender pay gap, Kosova nevertheless described how workers' demands centred on equalizing wages by making the highest hourly rate a standard one for the whole enterprise.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, during the 1929 general tobacco strike¹⁴⁶ in Bulgaria, workers demanded degressive wage increases – 40 per cent on wages below 50 levs per day and 30 per cent on wages above 50 levs – justified by the need to bring the lowest wages on par with the rising cost of living. The result of the strike contributed to diminishing the gender and age gap in wages.¹⁴⁷

The advent of Fordism, Taylorism and other ideas of restructuring labour processes in a “rational” or “scientific” way gained traction in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s. In many industrial sectors, rationalization led to the re-evaluation of the notion of skill and to the destabilization of the established gender segregation of labour. Thus, in the 1930s, following a major restructuring of the Bulgarian tobacco industry, the gender pay gap significantly diminished: women's wages stood at 57.3 per cent of men's in 1926, while in 1932 the ratio was 68.5 and in 1935 81.3 per cent. Yet, the convergence of men and women's wages was for the most part a result of lowering men's wages rather than substantially increasing women's wages. Bulgarian trade unions across the political spectrum fought against the consequences of rationalization. Both underground trade unions (under communist influence) and the legal corporatist trade union struggled to limit women's inroads into better-paid occupations and reverse the wage-equalizing effect the rationalization process had on Bulgarian tobacco industry (see also [chapter 4](#)).¹⁴⁸

Drawing on their experience of unequal pay and the consequences of rationalization, women trade unionists from the region took these problems to the international plane. Giving a speech at the Fifth Profintern Congress in 1930, Bulgarian trade unionist Iordanka Nikolova (later Chankova, 1911–44) approached the problem of low wages and

the consequence of the rationalization process in the Bulgarian tobacco industry, stating that rationalization had resulted in a substantial decrease in men's wages (from 100 leva per day to between 60 and 80 leva). The overwhelming majority of the labour force in the Bulgarian tobacco industry consisted of women and minors who received significantly lower wages (between 26 and 60 leva), 'regardless of the fact that women do skilled work'.¹⁴⁹

However, in the rest of her speech, Nikolova did not touch on the issue of unequal pay, choosing to focus instead on the importance of working-class unity in the struggle against 'blood-soaked rationalization' and its consequences, such as lower wages for men workers, their detrimental effect on the standard of living of the whole working class, and increased unemployment.¹⁵⁰ The Profintern's instructions to Bulgarian trade unions on the issue of rationalization also stressed the need to achieve working-class unity and higher unionization rates. While not explicitly mentioning the gender dimensions of the rationalization process, the instructions nevertheless stressed the need to emphasize demands such as equal pay, paid maternity leave and protective legislation in (communist-led) unionization campaigns.¹⁵¹

Similarly, in the social democratic camp women trade unionists from the region addressed the danger of the gender wage gap not only as a demand for women's higher wages, but also as a means of preventing the lowering of men's wages and the substitution of women's labour for men's as part of the rationalization drive. Similarly to Iordanka Nikolova, Anna Boschek during the 1928 congress of the Austrian Independent Trade Union Federation (Freie Gewerkschaften) warned that 'if the large differences between men's and women's wages remain, employers will promote the employment of women in the rationalized companies to a much greater extent ... The trade unions can counter it only by making every effort to equalize women's wages with those of men in good time.'¹⁵²

Across political divides, women trade unionists were aware of the co-constructive role of gender and skill in justifying unequal pay. Before World War II women were frequently segregated in women-only categories in collective agreements, with their work defined as unskilled based on their gender alone.¹⁵³ In the early 1920s in the Polish metal industry, for example, workers were classified as skilled, unskilled and women, with women receiving significantly lower wages than unskilled men.¹⁵⁴ Thus, the struggle for equal pay was tightly intertwined with the struggle to untangle gender, skill and wages in order to overcome gender segregation in labour markets. Women trade unionists such as Nikolova and Boschek stressed the discrepancy between de facto skilled women's

labour and the lack of recognition of their work as skilled, justifying its inadequately low remuneration.¹⁵⁵

In the post-World War II decades, the struggle for gender, wage, skill and education equalities in the labour market continued across the region of focus against the background of the progress made in relation to the international recognition and acceptance of the equal pay principle and its “iconic” status in the (state) socialist world.

In state socialist contexts, women trade unionists and other women actors who engaged with the politics of women’s work were at the forefront of efforts – which were successful only to a limited degree – to translate the equal pay principle into practice in terms of substantive gender wage justice. In the state socialist countries, too, the intricate relationship between gender, skill and wages constituted one of the key problems that perpetuated unequal pay. Research carried out in the late 1960s by the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh) in connection with a policy-making process pointed out not only that gender wage inequalities were linked to the women’s lower qualification levels as compared to men, but also that women were kept in the lowest-paid occupations – positions for which they were often overqualified (chapter 5). It also questioned labelling work in majority-women industrial sectors such as textiles, tobacco and food industries as ‘light’ and called for a re-evaluation of wages, pension rights and other social benefits based on real labour intensity and hazardous working conditions in these sectors.¹⁵⁶

In Hungary, women trade unionists took the lead in what constituted a veritable campaign against unequal pay at the beginning of the 1970s. They found, for instance, that women in dairy-producing enterprises were not only squeezed into the lowest wage categories but also received substantially lower wages even within the lowest category. The critique of such blunt and open gender discrimination formed a self-evident part of their equal pay campaign. On the larger scale, the struggle against the gender pay gap was mostly couched in class terms in that it focused on improvements for low-wage groups, which were overwhelmingly populated by women workers. Demands included boosting wage levels in the light industries where women workers dominated, increasing pay for certain types of work, offering special raises for the lowest wage categories within a given industry, and compiling nationwide wage tables to improve wages in remote, rural areas. Initial success was repeatedly reported.¹⁵⁷ In the late 1950s and early 1960s, women trade union activists and specialists in Poland addressed and exposed persistent inequalities in their country. The

activists of the Women's Commission of the Central Council of Trade Unions (Komisja Centralna Związków Zawodowych), led by Irena Sroczyńska (1925–2001) (Table 9), gathered data on wage discrepancies, training opportunities and workplace conditions for women, aiming to identify and address inequalities in the labour market. It revealed that, despite legal frameworks supposedly promoting equal pay, women often earned significantly less than men, even when performing the same jobs or within the same pay grade.¹⁵⁸

On the international level, women trade unionists and activists from the region highlighted ongoing and emerging issues in implementing equal pay in the countries across the political divide; they also emphasized the need for continued efforts to bridge gender wage gaps existing in state socialist countries.

Conclusion

In the long period between the early twentieth century and the 1980s, trade unions and women had a complex, multifaceted and evolving relationship with each other. In the aftermath of World War I, the problems of women's work as well as the need to unionize women were treated with increasing attention within the IFTU, the IFCTU and RILU. In the interwar period all three major international organizations formulated a gender-related labour agenda, set up specific institutional structures and organized conferences dedicated to the politics of women's work. In the post-1945 period, women's trade union organizing was promoted across Cold War divides.

If we zoom in on the process of unionizing women in the national trade union federations in our region of focus, it becomes clear that the repeated calls for organizing women produced limited results. Women's unionization rates varied greatly depending on the national context, yet with the partial exception of Czechoslovakia and Austria, both of which recorded relatively large numbers of organized women in the interwar period, the share of women in overall trade union membership was several times lower than that of men, and certainly did not match women's share in the overall labour force. Persistent gender-based discrimination and segregation practices in the world of paid work, insufficient engagement with women-specific demands, widespread passivity about and lack of interest in work among women workers on the part of lower-level men trade union cadres and in local and national trade union branches, as well as a scarcity of trained women cadres,

hampered efforts for the mass unionization of women. The post-1945 period brought about a shift, especially in the state socialist world, where the new regimes strove not only to push women into the labour force on a large scale but also to mobilize them for economic, political and social causes through the trade unions. Within the WFTU, a focus on class, and a vision of the state socialist countries as role models of women's equality, often contributed to sidelining the specific problems of women workers in Eastern Europe ([chapter 10](#)). At the same time, unconditional endorsement of women's full inclusion in the world of paid work and unity of action policies opened new spaces for women's communist-aligned labour activism.

For women activists, the mass unionization of women workers constituted the single most important precondition for the more successful promotion of labour rights and the improvement of social protection of working women. Their emphasis was somewhat different from mainstream trade unionism of all political colours, which tended to emphasize the need to increase labour's overall bargaining power and, in state socialist contexts, the requirement to mobilize women workers for increased production.

Between the 1920s and the 1980s, women trade unionists from our region asserted their presence and influence in the labour movement by participating in trade union (women's) structures and institutions, attending (international) labour conferences and seminars, and taking an active part in discussions on the politics of women's work within and beyond trade union organizations. They took advantage of the possibilities presented by specific conjunctures within the labour movement, and in the larger geopolitical and economic context, to try to advance women-friendly labour and social policies. Simultaneously, women trade unionists' ability to promote their agenda was limited by the relative marginalization of women activists within trade union power structures. The issue of equal pay, which women trade unionists across the political spectrum promoted consistently on various scales of the labour movement, is particularly illuminating. The achievement of the inclusion of the principle of equal pay in official trade union programmes on the national and international scales was followed by a long-term struggle to ensure its application in collective agreements, national policies and international labour standards. In the long run, women trade unionists' persistence in pursuing women-friendly labour policies yielded results – even if they saw only a partial fulfilment of their agendas – that contributed to shaping the politics of women's work in the region and internationally.

Notes

- 1 Selected examples include Carew, *American Labour's Cold War Abroad*; Devinatz, 'Cold War Thaw'; Tosstorff, *The Red International*; Van Goethem, 'Conflicting Interests'.
- 2 Canning, 'Gender and the Politics of Class Formation'; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Frader, *Breadwinners and Citizens*; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*.
- 3 International Federation of Working Women, *Constitution*, 3.
- 4 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*.
- 5 International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, 'The Second Congress'.
- 6 Tosstorff, *The Red International*, 329, 389–90.
- 7 Losowsky, 'Rundschreiben'.
- 8 Losowski, 'Das Aktionsprogramm der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale', 104–6.
- 9 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 583–84.
- 10 Carew, *American Labour's Cold War*; Carew, 'Towards a Free Trade Union Centre'.
- 11 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Report on the Activity of the WFTU Concerning the Principles of Equality of Wages for Equal Work between Male and Female Labour. Submitted to the Executive Bureau and Committee of the WFTU', 2 May 1948, ARCH01666, box 79–82, folder 79, IISH.
- 12 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action', 341.
- 13 World Federation of Trade Unions, *6th World Trade Union Congress*, 49.
- 14 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Report of Activity of the WFTU, 1953–1957'.
- 15 'Bulletin of the 3rd World Trade Union Congress. Summary of Proceedings for Monday, October 12, 1953', 1953, collection 5595, box 3, folder 11, KCLMDA.
- 16 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Report of Activity of the WFTU, 1953–1957'.
- 17 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*.
- 18 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action', 346–52.
- 19 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Woman as Worker, and Trade Unionist'.
- 20 Gnydiuk, 'In the Web of a Male-Dominated Trade Union International'.
- 21 This position regarding women's participation in trade unions was included in the 1964, 1972 and 1979 versions of the Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights of Working Women. The 1979 edition of the Charter contained more detailed demands, including paid vacations for trade union education. See World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 109; 'Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights 1972'; 'Charta der ökonomischen, sozialen, kulturellen und gewerkschaftlichen Rechte der werktätigen Frauen [WFTU]', 1979, DY 34/12639, SAPMOBArch.
- 22 'Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights 1972'.
- 23 'Appeal of the 3rd WTUC'.
- 24 Daniela Kubátová, 'Koreferat erstattet vom Weltgewerkschaftsbund', November 1978, DY 34/12197, SAPMOBArch.
- 25 The ICFTU adopted the Charter of Rights of Working Women in 1965 and revised it in 1975, adding recommendations on creating women's committees and increasing the number of women in trade unions, among other points. See Gumbrell-McCormick, 'Facing New Challenges', 478, 481.
- 26 'Sigrid Ekendahl's Speech. Eighth World Congress of the ICFTU (Amsterdam, 7–15 July 1965)', 1965, Collection Sigrid Ekendahl, No. 134, ARBARK; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 'Charter. The Rights of Working Women', 1975, Collection Sigrid Ekendahl, No. 134, ARBARK.
- 27 See also Cobble, 'A Higher "Standard of Life"'.
28 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*.
- 29 International Confederation of Christian Trade Unions, 'The Second Congress', 204.
- 30 Misner, *Catholic Labor Movements in Europe*, 143; Pasture, *Histoire du syndicalisme chrétien international*, 112.
- 31 *Verhandlungsbericht der Internationalen Konferenz der christlichen Arbeiterinnen*, 375. Scholarship and sources also mention 1928 as the year of establishment: *Die Arbeit der christlichen Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1928–1932*, 75; Misner, *Catholic Labor Movements in Europe*, 156.
- 32 Losowski, 'Das Aktionsprogramm der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale', 104–6. This emphasis certainly must be read (among other things) within the context of the existence

- of the ICWW/IFWW, as a women-only trade unionist international organization in this period.
- 33 Dyakonova, “‘Approached as a Force for Labour’”; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 219–24.
 - 34 Tosstorff, *The Red International*, 805.
 - 35 World Federation of Trade Unions, ‘Session of the Executive Committee, Rome, 5th–10th May, 1948’, May 1948, ARCH01666, box 79–82, folder 75, IISH; Nina Popova, serving as a secretary of the Soviet All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions (Vsesoiuznyi tsentral’nyi sovet professional’nykh soiuзов/Всесоюзный центральный совет профессиональных союзов), was the exception. See Wolf, “‘Women as Workers’”.
 - 36 Zimmermann, ‘Spurring Women to Action’, 350–51.
 - 37 As cited in Zimmermann, ‘Spurring Women to Action’, 351.
 - 38 ‘Meeting in Director-General’s Office 10 a.m., Wednesday, 10 December, 1958’, 1958, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA; Ernest Bell, ‘Record of Interview between Representatives of the [WFTU] and the Director-General’, 14 November 1962, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA.
 - 39 ‘List of Participants’.
 - 40 Hauch, “‘Arbeite Frau!’”
 - 41 Schmidt, *Die Christliche Arbeiterbewegung*.
 - 42 For an example on the politics of women’s exclusion from trade unions and the impact of World War I on unionization policies, see Kučera, *Rationed Life*, 117–20.
 - 43 Hauch, “‘Arbeite Frau!’”
 - 44 Erdélyi, ‘Women’s Labour Activism’.
 - 45 Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*, 40–50, 76, 176–78.
 - 46 Mladenov, *Развитие и постижения*, 34.
 - 47 Moik, ‘Die freien Gewerkschaften’.
 - 48 Mladenov, *Развитие и постижения*, 34.
 - 49 Fonó, *A magyar munkásnők helyzete*.
 - 50 Poláčková and van Duin, “‘Against the Red Industrial Terror!’”, 164–65.
 - 51 *Седем години Български работнически съюз*, 49.
 - 52 Blaschke, *Frauen in Gewerkschaften*, 94.
 - 53 Blaschke, *Frauen in Gewerkschaften*, 97.
 - 54 Sati, ‘Gendering Trade Unions’, 39.
 - 55 Sati, “‘Long Live Our Father’”; Akgöz, ‘Metaphorical Machines or Mindless Consumers’.
 - 56 Zimmermann, ‘Spurring Women to Action’; Zimmermann, “‘It Shall Not Be a Written Gift’”.
 - 57 Mladenov, *Развитие и постижения*, 189.
 - 58 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 85.
 - 59 Women’s sections were abolished in 1949 and then established again as the Women’s Commissions at the Central Council of the Trade Unions (Centralna Rada Związków Zawodowych, CRZZ) in 1957 (renamed as the Working Women’s Commissions in 1963). See Jarska, ‘Trade Union Activists’; Jarska, ‘Komisja Kobieta CRZZ’.
 - 60 Sofija Basanowska, ‘Liebe Genossen! ...’, [1975], DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch.
 - 61 Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization*, 51–60; Grabowska, ‘Bits of Freedom’, 149–50.
 - 62 Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*, 68–69.
 - 63 Jarska, ‘International Women’s Year and Women’s Activism’, 9–10.
 - 64 Jinga, *Gen și reprezentare în România*, 75, Table 2.
 - 65 Georgescu and Georgescu, *Mișcarea democratică și revoluționară*, 233.
 - 66 Ghiț, ‘Gendered Work’.
 - 67 The archival document containing the report’s text does not indicate who among them presented the speech at the symposium.
 - 68 ‘Diskussionsbeitrag des Vertreters des Allgemeinen Gewerkschaftsbundes Rumäniens UGSR’, 16–21 September 1974, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch.
 - 69 The URSSJ also had a strong communist faction due to the Popular Front strategy, prevalent in communist organizing at the time. This faction was involved with the strike in Tivar.
 - 70 Janjatović, ‘Štrajk tekstilnih radnika’; Rajković, *Dugi ženski marš*, 218–21.
 - 71 Réti, *A magyarországi textilipari munkásmozgalom*, 68–82, including original quote.
 - 72 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 221–22.
 - 73 Vasilev et al., *Текстилици*, 92.

- 74 Jászai, *A magyar szakszervezetek története*, 106–9.
- 75 Réti, *A magyarországi textilipari munkásmozgalom*, esp. 223–24.
- 76 Poláčeková and van Duin, “Against the Red Industrial Terror!”
- 77 *Rocznik pracowniczych związków*, 86–87.
- 78 Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*.
- 79 Pokorný, ‘Odborářka. Příklad Karly Pfeiferové’, 424–25.
- 80 Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*; Laskova, ‘Тютюноработниците в България’.
- 81 Ghit, ‘The Treacherous Trade Unionist’.
- 82 Mazurek, ‘From Welfare State to Self-Welfare’; Shpolberg, ‘Filmmaking as Activism’, 432.
- 83 Gardawski, Mrozowicki, and Czarzasty, ‘Trade Unions in Poland’, 32, 51.
- 84 Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret*.
- 85 Çağatay, ‘Women Workers’ Education at the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions’.
- 86 Gülenç, ‘DİSK ve Kadın İşçiler’; Satı, ‘Working-Class Women’.
- 87 Dyakonova, “‘Approached as a Force for Labour’”, 159.
- 88 Circular No. 379 from the Committee of the ORSS to the central boards and sections of the trade unions, 24 June 1913, f. 36B, op. 1, a.e. 27, TsDA.
- 89 Notes of the Political Police about the activity of the Feminine Circle in Bucharest within the trade unions, their conferences and gatherings, 1923–4, file 4530/1048, fond 3014, p. 102, SANIC.
- 90 At the time she was secretary of the Central Women’s Commission and member of the Executive Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party (Bulgarska komunisticheska partiia/Bългарска комунистическа партия, BKP).
- 91 Isusov, ‘Из материалите на общата синдикална конференция’, 226–41, including original quotes.
- 92 *Internationale Gewerkschaftliche Arbeiterinnenkonferenz 1927*, 241.
- 93 Anton Hueber was the long-term leading functionary of social democratic trade unionism in Cisleithania and later Austria, and a pivotal figure in the making of Boschek’s trade union career. See Göhring, *Anna Boschek*.
- 94 Moik, *Frauenarbeit*, 14–15 (ellipses in the original).
- 95 *Népszava*, ‘A magyar szakszervezetek IX. országos kongresszusa’.
- 96 Fonó, *A magyar munkásnők helyzete*, 68–69.
- 97 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 219; Koller, *Streikkultur*; Vasilev et al., *Текстилци*.
- 98 Burek, ‘Women Workers’ Protests’.
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- 100 Pokorný, ‘Odborářka. Příklad Karly Pfeiferové’.
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- 103 Penn, *Solidarity’s Secret*.
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- 106 ‘Empfehlungen der WGB-Kommission für Werktätige Frauen an das Sekretariat des WGB für die 5. Weltgewerkschaftskonferenz zu Problemen der Werktätigen Frauen, Sofia, 26–28, September 1989’, 1989, DY 34/12638, SAPMOBArch; ‘Schlußfolgerungen aus den Rundtischgesprächen über die Probleme der werktätigen Frauen Wien, 28.2.–02.03.1989’, 1989, DY 34/12638, SAPMOBArch.
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- 109 Boschek, ‘Frauenarbeit und Gewerkschaften’, 5.
- 110 Cobble, *Dishing It Out*, 152–56; Kessler-Harris, *A Woman’s Wage*, 83–112; Studer, “... da doch die verheiratete Frau”; Jarska, ‘Trade Union Activists’.
- 111 Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*, 17–31.
- 112 International Labour Office, *The Labour Provisions of the Peace Treaties*, 96.
- 113 International Congress of Working Women. ‘First Convention of International Conference of Working Women, National Museum, Washington, D.C., Afternoon Session’, 6 November

- 1919, 25–26. Mary van Kleeck Papers, 1883–1972, of Sophia Smith Collection, Women's History Archive (Northampton, MA), WASI; Vapnek, 'The 1919 International Congress of Working Women'.
- 114 Van Goethem, 'Conflicting Interests', 79.
- 115 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 227–98.
- 116 While on the issue of equal pay women trade unionists found themselves on the same side as legal equality feminists such as Open Door International, on many other issues women trade unionists from across the ideological spectrum mobilized against ideas of legal equality feminists. Confrontation was especially acute over the issue of gender-specific labour protection which lay at the core of the women-related agendas of all three strands of the labour movement. See Confédération internationale des syndicats chrétiens, *L'oeuvre de l'Internationale Syndicale chrétienne*, 71–73; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 368–415.
- 117 Zimmermann, 'Women's International Networks'.
- 118 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Eleventh Session 1928*, 1:99.
- 119 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 262–66; Zimmermann, 'Women's International Networks'.
- 120 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 279.
- 121 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 279–81.
- 122 Tosstorff, *The Red International*, 329, 389–90. Losowski, 'Das Aktionsprogramm der Roten Gewerkschaftsinternationale', 329, 389–90.
- 123 'Окръжно 1', 8 February 1932, f. 38B, op. 1, a.e. 222, TsDA.
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- 132 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Report of Activity of the WFTU, 1953–1957'.
- 133 'Dokumente der ersten Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen. Budapest, 14. bis 17. Juni 1956: Allgemeine Resolution', *Internationale Vereinigung der Gewerkschaften der Werktätigen des Öffentlichen Dienstes und verwandter Berufe. Berufsabteilung im Weltgewerkschaftsbund: Anhang zum Informationsbulletin*, no. 4 [1956]: 16–17, ARCH01666, box 155–60, folder 157, IISH.
- 134 'Dokumente der ersten Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen. Budapest, 14. bis 17. Juni 1956. Memorandum der Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen an den Generaldirektor der [ILO]', *Internationale Vereinigung der Gewerkschaften der Werktätigen des Öffentlichen Dienstes und verwandter Berufe. Berufsabteilung im Weltgewerkschaftsbund. Anhang zum Informationsbulletin*, no. 4 [1956]: 19–20, ARCH01666, box 155–60, folder 157, IISH.
- 135 Luis Alvarado, 'The Director General', 22 November 1956, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 1), ILOA.
- 136 Alvarado, 'The Director General'.
- 137 Bell, 'Record of Interview, 14 November 1962'; Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'.
- 138 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Forty-Eighth Session 1964*, 820–21.
- 139 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 107; 'Charter on the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights 1972'; 'Charta der ökonomischen, sozialen, kulturellen und gewerkschaftlichen Rechte [WFTU] 1979'.
- 140 Pánková, 'Ženy a odbory', 21–33.
- 141 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 85.
- 142 Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, 56.
- 143 Zagorski, 'Die Frau in der nationalen Gewerkschaftsbewegung', 590–92.

- 144 Aranyossi, 'The Impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution'.
- 145 Kosova, *Ben İşçiyim*, 88.
- 146 The strike was officially not trade union-led, yet communist and social democratic trade unionists fought for control over the strike committee.
- 147 Abadzhiev, *Спомени от изминатия път*, 122.
- 148 Masheva, 'Renegotiating Skills, Wages'.
- 149 Dochev, 'Йорданка Николова в СССР', 230.
- 150 Dochev, 'Йорданка Николова в СССР'.
- 151 Masheva, 'Renegotiating Skills, Wages'.
- 152 Boschek, 'Frauenarbeit und Gewerkschaften', 5.
- 153 Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality*; Quataert, 'Women's Work and Worth'.
- 154 Lozovskii, *Мировое профессиональное движение*, vol. 3, 224–26.
- 155 Boschek, 'Frauenarbeit und Gewerkschaften', 5.
- 156 Komitet na bulgarskite zheni, 'Концепция за осигуряване на оптимални условия за съчетаване задълженията на жената като производственичка, майка и общественичка – 1-ви проект', 1971, f. 417, op. 4, a.e. 61, p. 14–15, TsDA.
- 157 Zimmermann, "It Shall Not Be a Written Gift".
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Radical women: gendered social critique in anarchist, communist and New Left movements, 1890s to 1980s

Introduction: radical politics in long-term multiscalar perspective

The radical left has been a home to women labour activists who voiced fundamental critiques of existing gender and labour relations while challenging men's reluctance to engage seriously with women's emancipation in full – we call them *radical women*. In this chapter, we look at radical women in anarchist, communist and New Left movements and the trajectories of their gendered social critique in a common framework (that is, as part of the radical left) and from a long-term multiscalar perspective. Exploring the diverse strands of radical women's labour activism in the region of focus from the late nineteenth century until the 1980s, we 'think-together' the variety of agendas radical women pursued and the vastly different repertoires of action they employed when striving to achieve their demands.

In social movement studies, the term 'radical' is generally associated with contentious politics, including collective violence.¹ Engaging with the term with a gendered lens, however, feminist scholarship has shown how women who advocated for thorough political change to achieve gender and social justice have been involved in a variety of formal and informal organizations, including state institutions, adjusting their strategies to shifting political environments.² Drawing on these contributions, we consider the full spectrum of their repertoires of action, ranging from strikes, public protests and other militant action to the work of experts, bureaucrats and civil servants who, in state-aligned and/or international organizations, pushed for policies and mechanisms targeting gender inequalities in the workplace and beyond.³ Combined

with a long-term perspective, adopting such an inclusive understanding of the repertoires and organizational forms of women's labour activism allows us to follow continuity and change in radical left women's agendas across political ruptures. It provides insight into how gender and class (and sometimes also other major categories of difference) shaped and informed radical women's critique of gender and labour regimes under changing historical contexts of post-imperial transitions, and nation- and state-building processes.

Women who upheld radical views on how to change gender and labour relations and who were unhappy with women's secondary position in mixed-gender organizing were certainly present also among social democrats (chapter 4), agrarian socialists, Trotskyists and Maoists, as well as among left-wing women organized in second wave feminist movements. We limit our discussion to those in anarchist, communist and New Left movements, as this helps us to highlight continuity and change in radical women's tactics and strategies over time in a more focused manner. Yet, acknowledging the contingency of the organizational forms women's labour activism has taken historically, we do not argue that *all* women who joined these movements were necessarily *radical* in the sense of how we use the term here.

In the long view, radical women who joined anarchist, communist and New Left movements in our region of focus strove to shift the meanings of concepts related to women's labour and economic rights by tackling issues such as wage justice, equal pay, the right to work, improved working conditions and labour protection. They promoted or enacted far-reaching change in relation to these rights. Some communist women continued doing so under (state) socialist regimes. Simultaneously, radical women openly addressed the sexism and gender-based discrimination they experienced in society as well as in the social movements they joined, and advocated for a fundamental change in terms of women's and men's involvement in reproductive labour, particularly unpaid labour in the household. Apart from these common denominators, the world views of radical women could be vastly different and, in the course of the twentieth century, in open conflict regarding activists' relationship to state power. Anarchists often adhered to an anti-statist world view, while many communist women, with the coming of (state) socialism, self-identified with this new regime. New Left women rejected both capitalism and state socialism (whereas, for many social democratic women, state socialism was worse than capitalist democracy).⁴ These differences coloured radical women's agendas and translated into different repertoires of action. Anarchist

women employed a wide array of repertoires ranging from terrorist attacks, ‘expropriations’ and strikes to the organization of mutualist communities. Communist women, depending on the context and time period, acted within social movements to overthrow capitalism or – aligned to various degrees with (state) socialist regimes – pursued their agendas ‘from within’ established forms of governance on national and international scales, stretching the boundaries of these institutions with their gendered labour demands and action. By contrast, New Left women emphasized women’s autonomy from the state and men-dominated social movements and established new, ‘independent’ or ‘autonomous’ structures.

With a view to integrating this wide spectrum of repertoires, the chapter relies on activist publications and documents as well as secondary sources on women in anarchist, communist and New Left movements as source material. It covers the period from the late nineteenth century, when anarchism and revolutionary socialism gained ground in the region, up to the 1970s and 1980s, when New Left politics and feminist currents that engaged in radical system critique within it gained traction in the countries of the region – albeit to different degrees. By considering imperial and national contexts and transnational levels of organizing at the same time, we identify the synchronicities and divergences between national and international agenda setting. Two significant insights enabled by this long-term multiscalar perspective are worth highlighting here. First is the importance of a focus on the life trajectories and career paths (political biographies) of individual women when tracing change and continuity in the demands, discussions and controversies around women’s labour and economic rights as well as in women’s struggles against sexism and discrimination in anarchist, communist and New Left movements. This allows us to highlight the multi-issue, intersectional nature of radical women’s activism⁵ ([chapter 7](#)) and follow these women’s simultaneous engagements with various social movements and causes, such as socialism, anarchism, feminism and nationalism, as well as their national and transnational networks within a certain movement, such as activists’ simultaneous involvement with communist-aligned women-only, trade union and party organizations ([introductory chapter](#)). It also allows us to trace the convergence of agendas and activist repertoires across the Iron Curtain⁶ (see also [chapters 5 and 10](#)) and include those women in (state) socialist contexts who adhered to radical visions of gender and labour relations and still saw the workers’ state as an indispensable precondition for thorough change as part of our discussion on radical women’s labour activism.

Secondly, radical women from the region both contributed to the development of international agenda setting in relation to women's work-related demands and translated international developments and agendas to their local and national contexts in creative ways. Throughout the decades, different and often overlapping generations of women in the region generated radical gendered critiques of class oppression in local, national, regional and international contexts simultaneously. At the same time, certain issues and agendas were often pursued only at a particular scale and/or within a particular political arena.⁷ Studying how activists shaped anarchist, communist and New Left agendas around women's work on multiple scales while highlighting the limitations for women's labour activism within men-dominated radical left mobilizations, the chapter builds on recent scholarly calls for a balanced and critical approach to the complicated and ambiguous relationship between feminist struggles for gender justice and class-based approaches to social justice.⁸

Radical women in and between social movements until World War II

Women's engagement with the radical left in the period between the late nineteenth century and World War II was shaped by the turbulent history of our region, characterized by regime changes and redrawing of state borders, as well as by frequent social, economic and political crises. Radical women labour activists in the Russian, Ottoman and Habsburg Empires (Map 1) often engaged with multiple causes and social movements, including socialism, anarchism, feminism and nationalism. The revolutions, upheavals and civil wars that followed in the aftermath of World War I, accompanied by a convergence of the radical critiques of the established economic, social and political order, gave way to new visions of gender and labour relations. The impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution and the early Bolshevik vision of the 'New Woman' profoundly influenced communist women's agendas in the interwar period. Simultaneously, the Communist International (Comintern) established in 1919 created closely knit transnational networks and offered communist women the opportunity to pursue their activism on the international plane.⁹ Even though the chapter's focus is on 'radical women' and not on *all* women in left-wing social movements, in the early decades of the twentieth century there was a considerable overlap between radical women and women in anarchist and communist

movements. This section therefore at times refers to women in these movements in general terms.

From empires to nation-states: women's paths towards the radical left

Women's paths towards the radical left at the turn of the twentieth century were deeply shaped by the region's predominantly agrarian economies that relied on a variety of land ownership regimes. In Hungary in the 1890s and 1900s, agrarian socialism but also anarchism were gaining ground among poor peasant women, who radicalized in a context of a growing number of landless and smallholder peasants, unequal distribution of land and general peasant poverty, which forced them to engage in highly exploitative forms of wage labour.¹⁰ The letters of Mrs Gábor Magyar, who identified herself as an inspector from the Free Women's Organization of Balmazújváros (Balmazújvárosi Szabad Nőszervezet), to Rosika Schwimmer (1877–1948), a leader of the Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete), mixed Christian notions with the ideas of world freedom and sisterly love. Their content is an indication of the influence of ideal anarchism and the Tolstoyan movement on peasant women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Hungary.¹¹ The activism of the Ukrainian peasant Matrena Prisiazhniuk who self-identified as an 'anarchist-individualist' illustrates another pattern in Eastern European peasant women's anarchism (Map 1). In the speech she gave after her death sentence was pronounced in 1908, Prisiazhniuk declared that her 'ideal [was] the free development of the individual personality in the broadest sense of the word and the overthrow of slavery in all its forms'.¹² In both cases, women's involvement in anarchism was informed by their poor peasant background. Hunger, destitution, family suffering, and particularly mothers' inability to feed and take proper care of their children made them challenge the legitimacy of the given legal and social order.

The 1905 Russian Revolution was a turning point for women of various ethnic and class backgrounds in the Russian Empire, pushing many of them into diverse, including radical left, social movements. In the Russian Empire in 1903–7, women made up 30 to 35 per cent of the membership in anarchist groups. Alongside gender, other social categories, such as ethnicity and age, shaped patterns of women's activism. Jewish women were highly visible in the anarchist movement, and so were young girls. One of the defining characteristics of women anarchists was their involvement in acts of violence such as expropriations and

terrorist attacks. This is clearly visible in the biography of one of the most prominent figures of Ukrainian anarchism – Olga Taratuta (née Elka Ruvinska) (1874?¹³–1938), dubbed ‘Grandmother of Anarchy’, who experienced her first arrest at the age of 18.¹⁴ The example of Sonja Lerch (née Sarah Sonja Rabinowitz) (1882–1918), a Jewish woman born in Warsaw (Russian Empire, today Poland), confirms the importance of the year 1905 in radicalizing women. Her political trajectory also points to women activists’ ideological flexibility and their consecutive or simultaneous belonging to different social movements. Sonja Lerch took part in the revolution by helping to organize workers’ and students’ soviets in the port city of Odesa (Odessa, Russian Empire, today Ukraine) (Map 1, Map 4). Forced to flee to Central Europe in 1907, she retained a lifelong attachment to the secular, non-Zionist Jewish socialist movement, the Bund, yet also mixed with anarchists and pacifists, led strikes and attended revolutionary reading circles. Refusing to take up what she considered doctrinaire positions, she instead channelled the possibility of protest into the specific, immediate and pragmatic terms of improving everyday life.¹⁵ Clara Halpern (1888–1978), born into a Jewish family in Novozybkov (Russian Empire, today Russia), also radicalized during this time. She gravitated towards social revolutionaries and later on joined the ‘Young Ones’ (Molodye)¹⁶ anarchist group in Białystok (Russian Empire, today Poland) (Map 1, Map 4), where she did agitation work and participated in expropriations.¹⁷ According to the recollections of Iuda Grossman-Roshchin, the Białystok anarchist group worked actively among ‘the most backward, the most oppressed part of proletariat’, namely women textile workers. Most of these workers were ethnic Poles, and anarchists tried to counteract the influence of the ‘populists’ (narodovtsi) representing Polish bourgeois nationalism among workers. In 1905–6, anarchists took an active part in organizing and supporting a series of strikes among the women textile workers that ended with partial success.¹⁸

Women’s involvement in radical left movements in the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries is considerably less well studied in comparison to that in the Russian Empire. It is evident, however, that both the formation of socialist and anarchist groups and women’s participation in them were profoundly shaped by the ethnic and religious identities in the Ottoman world. Anarchism was especially prominent among minoritized groups, who organized in secret societies along ethno-religious lines (often in close relation with national liberation movements) and had ties with transnational Russian, European and Balkan revolutionary circles.¹⁹ A number of

women were active in these organizations, including the Armenian journalist, writer, poet, teacher, and socialist and feminist activist Mari Beyleryan (1877–1915). Beyleryan not only defended women's right to work and to contribute to the family economy but also criticized the lack of respect women received for performing the tiresome household chores, arguing this work was undervalued in society because it was not monetized. She argued that housework had 'confined us [women] to the status of a domestic servant. We have been deprived of even the least amount of respect in return for a long-suffering life, the grand altruism and deprivation.'²⁰

The share of industrial workers before World War I which grew, although in a highly uneven manner, across the region but still constituted a relatively insignificant part of the workforce²¹ posed a challenge to mainstream Marxist ideological stances about the leading role of the industrial proletariat.²² This created tensions that were visible in both reformists' and revolutionary socialists' preoccupation with attracting more members of the working class to the labour movement, as well as in some anti-intellectual opposition in Marxist organizations. Women intellectuals who identified with the radical left had to fight prejudice and discrimination on account of both their gender and their class position, since they came mostly from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. In the left wing of the Bulgarian Workers' Social Democratic Party (Bulgarska rabotnicheska sotsialdemokraticheska partiia/Българска работническа социалдемократическа партия, BRSDP) (the 'narrow'), the workers' opposition attacked Koika Tineva (1880–1964) for 'picking her nails and blushing' and her 'aristocratism'.²³

Sexism and constraints posed by the unequal division of household responsibilities and adherence to traditional gender roles within the family – widespread even among radical activist couples – also impeded women's engagement with the socialist movement.²⁴ In an article published in 1921 in the *Workers' Newspaper* (*Работнически вестник*), the organ of the 'narrow', Ana Maimunkova (1878–1925)²⁵ focused on gender inequalities as the fundamental reason for the low number of women members in the communist party and trade unions:

It is not only the household trifles around which they are engaged, or family obligations, age-old prejudices, traditions and customs that explain this lower level in women's political consciousness ...

We are fighting for the emancipation of the worker, of the woman slave, and in general we are fighting against all subjugation ... But is this what all our comrades do in their private

lives? No, most of them are like that only in their social life, but in the family they behave like masters ... There the communist man replaces the capitalist master; he wants to rule at home.²⁶

On an ideological level, radical women were attracted to socialism early on, due to its vision of a new social order that fundamentally rejected inherited hierarchies and redressed social inequalities, thus promising a full turnabout of the gender and social order that would bring about 'women's liberation' (Figure 5, Figure 6). In other words, for radical women socialism offered solutions to two major social problems of the time, namely the 'social question' and the 'woman question', and they regarded the latter as no less serious than the former. Socialist parties were the first ones to open their doors to women and, in 1891, the Second International mandated that its member parties advocate gender equality.²⁷ Yet, socialist movements, in all their incarnations including the radical ones discussed in this chapter, prioritized class struggle over gender justice. In practice, they had an ambiguous relationship to women's emancipation, and they stayed masculinist in terms of their organizational cultures, political agendas and activist repertoires.²⁸

Negotiating class- and gender-based identities was a challenge for radical women in our region as they navigated the men-dominated world of the socialist movement, but tension was also clearly visible in their strained relationship with the women's movement.²⁹ Engaging with the issues of poverty and precarity, radical women tended to highlight the different social and economic needs of working- and middle-class women. In turn, they were criticized by women active in the first wave women's movement for undermining the strength and unity of this movement.³⁰ The most visible separation between 'bourgeois' feminist and socialist 'proletarian' ideas happened in countries with strong socialist parties and movements, such as Austria, Bulgaria and Serbia, which tended to generate vibrant socialist (and later communist) women's movements.³¹ Yet, while some leaders of the socialist women's movement, among them the German Clara Zetkin (1857–1933) within the Second International (and later on within the Comintern), insisted on clearly distinguishing their movements from those of 'bourgeois feminists', the non-co-operation policy was routinely breached by various (radical) left women at national and international levels.³²

War and revolution: radical women during World War I and its aftermath

In the final years of World War I, coercive economic measures and food shortages caused rapid deterioration in the living and working conditions in many countries in the region and beyond. Women who constituted the backbone of the home front workforce bore the brunt of it and were on the front line of public protests: hunger riots, street demonstrations, strikes ([chapter 8](#)). Simultaneously, the process of disintegration of empires and the emergence of new nation-states ([Map 2](#)) was often accompanied by revolutions and/or civil wars. The rise of social antagonism ran parallel to an upsurge in the number of proponents of deep, fundamental change in the socioeconomic and political order. As a consequence of this 'global revolution of rising expectations'³³ there was a noticeable shift towards the radical left in many countries across Europe in the last years of the war and its immediate aftermath.

In the early stages of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the fight between revolutionaries and counter-revolutionaries was accompanied by acute and often violent conflicts within the left, namely between Bolsheviks, social democrats, social revolutionaries and anarchists. Anarchists were particularly strong in Ukraine, where the movement led by Nestor Makhno gained control over vast territories. Makhno's wife Halyna Kuz'menko (1896–1978) took an active role in the organization of children's communes and schools in Huliaipole (Russian Empire, then Soviet Union, today Ukraine) ([Map 2](#), [Map 4](#)).³⁴ She was also an outspoken critic of the Bolsheviks – as were most members of the movement – stating that their 'aim [was] State Communism, with the workers and farmers of the whole country serving as employees of the one powerful government master. Its result is the most abject slavery, suppression and revolt.'³⁵ Another major figure in the Makhno movement was Maria Nykyforova (1885?–1919). Before joining the movement, Nykyforova already had rich experience in terrorist actions and expropriation campaigns. Unlike Kuz'menko, Nykyforova was active in the development of the military operations and tactics of the Makhno movement.³⁶

Like the Russian Empire, the dissolution of the Habsburg Monarchy was accompanied by upheavals and revolutions that opened spaces for radical women. In Hungary, women activists such as Magda Aranyossi (1896–1977) were very critical of the Republican government of Mihály Károlyi, established in 1918. These women judged many of the Károlyi government's reforms – such as restricting the right to vote only to

literate women while giving universal suffrage to men above the age of 21, or fixing the social security payment for women to one-third of that for men – as strongly biased against working-class women on account of both gender and class.³⁷ Many of the measures that the short-lived Hungarian Republic of Councils (21 March–1 August 1919) took that aimed at granting women equal political rights, eliminating gender-based discrimination in education, and alleviating women's household and childcare burden were – for the most part – compliant with the agendas of women in radical left movements. Yet, communist women were also quick to point out the deficiencies in the scope and application of the regime's policies. The Nationwide Women's Congress (Országos Nőkongresszus) that convened in June 1919, while expressing full support for the regime, addressed the government with a long list of demands. These ranged from limiting child labour and increasing protection for pregnant women and working mothers and the demand that 'in all professions and in all careers women should be paid in fact (and not only in principle) fully equal wages for equal work with men', to preparing 'young people of both sexes intellectually and spiritually for their vocation as parents' and establishing a revolutionary tribunal against all forms of sexual violence (on equal pay, see also [chapter 2](#)).³⁸

The turbulence of the war's aftermath contributed to a full-scale political-personal radicalization of some women on the radical left. The Hungarian social democrat Katica Horváth (1887–?) became a militant leader of the Nationwide Federation of Men and Women Household Workers (Háztartási Munkások és Munkásnők Országos Szövetsége)³⁹ (on domestic workers, see also [chapter 9](#)). In the first days of the Hungarian Republic of Councils, a 4,000-strong crowd of domestic workers greeted Horváth with 'rapturous applause' when she praised the new communist state, anticipating the bourgeoisie being put to work, the end of large households with many servants and the creation of a system of collective kitchens; in the meantime, radical and rapid improvement of the conditions of household work was the order of the day.⁴⁰ Horváth served as 1 of 36 women on the Budapest Central Revolutionary Workers' and Soldiers' Council (Budapesti Központi Forradalmi Munkás- és Katonatanács).⁴¹ In 1920, now a clerk at the social democratic daily *People's Voice* (*Népszava*) and nominated as a social democratic candidate for the national elections, she was arrested. At the turn of the year she had been involved in illegal cabaret performances – permission for a new 'entertainment association' for domestic workers she aimed to establish was still pending – and other prohibited activities.⁴² Horváth was then put on trial during the Republic

of Councils period, when (reportedly) she had requisitioned (together with her co-defendants) an art nouveau palace in an elegant Budapest residential area and made the villa into the seat of the domestic workers' trade union. She was sentenced to eight months in prison.⁴³ In Bulgaria, 1919 similarly was a radicalization moment for some women's political trajectories, including Koika Tineva. Initially part of the more radical 'narrow' wing of the BRSDP, Tineva was expelled in 1908 due to her stance on the political neutrality of trade unions and her insistence on co-operation with the reformist 'broad' wing. In 1915, she was in turn expelled from the 'broad' wing for her anti-war positions. In 1919, following a stay in Soviet Russia, Tineva in the end joined the newly founded Bulgarian Communist Party (Bulgarska komunisticheska partiia/Българска комунистическа партия, ВКП).⁴⁴

While Austria did not see a full-fledged Republic of Councils, women on the radical left participated in strike movements towards the end of the war and engaged in a radical rethinking of the newly founded Republic of (German-)Austria. One result of the revolutionary transformation was the relatively long-lasting councils movement, which maintained a 'parliament of the working class' until 1924. Within the institutions of the workers' councils, radical women from different parts of the left's spectrum met and expressed their desire for a 'revolution of the soul'.⁴⁵ Their visions of fundamental social change, expressed boldly and explicitly for the time, encompassed all parts of life, from the radical restructuring of economic decision-making (Emmy Freundlich, 1878–1948) ([chapter 1](#)), to a proletarian dictatorship (Anna Hornik-Strömer, 1899–1966; née Strömer, also spelt Ströhmer), a rethinking of partnership between men and women and between children and parents (Elfriede Eisler-Friedländer/Ruth Fischer, 1895–1961, and Marianne Pollak, 1891–1963), and the working conditions of women (Käthe Leichter, 1895–1942) ([chapter 8](#)).⁴⁶

The backlash that followed the postwar radicalization, accompanied in many countries by state repression, was a major challenge to women in radical left movements in the early 1920s. Squeezed from multiple sides and seeing their membership numbers dwindle, anarchists in Czechoslovakia were compelled to seek alliances first with social democrats and later with communists. Activists with ties to multiple movements such as Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1969) – a member of the Independent Socialist Party (Neodvislá socialistická strana)⁴⁷ in the immediate post-World War I years who nevertheless maintained close links to leaders of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (Komunistická strana Československá, KSČ) as well as

to the feminist movement – proved instrumental in building political alliances.⁴⁸ The Austrian Anna Hornik-Strömer reported in 1920 to the First International Congress of Communist Women that the party had already lost a significant portion of its women members and could no longer afford to publish its separate women's periodical *The Revolutionary Proletarian Woman* (*Die Revolutionäre Proletarierin*).⁴⁹ In Serbia, after being discontinued in 1914 due to World War I, the social democratic women's journal *Equality* (*Једнакост*), resumed publication in March 1920, now as a communist women's journal, only to be banned in December 1920.⁵⁰

Agendas and repertoires between the local and the international

The Russian Revolution of 1917 and the evolving Bolshevik gender politics profoundly shaped the discussions around the 'woman question' worldwide and left a deep imprint on communist women's visions of social transformation. The initial years of the Soviet regime were marked by a wide-ranging equality programme envisioned to create a 'New Woman' that involved full political rights, reproductive freedom, reform of the family code, the removal of formal barriers to women's education and the establishment of the principle of equal pay for equal work.⁵¹ By the early 1920s, communist women in our region had adopted Soviet gender- and welfare-related agendas as a role model and struggled for fundamental change in working-class motherhood, socialized childcare, gender wage justice and women's relief from what Lenin called the 'crushing drudgery' of housework.⁵²

Communist women's agendas and repertoires evolved throughout the interwar period and displayed variations that reflected local specificity. The Women's Section of the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) in its report for the period 1924–8 made a special case for Turkey, acknowledging the difficulties of doing illegal communist work in the Kemalist one-party regime. From a communist point of view, many Kemalist policies such as secularization, prohibition of polygamy and limitations on women's veiling were progressive (yet insufficient) measures towards achieving gender equality.⁵³ Turkish women were also targeted specifically through the Comintern's policy towards 'peoples of the East'. Rahime Hanım (Selimova) and Naciye (Nadzhia) Hanım attended the Congress of the Peoples of the East in Baku (Soviet Union, today Azerbaijan) in 1920. Here, Naciye Hanım confronted orientalist representations of Turkish women, stating that they do not fight only against veiling 'as many people suppose' and that

this issue was in fact 'of the least importance'. She proceeded to outline an agenda for 'complete equality of rights', which included the demand for 'unconditional opportunity to make use of the educational and vocational-training institutions established for men' and 'unconditional admission of women to employment in legislative and administrative institutions'.⁵⁴

The establishment of the institutions of the Third International⁵⁵ in the immediate post-World War I years played a markedly centralizing role for communist women's activism, as it unfolded within a social movement that was 'so international in its rhetoric, so transnational in its practice, so global in its ambitions'.⁵⁶ The International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern, established in 1920, with its conferences and its organ *The Communist Women International* (*Die Kommunistische Fraueninternationale*) provided a major forum for communist women's co-operation, and a densely knit border-crossing network of activists was formed.⁵⁷ Despite the strong presence of Central and Eastern European women in the secretariat's conferences, as correspondents and contributors of press articles, their contribution to the international communist women's movement has begun to be researched only very recently.⁵⁸

The secretariat's co-ordinating and centralizing role is evident in the activists' choice of repertoires, with co-ordinated campaigns around International Women's Day (8 March) probably being its most visible and recognizable manifestation. Some agendas and repertoires were clearly related to Soviet foreign policy and reflected the increasing Soviet domination in the international communist movement, such as the 1928 celebration of the 10th anniversary of the Soviet Union. By contrast, some repertoires were evidently adapted to local realities, such as Bulgarian communist women's use of traditional social gatherings that combined work and entertainment (*sedenki*) as the most effective tool to reach peasant women⁵⁹ or the bilingual events (in German and Czech) organized by Czech communist women to reflect the multiethnic composition of the movement (and the state).⁶⁰ Divisions along ethnic lines in Czechoslovakia persisted throughout the interwar period, and the communist women's movement remained fractured into separate women's sections, each with its own periodical.⁶¹ In Romania, communist women's circles appeared in 1922 under the influence of international communism. Communist women in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, sought to attract to these circles especially women working outside the capital and to encourage them to join trade unions (see [chapter 2](#)). A resolution of the Communist Party of Romania (*Partidul Comunist din România*, PCdR) on women's circles referred to 'woman's

special situation, which bears double exploitation: in the factory and in the home ... woman is more burdened by the prejudice ... (existing in the thinking) of ... many male workers, as well'.⁶²

Starting in 1919, when the First Congress of the Comintern took place, recruiting women workers was declared paramount for the success of the movement, and therefore it was 'an urgent task of every member party of the Communist International to work forcefully and energetically to win proletarian women to its ranks'.⁶³ Numerous appeals, resolutions and guidelines from the ECCI to the affiliated communist parties on the work among women followed throughout the interwar period.⁶⁴ Yet, despite the official urgings issued by the Comintern and the various communist parties, work among women was routinely assessed in reports as unsatisfactory and lagging behind. The Women's Section of the ECCI in 1928 aptly summarized the reasons why: '[work among women] on the whole is weak and one of the chief causes is the inability of the majority of the Parties to realize the necessity of special work to win over working women. Consequently, as a general rule the active leadership and support of the work amongst women by the Party leaders is [sic] still weak'.⁶⁵ The marginalization and lack of support within the party often hampered communist women's organizing in very concrete and practical terms (see also [chapter 4](#)). For instance, in 1920, the Yugoslav Central Women's Secretariat (Centralni sekretarijat žena) was unable to organize its yearly conference due to lack of financial support from the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (Komunistička partija Jugoslavije, KPJ).⁶⁶

International communism's strategic documents had traditionally put a special emphasis on recruiting women workers, with this focus becoming even more pronounced following the decisions of the 1924 Fifth Comintern Congress. This congress started a broad reorganization of communist work among women that lasted until the adoption of Popular Front tactics in the mid-1930s. It involved a greater focus on trade union work (on communist women trade unionists, see [chapter 2](#)) as well as a shift towards workplace-centred activism. In many countries of the region, however, the Comintern's directions were in stark contrast to communist women's support base, which consisted not of gainfully employed women but predominantly of housewives. The women's section of the KSC – which was one of the strongest, with a membership of between 17,000 and 25,000 women – was criticized by the ECCI's Women Section on the grounds that, in 1926, 72.7 per cent of its women members were housewives and only 27.3 per cent workers. A similar criticism was directed at the Communist Party of Austria

(Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ), whose influence was 'limited chiefly to housewives and unemployed women, notwithstanding the great efforts made to attract the factory women'.⁶⁷ By contrast, other parties from the region were praised for their recruiting and agitation tactics. In Poland, women communists constituted 8 per cent of party members, and the women's section was praised for its recruitment efforts including, among other things, their initiative to open a school for training women cadres and to establish a network of women's departments in provincial party structures.⁶⁸

In the 1930s, activists in radical left movements, men and women alike, found themselves in an increasingly difficult situation in most countries of the region. The establishment of right-wing authoritarian regimes in many places led to repression and persecution, often specifically targeting communists and anarchists and forcing them to work underground. After the adoption of Popular Front tactics, communist women infiltrated and tried to influence from within various types of legal organizations, including trade unions, parties, co-operatives and women's organizations ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 2](#)). For many activists, however, increased persecution by right-wing authoritarian regimes resulted in imprisonment and/or political exile (most often in the Soviet Union). Exile to the Soviet Union, for many communists, turned out to be dangerous, often more so than persecution at home. In the 1930s many ended up in Soviet labour camps or were executed during the purges of 1937–8.⁶⁹ A similar fate also befell anarchist women. In 1921, upon the defeat of the Makhno movement, Halyna Kuz'menko managed to flee the Soviet Union but was arrested during World War II and sentenced to an eight-year term, which she served in Mordovia, in the Volga region (Soviet Union, today Russia).⁷⁰

Radical women's politics and policymaking after 1945

The post-World War II context opened a new era in radical women's organizing and labour activism. The radicalization of the 1930s and its suppression by right-wing authoritarian regimes, together with the dramatic war experience, had set the stage for many actors' individual and collective decision-making after 1945. The positioning of national governments in the decades following World War II on either side of the Iron Curtain in the new international system had a definitive impact on the activist careers and life trajectories of radical women. In Austria and Turkey, where governments pursued anti-communism

as part of their Cold War politics, communist women experienced exclusion and repression. By contrast, in (state) socialist countries, governments adopted to different degrees the Soviet model of women's emancipation and sought to facilitate women's participation in paid labour.⁷¹ Yet, women who mobilized for radical change in the interwar period were not always welcomed by the (state) socialist regimes, while some of them themselves turned their back on these regimes. In the second half of the twentieth century, conditions for radical politics were shifting, as older and younger cohorts of women in our region engaged in (re)new(ed) struggles for thorough political change in shifting national and international contexts.

Between persecution and co-optation: the postwar years

Aligned with the west, unlike other countries in the region, women in Turkey and Austria who radicalized during the interwar period continued their political work in the postwar context in which anti-communism marked nation-building processes. One of them was Zehra Kosova (1910–2001), a tobacco worker who migrated from Kavala, Greece, to Turkey during the population exchange between Turkey and Greece in 1924. In the 1930s, she was an active member of the Communist Party of Turkey (Türkiye Komünist Partisi, TKP) and involved in the underground trade union organizing of tobacco workers ([chapter 2](#); see also [chapter 5](#)). Upon Turkey's transition to a multi-party regime and the liberalization of the ban on workers organizing in 1946, Kosova became a member of the Socialist Workers' and Peasants' Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist Emekçi ve Köylü Partisi, TSEKP) and turned to establishing legal trade unions in Istanbul. The TSEKP's publication *Mass* (Yığın) agitated for women's right to work and informed its audience about the work of the communist-aligned Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF).⁷² In the postwar years, however, the crackdown on communists in Turkey only intensified. Suat Derviş (1905–72), the Marxist writer and journalist who had focused on women workers' problems since the 1920s, was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment for illegal communist activity in 1944. Increasing harassment and intimidation by the state, partly because her partner Reşad Fuat Baraner was the leader of the illegal TKP, caused Derviş to flee the country in 1953.⁷³

Radical women in Austria were active in the communist Trade Union Left Wing Group (Gewerkschaftlicher Linksblock, GLB) and the Federation of Democratic Women Austria (Bund Demokratischer Frauen Österreichs, BDFÖ), an organization established in 1946 by mainly

communist women – many of them formerly part of the antifascist resistance in Austria and in their countries of exile. One of the women joining the BDFÖ was the aforementioned Anna Hornik-Strömer, who campaigned as a young worker in the January 1918 strike and subsequently in the KPÖ.⁷⁴ Another was Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky (1897–2000), the renowned architect and inventor of the ‘Frankfurt kitchen’ (a modern fitted-kitchen design with access to light and fresh air), who also had designed (an eventually unimplemented) part of a girls’ vocational school in Ankara, Turkey.⁷⁵ BDFÖ activists supported communist workers during the October strike in 1950 (Oktoberstreik) – a wave of strikes against price increases and the so-called wage–price agreements between the government, companies and the social democratic Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB).⁷⁶ They collected money for striking workers and held meetings with women factory workers to mobilize them to join demonstrations and action against the price increase in essential goods (see also [chapter 8](#)).⁷⁷ Radical demands from communist women appeared in the weekly journal *Voice of Woman (Stimme der Frau)*, too. There, calling attention to the time women spend on unpaid household labour ([Figure 16](#)), the trade unionist Grete Kalteis (1901–96) demanded for women the reduction of weekly work hours from 48 to 44 and a free day each month for running errands.⁷⁸ Marie Grassinger (1893–1977), a member of the Vienna Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer), asked for housewives with large families and caregivers (of sick parents or war-disabled husbands) who worked part-time to have the same access to ration cards as full-time workers.⁷⁹

In the newly established (state) socialist regimes, the situations of radical women varied greatly. On the one hand, repressions targeting political adversaries affected a lot of former allies from the Popular Front period. In Stalinist Bulgaria, the largest groups of women political prisoners consisted of left-wing women, including social democrats, anarchists, Trotskyists, agrarians and, as a result of the party purges in the late 1940s and early 1950s, also communists.⁸⁰ On the other hand, for communists with the “right” record of interwar activism and World War II resistance, such as Tsola Dragoicheva (1898–1993) of Bulgaria and Ana Pauker (1893–1960) of Romania, regime change opened new paths for pursuing politics in diverse arenas. Both Dragoicheva and Pauker reached high echelons in the government and communist party of their respective countries and were also leaders in national and international (WIDF) women’s organizations.⁸¹ In Yugoslavia, some radical activists of the interwar era such as Angela Vode (1892–1985)

were sidelined by the new regime, while others held high positions in the party and the state as well as in women's organizations, such as Kata Pejnović (1899–1966), Vida Tomšič (1913–98) and Mitra Mitrović (1912–2001).⁸²

Another, perhaps more subtle, mode of marginalizing radical women occurred through what we can call pacification by inclusion. In Czechoslovakia, the anarchist activist and communist politician of the interwar period Luisa Landová-Štychová became a regime icon in the Stalinist era as vice president of the Czechoslovak Astronomical Society (Česká astronomická společnost), but she nonetheless 'remained on the fringes of Czech politics'.⁸³ In the case of Poland, women who had been active since the 1920s and 1930s were mainly assigned to secondary and invisible positions in party schools and state administration. The image of the radical communist woman of the interwar period 'contributed to the creation of the gender division of political work after the war, when women were assigned specific roles as guardians of revolutionary past'.⁸⁴

Internationalizing radical politics

Established in 1945 in Paris, the WIDF soon became the flagship organization of communist-aligned women worldwide. Its main agendas were antifascism, peace, child welfare, women's rights and anticolonialism.⁸⁵ The organization served as a meeting point for women active in political parties, women's organizations and trade unions, and as an arena for women's labour activism. Among the prominent figures in the WIDF were radical women from our region who had been active through the interwar period and in antifascist resistance during World War II. One of them was the Austrian Anna Grün (1889–1962), a teacher, leading communist functionary and later police welfare officer, who during World War II had spent time in exile in France, joined the resistance and been imprisoned for a brief period of time. Grün participated in the foundational WIDF congress in 1945 and would promote the establishment of a similar organization upon her return to Vienna (the BDFÖ).⁸⁶ Another was Edwarda Orłowska (1906–77), a 'professional revolutionary' of the interwar period⁸⁷ who became the head of the Women's Department of the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza). She was also a member of the WIDF's Executive Committee; there, she urged the WIDF to co-operate with the communist-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in furthering women's labour rights (see also [chapter 2](#), [chapter 10](#)).⁸⁸ For Grün, Orłowska and their like,

the WIDF served as an arena for internationalizing radical politics of women's work in the early Cold War years.

At the second congress of the WIDF in 1948 in Budapest, delegates from Eastern Europe emphasized the importance of the issue of women's wages and pushed for the United Nations 'to take immediate steps for the realization of the principle of women's equality ... including the principle of equal pay for equal work'.⁸⁹ By that time, some (state) socialist regimes in the region – such as Yugoslavia (1946), Bulgaria (1947) and Romania (1948) – had endorsed the principle of equal pay in their constitutions, while others had passed laws to support this principle. Radical women from these contexts, such as Eugenia Pragierowa (1888–1964), a lawyer and state official from Poland, saw the WIDF as a forum to lobby for the inclusion of the equal pay principle in the UN agenda.⁹⁰ Pragierowa was a radical woman already active in the Polish Socialist Party (Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS) including its Women's Section from before World War I. In the interwar years, she had worked within the Ministry of Work and Social Assistance (Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej)⁹¹ and authored several publications on workers' representation in enterprises and various aspects of labour legislation in the official journal of the ministry. These publications demonstrated her attention to the international dimension of labour law development and interest in gendered issues, although she was not formally involved in the Polish delegations at the annual sessions of the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO).⁹² In state socialist Poland, she became Under Secretary to the Minister and vice president of the Women's League (Liga Kobiet, LK). Speaking at the 1948 WIDF congress, Pragierowa reminded the audience that the ILO would soon hold a(nother) discussion on wage equality and that the WIDF would 'leave no stone unturned to make Equal Pay for Equal Work an internationally applied principle'.⁹³ The effort to make equal pay a universally applied principle exemplifies the contribution of radical women to international agenda setting in the period of transition to state socialism. This is not to suggest that the equal pay issue was resolved in (state) socialist countries; on the contrary, women struggled for equal pay under (state) socialism for many years to come.⁹⁴ The discussion about women's wages at the WIDF, instead, highlights radical women's engagement with the politics of practice on different platforms, similar to trade union women who pursued the issue of equal pay on multiple levels (chapter 2). Alongside more "mainstream" communist women, radical communist women continued transnational networking and participating in UN processes in the decades to come and contributed to the evolution of

this and other labour-related demands into a significant component of internationally recognized women's rights (see also [chapter 10](#)).

Gendered social critique through research and policy proposals

Several decades into (state) socialism, the gap between what was envisioned and what had been achieved in terms of solving women's work-related problems became increasingly visible to many, leading a new wave of radical critique to rise to the surface. Such critique was sometimes toned down to more moderate language; at other times harsh words were used, or fun was made of the trouble. At a commission meeting on the activities organized jointly by the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh) and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Trade Unions (Bulgarski profesionalni suiuzi/Български професионални съюзи, BPS; [Figure 27](#)) in 1972, a participant suggested something that made other participants laugh: instead of the 'commission for work among women', the structure should be called the 'commission for work on women's problems among men'. Chairing the meeting was the head of the KBZh, Elena Lagadinova (1930–2017), an activist with a record in antifascist resistance. Engaging with the participant's suggestion in a humorous manner, Lagadinova replied: 'No, it should probably be a committee to work on those problems that women's employment raises!'⁹⁵ The remarks pointedly addressed two grave problems: men's unwillingness to recognize women as equal partners at work, and the poorly handled consequences of women's mass entry into paid labour. A close reading of the documents from women activists' internal discussions in Bulgaria and elsewhere in the region reveals that such sarcastic remarks and creative exchanges between women activists were far from uncommon.

From the second half of the 1960s, the realization that systemic change did not eliminate women's oppression, and that the 'building of socialism' indeed generated grave new problems which affected women in a gendered manner, prompted more critical voices among activists who nonetheless remained aligned with (state) socialism. Research conducted via women's organizations and trade unions on the problems of women workers formed a significant basis for voicing far-reaching gendered social critique anew. A case in point is research conducted by Júlia Turgonyi⁹⁶ (1928–2014) ([Table 9](#)) in 1967 as part of a large-scale research project on women workers' work and life conditions carried out by the Social Science Institute (Társadalomtudományi Intézet, TTI) of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers'

Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottsága). Head of the cultural department of the National Council of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, MNOT) and a researcher at the TTI, Turgonyi interviewed women workers in six factories in Hungary, discussing with them not only problems in the workplace such as night shifts, working conditions, unequal wages and overtime work, but also struggles outside work such as political activity, housework, childcare, maternity leave and sick leave.⁹⁷ Research results revealed the gender-specific nature of women's work-related problems and, importantly, pointed at women's unpaid work at home as a root cause of discrimination in paid work.⁹⁸ Having dedicated much work and energy to the revamping of the Hungarian politics of women's work since the late 1960s,⁹⁹ Turgonyi soon became impatient with its limited results. In 1973, in a Hungarian flagship social science journal, she addressed the matter with harsh words. Men's attitudes towards women – and not just the insufficient number of childcare facilities – were the source of women's problems: 'women are increasingly less inclined to reconcile themselves to this situation. It becomes clearer and clearer that, in order to validate women's equal rights, *male prerogatives* must be *curtailed* and finally abolished.'¹⁰⁰

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, other (state) socialist contexts also saw the revival of gendered social critique in the public sphere; these were often made public through scientific research and policy proposals (see also [chapter 5](#), [chapter 8](#)). In Bulgaria, the KBZh and the journal *Woman Today* (*Жената днес*) financed and published research on the experiences of women workers that showed both the sexual harassment and the misogyny women experienced in the workplace, and the many hours women spent in unpaid work, which deprived them of the possibility of becoming, in the activists' words, '[a] holistically developed person[s]'.¹⁰¹ Drafted by a team of women activists and researchers who held radical visions about reconciling women's work, family and civic responsibilities, the KBZh's draft policy proposal (1971) prioritized the problems of women's gainful employment and simultaneously devoted significant attention to women's unpaid and reproductive labour.¹⁰² The final Politburo decision 'On Raising the Role of Women in Developed Socialist Society', passed in 1973, adopted the KBZh's proposals only partially. It reaffirmed women's three major social roles (mother, worker, citizen), but stated that among these 'motherhood ... ranks first'.¹⁰³ Partial success was what radical women could hope to achieve, since their demands reflected in policy proposals could be watered down to a significant degree when those proposals

turned into actual policy.¹⁰⁴ Indeed, radical women (functionaries) repeatedly ended up trying to make the best out of defeat, aiming to bargain for piecemeal improvements or additional safeguards for women workers in exchange for accepting reforms they had sharply opposed.¹⁰⁵ In one case in Czechoslovakia, where the expert-activists of the Czechoslovak Women's Union (Československý svaz žen, ČSŽ) participated in discussions on women's work with a focus on paid work, unpaid care work and motherhood,¹⁰⁶ the attempt to participate in policymaking yielded an even worse consequence. In 1969, the entire ČSŽ board was dismissed, and the activists involved, seen as too critical of the government, were also removed from other important positions they held.¹⁰⁷

As Natalia Jarska argues regarding the case of Poland, what is considered as a period of gender backlash in the literature on state socialist contexts following de-Stalinization was also a time when women labour activists engaged in knowledge production about women's inequality in the workplace as a 'powerful means to challenge official claims'.¹⁰⁸ The simultaneous developments in multiple contexts where activist research provided grounds for openly criticizing (state) socialist realities regarding the politics of women's work, and where activist functionaries aimed for radical improvement of the position of working women, constitute an overlooked milestone in the history of radical women's labour activism – regardless of the very mixed record in terms of activists' achievements and failures.

Transnational encounters and radicalization in local contexts

On the international level, communist-aligned women continued shaping the UN's processes of gender equality. The WIDF and the national organizations affiliated with it had a significant role in the making of historic documents and events such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1967), the International Women's Year (IWY, 1975) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979).¹⁰⁹ With these, by the end of the 1970s, the WIDF's demands around women's work such as the right to work, equal pay and access to social security, which were 'perceived by the world to be quite radical [back] in the late 1940s', had become normalized.¹¹⁰ Even though such demands served globally to showcase the advanced (state) socialist position regarding women's (labour) rights rather than reflecting the realities of women workers in (state) socialist national contexts, the synergies of transnational

encounters enabled by the WIDF generated new waves of radicalization of women labour activists in non-(state) socialist contexts in the region.¹¹¹

The Association of Progressive Women (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, İKD) in Turkey offers a good example of such radicalization. Founded in 1975 on the initiative of the TKP's women members, the İKD comprised women from various left-socialist parties and groups, and from trade unions, as well as industrial workers, students, teachers, housewives and state employees. İKD activists declared that they would use the 'instruments of the working class to realize women's gender-specific demands'¹¹² regarding public childcare services, wage equality, equal opportunity in education, access to contraception and extended maternity leave – demands that had hitherto not been raised collectively and contentiously in the Turkish context (Figure 28, Figure 29). The organization's establishment was with reference to the IWY and the UN Women's Decade (1976–85) which were, as the İKD repeatedly stated in its publications and pamphlets, thanks to the WIDF's initiative.¹¹³ As its ties with the WIDF grew, the İKD established connections with women's organizations and trade unions in state socialist countries. During 1977–9, official delegations from Bulgaria and the Soviet Union visited Turkey at the İKD's invitation. İKD leaders likewise travelled to state socialist countries, for instance to Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1976 for the international conference 'Women in Agriculture' organized by UNESCO and the WIDF, and to Moscow, Leningrad (Saint Petersburg, Soviet Union, today Russia) and Tallinn (Soviet Union, today Estonia), for educational excursions as guests of the Soviet Women's Committee.¹¹⁴ Since the WFTU had barely any presence in Turkey, the WIDF was the İKD's only means of having ties with communist trade union women. Thus, even if by the end of the 1970s the WIDF's (earlier radical) demands around women's work were turned into common sense on the international women's "scene", the transnational encounters enabled by the İKD–WIDF relationship were an important dynamic of the radicalization of women labour activists in the Turkish context.

Collaborations and contestations: New Left politics and its feminist currents

The developments in world and gender politics in the late 1960s and 1970s resulted in increased influence and exchange between different groups of women nationally and transnationally, leading to a partial synchronization of their agendas, albeit with different and often

incompatible ideas as to how to pursue those agendas. Agendas related to gender and labour, such as part-time work, the restriction of night work, vocational training, new technologies and unemployment, as well as legal frameworks regulating the private sphere that left women disadvantaged in the public sphere, occupied many groups of women regardless of their political affiliations. Across our region, New Left movements and the feminist currents within them impacted women's labour activism in multiple locales, although not necessarily simultaneously. Placing a strong emphasis on patriarchy as a system of oppression, New Left feminist currents (many of which later would form part of, or would self-identify as belonging to, second wave feminism) developed a fundamental critique of power in *all* societies and social relations, including in bourgeois-capitalist and communist societies, public and private life spheres and radical left social movements.¹¹⁵ Compared to "classical" radical communist women, radical New Left women attributed a greater significance to the issues of abortion and domestic violence, had a different take on the value of women's unpaid household labour and, importantly, argued for women's 'autonomy' from men-dominated political structures as an indispensable prerequisite for overcoming gender-based oppression. New Left feminists oftentimes belonged to a younger generation, but the transition from 'old school' communist and socialist to the New Left feminist labour politics is neither linear nor clear-cut.¹¹⁶ Rather, various collaborations and contestations occurred between different groups of women, and different alliances or lack thereof led to different results in each local context.

An early example of this is from Austria, where the interaction between communist, autonomous and (young) social democratic women resulted in different kinds of alliances, sometimes against what was perceived as a wing of social democracy that was too reform-oriented and too mainstream.¹¹⁷ Competing perspectives on labour were present in the communist BDFÖ, the Women's Department of the social democratic ÖGB, and communist and New Left trade union factions the GLB and Trade Union Unity (Gewerkschaftliche Einheit, GE), as well as feminists who were then part of the Autonomous Women's Movement (Autonome Frauenbewegung). In 1974, women from Independent Women Action (Aktion Unabhängiger Frauen, AUF) criticized the ÖGB for treating women (and migrants) as second-class workers by disregarding the topic of unpaid work and called for a joint demonstration on 1 May together with GE and other Marxist groups.¹¹⁸ Abortion was another issue that brought communist, social democrat and feminist women into collaboration. Ruth Aspöck (1947–) of the

Autonomous Women's Movement recalls that flyers about the right to abortion were distributed within the ÖGB and the Socialist Party of Austria (Sozialistische Partei Österreichs, SPÖ). Thanks to the efforts of Irma Schwager (1920–2015), a leading communist in post-1945 Austria, the KPÖ printed posters about abortion rights free of charge.¹¹⁹ At the same time, differences in organizational strategies and agendas divided communist and feminist women. The AUF and communist trade unionists disagreed, among other things, on the status of women's unpaid work and housewifery, which showed, for example, in their different engagements with the 'Wages for Housework' campaign initiated by activists in Italy in 1972.¹²⁰ Whereas some voices within the AUF understood the campaign as empowering and offering a theoretical and practical basis for separate women's trade unions,¹²¹ communist trade unionists insisted that women's participation in paid work alone would guarantee independence and emancipation.¹²²

Similar topics, and related tensions, surfaced in the Turkish context several years later, in the early 1980s, when small groups of women who had earlier belonged to left-wing movements initiated what they called the 'new feminism'.¹²³ Feminists' problematization of women's unpaid work and their preference for autonomous political structures challenged communist women's prominence in generating radical demands about women's work. During the TKP Women Activists Conference held in Copenhagen in 1983, participants, many of whom had earlier organized in the İKD and were in exile after the 1980 military coup, discussed at length how to mobilize women in Turkey as well as Turkish migrant women in Western Europe. A primary concern of activists at this meeting was 'feminist currents' that 'prevented women's movements from coalescing with the fight for socialism'.¹²⁴ Communist women considered feminism as a threat that could divert women into anti-communist politics. Similar to the communist women trade unionists in Austria, they complained, with reference to the Wages for Housework campaign, that 'some feminists argue[d], by manipulating Marxist views, that housework count[ed] as social production and that housewives [like workers] produce[d] surplus value'.¹²⁵ At the same time, activists recognized the blurring boundaries and mutual influence between feminist and communist women: 'Yet, many feminist currents have also been influenced by Marxism-Leninism to a lesser or greater extent. This is inevitable because communism is the way for the liberation of all who are oppressed. Many feminist currents ... involve a reaction, *although unconsciously*, to the existing system.'¹²⁶ In later years, in Turkey the crystallization of 'socialist feminism' as a New Left feminist

current further blurred the boundaries between communist and feminist women's politics, resulting in the retrospective identification of some former İKD women as 'red feminists' of the 1970s.¹²⁷

Calling for 'opening up the history and conceptualization of "1968" geographically', Maud Anne Bracke points to the gendered social critiques radical women articulated across Eastern Europe that were expressed, for example, in women workers' protests in Łódź in 1970 against the Gomułka government's economic reforms that resulted in a sharp drop in real wages in Poland.¹²⁸ In (state) socialist countries, though, communist women's initial response to New Left feminist mobilizations was more on the side of contestation than collaboration. Now representing the 'old left', including the radical ones among them, communist women had two important reservations about calling themselves 'feminist'. First, communists, men and women alike, from the start, earlier in the twentieth century, had labelled feminism a bourgeois ideology with an approach to women's emancipation that lacked a reference to women's class oppression. Over the decades, activists in (state) socialist women's organizations and trade unions had avoided the term 'feminism' and preferred to use other terms, such as 'women's revolution' in Bulgaria, when engaging in more radical politics and calling for, for example, the abolition of the 'second shift' – women's unpaid reproductive labour in the household.¹²⁹ Secondly, the New Left incarnation of feminism criticized not only sexist and discriminatory attitudes in radical left movements but also their institutions, including the party and the state, advocating women's autonomy from these institutions and thereby developing their own, new definition of 'radical' when talking about women who engaged in these movements.¹³⁰ For radical communist women, the call for autonomy was at the core of what they rejected, since they still saw the (state) socialist workers' state as the indispensable precondition and the vanguard of radical change, despite its flaws and shortcomings. As Judit Kovács (1917–2003), a well-known Hungarian journalist associated with the newspaper *Hungarian Nation* (*Magyar Nemzet*), had written back in 1966, 'separatism' was a stage in women's struggle for emancipation that the labour movement had already transcended early in the twentieth century.¹³¹ In Eastern Europe, from 1949 onwards, communist-aligned radical women enlarged this inherited political doctrine so that it encompassed the commitment to the struggle for working women's interests not only within mixed-gender, class-based social movements, but also in alignment with the (state) socialist workers' state (see also [introductory chapter](#)).

A well-researched exception to the dominance of this political constellation in Eastern Europe in the period is Yugoslavia (Map 3). Here, an open engagement with New Left feminism took off in the 1970s as various groups of women who embraced the ‘autonomy principle’ mobilized outside the KPJ and in opposition to the state-aligned Conference for the Social Activity of Women (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena, KDAŽ). These were members of a younger generation of women who acknowledged the progressive laws on women’s work-related rights but criticized their insufficient implementation due to the patriarchal organization of the public and private spheres. Following the 1978 conference ‘Comrade Woman: The Woman Question – A New Approach?’ in Belgrade, where feminist activists from Western European countries were among the participants, new women’s organizations emerged in Zagreb (now in Croatia), Belgrade (now in Serbia) and Ljubljana (now in Slovenia).¹³² It is of no surprise that the leading figures in these organizations were researchers, such as Lydia Sklevicky (1952–90) in Croatia and Žarana Papić (1949–2002) in Serbia.¹³³ The emerging ‘new feminists’ in Yugoslavia sought to relate women’s oppression in the family to the discussions around women’s work; Nada Ler-Sofronić (1941–2020), for example, argued that ‘understanding women’s subordination leads to a deeper quality of class consciousness’.¹³⁴ Their critique of the existing socialist system and of their fellow contemporary revisionist Marxist thinkers was that ‘the woman question kept its focus not on women, but on the working mother’.¹³⁵ This resulted, so they argued, in the silencing of, or apathy in addressing, women’s problems in public debate when they were not directly related to paid work, such as domestic violence, and the new radical women were no longer willing to accept this.

In the neighbouring state socialist contexts, we find individual women researchers and activists self-positioning in a similar manner, including for instance, from the 1980s, Mária Adamik in Hungary. Arguably, individual representatives of this new generation of radical women in (state) socialist contexts pursued divergent visions on how their agenda and their struggles aimed to transform or overcome the workers’ state.

Conclusion

Focusing on radical women’s labour activism from a long-term multiscale perspective, this chapter has explored how women negotiated their

gender and class interests in radical left movements from the late nineteenth century to the 1980s. Our findings indicate that radical women's position in the anarchist, communist and New Left movements in our region has moved from participating in labour struggles, bringing in gender-specific demands and calling out movements for not living up to their self-proclaimed ideals with regard to women, to establishing more programmatic approaches to gendered labour demands while addressing collectively and more openly the sexism and discrimination they faced in these movements. Radical left movements have remained men-dominated, but radical women participating in these movements, or aligning with (state) socialist states, insisted, though not always successfully, on pursuing emancipatory visions of gender and labour relations and pushing the limits of what is sayable and doable. At the same time, there has been a great variety across imperial, national and international contexts where activists engaged in different movements and mobilized various activist repertoires based on the affordances provided by their local conditions. Furthermore, multiple engagements with various social movements and causes as well as activists' national and transnational networks within a certain movement, such as their simultaneous involvement with communist-aligned women-only, trade union and party organizations, each added a layer to radical left women's activism. At the same time, each platform and scale of activism prioritized certain agendas and repertoires and set different limitations on what activists could (successfully) pursue.

Radical left women's repertoires and organizational forms varied widely across time and historical context, as outlined in the chapter introduction. Their agendas, however, follow some common patterns and display a level of continuity across historical contexts and political ruptures. Radical women aimed at developing holistic solutions to working(-class) women's problems that addressed the root(s) of the problem. As the chapter has demonstrated, these solutions often breached the established divides of public and private, and paid and unpaid, labour and consequently called for multiple, interrelated fundamental reforms.

In the pre-World War I period, the entanglements between the 'social question', the 'woman question' and the 'national question' resulted in women's involvement in different social movements, at times simultaneously. For radical women in anarchist and communist movements, the years before and after World War I were periods of increased transnational collaboration due to the salience of radical mobilizations in the region. The period between the two world wars witnessed the internationalization of radical women's demands in the communist movement. In the post-World War II period, conditions of 'being radical' changed as the consolidation of

(state) socialist regimes incorporated important demands of the interwar period, such as wage equality, into legal frameworks, while simultaneously limiting the discursive space for radical visions that challenged the legitimacy of the workers' state. Compared to the movement-based demands of the interwar period, there were fewer women who voiced fundamental critiques of social relations under (state) socialist regimes. Nonetheless, there were two moments when radicalism in women's labour activism was notable: in the immediate aftermath of World War II, when activists tried to incorporate (some of) their interwar agendas into the emerging (state) socialist legal and institutional framework and also in the international arena, and in the late 1960s and 1970s through research and policy proposals. By contrast, in Turkey and Austria, where anti-communist regimes prevailed, communist women continued mobilizing around radical demands collectively. Their lack of access to positions of power and collective experience of political exclusion and repression enabled the development of a convention of fundamental critique that went beyond what was possible under (state) socialist regimes yet was often aligned with the official gender discourses of these regimes. During this time, transnational encounters between women across the Iron Curtain led to the circulation of ideas and activist repertoires as well as some achievements in global women's rights. Finally, from the 1970s onwards, feminist currents within New Left movements that engaged in system critique gained traction in some countries of our region (Austria, Turkey, Yugoslavia). Organizing around the issues of abortion, domestic violence and women's unpaid household labour, New Left feminisms shifted the meaning of 'radical' by linking it to women's autonomy from men (the party and the state).

The story of radical women and their labour activism in the region, the key elements of which are brought together in this chapter, was historically a fragmented one, and not just because of the differences in political and economic regimes and the always heterogeneous nature of social movements. It is also because many of the institutional sources we come across tend to downplay the diversity of the people involved in their making, often undermining the significance of more radical voices, or even excluding them altogether, especially as the scale of activism grows – from grassroots to international. Further research on radical women's activism would therefore benefit from turning attention to more informal or unofficial documents (for example, local newspapers and factory gazettes) and asking unusual questions (for example, where is anarchist women's activism in state socialist contexts?) in its search for the many guises of gendered social critique.

Notes

- 1 See, for example, Tilly and Tarrow, *Contentious Politics*.
- 2 Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*; Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*; Jennissen and Lundy, 'Radical Women in Social Work'; Katz, "Researching around Our Subjects"; Mrozi, *Architektki PRL-u*.
- 3 Bereni and Revillard, 'Movement Institutions'. For examples in (state) socialist contexts, see Çağatay et al., *Through the Prism of Gender and Work*.
- 4 See, for example, Eley, 'Legacies of Antifascism'; Liotard-Vogt, "The Most Important Thing".
- 5 Gore, *Radicalism at the Crossroads*.
- 6 Bonfiglioli, 'Communisms, Generations, and Waves'.
- 7 Franzaway and Fonow, *Making Feminist Politics*; Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action'.
- 8 Krylova, 'Bolshevik Feminism'; Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot'; Studer, 'Communism and Feminism'.
- 9 Krylova, 'Bolshevik Feminism'; Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*; Studer, *Travellers of the World Revolution*.
- 10 Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 11 Varsa, "Let Us All Stand"; Zimmermann, 'Female Agrarian Workers'.
- 12 *Речь Матрены Присяжнюк*, 8; Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 66.
- 13 The literature also considers 1876 and 1878 as possible years of birth.
- 14 Avrich, *The Russian Anarchists*, 67–69; Savchenko, "Бабуся анархії".
- 15 Stibbe et al., 'Socialist Women and the Great War', 14.
- 16 Later called 'the Maximalists'.
- 17 Avrich, 'Clara Halpern'.
- 18 Grossman-Roshchin, 'Думы о былом', 177.
- 19 Konstantinova, 'The Role of Bulgarians'; Tunçay and Zürcher, *Socialism and Nationalism*.
- 20 Mari Beylerian as quoted in Çalikman Gavrilo, 'Mari Beylerian', 24. The original article was published in *Ardeanis*, a journal published between 1902 and 1904.
- 21 With some notable exceptions such as the Czech lands.
- 22 Dimou, *Entangled Paths*; Njagulov, 'Early Socialism in the Balkans'; Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*.
- 23 Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 98–99.
- 24 Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 168.
- 25 ZARAH DB, 'Maimunkova, Ana. Special Record (Person)'.
- 26 Mai, 'Да подготвим жените за предстоящите борби!'
- 27 Boxer and Quataert, *Socialist Women*, 1–3.
- 28 Zimmermann, 'Socialism, Gender, and the Emancipation of Women'.
- 29 Zimmermann, 'A Struggle over Gender, Class, and the Vote'.
- 30 Boxer, 'Rethinking the Socialist Construction'.
- 31 Daskalova and Zimmermann, 'Women's and Gender History', 306.
- 32 Daskalova and Zimmermann, 'Women's and Gender History', 306–7.
- 33 Leonhard, '1917–1920'.
- 34 Darch, *Nestor Makhno*, 97–104.
- 35 Kuzmenko quoted in Berkman, *The Bolshevik Myth*, 236.
- 36 Mytrofanenko, 'Анархистки Марія (Маруся) Никифорова та Галина (Агафія) Кузьменко'.
- 37 Aranyossi, 'The Impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution', 171.
- 38 The quotes from a contemporary report about the congress are given in Aranyossi, 'A Nagy Októberi Szocialista Forradalom', 281–82. Parts of Aranyossi's 1954 study have recently been published in English translation: Aranyossi, 'The Impact of the 1917 Russian Revolution'.
- 39 *8 Órai Újság*, 'Látogatás a "háztartási alkalmazottak" szakszervezetében'.
- 40 *Az Újság*, 'Tömegesen elbocsátják'.
- 41 Alföldi, 'A magyarországi szocialista nőmozgalom', 171.
- 42 *Budapesti Hírlap*, 'Letartóztatott képviselőjelölt'; *8 Órai Újság*, 'Letartóztatták a X-ik kerület női képviselőjelöltjét'.
- 43 *8 Órai Újság*, 'Az elitelt cselédvezér'.
- 44 Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 238–40.
- 45 Friedländer, *Sexualethik des Kommunismus*, 48.
- 46 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*

- 47 Known as the Independent Socialist Workers' Party (Neodvislá socialistická strana dělnická) after 1924.
- 48 Holubec, 'Between Anarchism and Communism'.
- 49 Taber and Dyakonova, *The Communist Women's Movement*, 104–8, 115–16.
- 50 Milkitsch, 'Die kommunistische Frauenbewegung in Jugoslawien'; Prošić-Dvornić, "Једнакост", 10–11.
- 51 Studer, *The Transnational World of the Cominternians*, 40–58; Krylova, 'Bolshevik Feminism'.
- 52 Lenin, *Collected Works*, 29: 429.
- 53 Communist International, *The Communist International*, 55–65.
- 54 Pearce, *Congress of the Peoples of the East*, 148–49.
- 55 The international organization of socialist and labour parties, the Second International, founded in 1889, split during World War I due to many European socialist parties' support for the war effort of their respective countries. On 2–6 March 1919 in Moscow, the socialist revolutionary left wing convened the founding congress of the Third International (Communist International, Comintern), which advocated world communism and in which the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had a leading role.
- 56 Studer, *Travellers of the World Revolution*, 22.
- 57 Bayerlein, 'Zu Aufbau und Destruktion einer Fraueninternationale'; Marie, 'The Women's Section of the Comintern'; Waters, 'In the Shadow of the Comintern'.
- 58 Dyakonova, "Approached as a Force for Labour"; Taber and Dyakonova, *The Communist Women's Movement*.
- 59 Kirkowa, 'Der internationale kommunistische Frauentag'.
- 60 Kirkowa, 'Der internationale kommunistische Frauentag', 478.
- 61 Neštáková, 'Slovak Communist Women's Struggle'.
- 62 Quoted in Căncea, *Mișcarea pentru emanciparea femeii*, 104. The text in parentheses in the quote appears thus in the cited volume and may indicate a clarification or shortening of the original source sentence by Căncea.
- 63 Taber and Dyakonova, *The Communist Women's Movement*, 80.
- 64 Kirsanova, *Коминтерн и трудящаяся женщина*.
- 65 Communist International, *The Communist International*, 55–65.
- 66 Bujaković, 'Reinvestigating Communist Women's Activism', 13.
- 67 Communist International, *The Communist International*, 236.
- 68 Communist International, *The Communist International*, 55–65; Mezhdunarodnyi zhenskii sekretariat IKKI, *Женское коммунистическое движение*, 28.
- 69 Bayerlein, 'Zwischen Internationale und Gulag'.
- 70 Darch, *Nestor Makhno*, 128–46; Mytrofanenko, 'Анархістки Марія (Маруся) Никифорова та Галина (Агафія) Кузьменко', 26.
- 71 Simic, *Soviet Influences on Postwar Yugoslav Gender Policies*.
- 72 'Kadınlar Yemin Ettiler'; 'Dünya Kadınları Demokratik Federasyonunun Çalışmaları'; 'Kadın Çalışıyor'.
- 73 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 111.
- 74 Painter et al., 'Life Trajectories'.
- 75 Kılıç, 'Homemaker or Professional?'; Niederkofler, *Mehrheit verpflichtet*, 50–103.
- 76 Autengruber and Mugrauer, *Oktoberstreik*, 61–138.
- 77 'Höhere Löhne'; *Der Abend*, 'An die Frauen und Mütter!', 4 October 1950, newspaper clipping, box 2, Oktoberstreik, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 78 'Für die berufstätige Frau'.
- 79 'Die Zusatzkarte'.
- 80 Dzhermanova, *Спомени от лагерите*, 69–70.
- 81 Daskalova, 'A Woman Politician in the Cold War Balkans'; Levy, *Ana Pauker*. The involvement of figures such as Dragoicheva and Pauker in the political repression and violence launched by the new regimes should also be noted here. Our acknowledgement of the radical agendas these women pursued does not override the controversies around their practices otherwise.
- 82 Mitra Mitrović served as Minister of Education in the People's Republic of Serbia (Narodna Republika Srbija), but in 1954 was sidelined into a more symbolic position due to her support for the dissident Milovan Đilas, who was by then her ex-husband. See De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 420–21, 575–79, 604–7; Grubački, 'Political Transformations of Interwar Feminisms', 220.

- 83 Holubec, *Nešťastná revolucionářka*, 445–46.
- 84 Jarska, 'Women Communists and the Polish Communist Party', 198–201.
- 85 De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation'; Armstrong, 'Before Bandung'.
- 86 Wien Geschichte Wiki, 'Anna Grün'; De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation'.
- 87 Stańczak-Wislicz, 'Edwarda Orłowska (1906–1977)'.
- 88 Women's International Democratic Federation, *Second Women's International Congress*.
- 89 Women's International Democratic Federation, *Second Women's International Congress*, 374.
- 90 Grabowska, 'Beyond the "Development" Paradigm'; Wolf, "'Women as Workers'".
- 91 Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization*, 42.
- 92 See, for example, Pragierowa, 'O przedstawicielstwie robotniczym w zakładach pracy'; Pragierowa, 'Ustawodawstwo o czasie pracy kobiet i młodocianych'.
- 93 Women's International Democratic Federation, *Second Women's International Congress*, 297.
- 94 See Jarska, 'Trade Union Activists'; Zimmermann, "'It Shall Not Be a Written Gift'".
- 95 Stenographic record of the meeting held on some current issues from the joint activities of the Committee of Bulgarian Women and the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Trade Unions, 14 July 1972, 78–79, f. 417, op. 4, a.e. 53, TsDA.
- 96 ZARAH DB, 'Turgonyi, Júlia. Special Record (Person)'.
- 97 We have made available three of Turgonyi's related original memos, with detailed English-language abstracts, in our open access database ZARAH DB: Júlia Turgonyi, 'Feljegyzés a debreceni BIOGAL Gyógyszergyár munkásnőivel folytatott beszélgetésről', 28 November 1967, folder 64, box 71, group 2, collection M-KS-904, MNL OL, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/95>; Júlia Turgonyi, 'Feljegyzés a Kelenföldi Textilkombinát munkásnőivel folytatott beszélgetésekről', 13 December 1967, folder 64, box 71, group 2, collection M-KS-904, MNL OL, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/94>; Júlia Turgonyi, 'Feljegyzés a ... megbeszélések során az új mechanizmussal kapcsolatban felmerült kérdésekről', 15 December 1967, folder 64, box 71, group 2, collection M-KS-904, MNL OL, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/6>.
- 98 Turgonyi and Ferge, *Az ipari munkásnők*.
- 99 Zimmermann, "'It Shall Not Be a Written Gift'".
- 100 Turgonyi, 'Főhivatású anyaság' vagy teljes emberi élet?' (emphasis in the original).
- 101 Valiavicharska, *Restless History*, 59–70.
- 102 Komitet na bulgarskite zheni, 'Концепция за осигуряване на оптимални условия за съчетаване задълженията на жената като производственичка, майка и общественичка – 1-ви проект', 1971, f. 417, op. 4, a.e. 61, TsDA.
- 103 'Enhancing the Role of Women'. See also Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo'.
- 104 See, for example, Popa, "'We Opposed It'".
- 105 Zimmermann, 'Dance around a "Sacred Cow"'.
- 106 Láníková, 'The Czechoslovak Women's Union'.
- 107 Láníková, 'The Czechoslovak Women's Union', 401.
- 108 Jarska, 'Trade Union Activists', 376. For the backlash argument, see, for example, Luleva, 'Женският въпрос'.
- 109 De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation'.
- 110 Gradska, *The Women's International Democratic Federation*, 194.
- 111 Ghodsee, *Second World, Second Sex*.
- 112 İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, 'Tüm Bölge Sekreterliklerine ve Şube Yönetim Kurullarına', 16 December 1978, reprinted in Pervan, *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*, 193.
- 113 For a more balanced view, see Popa, 'Translating Equality'.
- 114 Çınar, 'Transnational History of Left Feminism', 86–88.
- 115 On the emergence of feminist mobilizations from within the New Left, which later evolved into autonomous movements, see Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement*; Studer, "'1968" and the Formation'.
- 116 Bonfiglioli, 'Communisms, Generations, and Waves'; Strazzeri, 'Beyond the Double Blind Spot'.
- 117 Mesner, 'Viele und Verschiedene'.
- 118 Helfert, 'Radical and Utopian'.
- 119 Frauenkollektiv RitClique, *Zündende Funken*, 60.
- 120 On this campaign, see Bracke, 'Between the Transnational and the Local'.

- 121 Gerti, 'Frauen und Gewerkschaft'.
- 122 Brichatschek, 'Über das falsche Leitbild'; '7. Bundeskongress des BDFÖ, 16. bis 17. Mai 1981: Einschätzung des Oberösterreichischen Landessekretariats', 1981, KPÖ-Parteiarchiv, Sammlung Bund Demokratischer Frauen, Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft.
- 123 Adak and Çağatay, 'Revisiting Feminist Historiography'.
- 124 TKP Kadın Bürosu, 'TKP Kadın Aktivistler Konferansı Raporu', 1983, conference report reprinted in Akbulut, *Zühal Kılıç Arşiv Fonundan*, 12–13.
- 125 TKP Kadın Bürosu, 'TKP Kadın Aktivistler Konferansı', 14.
- 126 TKP Kadın Bürosu, 'TKP Kadın Aktivistler Konferansı', 13 (emphasis added).
- 127 Akal, *Kızıl feministler*, 13–14.
- 128 Bracke, "'Women's 1968 Is Not Yet Over'", 753.
- 129 Sharkova, 'Социалистическата жена'; Valiavicharska, *Restless History*, 62.
- 130 Adak and Çağatay, 'Revisiting Feminist Historiography'; Studer, "'1968" and the Formation'; Helfert, 'Radical and Utopian'.
- 131 Kovács, *Utazás a női egyenjogúság körül*.
- 132 Božinović, 'Key Points in the History', 18.
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Regional awareness and international engagement: social democratic women, 1890s to 1930s

Introduction: social democratic women's labour activism between internationally shared challenges and regional problems

Social democracy had a significant appeal among women in our region of focus, not only in the internationally well-known case of Austria, but also in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland. Women's labour activism was already an important part of the activities of smaller social democratic parties in Bulgaria, Yugoslav lands, (late Ottoman) Turkey and the Kingdom of Romania as well before World War I ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#)).¹ The politics of knowledge production over the past seventy years has made social democratic organizing in much of Eastern Europe less visible for the historiography of social democracy and gender, partly due to the denial of the value of scholarship on this regional history produced in (state) socialist countries. This is so even though until around 1933 social democratic women from territories that would later be (state) socialist were more numerous and at times even more influential in transnational social democracy than, for example, their comrades in Italy or Spain.²

This chapter focuses on socialist and social democratic women's organizing practices and agendas on women's right to work and women's caring duties, at the intersection of local challenges and transnationalizing politics. In a social movement in which men leaders claimed to welcome women but where resources (made) available and quotidian attitudes often did not match that promise, transnational solidarity among women activists could help create visibility for marginalized comrades. The chapter aims to explore how a focus on women's labour activism within socialist (pre-World War I) and social democratic parties

affiliated to the social democratic Labour and Socialist International (LSI) (post-World War I) from Central and Eastern Europe challenges the chronology and cartography of labour activism and women's movements in and beyond the region. It shows that women who focused on socialist and social democratic party politics in their activism developed a keen awareness of more limited organizing possibilities in their contexts, due to fewer resources and political repression. It also suggests that these obstacles, especially Hungarian and Polish social democratic activists' comparatively early interwar experiences with political repression, were formative for social democratic international women's politics from the late 1920s onwards.

We reconstruct how, until World War I, socialist women focused primarily on organizing women workers and creating platforms and institutional structures for the formulation of women-specific labour demands. Their activism largely unfolded in the political contexts of the Habsburg Empire and, later, the variety of states that followed the disintegration of the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires. Between the 1890s and the 1910s, the first women-only labour organizations and socialist women's journals appeared. In the first decade after World War I, the transnational connections of women labour activists in Europe intensified. The conferences of women linked to parties affiliated to the social democratic LSI, organized every two or three years between 1923 and 1931, and the trilingual *Women's Supplement* to the LSI's monthly *International Information* facilitated, as we demonstrate, greater convergence of agendas and practices among social democratic women. This closer co-operation brought greater awareness of the conditions and possibilities that united and divided women from different social democratic movements in Europe (and, by the 1930s, from Palestine and Argentina).

The first part of this chapter addresses social democratic women's organizational strategies and platforms, establishing the specificities of our region of focus in a European comparative perspective (see also [chapters 1](#) and [2](#)). The second part discusses selected issues related to women activists' work-related politics, covering demands concerning women's right to paid work and their duties in the field of care work.

Socialist and social democratic women's organizing and repertoires of action

Women activists from the region who joined social democratic parties sought to understand women's position in paid work and engaged

with the issue of women's unpaid work, especially motherhood. Doing women's politics and organizing women in social democratic party politics was difficult. Internationally, socialism was characterized by an ambiguous relationship to the 'woman question', even if early programmatic documents professed commitment to women's emancipation.³ As in Western European contexts, in Central and Eastern Europe, social democratic parties as a whole treated the overcoming of women's unequal status and gender-related issues as, in the end, secondary to concerns about class. Yet women who joined the young socialist movements in the region from the 1890s insisted, often against men comrades' lack of interest or overt opposition, that socialist politics had to recognize that women faced specific challenges in the world of paid and unpaid work. Repeatedly, they made the case that activists had to address and work with these challenges when seeking to recruit new members or mobilize them for political action. An important strategy of socialist women's activists was participating in and moving between different strands of activism to be able to realize women-specific agendas ([introductory chapter](#)).

Central and Eastern European socialist and social democratic women's organizing efforts displayed an awareness of their region's economic and political specificities. Grassroots work and transnational contacts, and the possibility for comparisons such contacts enabled, increased activists' awareness that women's politics in Eastern Europe had specific challenges. After World War I, up until the ban on the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP) following the 1933–4 austrofascist regime change, Austrian social democratic women pursued a politics of promoting social democratic women's activism in countries with smaller labour movements.⁴ This politics would prove influential. Beyond Austria, in much of Eastern Europe, dealing with the lack of means for organizing as well as with repression shaped social democratic women labour activists' strategies of organizing and repertoires of action, in the 1920s and 1930s.

Challenges in organizing women

In the first half of the twentieth century in our region of focus, women activists pointed to a variety of difficulties they had met while organizing working women. These difficulties were similar to those with which socialist women activists across Europe struggled. They highlighted their men comrades' ignorance and lack of interest in involving women in social democratic politics and integrating them into organizations as well

as their opposition to women's separate organizing due to their fear that this would split and weaken the party.⁵ Oriented towards men workers, socialist organizations failed to address the issues specific to women workers, whose workplace and household experiences differed from those of their men comrades (see also [chapters 3 and 8](#)).⁶

In the first decades of socialist organizing, men frequently ignored or resisted the integration of women in parties. In 1899, the Congress (Parteitag) of the SDAP discussed the question of the delegates from the Social Democratic Women's Committee (Frauenreichskomitee), but it was a discussion full of misogynistic undertones and sexist comments.⁷ Women activists complained about their men comrades' lack of support for women's participation in the party. In 1902, at the Prague Congress of the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická, ČSDSD), the Czech Božena Toužilová challenged men activists with the following question: 'How many comrades have made sure that their women have the opportunity to educate themselves, to learn; how many comrades have even made sure that their women also become agitators for our cause?'⁸ In 1928, the Austrian Adelheid Popp (1869–1939), doyenne of European social democratic women at that point, remembered how, in 1911, when Viennese social democratic women had celebrated Women's Day for the first time with a procession and a banner, 'among the ranks of the curious there were even party comrades who were inclined to ridicule the women demonstrating'.⁹ By the late 1920s, Popp claimed, the situation had dramatically improved, at least in Austria. In the Hungarian context of the early twentieth century, one of men social democrats' main goals was to diminish the influence of the Catholic Church on women workers, and women activists faced challenges similar to those in Austria.¹⁰

Central and Eastern European socialist party leaders and individual men members usually hindered women's attempts to form their separate organizational structures and methods of action.¹¹ In Prague, at the Fifth Party Congress of the SDAP in 1896, some men social democrats wanted to dissolve the *Women Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*) and replace it with a women's supplement in the *Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiter-Zeitung*) ([Table 4](#)).¹² In 1904, in Hungary, the newly established Association of Women Workers of Hungary (Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület, MME) pointed out that it needed women agitators to organize women, and that it wanted to develop institutional structures and agendas for specifically women-related concerns; it was accused of separatism.¹³ In Bulgaria, the social democratic women's group and a conference of

women socialists organized by Vela Blagoeva (1858–1921) in Sofia in 1905 provoked resistance among some of the influential men socialists.¹⁴ They feared that a separate women's organization would increase women workers' opposition to the united workers' movement.¹⁵ As Krassimira Daskalova explains, 'the "narrow" socialist wing (that is, orthodox socialists and future Bolsheviks) were against the establishment of "a neutral women's union", whereas the "broad" socialists (later named Social Democrats) favoured an independent women's organization'.¹⁶ In the women's journals she edited and in the general socialist press, Blagoeva 'defended', as Maria Todorova puts it, 'the right of socialist women to make their own individual choice'.¹⁷

A further hindrance to women's organizing that took a central role in women activists' debates in the labour movements of our region of focus and beyond was women's gender-specific experiences of work that involved working women's responsibilities for housework and childcare. Comparatively early, Slovenian socialist women articulated in the short-lived *Women's Paper* (*Ženski list*) (Table 4) in 1913 that women's care-related responsibilities hindered women's organizing, and they did not consider this as an unquestionable given but called for change:

It is really difficult for a woman to participate in public life, namely for a proletarian woman! A worker usually accumulates a large family – and within four–five years the worker's wife is already so blessed with children that she never has time for anything other than work. But as long as there are no children, the wife goes to work during the day as well, and in the evenings she still has to do all the household chores at home. The husband can rest from the day's work and toil; the wife must not! So: asking the worker's wife to go to conventions, discussions and other such meetings in the evening – that is quite a big demand nowadays. Of course, the women's movement suffers as a result, and women's demands are only slowly, very slowly, coming closer to being realized. It will be necessary to think seriously, then, how to relieve the working woman so that she can more easily devote herself also to public work and not be exclusively a slave of the home.¹⁸

Women activists also pointed out that the idea that women workers were to be wage earners only up to the point of getting married kept them away from socialist organizing. At the Hungarian social democratic women's congress of 1925, the Hungarian trade unionist and social democratic politician Anna Kéthly (1889–1976) referred to

the 'female psyche that encloses and dreams [a world of] fantasies' as a 'hindrance to the women's movement in the past'.¹⁹ 'Women considered employment a temporary condition, one that would be replaced by a better future, when the fairy-tale prince would take them away from their workplace.'²⁰ She urged women to abandon the idea of being saved by any force other than their own fight for achieving better working conditions.

The difficulty of organizing women was reasserted time and again with reference to gender-specific circumstances, as articulated by the Austrian social democratic women's organ, the *Women Workers' Paper*, calling for women to get organized in 1896. The journal acknowledged that, for fear of being fired, women were less likely to organize: 'After all, their contribution to the household is indispensable under the present circumstances and often even the only source of income for the family. And what does a woman, a mother, not endure in order to keep the most bitter hardship away from her loved ones?'²¹ This remained an issue for Hungarian activists until well into the 1920s; in the *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*), they repeatedly identified among the major hindrances to women's organizing their lack of time to participate in party work due to their responsibilities in wage work, child raising and housework, as well as fear of losing their job.²²

A distinguishing feature of women's social democratic labour activism in Central and Eastern Europe was the awareness activists developed that the political, economic and cultural situation of their region played a role in hindering socialist activism in general and women's organizing in particular. Specifically, women addressed their countries' unequal economic position in comparison to Western Europe, their comparatively less advanced industrialization, and the ensuing delay in the 'making of the working class' and lack of financial means.²³ Socialist women activists adopted the widespread topos of the 'developmental' time-lag, well anchored in public discourse around nation-building in the first half of the twentieth century in Central and Eastern Europe, about the need to 'catch up' in economic and cultural terms with the more 'developed' parts of Europe.²⁴ In Hungary, where in the early twentieth century social democratic efforts to organize women focused strongly on trade union organizing, clustering women according to the branches in which they were employed, the *Woman Worker* formulated its concerns as follows:²⁵ the numbers of organized women 'show that we are behind in Hungary. While among organized workers in England women make up 6 per cent, in Austria even 7 per cent, in Hungary [it is] only 2.5 per cent. This should not discourage but

encourage us to catch up with foreign comrades.²⁶ A year later, in 1906, the same paper argued:

Women factory workers' activism is weak in Hungary. This is partly due to Hungary being industrially less developed, and partly due to its cultural backwardness, which manifests itself among women much more frighteningly than among men. In this unlucky country, which struggles in the claws of feudal reactionaries, circulating capital could only prevail with difficulties and that [condition] partly necessarily led to the formation of the proletariat among both genders.²⁷

From the perspective of many activists, 'backwardness' explained both their country's general lack of development and its consequences for women's organizing. Furthermore, activists referred to it to reason for the need for further achievements in the field. While women activists pointed to the more limited financial possibilities of social democratic organizations in their region as compared to Western Europe, these limitations did not always express a politics of limiting resources for women's activism in particular. In Hungary, for example, the *Woman Worker* received financial support from the party from 1912 onwards, when the National Women's Organizing Committee of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt Országos Nőszervező Bizottsága, MSZDP ONB) became more party-aligned (see [Appendix 1](#)).²⁸ From 1912 onwards, the tasks of the MSZDP ONB included the renewed publication of the women's paper that had been discontinued on financial grounds at the end of 1908, and the organizing of women workers.²⁹

In the political atmosphere of the interwar period, which in many lands turned from democratization, and in some cases revolutionary political rupture, to increasingly repressive, right-wing authoritarian regimes, women activists repeatedly referred to the growing difficulties of socialist organizing and the adverse effects political repression had on women's organizing in particular. In Poland and Hungary, women's sections in socialist and social democratic parties had long traditions and sophisticated approaches to work under such conditions. Yet, after World War I, in international meetings they often mentioned the impact of reactionary forces and political dictatorship on their work. The Women's Central Committee of the Polish Socialist Party (Centralny Wydział Kobiety Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej, CWK PPS), established in 1919 and suspended in 1922, was re-established in

Poland in 1924 after several years of discussions about the necessity of its revival; its existence was continuously questioned and criticized by the members of the party.³⁰ The 1931 report on Poland prepared for the Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI stated candidly that the Polish delegate Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (1867–1936) could not attend that year's conference because she was accused in a 'political trial', a move considered by the International Advisory Committee on Women (IACW) of the LSI – a federation of social democratic parties – as a 'further development of Fascism in Europe'.³¹ Impressed by Austrian social democracy and the achievement of Red Vienna, Hungarian Anna Kéthly soberly reminded those gathered at the 1931 LSI women's conference in Vienna that Austrian women held 'treasures in their hands' but that the forces of reaction were not far away.³² Only two years later, parliamentary democracy indeed ended in Austria, and after a short-lived attempt at resistance the SDAP was banned in 1934. Before this, in a 1927 report to the *Women's Supplement*, Kéthly pointed out that 'the methods used for organizing women [in Hungary] are similar to those in Germany and Austria ... with the considerable difference, however, that we do not possess the same possibilities of a political movement and cannot therefore work with the same resources'. In 1927, the Hungarian Women's Secretariat was closed, 'on financial grounds'.³³ Activist strategies to get women workers organized tried to adapt to the variety of challenges women faced in this terrain.

Strategies to get women workers organized

Historically there were two paths taken by women activists, who identified the difficulty of organizing women to be closely connected with women's gender-specific experiences in the world of work, to win women workers for and keep them in the movement. The first was the adoption of special strategies, such as the organization of meetings, assemblies and conferences and the production and distribution of print media addressing women workers specifically (see also [chapter 2](#)). Later, in the interwar period, women activists paid more attention to a second (and often complementary) option – namely, the restructuring of the movement to make it more accessible to and appropriate for the representation of the needs and interests of women workers.³⁴

Women in our region adapted similar women-targeted strategies to their repertoires of action. Convinced by the fact that enticing women to the movement did not depend simply on doing more but rather on introducing new, women-targeted strategies, labour activists in

social democratic parties organized readings, discussion events, special meetings and courses, and engaged in house-to-house agitation work to reach out to working-class women (see also [chapter 2](#), [chapter 5](#)). Women activists also used women's responsibilities for work in and around the home as a means to address women workers and draw them to socialist and social democratic organizing and activism (see also [chapter 8](#)). Historian Blanka Soukupová has shown that, to involve women in party politics more actively, Czech women labour activists frequently addressed issues around the growing difficulties of maintaining the household, such as rising food prices.³⁵ In Hungary, in 1913, urging women workers to join a women's assembly organized in preparation for the general electoral strike planned by the MSZDP, the MSZDP ONB addressed women with the following words: 'Women comrades, women labourers! The depressingly high prices and huge unemployment are destroying the means of living of several thousand workers ... We feel the burdens and misery three-fold: as women workers, as home makers and as mothers. We need to ease this triple burden. That is why [you must] come and join the women's assembly.'³⁶ In 1924, a resolution of the women's sections of the Austrian socialists noted that 'still in quite a number of countries affiliated to the Labour and Socialist International, the Women's Organisation is either making no headway at all or does not even exist'. The resolution went on to call on the LSI to 'endeavour to achieve improved conditions in all countries through the initiative of the Women themselves'.³⁷ Women in the Austrian SDAP prided themselves on their sophisticated press and on their methods of recruitment through special meetings for women, especially in cities.³⁸

What the Austrians called 'the all-important question of the press' would indeed be particularly significant in our region of focus.³⁹ Newspapers addressing women workers as well as women's sections in the party newspapers were means to reach out to working-class women ([Table 4](#)). In Hungary, first the paper *Woman Worker* was established in 1905; it was followed in the 1920s by the section 'Working Woman' ('A dolgozó nő') in the MSZDP's paper, *People's Voice* (*Népszava*).⁴⁰ The content and style of Austrian and German women's publications, and the success of Austrian social democrats in the 1920s, mattered greatly for comrades abroad. The journal *Dissatisfied Woman* (*Недовольната*), published in Bulgaria from 1931 to 1934, after a decade without a social democratic women's newspaper, recalls the name of the Austrian 'independent weekly' *The Dissatisfied* (*Die Unzufriedene*); the latter addressed what party women sometimes called 'indifferent women', those who were not yet party members ([Table 4](#)).⁴¹

In addition to using the regular press, women activists also adopted targeted agitation strategies to attract different groups of working women to the socialist movement. The Budapest Women's Committee of the MSZDP proposed to the Executive Committee of the Budapest party section in 1937 the following action plan for the 'agitation for women members' and new subscribers for the *Woman Worker*:

Preparation of a flyer urging working women to join the social democratic party or subscribe to the *Woman Worker*; a letter addressed to housewives, who are mothers and another to women working in factories and in offices to convince them to enter the party; organization of a propaganda meeting in October in each district, possibly with entrance tickets. The hall should be decorated and festive, with flowers and a choir singing. Agitation during the breaks of the meeting; propaganda presentation where there is no option to organize a meeting: 'The Woman and Socialism', 'The Woman Question and the Social Democratic Party', 'The International Women's Movement'; the organization of events for women: meet-and-greet sessions with sandwiches, fruit etc. The event will have an intimate touch through personal exchanges and the offering of food; addressing the wives of well-known comrades in a letter calling upon them to recruit a new party member or a new subscriber to the *Woman Worker*.⁴²

Most striking here is the variety of the methods activists applied to reach out to diverse groups of women workers and the gendered emphasis on the 'decorated and festive' character of the planned events to ensure success among women.

Another important tool for women's mobilization was the celebration of International Women's Day, introduced in Europe in 1910 by the International Conference of Socialist Women in Copenhagen on the initiative of Clara Zetkin (1857–1933).⁴³ Together with most other social democratic women's sections and organizations across Europe, and sometimes as a cross-class action between working- and middle-class women activists, social democratic women in Central and Eastern Europe celebrated International Women's Day every year, usually in March (but sometimes in April or as late as June).⁴⁴ In the period between 1923 and 1934, the slogans of the celebration referred to current political events in each country as well as to common claims of international social democratic women. They called for equal pay for equal work (Poland, 1931) and the 'defence of women's right to work *and* marriage'

(Czechoslovakia, 1933) and asserted 'We keep the faith with social insurance!' (Austria, 1931). Or, as reported by the Union of Working Women of Romania (Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din România, UFM), 'The watchwords were proclaimed in 1931, 1932 and 1933 in agreement with the International Women's Committee. They were closely linked with the needs of the hour; against war and fascism, ... for legal relief of the unemployed and unification of the social insurance systems, for equal political rights for women.'⁴⁵ International Women's Day was a moment for taking stock of political changes as well.⁴⁶ In 1930, the Polish socialist women's committee reported that the Women's Week it organized (as did others in various countries) was now geared towards fighting the Piłsudski dictatorship,⁴⁷ whereas in 1934 – after the defeat of the Viennese workers' uprising in February that year – Fanny Blatny (1873–1949) wrote that 'Women's Day 1934 is separated from Women's Day 1933 not by the brief space of a single year, but by a whole world.'⁴⁸

Socialist women's organizational platforms

The women-specific organizational platforms of socialist and social democratic organizations were set up, developed and expanded overwhelmingly on the initiative of women labour activists themselves. These platforms could be informal women's networks, formal, elected, municipal, regional or national women's committees, women-only conferences and educational programmes addressing women's issues (see also [introductory chapter](#), [chapter 5](#)), women's groups of mixed-gender or women-only organizations, or any mixture of these. On the one hand, by pursuing women's activism in men-dominated networks and structures, women had greater access to resources but had to put up with less decision-making power. Many socialist women – such as Clara Zetkin⁴⁹ – held out the hope of shaping the men-dominated parties to fully accommodate women's politics. On the other hand, in working class-based women's organizations, while women activists had greater freedom to develop progressive policies for working-class women, they could be cut off from the key political and financial resources needed to realize their endeavours. After all, separate women's organizations often needed to collect their own funds; they had to cultivate their own networks in a context of marked political and economic inequality between women and men and of women's (thus) more restricted access to material resources.

These complexities deeply shaped the history of socialist and social democratic women's organizing everywhere in the region. In Serbia,

Stojanka-Canka Dragneva Jovanović (1873–1905), while being active in the Serbian Social Democratic Party (Srpska socijaldemokratska stranka/Српска социјалдемократска странка, SSDS), also initiated the first women-only socialist organization, the Women Workers' Society 'Consciousness' (Žensko radničko društvo 'Svest'/Женско радничко друштво 'Свест') in 1903, which lasted only until she died in 1905.⁵⁰ In Hungary too, women in the early socialist movement transitioned and switched between activism in mixed-gender and women-only structures. In the 1890s, peasant women from the so-called Stormy Corner (Viharsarok), on the south-eastern borders of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, participated in the mixed-gender local organizations of the MSZDP as well as in those of the more egalitarian independent social democratic movement (független szociáldemokrata mozgalom), known from 1897 as the Independent Socialist Party (Független Szocialista Párt, FSZP). In the latter, peasant women's organizing was supported by the editor of the movement's paper, the *Agrarian Worker* (Földművelő), Mariska Várkonyi (1878–1924) (Figure 2, Table 4). At the same time, in both parties, women created women-only structures.⁵¹

In both Hungary and Romania, before World War I, there was a transition from a women's association affiliated to the party to women's groups with significant autonomy, eventually making way for the creation of a women's party section (with more influence, but less autonomy). Socialist women's circles – where women interested in socialism could meet, discuss readings, listen to lectures and, most likely, share their own hardships and political questions – preceded the organization of full-scale associations of women workers, such as the MME, as well as women's sections in different socialist parties. The organization of such circles usually required the commitment and insistence of women already connected to the socialist movement.⁵² The MME was the first labour organization formed by women working in the industrial sector to be legalized in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Empire. The association was a separate women's organization closely associated with the MSZDP and its trade union movement. Its counterpart was the MSZDP ONB, which gained institutional stability from 1905. In Romania in 1893, a socialist women's mutual aid society called the Help (Ajutorul) was set up, partly by taking over an older, non-socialist women's mutual aid society, the Saviour (Salvatorul), founded in 1886.⁵³ The 96 members of the Help were prominent presences in the year's May Day march. Women's Circles were founded in 1911, with Dr Ecaterina Arbore (1873–1937) and Jeana Brănișteanu as key founding members.⁵⁴

Legal-political contexts contributed to shaping women activists' switch between women-only and mixed-gender labour organizing. A case in point is the Association of Social Democratic Women and Girls (Verein sozialdemokratischer Frauen und Mädchen) in Cisleithania (Map 1), founded in 1902. In 1909, a resolution of the SDAP Congress approved the association as a member organization of the party, and its women activists were counted as party members. The resolution thereby contradicted Section 30 of the Associations Act, which did not allow women in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Empire to be organized in political associations and prohibited their party membership. In 1911, in anticipation of an official dissolution, the Fourth Party Conference of the SDAP decided to discontinue this separate women's association.⁵⁵ The association was an attempt by women to self-organize following a corresponding decision by the Second Socialist International in Brussels in 1891.

In the region's socialist movements, where money was either tight or, more often, almost non-existent, women's sections and delegates had to prove to their men comrades that women members could contribute to the party budget. When in 1893 the Help mutual aid society became affiliated to the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Romania (Partidul Social Democrat al Muncitorilor din România, PSDMR) in Romania, the significance of its own capital of 2,000 lei and its contribution of 'important sums to the party' appear to have made a difference.⁵⁶ In 1914, when men were mobilized into the army in Romania, the members of the PSDMR's Women's Circles in Bucharest became crucial for political work, for party finances and for the distribution of the party press, which itself generated revenue.⁵⁷ In Austria too, women social democrats assessed their weight in the movement not only by membership in associations but also by numbers of subscribers to the *Women Workers' Paper*.⁵⁸ After the end of World War I, the question of finances for organizing women would continue to permeate (and complicate) women's labour activism in the social democratic parties in the region. For instance, in 1933, the Central Committee of the UFM reported that its task was difficult 'not only because working-class circles are dominated by the crisis' but also because 'no member of the Central Committee has sufficient free time at her disposal, or receives any payment for her work; but because from the outset, the General Committee committed the serious mistake of asking branches for a contribution at the ridiculous rate of 50 bani per member'.⁵⁹

Unequal disposition of resources and access to representation, rooted in massive intra-European inequalities, left a mark on the

emergence of the IACW within the LSI, the women's committee which from 1927 pursued the older socialist goal of networking like-minded women in Europe, albeit within a body that aimed to distinguish itself from the communist Third International.⁶⁰ The 1926 (second) International Women's Conference of the LSI was shaped by differences of opinion concerning the principle of representation in the IACW and associated costs. On the one hand, the Eastern and Southern European women present insisted on a large committee with many delegates. On the other hand, large committee sizes were considered impractical. Also, the parties federated in the LSI paid for the ordinary expenses of the IACW, and a large committee would have been more costly. Still, the Greek, Lithuanian, Czech and Polish women's representatives, against the German and the Belgian ones, insisted on a large IACW, arguing that internationalism was extremely important for the work of women in smaller movements and that the input of women from these countries was crucial for the international social democratic women's movement. In the end, the IACW had around 30 members (Table 5). Betty Karpíšková (1881–1942, Czechs in Czechoslovakia) and Dorota Kłuszyńska (1876–1952, Poland) became influential members of the IACW presidium, the executive body of the IACW, shaping its activities into the 1930s. Between 1923 and 1934, Adelheid Popp, an Austrian, was the IACW representative in the Executive Committee of the LSI.

Among the countries affiliated to the LSI, there was great variation in the size and structure of social democratic women's organizations. At the peak of social democratic women's organizing in our region, by the Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI (held in Vienna, in 1931), there were 228,179 women in the Austrian SDAP (as many as in Germany, which was far more populous). The Hungarian MSZDP and the Czech-speaking and German-speaking parties in Czechoslovakia each had between 24,000 and 26,000 women members. In Hungary 7,200 women were affiliated individually, whereas the remaining approximately 17,000 women party members were affiliated indirectly, via their memberships in collectives (usually unions) affiliated to the MSZDP.⁶¹ In Poland there were 9,200 (individually affiliated) women members and in Romania 1,000, whereas Greece reported a mere 300 members.⁶² In Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, women could be and often were full members of parties (what the IACW termed 'joint organization') and had their own central committees, local sections, dedicated publications and conferences. In Romania and Bulgaria, social democratic women had separate women's organizations

linked in federations.⁶³ In all these countries, social democratic women's structures collaborated with other social democratic organizations (Friends of the Children, social democratic gymnastics clubs) and, more rarely than the Swiss or the Belgians (for example), with some non-social democratic women's organizations, on either welfare or suffrage issues.⁶⁴

Women in the two large social democratic parties in Czechoslovakia, the Czech and the German parties, generally described the level of influence they had within their organizations as satisfactory. In 1931, Czech-speaking women reported that the proposals made by the Women's National Committee (*Výbor sociálně demokratických žen*) were adopted without much struggle in a recently renewed Party Programme and Statutes. German-speaking women in Czechoslovakia drafted resolutions which were submitted for discussion in party assemblies. As in Austria, invoices for funds collected from party members used different colours for women and men – in this way there could be a very good overview of the gender distribution of members and the proportion of their contributions to the party budget.⁶⁵

In interwar Bulgaria and Romania, there were women-only socialist organizations. In Bulgaria, the Women's Social Democratic Union (*Zhenski sotsialdemokraticheski suiuz*/Женски социалдемократически съюз, ZhSDS) had 622 members organized in 19 groups in 1921. In 1922 it had approximately 1,000 members in 26 groups. During the Third Congress of the Bulgarian social democrats, in 1924, the ZhSDS reported 1,293 members in 41 groups. The professional and social standing of the members was as follows: 363 women workers, 461 housewives, 53 employees in private (commercial) enterprises, 82 civil servants, 151 teachers, 81 craft workers, 19 doctors, 22 midwives and 61 others.⁶⁶ In Romania, around 1932, the UFM, a federation of women's organizations affiliated to the PSDMR, had around 1,200 members meeting in 12 towns; membership fluctuated, with several sections closing or stagnating soon after founding.⁶⁷

Socialist women's multi-movement activism

An important strategy of socialist women was multi-movement activism, whereby they participated in and moved between different strands of activism to be able to realize women-specific agendas. Even a brief look at selected protagonists confirms the historical relevance of this pattern. Alojzija Štebi (1883–1956), a key social democratic woman activist in the Yugoslav lands before World War I, later switched to

the feminist movement (Table 3).⁶⁸ In late 1880s and early 1890s Bulgaria, Kina Konova (1872–1952) was cofounder and leader of the Friendly Society, Women’s Branch (Priiatelska družinka, Zhenski klon/Приятелска дружинка, Женски клон) in Sevlievo, which was a women’s group affiliated with the pauperophilia (siromahomilstvo) movement in Bulgaria, the first local women’s socialist organization in Bulgaria (Table 3). In Sevlievo, Konova also established a women’s organization called Hope (Надежда/Nadezhda) in 1897. She was later cofounder of the Bulgarian Women’s Union (Bulgarski zhenski suiuz/Български женски съюз, BZhS) in 1901 and joined the Bulgarian ZhSDS upon its foundation in 1921.⁶⁹ While affiliated to the ZhSDS, Konova remained ‘a passionate and faithful follower’ of the activities of the BZhS as well, being ‘equally attracted to both feminist and socialist emancipation ideologies’.⁷⁰ She published both in *Women’s Voice* (Женски глас), the organ of the BZhS, and in *Prosperity* (Благоденствие) and *Dissatisfied Woman* (Недоволната), two papers of the ZhSDS (Table 4).

Sometimes activists switched from co-operating with feminists to a non-co-operation stance. Kina Konova and her socialist comrade, Vela Blagoeva, for example, who belonged to the revolutionary ‘narrow’ faction, a group that later formed the communist party, angrily left the BZhS in 1903, objecting to its ‘above-class stance’, that is disputing BZhS’s claim to be able to represent all women, cross-class. Blagoeva subsequently founded the periodical *Women’s Labour* (Женски труд) and the first educational social democratic group for women workers in Sofia in 1905. The same year, she organized the first conference of socialist women in Sofia. Women’s parallel engagement for different social activist strands was also manifest among the members of another group, who left the BZhS in 1908 to form the Union of Progressive Women (Suiuz na naprednichavite zheni/Съюз на напредничавите жени). The group was headed by Ana Karima (1871–1949), who was among the founders of the BZhS; it included many members who in the interwar period would become leading figures of the ZhSDS.⁷¹

After 1934, when the austrofascist regime banned the SDAP in Austria, many women from smaller social democratic movements in Eastern Europe were left without one of its most significant brokers of connection to the broader social democratic movement. Until 1938, Czech social democracy continued, while, all around, all that had seemed solid vanished into the toxic fog of fascist repression.⁷² By the summer of 1938, social democratic women affiliated to the LSI whose countries were not yet dictatorships were hosting refugees from Austria, Germany

and Czechoslovakia in the shadow of militarism and war.⁷³ This was the closing of one major chapter of social democratic women's labour activism in the region.

Socialist and social democratic women's stances on labour issues

Women labour activists who were primarily active in socialist and social democratic party politics developed wage justice agendas and sophisticated stances on gendered wage discrimination (see also [chapter 2](#)), women-specific labour protection laws, and social protection and welfare agendas. Across the decades, from the local to the international level, they devoted particular attention to the issues of women's right to gainful employment and easing women's caring duties.

Socialist and social democratic women's activism for women's right to paid work

In the second half of the nineteenth century, in some of the socialist circles and parties in the region, as elsewhere in Europe, there was strong opposition to women's employment. Government politicians and members of social movements contested especially married women's right to gainful employment. Between 1860 and 1880, socialists in the Czech lands argued that women's appearance on the labour market was the cause of the decline of the situation of the working class. They claimed that women competed with men for jobs and that women's cheap labour depressed men's wages; that work in industry endangered women's health and the health of the next generation, especially as women worked during pregnancy; that if women entered wage labour they would not have time for their natural task, which, socialist men maintained, was to manage the household and rear children; and that the loose morals of men workers corrupted young girls, which led to hidden prostitution and sexual abuse. In 1880, in a public meeting in Prague, a socialist activist declared that women and children should be banned from working in factories, because women's place was in the home. A big round of applause followed this declaration.⁷⁴

By the 1910s, in the Kingdom of Romania, as growing numbers of women were leaving home industry, joining newly opened textile factories in the slowly but steadily industrializing country, socialist Ecaterina Arbore argued that historical developments compelled women

to join factories and suggested that opposing women's work in industry would be a mistake. She argued – echoing Clara Zetkin⁷⁵ – that women's work outside the home was at the root of women's struggle for political rights: 'Today, in order for them to escape death in misery, women must work outside their homes, in factories, workshops or offices, but if their work is equal to that of male workers, if they earn their own living, then it is only fair that women should be asking for the same rights that men are asking for.'⁷⁶ Around the same time, in the Ottoman Empire, Hüseyin Hilmi, one of the party leaders of the short-lived Ottoman Socialist Party (Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası, 1910–13), more an intellectuals' group than a broad-based party, advocated in the newspaper *Partnership* (*İştirak*) Ottoman women's participation in paid labour while problematizing unlivable working conditions of those who were employed.⁷⁷

After World War I, in Europe, most socialist parties refrained from contesting women's right to work, even if in practice many trade union leaders and those in the ranks of the labour movement opposed women's employment after soldiers were released from service in armies (demobilized).⁷⁸ However, by 1929, for social democratic women the issue of women's right to paid work was again an area of political contestation in Europe, partly because of the worsening economic situation and partly because of a growing number of conservative and fascist politicians.⁷⁹ Because of the Great Depression, proposals to limit women's employment, particularly in the public sector, or to limit employed women's access to social insurance were put forward in several countries in Europe, as well as in North America, Australia and, to a lesser extent, Latin America.⁸⁰

By the late 1930s discouraging married women's gainful employment and restricting women's employment in the public sector were, at least on paper, significant features of labour policy in fascist Italy and National Socialist Germany.⁸¹ However, limits on women's access to employment, or employment in certain sectors, and on employment-related benefits were created in non-authoritarian states as well – including a reform of social insurance in Britain in 1931.⁸² In various other countries in Europe and beyond, proposals to restrict women's employment had been put forward between 1933 and 1935; they targeted especially married women employed in the public sector.⁸³ In several cases, strict versions of such proposals became policy and were briefly enforced – as in Bulgaria and Belgium.⁸⁴ Still, in most cases, including in Poland and especially in Czechoslovakia, such policies were successfully opposed by cross-class coalitions of women from both the labour movement and the women's movement.⁸⁵

In fact, the association of curtailments of women's right to work with fascism, and conversely of the support for such a right with antifascism, was to a great extent the result of social democratic women's transnational action. The international women's conferences of the LSI – especially the fourth one, in Vienna in 1931 – catalysed the construction of this linkage. At this and similar gatherings, amplified by processes of transfer to and from national contexts, a specific 'right to work' agenda was defended.

Social democratic women in the German-speaking parties in Europe were already alert to the issue of women's dismissals from the early 1920s, when trade unions had colluded with the government in the unfair dismissal of women after demobilization.⁸⁶ When Austrian social democratic MP Therese Schlesinger (1863–1940) spoke in 1929 in the first chamber of the parliament against a proposal to reinstate a prohibition on married women's work as teachers, disagreeing colleagues jeered and 'abusive words flew about the chamber'.⁸⁷ Speaking at the 1929 Congress of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands), Marie Juchacz (1879–1956) – former MP and founder of the internationally influential Workers' Welfare Committee (Arbeiterwohlfahrt, AWO) – mentioned that workers had been expressing objections to women's employment, a 'psychological development', which the women's movement followed with 'much anxiety'. Yet 'the attitude of the Party and the trade unions remains unchanged', she assured her audience.⁸⁸

In the first half of the 1930s, women labour activists succeeded in slowly and subtly steering social democratic politics towards a proactive politics of defending women's right to employment, especially through international organizing. The same year as Schlesinger's and Juchacz's speeches, a few weeks before the October 'Black Friday' that inaugurated the Great Depression, in reaction to developments in Germany and elsewhere, women in the consultative Women's Committee of the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) passed a resolution that claimed that unions should not oppose married women's work. They argued that trade unions should refrain from adopting principled opposition to women's paid work, be they married or unmarried, especially because economic conditions did not allow working-class women to choose not to work, requiring them instead to work outside the home.⁸⁹ After some months of hesitation, the Executive Committee of the IFTU adopted the Women's Committee's resolution as its own.⁹⁰ At the 1931 Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI in Vienna, a Congress Resolution on Women's Right to Work

stated that the conference ‘vigorously opposes the campaign against the employed woman’.⁹¹

Women from our region of focus who were active in social democratic party politics influenced national and international stances on women’s right to work. In 1931, Fanny Blatny from the German Social Democratic Workers’ Party in the Czechoslovak Republic (Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, DSAP) spoke passionately at the Fourth International Women’s Conference of the LSI against the Central European trend of proposing married women be dismissed in order to combat unemployment, on account of their being part of double-income households and therefore ‘double earners’:

We are supposed to be ‘double earners’ when we earn something beside the earnings of the husband; but one does not consider whether it was possible to contract the marriage because of this circumstance, or whether there are debts, or whether we have to take care of sick relatives or the maintenance and education of children, or whether we must first earn to pay for furnishing our home.⁹²

In mentioning the issue of the double earners, Blatny was referencing a mounting public campaign in Czechoslovakia against the public sector employment of married women, especially if their partners were civil servants as well. From the beginning of the Great Depression, in the context of growing unemployment, the government had proposed various measures disadvantaging women employed in the public sector. Although Czech feminists and women trade unionists from Czechoslovakia successfully mobilized against the 1930 measures, as well as subsequent ones, in 1932, women’s right to work when large numbers of white-collar men continued to be unemployed was regularly questioned in the public sphere.⁹³

The 1931 LSI Women’s Conference adopted a resolution on ‘Women’s Right to Work’, building on the national and international work of trade unionists such as the German Gertrud Hanna (1874–1944),⁹⁴ but also on the support of an unusually large number of delegates of parties from the region. A text finalized in a committee led by Blatny (Germans in Czechoslovakia), the resolution ‘Women in the Economic System’ claimed that the fight against unemployment had been instrumentalized ‘by the employing classes and reactionaries’ to contest what the conference affirmed as ‘the equal right of women to work’.⁹⁵

The 1931 discussion in the Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI on women's right to work was part of an expansive vision on women's emancipation through socialism, albeit one that by that point was meant to be defended. Politicians in various countries called for curtailing women's employment. At the same time, measures such as the restriction of women's night work or the prohibition on women's work in toxic industries were increasingly loudly contested by transnational women's organizations such as Open Door International (founded in 1929).⁹⁶ Aiming to create a political parapet against these two growing currents, the resolution of the Women's Conference of the LSI on 'Women in the Economic System' singled out women's right to work in its first part. However, it linked women's right to work to the conference's more expansive programme of 'minimal demands' for women. The 1931 minimal demands programme called not only for the inclusion of women in all occupations, at all levels, and the removal of 'injustices' with regard to unemployment benefits, but also for the extension of the 'protection of motherhood' and a reduction in work hours, in conjunction with 'the realization of the principle of equal pay for equal work'.⁹⁷

Concern for prevailing labour conditions for women in 'new states' in Eastern Europe shaped preparatory documents and discussions at the Women's Conference in the Vienna Konzerthaus (Figure 13), on rationalization and on the matter of the 'right to work'. A draft resolution submitted by the Polish delegation had called for restrictions on women's night work and employment in toxic industries, in line with ILO Conventions.⁹⁸ In the plenary discussion, Denmark's IACW representative and member of the IFTU Women's Committee, Henriette Crone (1874–1933), a supporter of the removal of women-specific restrictions on women's work (except when they were, in practical terms, in the interest of women and the working class as a whole),⁹⁹ argued against the inclusion of overly specific wording in the resolution of an international event like the Women's Conference of the LSI. In her speech, Crone allowed that women in countries with weak trade unions, which could not force improvements in labour conditions and could not pursue a politics of higher wages for women, were free to continue to pursue a policy which favoured women-specific labour protection in their contexts. In an effort to avoid splits in the international social democratic women's movement, she argued against overly detailed international resolutions, considering them a hindrance to the goals of women in countries where women workers could pursue equal pay through their relatively strong trade unions. Presumably, Crone had in

mind the dynamics in the relatively strong trade unions of Scandinavian countries, when concluding:

we who are so happy to live in countries where we have the basis for building up the Trade Unions, so that we have power enough through them to give such protection as may be suitable to every trade or factory, and for the rest make our principal work the improvement of wages – we should have the right to do so, and you are doing us a wrong when you attempt to compel us to come under a system which will weaken the power of our Trade Unions. I warn you that *we cannot accept nor work under the resolution from Poland*.¹⁰⁰

By contrast, German IACW member Toni Sender (1888–1964) can be read as taking a position that aligned with the demand for unified labour standards. In a speech on ‘political reaction’ and its effects on women’s emancipation, Sender argued that rationalization had affected ‘new states’, especially the post-imperial Eastern European ones, more harshly.¹⁰¹ For Sender, the rise of Mussolini and Hitler as well as repressive regimes in Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia were linked to the post-World War I restructuring of the international economic system, with economic nationalism in new states leading to a hasty embrace of rationalization.¹⁰² She called for generalized vigilance against the rise of fascism. In other words, if the Polish draft resolution called for stronger labour standards, likely – in part – against the background of rapid rationalization in Eastern Europe,¹⁰³ Sender’s linking, at the same conference, of worsening labour conditions and political reaction in Eastern and Western Europe could be read as (at least) allowing for strong internationally guaranteed protection for labour rights, in the face of fascism and economic nationalism – the kind of detailed standards Crone found difficult to accept. As illustrated by Crone’s stance, for a minority of women labour activists, the desired goal of unrestricted right to work, as well as of ‘equal pay’, was not fully compatible with the ILO- and IFTU-backed international, women-specific labour protection legislation.¹⁰⁴

All in all, the fight against ‘reaction’ and fascism in Central and Eastern Europe configured the discussion on women’s right to work in the Fourth International Women’s Conference of the LSI. After the mid-1930s, social democratic women’s organizing on the ‘right to work’ in the region of focus could not continue with the kind of intensity the Vienna conference promised. For example, in 1933, in Poland, the

Polish Socialist Women's Conference – even though the activists' ability to act was limited, due to repression – dealt with the issue of married women's layoffs.¹⁰⁵ In Western Europe, in the mid-1930s, discussions on the right to work intensified (see also [chapter 2](#)). In the years that followed the turn to authoritarianism in Austria from March 1933, with social democracy soon to be banned, the well-organized women in Czechoslovakia, from both the German and the Czech social democratic parties, continued their labour activism. Judging by the tone of reports to the *International Information – Women's Supplement*, few other social democratic women's groups in our region could do as much to shape government policy.

Socialist and social democratic women's efforts to support working mothers

Beyond securing access to paid work in good conditions, between the 1890s and the 1930s, socialist and social democratic women labour activists in the region sought to improve working and living conditions for working mothers. They developed working mother-related agendas and focused on motherhood because most working-class women identified strongly as mothers and household workers ([chapter 8](#)), even when they were wage workers,¹⁰⁶ and because increasingly women themselves hoped to have 'fewer, healthier and better cared-for children'.¹⁰⁷ Simultaneously, during this period, public opinion and governments began to consider the welfare of children more important – leading to new pressures and expectations on women but also to new political opportunities, especially in countries where women could vote after World War I.¹⁰⁸

Early on, women socialists often conceptualized mothering as undervalued work, and were invested in recognizing, valuing and easing women's unpaid work within families. For instance, in the 1910s, the Armenian Mari Beyleryan (1877–1915), working for the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party (Տոժիալ Դեմոկրատ Հիւնձակյան Աուսակցութիւն) in the Ottoman Empire, criticized the lack of respect women received for performing tiresome household chores, arguing that these chores were undervalued in society because they did not 'bring money home' (see also [chapter 3](#)).¹⁰⁹ In 1898, women labour activists in the Czech lands demanded the establishment of kindergartens.¹¹⁰ In 1902, they called for facilitating women's employment outside the home through more 'free' time with the help of soup kitchens, canteens, playgrounds and nurseries

for children.¹¹¹ However, it is especially after World War I that women labour activists in Europe, including those from Central and Eastern Europe, began pursuing as systematically as politically possible policies meant to ease the tension between women's paid work, their housework and their childcaring duties¹¹² – a triad Austrian social democratic women called by 1928 'the threefold burden' ('die dreifache Belastung' or 'die dreifache Arbeitsbürde').¹¹³

In the interwar period, key areas of activism in relation to mothers' paid and unpaid work by social democratic party women in Europe were those related to maternity and childcare leave, cash help for mothers and families, including so-called mothers' pensions and family allowances (often the demand included that these were paid to women – whether employed or homemakers), institutions for childcare (crèches and kindergartens), labour-saving household devices, men's greater contribution to unpaid family work and 'conscious maternity' (legal abortion, access to contraception). Judging especially by reports to the LSI's *International Information – Women's Supplement* by activists from the various affiliated parties, women from our region shared these concerns. At the same time, the reform of laws criminalizing abortion was of great concern in Central and Eastern Europe, at a time when in Britain and France family allowances attracted much of the energy of women engaged in labour politics at national and local level.

From 1918 to 1920, left-wing women labour activists from our region of focus called for the socialization of childcare and housework. Activist Marianne Pollak (1891–1963) argued that fatherhood needed to be seen by men to be socially significant and as personally important as wage work.¹¹⁴ Therese Schlesinger claimed that women's burdensome housework was a daily gift of maternal strength and happiness to entrepreneurs, at the cost of the health and wellbeing of the working class.¹¹⁵ In other words, Schlesinger suggested mothers' under-resourced work to nurture current workers was a subsidy to capital owners; women's unpaid work in bad conditions nurtured wage workers while ruining the wellbeing of the nurturers. The communal kitchens and socialized housework she envisioned – inspired by developments in the Soviet Union – were never realized. Still, social democratic research on women's work, improvements to housing and better welfare made a difference to the living and working conditions of working women, particularly in Vienna, the Austrian capital city (see also [chapter 8](#)).

Besides the well-documented Austrian social democratic women's interwar activism on behalf of working mothers, especially in Vienna,¹¹⁶ women from Czechoslovakia had the most concrete, consistent and

creative engagement with the problems encountered by mothers as paid and unpaid workers in the region. Working in parties with many women members, in a functioning parliamentary democracy and relatively prosperous state until after the mid-1930s, women from the ČSDSD and the DSAP in Czechoslovakia could press for expanded social policies and have reasonable hope to succeed, at least in part. For instance, in 1928, the demands of social democratic women in Czechoslovakia included, alongside better political participation and equal status before the law, 'the revision of the section in the penal code dealing with abortion; the extension of public maternity and welfare centres; the inclusion of homeworkers and domestic workers in social insurance'.¹¹⁷ A few months later, social democratic MPs Taub and Schäfer presented in the parliament a new project for insurance laws, which proposed better coverage for women, be they married or unmarried, and more benefits for new mothers, including 'a complete layette consisting of three sets of garments to be made available to any woman about to be confined, free of cost'¹¹⁸ – a policy that had already proved highly symbolic and materially effective in the fight against working-class mothers' and children's deprivation in Red Vienna.¹¹⁹

After 1928, social democratic activists in the region were consistently active in linking women's welfare as mothers and workers to the decriminalization of abortion and the availability of birth control. A resolution on 'The Mother and Child' submitted to a vote at the International Women's Conference of the LSI in Brussels in 1928 called for better labour protection, better medical care, more benefits for new mothers, and the 'creation and development of the protective care of the community for the mother and child: such as the provision of milk, home helps, nursery schools'.¹²⁰ The resolution noted the need for more research and policies to improve maternal health but made no explicit reference to abortion. Yet the resolution was a compromise text, reconciling draft resolutions proposed by women from the Independent Labour Party in Britain¹²¹ with draft resolutions from Austria and Poland. The former resolution focused on allowances to be paid to women, while the latter two were explicit on the issues of abortion, contraception and conscious maternity.¹²² Polish labour activist and physician Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka proposed that, 'while in principle against abortion', the LSI Women's Conference ought to demand liberalization of sale of contraceptives and the reform of penal code articles dealing with abortion, in accordance with 'the requirements of modern medicine', 'modern ideas of the penal code' and 'the attitude of the modern liberated woman'.¹²³ Notably, whereas women's activism

seeking the de-criminalization of abortion in our region was linked to arguments about women's autonomy and unburdening of daily life, social democratic discussions about conscious maternity were just as much tied to Malthusian and eugenicist ideas about fostering not just the growth but also the quality of populations (through fewer births of unwanted children or to mothers in precarious circumstances).¹²⁴

In the years that followed, as family allowances were passed into legislation in France and Labour Party women mobilized support for them in Britain, activists in our region retained a focus on abortion and contraception as key issues for addressing the tension of childcare, housework and paid work, especially as pregnancy tended to increase women's risk of dismissal, while intensive work during pregnancy created health risks. In November 1928, social democratic women in Czechoslovakia reported to the *LSI International Information – Women's Supplement* that 'the resolution concerning the mother and child, referring to the campaign against the abortion paragraphs, has aroused considerable interest and the whole of the women's movement in Czechoslovakia has welcomed its appearance'.¹²⁵

In January 1933, Czechoslovak women welcomed the introduction by social democratic Minister of Justice Alfréd Meissner of a bill legalizing abortion for eugenic reasons (when the 'child would be seriously defective, either physically or mentally') or for social reasons (when the pregnant woman would not be able to support herself or those legally dependent on her following the birth of a child). The bill proposed that financial aid following a legal abortion should be provided if the same woman would have been entitled to a maternity benefit had she given birth. Labour activist Betty Karpíšková felt compelled to defend the bill against both communist and 'bourgeois party' critics, arguing that the aim was to 'secure some *immediate* practical results'.¹²⁶ A very similar bill was introduced in the Austrian parliament by social democratic MP Adelheid Popp the same month.¹²⁷

Meanwhile, in Romania, social democratic women in the UFM were fighting the introduction of much harsher punishments against abortion in a penal code that was being drafted.¹²⁸ The UFM considered the harsher punishment a disaster in a country with high maternal and infant mortality rates and believed that abortion should actually be legalized, on 'the principles of legalization of abortion on social grounds, and of associating maternity with a consciousness of the responsibility that it involves'.¹²⁹ In 1933, and the years that followed, the UFM¹³⁰ – supported by few other women's organizations in Romania – would publicize the issue of conscious maternity through articles in its monthly bulletin and public lectures.¹³¹

To sum up, from the nineteenth century until World War II, social democratic women in our region emphasized the social worth of women's work as mothers and aimed to ease the tension between paid and unpaid work. This included arguing and hoping for the socialization of housework and rarely – as in Marianne Pollak's case – for men's greater involvement in raising children. It included better inclusion of women in emerging social protection frameworks, especially after World War I. At the same time, by the mid-1930s, social democratic women in Central and Eastern Europe were particularly active in pushing for the loosening of restrictions on abortion and better access to contraception, arguing that this was a key issue for working women.

Conclusion

This chapter contributes to integrating the history of socialist and social democratic women's activism in our region of focus into the larger transnational history of socialist and social democratic women's labour activism, focusing on these women's organizing strategies and their agendas around the politics of work. It shows that in the first half of the twentieth century in our region, activists faced similar challenges in organizing women workers as did their women comrades across Europe. This included men's ignorance; their lack of interest in and resistance to involving women in social democratic politics and integrating them into organizations; and their opposition to women's separate organizing. The two main means by which women activists aimed to overcome these difficulties – namely, the special women-targeted organizing strategies and the initiatives women took towards restructuring the movement to make it more accessible to and appropriate for the representation of the needs and interests of women – were in close interaction with the developments in the European, and especially the Austrian, socialist and social democratic women's movements. The chapter argues that, from the late nineteenth century but especially in the 1920s and 1930s, the internationalism that shaped socialist and social democratic women's politics produced a continuous if more or less explicit engagement with questions of structural inequality in Europe and the challenges such differences posed to organizing. For example, women in the region pointed to their efforts at organizing women, which, despite having fewer concrete resources than in 'the west', were similarly great. However, some women from beyond the region noted that rationalization was affecting Eastern Europe more harshly. Even when key common

objectives, eventually the same threats (with the coming of right-wing authoritarianism and fascism), and especially the brightest goals for a more just world shaped social democratic women's actions, the matter of what could be achieved in local contexts influenced activists' local and international interactions.

The chapter entangles the significant history of women's social democratic organizing on labour issues in Eastern Europe before World War II with the better-researched and better-known history of Central and Western European organizing. By looking at socialist and social democratic women's activism across the division of World War I and beyond the geographies constructed by the Cold War, we identify strong patterns of connection and interaction between (especially) social democratic women from Central and Eastern Europe. Their organizational repertoires and agendas for women's right to work and for how to ease the tension between paid and unpaid work developed within a shared political horizon – one that was dramatically reconfigured only after 1933. The struggle for the right to abortion was specific to this Central and Eastern European space of shared concerns. At the same time, Eastern European social democratic women's perceived 'backwardness' as well as their (very concretely) more limited resources structured transnational interactions. Importantly, social democratic women from Eastern Europe saw transnational contacts, especially those facilitated by the IACW of the LSI, as precious for their political effectiveness in their home contexts and in international labour politics.

The chapter points to the period 1910–31 as one of intensified contacts between social democratic activists across our region of focus. For the 1930s, it underscores how National Socialist and fascist governments in Germany and Austria, and suppression of the strong social democratic parties in these two countries, had a dampening effect on the growing women's labour activism of the region. This was the case even though labour activists from Eastern Europe were by no means unused to repression and reaction, having experienced both since the 1920s. Future research must probe the construction of women labour activists' stances within social democratic politics and ought to delve into how interwar competition with communist parties – not discussed here – shaped the post-World War II politics of the working mother, spearheaded in the Cold War context by communist labour activists coming especially from Eastern Europe.

Notes

- 1 This chapter mentions but does not discuss in depth developments in the Ottoman Empire (before World War I), largely due to the dearth of sources created by political climates unfavourable to social democratic women's labour activism in these contexts and periods.
- 2 For instance, Gruber and Graves, *Women and Socialism*. The foundational volume reflected the state of the art and circuits of knowledge production at the time and did not claim to be exhaustive.
- 3 Zimmermann, 'Socialism, Gender, and the Emancipation of Women'.
- 4 'Organise the Women!'
- 5 Hauch, 'Der diskrete Charme', 86–87.
- 6 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 76.
- 7 Hauch, 'Der diskrete Charme', 89–90.
- 8 Soukupová, 'Sociální demokracie a dělnické ženy', 80.
- 9 Popp, 'International Women's Day in Austria'.
- 10 Alföldi, 'A magyarországi szocialista nőmozgalom'.
- 11 Hauch, 'Der diskrete Charme', 86–87.
- 12 Meditz, 'Die "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" und die Frauenfrage', 168–72.
- 13 Fonó, *A magyarországi szocialista nőmozgalom történetéhez*, 17.
- 14 The social democratic women's group was an informal group of women members of the 'narrow' wing of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Workers' Party in Sofia. In the literature it is described as not fully institutionalized until 1913 when the Central Women's Commission (Tsentrlna zhenska komisiia/Централна женска комисия) was formed. See Bradinska, *Възникване и оформяне*; Stoianova, 'Раждането на женското социалдемократическо движение'.
- 15 Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 154.
- 16 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 64.
- 17 Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 154; Daskalova, *Жени, пол и модернизация*, 237–38, 271.
- 18 'Našim ženam', 4.
- 19 'A rendőrségtől felosztatott nőkongresszus', 25 December 1925, MSZDP, fond 658.1, archival unit 43, PIL.
- 20 'A rendőrségtől felosztatott nőkongresszus', 3.
- 21 'Die Frau als Arbeiterin'.
- 22 Papp, *Die Kraft der weiblichen Seele*, 172.
- 23 'Gyári munkásnők gyűlése'.
- 24 'A szakszervezeti mozgalom'; 'Gyári munkásnők gyűlése'.
- 25 Developing a focus on women workers who could not be organized in trade unions, the MME aimed to fulfil a complementary function: Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*, 45.
- 26 'A szakszervezeti mozgalom'.
- 27 'Gyári munkásnők gyűlése'.
- 28 Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*
- 29 Fonó, *A magyarországi szocialista nőmozgalom történetéhez*, 76.
- 30 Dufrat, 'Dyskusje wokół działalności'.
- 31 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.8–9; De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 80–83.
- 32 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.23. Between 1918 and 1934, under SDAP governance, several social housing projects and policies aimed at improving sanitation, healthcare and education were implemented in the capital city of Austria, hence the name Red Vienna.
- 33 'Difficult Days'.
- 34 For a summary discussion of the scholarship on several countries outside our region, see Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*.
- 35 Soukupová, 'Sociální demokracie a dělnické ženy'.
- 36 As quoted in Fonó, *A magyarországi szocialista nőmozgalom történetéhez*, 78.
- 37 'Organise the Women!'
- 38 Sekretariat der SAI, *Die Frauen in der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale*, III.13–14.
- 39 'The Annual Conference'.

- 40 Papp, *Die Kraft der weiblichen Seele*, 169.
- 41 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.24.
- 42 MSZDP Budapesti Nőbizottsága, 'Előterjesztés "Agitáció a Nőmunkásért 1937" akcióhoz', 1937, Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 63, PIL.
- 43 Ruthchild Goldberg, 'From West to East'.
- 44 Niederkofler, Mesner, and Zechner, *Frauentag!*; 'The International Women's Day' (1930); 'International Women's Day' (1933).
- 45 'The Conference of Rumanian Working Women'.
- 46 Neunsinger, 'International Women's Day'.
- 47 'The International Women's Day' (1930). After the May 1926 coup, Józef Klemens Piłsudski became the de facto leader of the Second Republic, and the rise of his dictatorship elicited a range of oppositional responses. For more on the conflicts of the period, see Plach, *Clash of Moral Nations*.
- 48 Blatny, 'For Equal Rights!'
- 49 Zetkin, 'For the Liberation of Women!'
- 50 Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji*, 82–83.
- 51 Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 52 'Raport către Adunarea Generală a Clubului socialist din București de la 9 februarie 1914', 9 February 1915, microfilm roll 227, inv. 2926 – Partidul Socialist din România 1914, SANIC; Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*, 41–42, 74–75.
- 53 *Universul*, 'Societatea femeilor'.
- 54 Ghiț, "About the Author" and "Context" to "Ecaterina Arbore", 24.
- 55 Hauch, 'Der diskrete Charme', 93.
- 56 Tudoran, 'Din lupta socialistă', 140.
- 57 'Raport către Adunarea Generală a Clubului socialist'.
- 58 Meditz, 'Die "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" und die Frauenfrage', 121.
- 59 'The Conference of Rumanian Working Women'.
- 60 Neunsinger, 'Creating the International Spirit of Socialist Women', 124.
- 61 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.11.
- 62 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.32.
- 63 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.12–18.
- 64 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.18.
- 65 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, III.17.
- 66 Mitkova, *Пол, неуводичен печат и модернизация*, 148–56.
- 67 'Conferința Uniunii noastre', *Buletinul 'Femeia muncitoare'* 3, no. 18 (1933) reprinted in Mihăilescu, *Din istoria feminismului românesc*, 175–181.
- 68 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 530–33; Grubački, 'Alojzija Štebi'.
- 69 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 258–61.
- 70 De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*, 260.
- 71 Daskalova and Offen, 'The Tensions'; Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists*, 153–56.
- 72 Blatny, 'For Equal Rights!'
- 73 'The Refugees'.
- 74 J. Fl., *Budoucnost*, 'Veřejná schůze lidu', 10 March 1880, quoted in Englová, 'Práce žen v továrnách'.
- 75 Zetkin, 'For the Liberation of Women!'
- 76 Arbore, *Femeia în lupta pentru emancipare*, 5. See also the commentary on this source and its author in Ghiț, "About the Author" and "Context" to "Ecaterina Arbore".
- 77 Temür, 'Kendi yayınları çerçevesinde Osmanlı Sosyalist Fırkası', 248–49.
- 78 For an account of union and Labour Party stances on women workers after demobilization in Britain, see Boston, *Women Workers and the Trade Unions*, 137–41.
- 79 'Women at the Congress'.
- 80 For a comprehensive overview of the timing and scope of these policies in global perspective, see International Labour Office, *The Law and Women's Work*, 346–69.
- 81 De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women*, 166–200; Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society*, 75–115.
- 82 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 59.
- 83 International Labour Office, *The Law and Women's Work*, 348.
- 84 International Labour Office, *The Law and Women's Work*, 349.
- 85 International Labour Office, *The Law and Women's Work*, 488, 525.

- 86 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 56, especially n. 59.
- 87 'The Austrian First Chamber'.
- 88 'Women at the Congress'.
- 89 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 435.
- 90 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 440.
- 91 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.84.
- 92 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.29.
- 93 Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 99–128.
- 94 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 449.
- 95 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.84.
- 96 Wikander, 'Some Kept the Flag'.
- 97 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.86.
- 98 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.45.
- 99 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 340, 361–64, 378–80.
- 100 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.45 (emphasis added).
- 101 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.12–14.
- 102 *Fourth International Women's Conference*, IX.12.
- 103 On rationalization in Poland and its veiled problematization by women labour inspectors, see Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors', 314–15.
- 104 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 429.
- 105 'The Women's Conference of the Polish Socialist Party'.
- 106 Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, 194–205.
- 107 Gruber and Graves, 'Introduction', 8.
- 108 Thane, 'Visions of Gender', 111.
- 109 Çalıkman Gavrilof, 'Mari Beyleryan', 24.
- 110 'Konference žen', quoted in Krutílková, 'Pionýrky v politice', 169.
- 111 Veselý, 'O tovární práci', quoted in Soukupová, 'Sociální demokracie a dělnické ženy', 81.
- 112 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 317.
- 113 'For Subject 1 (a). Resolution of the Austrian Socialist Women. Third Women's International Conference of the LSI, Bruxelles', 1928, ARCH01368, inv. 4336, F4, IISH, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4336>.
- 114 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 314.
- 115 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 317.
- 116 For an overview, see Gruber, 'The "New Woman"'.
117 'International Women's Day' (1928).
- 118 'Social Democratic Proposals'.
- 119 Das Rote Wien, 'Säuglingswäschepaket'.
- 120 'Resolutions for the Women's International Congress from the Independent Labour Party (Great Britain)', 1928, ARCH01368, inv. 4336, C89/28, IISH, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4336>.
- 121 'Resolutions for the Women's International Congress'.
- 122 'For Subject 1 (a)'.
- 123 'Resolution to Item 1 a) of the Agenda', 1928, ARCH01368, inv. 4336, 0124/28, IISH, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4336>.
- 124 Lehner, *Verpönte Eingriffe*.
- 125 'An Echo'.
- 126 'Birth Control and the Meissner Bill' (emphasis in the original). For debates on abortion in interwar Czechoslovakia, see Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 129–58.
- 127 'Towards the Repeal'.
- 128 'Reaction and the Lot of Women'.
- 129 'Reaction and the Lot of Women'.
- 130 'Ziua femeii la București'.
- 131 'Text de conferință cu titlul "Maternitatea conștientă", pentru acțiunile culturale organizate de UFM, martie–aprilie 1934', April 1934, microfilm roll 400, fond 30, inv. 3024, SANIC.

Part II

Women's gendered activist agendas and repertoires: from margins to centre

The second part of the book develops an integrative perspective on women's labour activism which leads beyond (while still including) the world of mixed-gender labour activism discussed in its full ideological and organizational variety in [Part I](#). [Part II](#) excavates women's rarely studied labour struggles, pays attention to women who belonged to particularly marginalized groups, and examines how women responded to their gendered positioning in the family, community and educational spheres. Through the combined, and conceptually innovative, focus on seldom-studied marginalized groups and seldom-studied arenas of struggle, we show and explain how and why women labour activists mobilized an expansive range of repertoires, emphasized specific agendas in a gendered manner, and sometimes invented agendas and repertoires on their own. The chapters showcase the ingenuity of women's activist responses to the interlocking circumstances they faced, highlight the tensions that emerged at the intersection of paid and unpaid work, and point to the barriers women confronted when they sought to integrate their gendered and intersectional interests into movement and public organizations and institutions. Together, the chapters outline the consequences of multifaceted marginalization for women's labour activism, overcome the scholarly disregard for specific, "non-classical" arenas of women's labour activism and discuss activism that have stayed closely connected with the gendered lifeworld of working-class communities. In the history of all these activisms, both solidarity and conflict with men played important roles.

[Chapter 5](#) discusses women activists' efforts throughout the twentieth century to shape the politics of education, including women's vocational, trade union and political training, locally and internationally.

Education, while often sidelined and/or studied in isolation from social movement history, has been a crucial dimension of the history of women's labour activism. Women activists recognized all too well that education was key to overcoming the subordinate status of women workers at work and in social movements. Women were precluded from many types of vocational training, and thus from what was construed as 'skilled' work, while in turn their de facto skills were neither acknowledged nor materially rewarded. Activists also knew that efforts to organize women workers had to meet them where they were, and that meant taking into account their lower level of education and their gender-specific subjectivities, orientations and conditions. The chapter identifies historical turning points in, barriers to and major efforts towards working women's empowerment through education.

Chapter 6 explores the nexus of gender, mobility and activism of women migrant workers. The precarious and liminal positions of women migrants often resulted in a strained relationship with the organized labour movement and pushed them to apply repertoires for bettering their working and living conditions that went beyond collective labour-focused action. The chapter considers human mobility – including migration – as a specific repertoire of labour activism which women employed as one means to improve their labour and life circumstances. From this perspective, women migrant workers' engagement with migration opportunities and regimes reappears as a mode of labour activism that must be studied in conjunction with the – similarly understudied – often reluctant or ambivalent attitude of women trade unionists regarding women migrant workers, and women migrants' role in women's labour organizing.

Chapter 7 links closely to chapter 6. It excavates life histories of women labour activists who pursued their ethnic, religious, class and gender interests in multiethnic contexts often rife with conflict, and the history of women's interethnic co-operation which was both rich and at times fraught with ambiguities. In many lands in the region of focus, different ethnic and denominational groups lived side by side, and diverse intra-region mobility added to this mix. Minoritized women working in industry and agriculture often faced difficulties stemming from the specifically marginalized position of the community to which they belonged and their position as women therein. Their community-based agendas related to living conditions, language and education. The biographical approach and the focus on working women's cross-ethnic interaction help to capture the impact of the interlocking inequalities faced and challenged by these women.

Chapter 8, through a focus on repertoires of activism rooted in working-class women's gendered roles in providing and caring for families and communities, contributes to an inclusive and integrative understanding of women's labour activism. For the working classes, making a living was built on the pulling together of various types of labour, including family and community work, much of which was assigned to women. 'Everyday activism' that aimed to improve conditions of families and communities, and built on women's capacities and responsibilities arising from their specific position therein, constituted an important dimension of women's labour activism. Chapter 8 provides a colourful panorama of these everyday-focused activisms, especially with regard to food, housing and childcare provision. This panorama also includes protests against environmental pollution, women's hidden work (in strike kitchens, for instance) in supporting men-dominated labour struggles, and knowledge production and artistic reflection on the matters addressed in the chapter.

With their close focus on the multiple belongings and disadvantages of women workers, the chapters in Part II of the book change our understanding of what constitutes labour activism, with significant consequences for labour and gender historians. If communities, and women belonging to these communities, were disadvantaged in terms of citizenship rights and entitlements such as access to labour markets, education for work, and labour rights, then their struggles addressing, and sometimes taking place in lieu of exercising, such rights must be fully integrated in the study of labour activism. Citizenship status was an important factor shaping multiply disadvantaged women's activism. Layered citizenship status limited their access to the more traditional forms of labour organizing, such as participation in trade unions, and prompted them, for instance, to rely more heavily on the tactic of exiting labour relations as a way of improving their condition.

If the struggles of women and working-class communities that aimed at improving the life and work circumstances of these communities were inseparable from women's gendered family and community roles, then the historians of labour activism must take on board the study of gendered social relations beyond the workplace. The chapters in Part II show how working-class women's multiple, often informal, resistance and livelihood-related practices emerged as important repertoires of action. Working women's activism based on the everyday was often part of, and sometimes even at the forefront of, transnational cycles of protest that fed into large-scale political and social change, as in the case of food unrest at the end of World War I or the protest movements in some

state socialist countries in the 1980s against unfulfilled basic material or health needs. The larger political transformations of which these protests formed a part had far-reaching implications for labour regimes, bringing new rights and opportunities for the working classes across the region in the post-World War I period along with a turn to full-scale neoliberalism and western-style democracy in the 1990s. Women's specifically gendered, expansive forms of labour activism were, as the chapters in this part show, not restricted to informal and grassroots types of activism. These activisms also took on organized collective forms, and the women sustaining them addressed men-dominated social movement organizations and state institutions. Networking to influence policy- and decision-making processes and mobilizing knowledge production to this end have been among the enduring repertoires of action that activists adopted in our region.

How women who were differently positioned in society and culture addressed and negotiated these differences, and the inequalities often attached to such differences, was an important factor impacting on the history of women's labour activism not just in the case of minoritized and migrant women discussed in this part of the book. Looking at class and political divides between women, [Part III](#) moves the large theme of difference between women, which has long preoccupied gender historians and feminist labour historians, to centre stage.

5

The power of education: improving women's status in the world of work, 1900s to early 1990s

Introduction: women's work-related education

When considering women's demands around gendered labour rights, education is perhaps not the first thing that comes to mind. Yet, education forms a fundamental precondition for women's labour activism that aims to improve working women's position in the family, in society and at work. The social democratic activist Szeréna Ladányi (1884–1940) concluded a 1917 brochure on women workers in this spirit: 'knowledge and information are power' and 'the ignorant person is always exploited by others'.¹ Indeed, the lack of educational capital hindered and marginalized women's labour organizing in trade unions ([chapter 2](#)), party politics ([chapter 4](#)) and elsewhere, for even the most ordinary act of activism, be it public speaking or knowing how to frame a demand, required resources that many women workers simply did not have. Gendered educational inequalities were also at the core of maintaining and justifying wage inequality, occupational segregation and segmentation, and women's overall disadvantaged position in the labour market. Focusing simultaneously on vocational training, political education and trade union education, this chapter offers a selective overview of both the educational policies of states, international organizations and social movements, and the ways in which women labour activists have tried to shape these policies in the region of focus from the 1900s, when working women's organizing around access to work-related education gained traction, until the end of the Cold War era in the early 1990s. Adopting an inclusive, long-term perspective, it aims to establish major trends and turning points in the politics of women's work-related education in the region by focusing on both the national and international scales of activism.

Although education has been an essential aspect of workers' struggles, its role in labour movements is often overlooked in labour history. In the case of gender history, the education of women workers is similarly under-researched, even though feminist scholars have long acknowledged education as a precondition for the progress of women in society. Attributing a wide-ranging influence to gender-specific educational initiatives led by women, Dorothy Sue Cobble underlines that they 'helped revitalize, grow, and feminize the global labor movement'.² Working women's organizing also 'changed the way unions organize and educate the rank and file' and shaped the understanding of trade union issues from a gender perspective.³ Education, as an important but less-acknowledged form of labour activism, in fact constitutes an important catalyst of "classical" labour organizing and a key means to improve women's status in the world of work and in society. As such, it must be studied as both an agenda and a repertoire of women's labour activism at the same time.

Studying women's labour activism from an inclusive, integrative perspective, this chapter employs a broad definition of 'workers' education' that comprises not only civic and trade union initiatives that aimed to empower workers in the labour market and the labour movement, but also formal and state-accredited educational programmes, ranging from literacy to vocational training, established to integrate workers and improve their status in gainful work.⁴ The scholarship on workers' education distinguishes between 'the education of workers by workers for purposes that they themselves determine' and 'the education of workers that is supposedly conducted for their benefit ... [but is] controlled by other interests'.⁵ This differentiation is important when discussing the agency of women workers and situating their activism vis-à-vis the state, international organizations, and labour and other social movements.⁶ Still, the analytical distinction between workers' education *by themselves* and *by others* is not always clear, since, throughout history, there have been many overlaps between workers' interests and those who are involved in their education, and many activists engaged in grassroots struggles, state processes and international organizing simultaneously. Therefore, when discussing the politics of women's education, we focus on the processes of inclusion and exclusion that inform the education as well as its outcome in terms of women's position within gender and labour relations. We do so by paying attention to a wide variety of women's education-related agendas, particularly to vocational training, political education and trade union education. Vocational education, as used in this chapter, prepares workers for skilled work in various organizational

settings; political education prepares for participation in political processes and organizing; and trade union education concentrates on labour rights and trade union organizing.

Throughout the twentieth century, gender-based discrimination in the educational system has been inherently connected to gendered inequalities in the workplace, in the family and in labour organizing, and has overlapped with other social categories of discrimination such as class and ethnicity. Following June Purvis, we locate the politics of women's education in three main realms, namely women workers' access to education, gendered differences in curriculum and the justifications offered to maintain and reproduce gendered differences in education.⁷ As the chapter demonstrates, these realms have been deeply connected to women's paid and unpaid labour, and the discrimination women faced in these realms has disadvantaged them vis-à-vis men when it came to qualifications, skills and activism in labour movements and the world of work. As Jane Gaskell argued, the label 'skilled' stood for 'a political process in which some workers have more economic power than others'; because women have not been strongly represented by workers' organizations, they have been disadvantaged in the process of managing skill definitions, which resulted in the devaluation of the work they did.⁸ The chapter builds on feminist perspectives that understand 'skill' as a relational and contested terrain that reflects assumptions about gender that 'permeate classification systems in a manner that not only segregates by gender, but also lowers the values of skills on that basis'.⁹ As a social construct, skill has been an instrument that systematically devalued women's work and discriminated against and marginalized skill sets and labour sectors that were connected predominantly to working women. Studying women labour activists' engagement with states and labour organizations in the region to improve women's skills and qualifications, we highlight how women made visible the link between education and labour rights such as wage justice and the barriers they came across in their activism as well as the changes in their agendas and repertoires of women's labour activism over time.

In what follows, the first section focuses on the education of women workers from the 1900s to the late 1930s. Enumerating the many types of educational initiatives of and for women workers, the conflicting issues and agendas concerning women's education, the specific educational work of women labour activists and the gender differences in workers' education, this section focuses mainly on national developments but also points to the early international initiatives of trade union and political education that involved actors from the region and became paramount

only after World War II. Its approach complements the discussion on the educational efforts in the co-operative movement in [chapter 1](#). The second section highlights the co-construction of national and international scales of the politics of women's education in the context of the larger socioeconomic change after 1945. It features the interaction between the region's governments, trade unions and women's organizations and the international trade unions (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, ICFTU; World Federation of Trade Unions, WFTU) and western-dominated international organizations (International Labour Organization, ILO; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO) that expanded significantly and gained traction on the national level after World War II.¹⁰ Educational activities within the cross-class activist contexts of the women's crafts movement, women's servants politics and the gendered labour inspectorate, which played an important role in the history of the women's labour activism focused on educational agendas, are discussed in [chapter 9](#). Education provided by Catholic trade unions, parties and internationals and the cultural education of workers are not discussed in the chapter. While the first section emphasizes the developments in Central and Eastern Europe in the interwar period, the chapter as a whole covers the entire region of focus and situates it within the global developments on women's education. In doing so, it establishes three threads that ran through the politics of women's education in the region throughout the twentieth century.

First, women's education remained a major agenda item for activists as well as governments and trade unions, as social, political and economic developments in the region and globally often brought improvements in women's participation in workers' education but also generated new challenges. In the early twentieth century, women's demands around education consisted mostly of access to basic education, vocational training in a limited number of professions, and inclusion in trade unions and their educational activities. Gradually, these were replaced by demands for co-education and equal representation in secondary and higher levels of education, full access to apprenticeship and vocational training including in traditionally male skills, and women-specific education in trade unions. Often, changes in economic regimes and technological developments were the main drivers of the shifts in educational policy, as the system of education and educational offerings were gradually adjusted to the demands of industry in later phases of industrialization.¹¹ Women labour activists responded to and sometimes shaped these shifts with a view to furthering women's labour

rights while seeking to serve their gender interests. The transnational production and circulation of knowledge through meetings, seminars and conferences, especially after World War II, have been integral to generating demands to improve women's status through education.

Secondly, making time for education has been a constant obstacle for working women, especially when they had care responsibilities. Having entered the labour market with all the historical disadvantages that undervalued their qualifications or deprived them of skills, women found it difficult, even impossible, to continue their education despite a host of solutions proposed by the actors involved in workers' education. High dropout rates have remained a constant problem in women's education.

Finally, a long-term perspective on education as a theme in women's labour activism sheds light on the collective political agency of men, whose sexist and discriminatory attitudes as family members, workers, activists and policymakers towards women have hindered the possibilities of improving women's status through education or based on the advances in women's education. In return, women have criticized and exposed family members who did not perform household and care work, co-workers who refused to see women as equal(ly skilled) partners in the workplace, trade unionists who ignored demands to organize educational activities in a way that suited working women's needs, and policymakers who prioritized economic goals over strategies to establish equality of opportunity for men and women in policies around education.

Richness and limitations of activist education, 1900s to 1940s

At the 1926 congress of Czechoslovak social democratic women in Prague (Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) ([Map 2](#)), participants uniformly asserted that the precondition for the further development of social democracy was the expansion of educational and agitation work among women.¹² Shared by many women activists in Central and Eastern Europe, congress participants' idea was that women's position at work, in the labour movement and in society could not be improved without women's greater access to education. Greater access was not merely a question of enrolment in numbers; societal attitudes also played a key role in determining the quality and type of education women could vie for. The growing number of women workers from the mid-nineteenth century had highlighted the effects of women's lack of general and

vocational education and made educational efforts integral to women's labour activism, with notable early attempts to provide women with some sort of vocational training (chapter 9). With women gaining the right to vote in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe after World War I, education also became a key component of women workers' activism in formal politics.

Vocational training and women's employment

Vocational training, like other educational sectors, remained highly gendered in the first decades of the twentieth century, and in many ways beyond World War II, in terms of curricular differences, gender-specific provision of vocational schools, enrolment numbers and choice of vocational track. In 1913, in the Austrian part of the Habsburg Monarchy (Map 1), only 9.2 per cent of industrial school students, of 167,165 students, were women.¹³ In the Hungarian part, women made up 3.5 per cent of the 98,622 industrial apprentices.¹⁴ Gendered inequalities in access to post-elementary general education accompanied this segmentation. Until the 1940s, women had lesser access to upper elementary schools, academic secondary schools and vocational secondary schools, although the gap narrowed significantly during and after World War I.

The lack of vocational education among women workers remained a pervasive feature that negatively influenced working women's position in the labour market. A 1896 survey into the living and working conditions of women workers in Vienna uncovered many examples of women being pushed to perform unskilled work and facing difficulties in and limits on getting proper vocational training. Experts discussed the cases of registered women apprentices who learned only fragments of the work involved in the overall production process during their training, and skilled workers being replaced by servants imported from Bohemia and other regions of the empire who worked for low wages (Map 1).¹⁵ In the interwar period, one of many such accounts could be found in the social democratic women's paper *Equality* (*Die Gleichheit*) (Table 4). It described the case of porcelain workers in 1929: male porcelain workers went through a five-year apprenticeship to become skilled workers, while women workers only attended a 12-week training programme before becoming auxiliary workers. Although women formed much of the workforce in the porcelain industry, they were mostly employed in positions categorized as unskilled, which paid significantly less and were more dangerous for their health.¹⁶ Szeréna Ladányi, a functionary in the Educational Secretariat of the Social

Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt Oktatási Titkársága, MSZDP OT), succinctly summarized the attitudinal basis of such differences in an anecdote about the reaction of a male worker when he learned that the new machines to fold the textile fabric would be operated by women workers. The male worker quickly asserted that 'the machine is not even a machine if not operated by a man'.¹⁷ This statement stands as a clear testimony to the extent that skill was a social construct, which significantly devalued work processes performed by women workers.

The case of trade education and women clerks in the Habsburg Monarchy illustrates how women's reduced access to education relative to men clerks produced a gendered differentiation of tasks in office work, resulting in a long-term highly disadvantageous situation for women workers. Clerk associations and trade unions in Hungary admitted women members only in the mid-1900s and largely ignored the specific problems and interests of women clerks, be they in terms of salary, pension benefits, status, job security, holidays or career advancement. The discriminatory attitude of these organizations in turn constrained the scope of action to remedy women's unequal position in office work. The turnover of women clerks in companies and generally in the labour market was high, due to the marriage clause (women were often dismissed if they got married) and the unqualified and manual work they did in the office. In terms of gender wage gap, paysheets of the Trade Bank (Živnostenská banka) in Prague, then part of Cisleithania, between 1899 and 1910 demonstrated that the wage gap between qualified/unqualified and junior/senior clerks was much higher than the difference between men and women unqualified bank clerks. Yet, the tallying of these three types of differences (gender, qualification, seniority) resulted in a very large wage gap between women and men clerks in general.¹⁸

The increasing demand for office workers from the 1860s and in particular for women clerks from the 1900s had made trade education a dynamically growing sector.¹⁹ Secondary trade schools predominantly trained boys, and only a handful of institutions for women existed in the Habsburg Monarchy, as was also the case in Germany and France.²⁰ In Hungary, the first vocational trade course for women, established in 1888 in Budapest, was initially a six-month course, later extended to 10 months; it offered practical training for 'lower-level trade occupations'.²¹ In the following decades, the number of courses that provided vocational training for women and prepared them to work in family businesses and as lower-level office workers grew considerably.²² Yet, curricular

differences between secondary trade schools for boys and the 10-month trade courses for women cemented women's lower-level position in office work. The detrimental effect of gendered differentiation in trade education was noted by the National Association of Women Office Workers (Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete, NOE), which in 1909 began widespread agitation to ban the 10-month trade course.²³ From the NOE's perspective, the course was simply not long enough to transfer the knowledge and skills that secondary trade schools taught in a three-year curriculum. Many clerks, both men and women, claimed that women's inadequate education worsened the salary of men, in Hungary and elsewhere in the Habsburg Monarchy.²⁴ Employers indeed exploited this situation and willingly hired women for smaller salaries to carry out the manual and lower-level office work that had previously been performed by men for higher wages. The NOE argued that the high percentage of women who could not be offered a position via its placement agency was also the result of their inadequate qualification and training.²⁵ Mariska Gárdos (1885–1973), a socialist activist and private clerk at the time, pointed out that the fight against the 10-month trade course was linked to the NOE's claim that there should be 'equal qualification, equal work, equal wage' for all workers.²⁶

In the 1900s and 1910s, the NOE's activism in seeking equal access to education for women was manifold. To improve the career prospects of unqualified women clerks, the organization offered courses in languages (German, English), stenography, accounting and correspondence. Arguing that these courses fulfilled a 'far-reaching social mission', the NOE called for its members to attend them and boost their careers.²⁷ It also ran a public campaign to convince the authorities that the solution to women clerks' inadequate training was to open all secondary trade schools to women or, alternatively, to establish more women-only schools in addition to the three institutions established shortly before 1911 in Pozsony (Bratislava, Hungary, later Czechoslovakia, today Slovakia), Marosvásárhely (Târgu Mureș, Hungary, today Romania) and Debrecen (Hungary) ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)). To this end, NOE members petitioned and visited various ministries (trade, religion, education) and chambers of commerce, and distributed pamphlets among students to discourage women from enrolling in the 10-month courses.²⁸ The NOE's activism to close the short-term trade courses for women was unsuccessful, but in the following decades women's access to vocational schooling significantly increased. By 1935, women's representation in secondary trade schools had increased from 4.3 per cent in 1910 to 30.8 per cent of the student body.²⁹

Trade union education for women

With the numerical increase of women workers and unionized women during and after World War I (chapter 2, Table 2), trade union federations started paying more attention to women workers' education. At the same time, the establishment of the ILO, which dealt with labour-related issues, triggered in Central and Eastern Europe new discussions and activism around work-related education. From the 1920s onwards, workers' trade union education gained an all-encompassing purpose: it included the training of trade union functionaries and labour activists as well as the cultural instruction of trade union members. In a series of reports submitted to the ILO in 1932, the Hungarian expert on workers' education declared that the goal of trade union education had previously been training in agitation work and keeping contact with the masses, but now trade unions needed to pay more attention to preparing labour movement leaders and increasing the prestige of the movement in the public sphere.³⁰ The Romanian representative, Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa, emphasized that the goal was to develop workers' sensibility towards socialism, and in that sense education formed an integral part of the working-class struggle.³¹ The Polish ILO correspondent reported that the Workers' University Society (Towarzystwo Uniwersytetu Robotniczego, TUR) served essentially as a hub for the mixed education of trade union members and young workers.³² It was in this larger context that trade unions started to address the educational needs of women members as well.

The Polish TUR, the Czech Workers' Academy (Dělnická akademie, DA) and other workers' education organizations used a great variety of educational means including lectures, slide shows, popularization of arts, and publication of pamphlets, journals and books to address their members. They offered mixed-gender courses for functionaries and secretaries; established libraries, reading rooms and study groups; and held discussion evenings and evening courses in addition to longer residential schools. There were also always a few women-specific events and lectures on the calendar. The Austrian Workers' College (Arbeiterhochschule) organized the first women-only residential seminar in 1926. In addition to listening to lectures, participants wrote sample articles and presented mock speeches to each other.³³ In 1931, the Trade Union Council of Hungary (Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Tanács) offered lectures on 'Women in the Trade Union Movement' and 'The Protection of Women and Child Labour'.³⁴ Likewise, Romanian trade unions organized lectures on 'The Free Woman and the Slave

Woman' and 'The Role of Women in the Socialist Movement'.³⁵ Women workers often recalled their involvement in educational activities as liberating and successful. Anna Maria Tilschová, a worker in interwar Prague, remembered that she understood the importance of knowledge and its power to fight against capitalists at the DA's courses. Another participant labelled the DA courses as her 'secondary school' and said that all the 'little' knowledge she had in French, German and socialist political theory was thanks to them.³⁶

In line with the all-encompassing approach to workers' education, trade unions in the interwar period organized courses that focused specifically on women workers' needs. The reason for organizing women-specific courses was both to address the issues around women's unpaid and paid work and to attract more women to trade unions (see also [Figure 10](#), [Figure 14](#)). In the early 1920s, the DA in Czechoslovakia ran a year-long women-only trade school, an evening trade course and a factory management class. Classes were organized to fit the schedule of working women, but it still required a huge effort to attend them twice a week from 7 to 9 p.m. There were also practical courses designed for housewives on drawing, sewing, dress cutting, hat decorating and housekeeping.³⁷ By 1925, the DA organized 'family schools for women', a lecture cycle held for 12 weeks, which initiated women into civic rights, self-education, health and home economics.³⁸ In 1928, the German Trade Union Confederation in Czechoslovakia (Zentralgewerkschaftskommission des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik, ZDG) reported on a wide range of educational activities and showed women's low participation in mixed-gender courses.³⁹ This prompted the ZDG to organize a residential school for women in 1928; however, it failed to materialize because too few women applied in 1928, 1929 and 1930. The first ZDG women-only course finally took place in 1935 in Teplitz-Schönau (Teplice-Šanov, Czechoslovakia, today Teplice, Czechia); 30 participants trained to become trade union functionaries. The report about this course emphasized that it was particularly difficult for women to participate in courses and later assume public (trade union) functions, as they could not even get liberated from housework.⁴⁰ Similarly, when the Czechoslovak Trade Union Association (Odborové sdružení československé) organized a two-week trade union school for women in 1937, organizers emphasized that this was the first 'vacation' in the lives of many participants,⁴¹ which speaks volumes about contemporary understandings of women's education and working women's life circumstances. The difficulty of making time for women's trade union education would remain a recurring problem in the ensuing decades.

The low proportion of women in mixed-gender courses was not a phenomenon unique to Czechoslovakia. The metalworkers' union in Hungary enrolled 37 workers into the middle-level seminar of the trade union; of these, only two were women, and both were unskilled factory workers (see also [Figure 11](#)).⁴²

Social democratic workers' education

After women gained the right to vote in Austria, Hungary, Poland and Czechoslovakia in the aftermath of World War I ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#)), party elites had to re-evaluate women workers' access to and status in party organizations. Friedrich Weiß, an Austrian social democrat, assessed that in the 1920 parliamentary elections social democrats received fewer votes from women than from men. To garner greater support among women, Weiß proposed to reform the party's educational activities in a manner that aimed to capitalize on the "traditional" forms of the gendered division of labour, focusing on women's interests in household management, maternity and child-rearing and on their 'emotional life', to be targeted via activities such as poetry and 'art evenings'.⁴³ Women's political education and educational activism were dominated by these two concerns in the interwar period. Women's household labour and its relationship to paid work became the main preoccupation of educators while at the same time functioning as the main obstacle to women's education and labour activism. In addition, women's inclusion in political life represented an increasing priority for both women activists and party leadership.

At the establishment of the Board of Education of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (MSZDP Oktatási Választmánya, MSZDP OV) in 1933,⁴⁴ Szeréna Ladányi expressed her motto and goal for women's education: 'we need to teach socialism to the masses!'⁴⁵ The MSZDP OV oversaw the educational activities of all social democratic organizations: trade unions, the party, co-operatives, youth sections and women's sections.⁴⁶ It also provided new opportunities for women workers through the creation of a working committee for 'women's education'. Ladányi served as a member of the MSZDP OT, the administrative body of the education committee. The working committee for women's education functioned in close collaboration with the National Women's Organizing Committee of the MSZDP (MSZDP Országos Nőszervező Bizottsága, MSZDP ONB) and was guided by its agenda. The collaboration and activities of these two organs demonstrate how education both represented activism *in itself* and was an essential

requirement to women's labour activism. Social democratic women demanded, among other things, gender equality in education and vocational training for women and men ([chapter 4](#)). Their agenda also included adult education in the form of literacy courses, vocational training, and housework, childcare and hygiene education.⁴⁷ In Ladányi's view, the economic independence of women was essential for their inclusion in the socialist movement.⁴⁸ Women's organizing committees were to co-ordinate lectures and debates for local women members of the party, while sewing, needlework and handicraft courses, as well as being practical, were to create a togetherness of women workers.⁴⁹ From this perspective, the educational agenda of social democratic women aligned with the 'Bread and Roses' movement in the US, in the sense that it provided both cultural opportunities and a sense of dignity and respect for the workers.⁵⁰

The programme of Hungarian social democrats was not unique in Central and Eastern Europe; similar strategies were pursued in countries with a strong social democratic party.⁵¹ For the Czech social democrat B. Frydrychová, the Central Committee of Social Democratic Women (Ústřední výbor sociálně demokratických žen, ÚVSDŽ), linked to the Czechoslovak Social Democratic Workers' Party (Československá sociálně demokratická strana dělnická, ČSDSD), aimed to strengthen women's participation in the movement and enhance their determination to fight for a new and more just social order. In Frydrychová's view, the task of social democratic women was therefore to help spread socialist knowledge.⁵² In German-speaking Austria, the Central Office of Education (Zentralstelle für das Bildungswesen, ZfdB) of the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP) held lectures and presentations for women from 1920 with similar motivation. And, like the MSZDP OV, it also provided opportunities for leadership positions for women functionaries. For instance, Helene Bauer (1871–1942), a socialist/social democratic activist and educator, became chair of the Pedagogical Committee of the ZfdB by 1928. At a women's school in Vienna, they distributed library books during presentations, and those who regularly attended lectures received a copy of Bebel's *Women and Socialism* at the end of the lecture series.⁵³ Educational activities were not limited to the urban working class: for example, socialist-aligned people's universities (uniwersytety ludowe) taught political education and practical courses to women in the Polish countryside in the 1930s ([Figure 18](#)).⁵⁴

In their educational activities, social democratic women's organizations mostly aimed at broadening the social and political knowledge

of their members and training women as administrative personnel. 'Investments in education' improved women's influence and power in society, but they were also a way to ensure members' loyalty to the movement.⁵⁵ The forms of these initiatives were diverse, ranging from evening lectures and seminars during the week through afternoon classes on weekends to multi-day or even longer residential schools. In addition, they included reading evenings, study trips and consultations.⁵⁶ These courses often concentrated on political education and provided rudimentary social and economic knowledge. A 'women's circle school' in 1928 in Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia), with more than 100 participants from western Bohemia, offered classes on 'Organizational and Political Questions', 'The History of the Movement and Its Present Problems', 'Organizational Questions of the Women's Movement', 'Political Parties and Their Programmes' and 'Economic Development and Women's Professional Activities'.⁵⁷ Prominent social democratic women such as Fanny Blatny (1873–1949) and Irene Kirpal (1886–1977) held lectures for German social democratic women in Czechoslovakia. Anna Boschek (1874–1957) and Käthe Leichter (1895–1942) played a similar central role in organizing the training of women functionaries in Austrian trade unions.⁵⁸ Gabriele Proft (1879–1971) (chapter 6, Table 5), Therese Schlesinger (1863–1940), Adelheid Popp (1869–1939) and Emmy Freundlich (1878–1948) held lectures organized by Austrian social democrats, and Szeréna Ladányi, Anna Kéthly (1889–1976), Mariska Gárdos and Mrs Péter Ágoston (1880–1967) did the same in the case of Hungarian social democrats.⁵⁹

Women's political education had to overcome multiple constraints, which can be fully grasped only via attention to a multitude of factors, some of which appear as mere details at first sight. First, organizers needed money to buy school supplies, textbooks and syllabi, to finance trips, to provide infrastructure, maps, projectors, gramophones and a library for the instructors, to rent premises and to pay speakers.⁶⁰ At the first boarding school for German social democratic women in Reindlitz (Ryjice, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) in 1924, the main obstacle for the organizers was also the lack of financial resources: women participants simply could not afford to cover the expenses, and district organizations were reluctant to fund the school.⁶¹

Secondly, as in the case of trade union education, it was difficult to reconcile women's household roles with attending lectures and seminars. For many activists, women's 'double burden' was responsible for their lack of participation in educational programmes.⁶² As Ladányi put it, the obstacles to women's political education were motherhood, housework

and their poor educational background.⁶³ This list showcases how much social democratic women's agenda and activism as a whole were interlinked with education. Afternoon meetings on home economics were not an end in themselves: rationally organized housework made it possible to educate housewives on how to be a socialist.⁶⁴ An article on 'Women's Schooling' published in 1930 in *Equality* described the problem in detail: 'It is even more difficult to organize women's schools. Women comrades find it so hard to get away from their families! They cannot leave the household alone, cannot leave the children unprovided for.'⁶⁵ The hardship also had to do with having to obtain the consent of men in the household. A participant in the summer school for women in Ivaň (Eibis, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) in South Moravia in 1932 emphasized how important the agreement of her husband was: 'My husband agreed ... I left the household to my husband and to God, and then I sprinted to Ivaň.'⁶⁶

The example of a week-long seminar for women, organized in Budapest in 1933, reveals the strategies employed by women activists to overcome these constraints. At the beginning of the seminar, to encourage the participants, Ladányi hailed their bravery: 'They have put aside all their work for a long time, left their household, their occupation and their family.'⁶⁷ Instruction took place between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., followed by excursions to social democratic-affiliated organizations (workers' clubs of the metalworkers, leather and bookbinding trade unions and the women's guild) and sightseeing (statue of Béla Somogyi), slide shows and singing. To cut down on the costs, participants were housed and given breakfast by members of the local MSZDP women's committee. Lunch was offered by the women's committee or ordered at a trade union restaurant. A member of the local women's committee, a Ms Csillag, brought small food packets in the evenings. Collective solutions to make the seminar affordable, in return, helped spur changes within the entire political movement and energized women's involvement in it.⁶⁸

The beginnings of international women's schools

From the early 1930s, social democratic initiatives in Europe aimed at establishing an international summer school for women activists and party members. At the meeting of the International Advisory Committee on Women of the LSI (IACW) (chapter 4, Table 5) in Prague in 1931, delegates debated the question of the organization of an 'International Women's Summer School' and decided to organize one in Brussels

in 1932. Delegates from Central and Eastern Europe, Fanny Blatny, Adelheid Popp and Betty Karpíšková (1881–1942), actively participated in the debate, and Popp was part of the subcommittee to prepare proposals for the organization of the course. As for students, planned to number around 40, organizers favoured women who had already worked for the party but had no prior experience in the women's socialist movement at the international level. The subcommittee also proposed to establish a fund to cover the travel costs of women from countries in 'which the women's movement is still weak and from which the travelling expenses are high'. The proposal was unanimously adopted by the IACW in Prague in 1931.⁶⁹ This summer course was never held, but the first International Study Week took place in Brussels in 1936 and the second in Charleroi in Belgium in 1939. Two Austrian women under the pseudonyms Fulda Lily and Steffy Exl participated in the 1939 study week as the only representatives from Central and Eastern Europe.⁷⁰ The International Study Week was a pioneering event in Europe, since other (social democratic) international organizations, like the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU), did not have international educational activities directed at women.⁷¹ Yet, as Karpíšková had stated at the 1937 congress of the ČSDSD, comrades from Eastern Europe could not participate in this event due to the high financial costs.⁷² This was not an isolated case, as financial difficulties and the increasingly right-wing authoritarian regimes considerably hindered social democratic women's organizing in Eastern Europe by the second half of the 1930s (see [chapter 4](#)).

Communist women from Central and Eastern Europe had access to international political education, for instance, in the international party cadre schools in Moscow.⁷³ The costs were covered by the Soviet Union, although travelling to Moscow was not necessarily a safe journey. Karla Pfeiferová (1886–1969), a Czech textile worker and trade union functionary, travelled to Moscow in 1930 with a fake passport to participate in a six-month educational course. Pfeiferová received thorough political training, visited textile factories, participated in trade union congresses and even gave several speeches to textile workers. This training had a lasting effect on her career after her return to Czechoslovakia, as she immediately became the regional head of the textile branch of the Red Unions (Rudé odbory) in Brno (Brünn, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia).⁷⁴ Another example was Zehra Kosova (1910–2001), a migrant tobacco worker and communist activist from Turkey ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 3](#)), who in 1934 travelled on a dangerous secret trip to Moscow and studied at the Communist University of the Toilers of the East (Kommunisticheskii universitet trudiashchikhsia

Vostoka / Коммунистический университет трудящихся Востока, KUTV). Kosova described a very similar experience to Pfeiferová's. She visited factories and learned about history, economics and the fundamental rules of socialism. The language of education was in one's own language at KUTV, so people from all over the world without any knowledge in the leading languages of the European labour movement could receive political education there. As in the case of social democratic residential schools, education was holistic: it included physical education and didactic leisure activities in addition to political education. Kosova also received textile training in Moscow and became a textile worker in the 1950s thanks to this training.⁷⁵

Working women's education on multiple scales and the larger socioeconomic change after 1945

With the LSI's educational activities addressing women and the international cadre education in Moscow, the seeds for the internationalization of workers' education were sown. Ceasing to exist with the outbreak of World War II, international initiatives for women's work-related education resumed only when postwar planning began in earnest around 1942–3. In the postwar years, education policy indeed emerged as a key pillar of the new, western-dominated international system.⁷⁶ After 1945, with women's increased participation in the labour force and the need for womanpower for industrialization and national economic growth, women's vocational training became a macroeconomic goal on both sides of the Cold War divide (Map 3).⁷⁷ This led to a dramatic increase in the variety of actors displaying an interest in the education of women. The ILO and UNESCO, initially the only international organizations working in the field of education,⁷⁸ developed policies that sought to facilitate women's inclusion in gainful work and improve their status in the labour market. From the 1950s onwards, the ICFTU and the WFTU organized international and regional seminars, creating a network of trade union activists concerned with both women's trade union education and shaping state and international policies on women's vocational training. Trade unions and national governments collaborated with the ILO and UNESCO on vocational training, workers' education and general education. Linked to national economic development by both national governments and international organizations, education 'came to be seen not just as a right, but also as an investment in economic growth, and [as] the primary tool for preparing and shaping the workforce

required by society'.⁷⁹ In this context, women labour activists worked towards empowerment through education by producing demands and programmes at the intersection of national and international politics of women's work.

Boosting women's skills in the postwar years?

As early as World War II, the ILO's women experts had linked women's mass entry into occupations that were considered masculine to new possibilities in women's vocational training.⁸⁰ The 1944 ILO Declaration of Philadelphia concerning the aims and purposes of the organization endorsed the 'assurance of equality of educational and vocational opportunity'.⁸¹ Discussing vocational guidance at its 1946 meeting, the ILO Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (established in 1932 and later renamed Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers) noted the immediate need 'for promoting freedom of access for women on an equal basis with men to all schools and full- or part-time courses if the experience of the war years in opening new opportunities for women is to be continued'.⁸² From then on, the topic of 'vocational guidance and training of girls and women' remained an almost-permanent agenda item for the ILO's women experts and sometimes for the ILO as a whole. Experts from our region were represented at ILO meetings on women's work-related problems only to a limited degree.⁸³ Yet, governments from the region were informed about the ILO's policies on women's education through their correspondents, and trade unions and non-governmental organizations drew on these policies in their local contexts. UNESCO's activities underscored the ILO's policies and reaffirmed that women's vocational training was impossible without full access to elementary education, and general education significantly impacted vocational training throughout the course of a worker's life.⁸⁴

In the postwar years, literacy was a priority for the governments in the region, as it was a solid barrier to women's vocational training, especially in countries where there had been less improvement in women's literacy in the first decades of the century.⁸⁵ Alongside governments, women's organizations and trade unions were involved in running literacy campaigns to facilitate women's inclusion in gainful work. In Romania in 1948, the government introduced a law on Reform in Education and created an office for elementary learning,⁸⁶ and the Union of Democratic Women of Romania (Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din România, UFDR) was a key participant in the literacy campaigns

organized until the mid-1950s.⁸⁷ Women activists in trade unions in rural areas of Romania were active in similar campaigns, such as those in the Trade Union of the Autonomous House of Monopolies Employees (Sindicatul Salariaților Casei Autonome a Monopolurilor),⁸⁸ representing tobacco growers in the historically state-monopolized tobacco industry. In 1950, the Ghimpați chapter of the union (near the capital Bucharest) sought to enrol women in skills training courses but had to give up because many of its women members were illiterate.⁸⁹

In rural areas, literacy education for peasant women was coupled with education in home economics as well as modern techniques of agricultural production and handicrafts (for the latter, see also [chapter 9](#)). In Yugoslavia, both co-operatives and women's organizations worked in this area ([Figure 21](#)).⁹⁰ Activists in the Co-operative Women's Sections (Sekcije žena zadrugarki) educated women in agricultural production, emphasized their position as workers, and advocated for the socialization of household work and more women in decision-making positions in co-operatives. Other activists moved from urban to rural areas to elevate peasant women's status. In the early 1950s, Rajka Borojević (1913–73), a teacher from Herzegovina and former Central Committee member of the Women's Antifascist Front (Antifašistički front žena, AFŽ) of Yugoslavia, moved to the village of Donji Dubac (today Serbia) and organized workshops for peasant women. Women came from nearby villages to attend her classes, which covered theoretical subjects (hygiene, childcare, sex education) as well as practical ones (cooking, knitting and sewing, handicrafts).⁹¹ In Turkey, the national Employment Service (İş ve İşçi Bulma Kurumu) in 1955 started supporting the development of rural industries to provide employment in handicrafts for peasants during the long dry season. One attempt in this direction was a carpet weaving workshop for women in the village of Ladik near Konya, which was also intended to function as an apprenticeship school.⁹²

Besides basic forms of training, women's lower-level or lack of vocational training compared to men was a problem for governments that wanted to recruit more workers to increase production, especially in industrial areas. This applied to socialist and capitalist, and more and less developed, contexts alike. In Austria, the 1951 census showed that only 14 per cent of women workers had acquired a skill certificate, although women represented about a third of the industrial workforce. As communist trade unionist Berta (Emmi) Brichacek ([Table 9](#)) noted, girls' apprenticeships were significantly limited, with 85 per cent of girls apprenticed in a mere 7 trades compared to young men, who were

apprenticed in 200 trades.⁹³ Offering on-the-job skills training to workers was a short cut to addressing this problem. This type of vocational training was especially promoted throughout (state) socialist Eastern Europe for the expanding, newly recruited workforce, which included many women. Various factories in Romania offered courses through which skills were taught or existing skills were certified; this benefited women, as they had, unlike men, 'joined the workforce without any preparation, without knowing anything, and in time, through practice, they [had] learned how to handle machinery'.⁹⁴

As governments, women's organizations and – especially in (state) socialist contexts – trade unions strove to improve women's skill levels on the ground, they ran into two concrete barriers: women frequently dropped out of training programmes, and they were employed in jobs incommensurate with their newly attained skill level. A 1956 joint ILO/UNESCO mission to Turkey on vocational education highlighted the high dropout rates in Girls' Institutes,⁹⁵ evening schools and village programmes. In Girls' Institutes, which were 'the most important pillar of the system of vocational and technical education' for women, only 1.25 per cent of the enrolled students graduated. Among graduates, very few earned a wage because there was a mismatch between the curriculum and the womanpower needs of the labour market; also, families regarded homemaking as women's primary vocation.⁹⁶ Women labour activists in (state) socialist countries where trade unions provided women with skills training at the enterprise level noted similar concerns. In the early years of state socialist Hungary, activists from the National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT) reported women's reluctance to enrol in (re)training programmes and their high dropout rates. Training programmes tailored to women workers' special needs and interests were disparaged, and women who finished vocational training with good results were employed in low-skill jobs regardless. These problems were related to women's family responsibilities and reinforced by the attitudes of skilled men workers, trade union functionaries and workplace management.⁹⁷ At the Belvedere Tobacco Factory in Bucharest, men workers swore at women who were training to become machine operators and hid their tools to hamper their learning process.⁹⁸ For women activists, it was clear from the 1950s that alleviating the tension between women's work and family responsibilities and addressing the discriminatory attitude of men had to accompany the push for women's equal access to vocational training if the latter was to yield the intended results.

International trade union advances and realities on the ground

Responding to the larger socioeconomic change after 1945, when women entered the workforce in increasing numbers, national and international trade unions on both sides of the Iron Curtain sought to organize women workers. Education was a crucial instrument for women's membership and participation in trade unions, and their access to higher positions in them. In many cases, trade union education also included political education that aimed to foster workers' loyalty to gendered political and economic regimes. In (state) socialist contexts, communist parties participated and sometimes took the lead in this type of political education. International trade unions held a special place in women's trade union education, as they developed overarching educational principles and frameworks for women workers and trade unionists across different contexts. This was a consequence of, and also contributed to, the internationalization of women's labour activism.

Before the Cold War split in the international trade union movement, the WFTU's focus regarding women workers was on equal pay (chapter 2), but the issue of women's vocational training formed part of the discussion on wages. A 1948 WFTU report on equal pay argued that women's lack of vocational training was mostly responsible for wage inequality, and called for creating technical schools for girls and reducing women's housework responsibilities to make time for education.⁹⁹ After the split in 1949, the newly founded anti-communist ICFTU and the now communist-aligned WFTU each developed its own, competing policy framework but produced similar demands for women's vocational training and trade union education. In 1953, the ICFTU's International Summer School for Women Trade Unionists in La Brévière (France) brought together 52 women trade unionists from 25 countries including Turkey (Meral Sonbay and Mevhibe Öksüzücü) and Austria (Wilhemine Moik, Valérie Kittel, Rosa Leykauf, Rosa Seibert).¹⁰⁰ 'Simultaneous translation' was used to break down some of the barriers created by the 'various languages' spoken during the summer school.¹⁰¹ A key demand of the participants was for the ICFTU to improve women's access to education and training programmes in trade unions so that women could be more active in the trade union movement.¹⁰² Participants in the WFTU's First World Conference on Women Workers in Budapest in 1956 similarly recommended that trade unions 'train women trade union leaders', 'give constant help to new women leaders' and 'strengthen educational and propaganda work among women'.¹⁰³ The WFTU's First International Seminar for Women Trade Unionists took place in 1957

in Zlenice near Prague (Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) and brought together more than 40 women from various countries including Hungary and Czechoslovakia.¹⁰⁴

In the 1960s, international trade unions considered women's vocational training increasingly in terms of the frameworks drawn by the ILO and UNESCO. The ILO's women experts had discussed the matter at the 1959 meeting of the Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers and evaluated the existing educational programmes in industries, trades, agriculture and home economics. Automation and technological developments had opened new career possibilities for women and challenged the notions of 'men's work' and 'women's work', but the negative influence of social traditions and discriminatory attitudes persisted.¹⁰⁵ UNESCO adopted a Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960) and started new research on the access of girls and women to education in rural areas (1962).¹⁰⁶ Parallel to these developments, the WFTU's Charter on the Economic and Social Rights of Women in 1964 included a section on education which called for equal opportunities for vocational training, equal access to professions and a special focus on women's training needs in the workplace, to be achieved during working hours without wage reduction.¹⁰⁷ One year later, in 1965, the ICFTU's Charter of Rights of Working Women called for equal access for men and women to educational and vocational training alongside the planning of trade union training in a way that would enable women's participation.¹⁰⁸

International trade unions also provided platforms for women labour activists to learn from each other's national context. In the run-up to the WFTU-led Second World Conference on Women Workers in 1964 in Bucharest, the WFTU's journal *World Trade Union Movement* published a series of articles and interviews about women workers' situation in different countries. An interview with Maria Kochanowska, a textile worker and chair of the Warsaw district committee of the textile workers' union in Poland, described how trade union women organized to make women's housework easier and to increase their spare time, so women could educate themselves skills-wise and culturally. 'We are equally concerned with the question of the education of the woman worker in her capacity of mother', Kochanowska said; 'the women's sections of the union factory committees systematically organize classes in sewing, in personal hygiene, in feeding the family accompanied by cookery lessons'. In addition, the women's section built a laundry inside the factory and created a small fund to buy household equipment for those women workers who could not afford it.¹⁰⁹

In the WFTU's global public arena, women workers from (state) socialist contexts were, as a rule, 'called on to embody Central and Eastern European progress rather than the ongoing women's trade union struggle in the region'.¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, a careful reading of interviews in *World Trade Union Movement*, such as the one with Maria Kochanowska, reveals how difficult in reality it was to create time for women workers to improve their skills. In the case of Kochanowska, in addition to her work, trade union duties and family responsibilities, she also attended evening classes at a high school for adults. Recognizing Kochanowska's tight schedule, her interviewer commented: 'When we asked her to give us an interview, she sighed and looked at her watch, and then said: "Oh well, let's go ahead" ... one can imagine what a long day she has.'¹¹¹

The difficulty of juggling so many shifts at the same time led women labour activists, from the mid-1960s onwards, to criticize more openly the discrepancy between governments' and activists' expectation or hope of increasing women's qualifications and skills and the realities women workers experienced on the ground. Gabrielle Traxler (1942–2015) (Table 9), head of the women's department in the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB), pointed at women's double burden as the underlying cause for women being less active in professional training.¹¹² In Bulgaria, Ana Vanova, director of the district women's organization in Sliven, condemned the fact that skills training in enterprises took place outside working hours and that housework and childcare responsibilities hampered women's participation.¹¹³ The Women's League (Liga Kobiet, LK) in Poland called for a new type of family, in which men participated more in household chores, which was much needed for women to gain better access to professional training.¹¹⁴

But limited access to training was just the beginning of the problem. Even with relatively good education, women were trained in trades that required lower skill levels and were sparsely represented in higher-grade positions. Studying women's representation in the job hierarchy, in 1971, the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh) pointed at unequal pay as a major problem and discussed gendered labour segregation that clustered women in low-paying jobs, some of which were mislabelled as 'light industry' even though women engaged in heavy and unsafe labour in them. Moreover, the KBZh found that 'a number of enterprise and production team leaders, especially foremen-level leaders, as well as highly skilled male workers, deliberately enforce the retention of women in the lower grades'.¹¹⁵ The criticisms activists from Austria, Bulgaria and

Poland voiced were very similar to those of the Hungarian trade union women from SZOT more than a decade ago.

Importantly, these criticisms also resonated with the situation of women workers in countries beyond the region of focus. Women labour activists in Italy criticized the discriminatory grading in the job hierarchy that made the improvements in women's qualifications redundant. Often, regardless of any qualification, women's work was equated with that of unskilled male workers.¹¹⁶ In Belgium, the 1966 Herstal strike drew attention to the arbitrariness of labelling industries as 'light' and 'heavy'. In the Herstal arms factory, the striking women were placed three grades lower than men in manual light jobs even though the work they performed was the same.¹¹⁷ Showing the social constructedness of 'skills', women's work was devalued across the Cold War divide, and it did not fit in the skilled vs unskilled distinction. As the next section shows, women labour activists' critique of this situation and the co-ordination between them at the international level resulted in a new impetus for the discussions and action around women's education in our region.

Between lagging skills and lingering discrimination

In the late 1960s and the 1970s, developments in the UN system regarding women's rights ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 3](#), [chapter 10](#)) inspired governments, trade unions and women's organizations in the region to study household work and its relation to vocational training in greater detail and educate the public with 'widespread information campaigns aimed at changing negative traditional attitudes of men and women towards women's work'.¹¹⁸ The ILO's World Employment Programme, launched in 1968, and UNESCO's declaration of 1970 as the International Education Year opened a new chapter on international collaboration around workers' education. In 1975, the ILO Recommendation R150, Human Resources Development (1975), called for change in gendered attitudes regarding the work of women and men in the home and in working life, and equal access for girls and women to occupations that were traditionally accessible only to boys and men.¹¹⁹ On the trade union side, both the WFTU (1972) and the ICFTU (1975) updated their charters on working women's rights, reiterating women's demands for vocational training and trade union education.¹²⁰ The WFTU's International Trade Union Symposium on the 'Participation of Working Women in Economic and Social Life', held in Bucharest in 1975 with delegations from 61 countries, had a clear focus on workers' education.¹²¹

Developments like these created an impetus in the region for trade unions and social movement organizations to engage in public discussions on women's work-related education. In Hungary, inspired by the UN International Women's Year (1975), the trade union journal *Work* (*Munka*) featured an 'Exchange of Views' on 'Trade Unions' Women Work' with a focus on women's education and vocational training. The opening article of the series declared that this focus was due to the gender gap in education (only 67 per cent of working women had completed eight years of primary schooling) and the ensuing association of women's work with semi-skilled and unskilled work.¹²² The exchange of views comprised 16 contributions and ended with an article by the president of the Central Women's Committee of SZOT (SZOT Központi Nőbizottsága), Margit Czerván¹²³ (1929–2019) (Table 9), who recognized and deplored the fact that in state socialist Hungary – just as in other state socialist countries – women manual workers constituted an ever-growing mass of unskilled and underpaid workers. 'In order to change the educational and occupational structure of women's manual work', she commented, 'what is needed is not new decisions, but a willingness to take action, [to accept] greater responsibility and to work more critically interrogating the present and the future.' Czerván's demands were directed not only to those who were responsible for the implementation of policies but also to men who, as workers and trade unionists, claimed that 'a woman may be a good worker, but she cannot be a skilled worker of equal value to [men]'.¹²⁴

Debates such as those featured in *Work* were part of a broader discussion on the 'scientific-technological revolution' and the relationship between automation and what was called 'deskilling' that took hold across the Cold War divide.¹²⁵ Trade unions and women's organizations situated their concern over women's education vis-à-vis this broader discussion. In Czechoslovakia, the Central Commission on Workers' Education, established in 1967, emphasized raising women's qualification and skill levels and called attention to shifts in the skill structure arising from scientific and technological change.¹²⁶ The Eighth International Seminar on the Revolution in Science and Technology and Trends in Women's Education, organized by the Conference for the Social Activity of Women (Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena, KDAŽ) in 1971 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia (now in Serbia), focused on the new educational needs of women arising from the scientific-technological revolution.¹²⁷ The demands to adjust women's vocational training to this 'revolution' were often bolstered by the claim that such an adjustment was necessary for national economic growth and the macro-economic goals of (state) socialist regimes. The KBZh in Bulgaria noted

that the existing skill level of the female workforce was unable to meet increased demands for high productivity and labour efficiency induced by the scientific-technological revolution. 'In this connection', the KBZh stated, 'it is imperative that very serious measures be taken to upgrade the qualifications of women.'¹²⁸

Developments on the international level in the long 1970s also triggered historically new mobilizations around women's education in countries such as Turkey where, compared to (state) socialist contexts, trade unions' gender politics as well as their recognition by the state as legitimate actors for social change were significantly weaker. It was, instead, women's organizations and international actors who pushed for keener engagement with working women's education. Established in 1975 with reference to the International Women's Year, the Association of Progressive Women (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, İKD) organized educational activities in workplaces and working-class neighbourhoods on women's labour rights as well as literacy, political education (Marxist analyses of social and labour relations), home economics and contraceptive methods (chapter 3, Figure 28, Figure 29). Taking advantage of the International Women's Year, the ILO in Turkey disseminated press releases and fact sheets about women workers' rights in seminars organized by women's associations.¹²⁹ In 1979, together with the ICFTU, the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, Türk-İş) co-organized a nationwide educational seminar for women trade unionists in Çeşme, İzmir. This event, the first of its kind, resulted in a comprehensive report on women workers' problems penned by women trade unionists¹³⁰ and contributed to the formation of the Türk-İş Women Workers' Bureau (Kadın İşçiler Bürosu) in 1980. Throughout the 1980s, the bureau educated women workers in Türk-İş-affiliated trade unions on topics including trade unionism and gendered labour rights as well as family planning, nutrition and women's health.¹³¹ Similar to Margit Czerván in Hungary, Rahime Akdoğan (1950–),¹³² the head of the bureau, participated in public discussions about women's vocational training and trade union education (Figure 30, Table 9). She criticized the fact that trade unions' educational activities rarely took place at the shopfloor level and were often scheduled outside working hours. This greatly hampered women's participation in the trade union movement due to their family responsibilities. Besides their family responsibilities, Akdoğan stated, women were 'pressured by their husbands and other men family members not to join union activities'.¹³³

The 1970s also brought a renewed interest in our region of focus in elevating the educational status of rural women to increase their

chances of gainful employment. In Yugoslavia, rural women in the second half of the 1970s started to attend courses on tourism alongside professional agricultural and general education in response to the 'need to improve production and [instate] a more modern way of life and work'.¹³⁴ As the Slovenian communist politician Vida Tomšič (1913–98) wrote, educational activities in the field of tourism fostered 'greater activity of women in local communities and tourist associations'.¹³⁵ The goal of gearing rural women's education more strongly towards income generation was promoted by the ILO, which developed this view into a Programme on Rural Women (under the World Employment Programme) in 1976. In 1973, the State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı) in Turkey prepared a project proposal about the education of women in rural areas with a focus on women's rights, familial relations and home economics. Discussing the possible ILO support for the project, Elisabeth Johnstone (ILO Programme Co-ordinator for Women's, Young Workers' and Older Workers' Questions) noted that the proposal had a largely educational approach and too little emphasis on women's economic contribution. The ILO could instead help the government to 'train girls and women in the skills needed for work outside the home. This may include training in handicrafts in the villages where women are traditionally engaged in such work, with an emphasis on marketing, credit, quality control and co-operative questions'.¹³⁶

Complementing public discussions on women's education in the countries of our region was the research boom in state institutions and public universities on multiple aspects of women's work, including the dynamics of their persistent concentration in lower-skilled jobs. Compared to the previous studies on the relationship between women's education and status in gainful employment, the new research was larger in scale, had a longer-term perspective and offered more differentiated data based on variables such as age, civil status and urbanization level. It showed that women's higher-level skills training was beneficial in terms of the stability of the labour force in the economy, and it cultivated more egalitarian relationships in the family. A study from Hungary on the participation of different cohorts of women in paid work throughout their life demonstrated that the traditional view of the woman as the homemaker and the man as the breadwinner was more likely to change when women had higher qualifications, and this was more likely to be the case in younger cohorts.¹³⁷ However, against the historical background of women's mass entry into non-agricultural sectors as unskilled workers, gender segregation and gender stratification in the labour market solidified over the years. Jolanta Kulpińska's research

on the textile industry in Poland showed that women dominated the sectors and branches with lower skill grades and lower earnings over the years to such a degree that there emerged 'two different labour markets', one for men and one for women, with different principles of supply and demand.¹³⁸ As trade union women had been problematizing since the 1950s, equal access to vocational training – if achieved at all – did not mean equal representation across skill grades. Moreover, having higher-level skills did not protect women from sexist attitudes of male colleagues or superiors, nor did it eliminate discrimination in education. In Yugoslavia, survey results published in 1981 on women workers in production, administrative services and managerial positions showed that women had difficulty in continuing education regardless of their educational level. While those with higher education and higher personal income worked overtime and found no leisure time to pursue education, others with lower education and income levels spent more time performing domestic and familial chores because they had less access to services and other forms of help in the household.¹³⁹ All in all, the research boom in the long 1970s provided legitimate substantiation of what women labour activists had been pointing out for decades: namely, that women's education had to be considered from a holistic perspective and aimed at a genuine transformation in gender relations in the labour market and at home simultaneously – a transformation that would reverse the long-standing devaluation of women's work.

Trade union education at the end of the Cold War era

Expanding on the knowledge production and experiences of the 1970s, women's trade union education in the 1980s and early 1990s in the region was additionally shaped by the ongoing UN Women's Decade (1976–85) and the political and socioeconomic changes that brought the end of the (state) socialist regimes. Resolutions of the UN World Women's Conferences in 1980 and 1985 urged governments and UN agencies 'to give priority to training women in the economic, scientific and technological fields' and called for 'positive action' to close the gender gap in workplaces and institutions.¹⁴⁰ In dialogue with these resolutions, the updated ICFTU Charter of Rights of Working Women in 1985 included a call for special efforts to be made to train women in new technologies.¹⁴¹ In the 1980s, both the ICFTU and the WFTU continued seminars and conferences on women's problems in various sectors and engaged in stronger collaboration with their affiliated branch trade unions, International Trade Secretariats (ITS, in the case of the ICFTU)

and Trade Union Internationals (TUI, in the case of the WFTU) – a trend that had already started in the previous decade.¹⁴² Intensifying from the mid-1970s onwards, the WFTU's regional women's seminars maintained a strong focus on education (chapter 10, Table 9). In 1984, the WFTU Working Women's Commission organized a roundtable in Budapest on the consequences of introduction of new technology.¹⁴³

A novelty in our region in this period was the emergence of bilateral and international educational initiatives between women trade unionists from both sides of the (former) Iron Curtain. As mentioned in the [introductory chapter](#) of this book, starting in the mid-1980s and extending well into the 1990s, lower- and higher-level women functionaries from the Trade Union of Iron- and Metalworkers and Workers in the Electrical Industry (Vas-, Fém- és Villamosenergiaipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete) in Hungary and those from the ÖGB and the Metalworkers' Union (Gewerkschaft Metall, today Produktionsgewerkschaft, PRO-GE) in Austria met each year in Budapest or Vienna where they listened to presentations by experts on (women's) labour issues and engaged in detailed exchanges about each other's realities and experiences.¹⁴⁴

In hindsight, bilateral collaborations across the Iron Curtain in the 1980s such as the one between Hungarian and Austrian activists foreshadowed a new, western-oriented type of transregional interaction around women's trade union education. After the end of the Cold War ([Map 4](#)), cross-border initiatives mushroomed in the region, led by the ICFTU or western-aligned trade unions. The ICFTU was eager to become a leading actor in (re-)educating Eastern European workers into a world of 'free' trade unionism and, to this end, to build and collaborate with trade unions that had this outlook. This brought new opportunities for cross-border educational collaboration between women trade unionists. During the last decade of the state socialist period, the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity' (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy 'Solidarność', NSZZ) in Poland, which operated underground and through offices in Western Europe for most of the 1980s, had joint initiatives with the ICFTU on women-related topics.¹⁴⁵ After the end of state socialism, the ICFTU Women's Committee's first destination was unsurprisingly Poland, where a 1990 seminar on the Rights of Working Women brought together (western) members of the ICFTU Women's Committee and 45 women trade unionists from across Poland in the city of Gdańsk to identify the priority problems of working women and discuss women's position in trade unions. Later, the committee reported that the problems Polish women identified – such as occupational segregation and limited choice of jobs for young women – resembled

those faced by women in western countries. Regarding vocational training, participants highlighted the need for retraining for women returning to the labour force (after taking a break due to family responsibilities) and creating special training mechanisms for women to upgrade their qualifications.¹⁴⁶

In the years ahead, the ICFTU Women's Committee and women from (western) national trade unions represented in the committee continued organizing educational programmes for women in post-socialist countries such as Poland, Hungary, Romania and the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic, in collaboration with the newly established or revamped older trade unions in these countries. The focus of these events was the high-priority problems of working women and women's integration into trade unions. Despite the higher levels of schooling of young women compared to men, the educators noted, there was a 'significant mismatch between women's qualifications and career opportunities', girls were 'heavily under-represented' in training programmes for skilled jobs, and family responsibilities prevented women from receiving further training.¹⁴⁷ Noting women's deteriorating economic and social situation in the context of transition to a market economy, the ICFTU Women's Committee urged governments and trade unions to work towards maintaining the 'social benefits and infrastructure which allow women to reconcile work with family responsibilities'.¹⁴⁸ In the meantime, the ICFTU and its affiliates would assist trade unions in setting up women's committees and preparing basic and leadership training programmes for women trade unionists. With this, a next chapter in the region's history began, where a new cohort of women labour activists would grapple with problems in women's work-related education – those inherited from the (state) socialist era and the ones brought by the transitioning economies.

Conclusion

This chapter explored the politics of women's education by 'thinking-together' the different efforts targeting working women in the broad field of workers' education on national and international levels, with a focus on vocational training, political education and trade union education. A longitudinal and inclusive overview of key actors and their political projects and world views in the educational field on the one hand, and the efforts of women labour activists to improve their material conditions and social status on the other, demonstrated

that the politics of education has remained a significant and dynamic element of women's labour activism throughout the twentieth century. Education proved to be a constant agenda item in women's labour activism as well as the most important resource to enhance women's labour activism itself. Throughout the twentieth century, women workers widely realized that the marginal and discriminated status of women in the labour movement and at work could not be effectively changed without education. Tracing the evolution of women's agendas and repertoires around the politics of education, we identified major trends and turning points in the politics of women's education over a century.

Against the background of changing political contexts, economic policies, and labour and gender regimes, education has been an important, ongoing agenda item for women labour activists, governments and workers' organizations alike in the region and globally, making it an integral part of activists' struggles. Whereas in the late imperial and interwar periods the politics of work-related education was pursued mainly on the imperial and/or national level by trade unions and political parties with few international exchanges, the post-World War II period brought about an internationalization that resulted in much interaction between and co-construction of activism on national and international scales. After 1945, the variety of actors engaged in women's education dramatically increased as women's vocational training became a macro-economic goal across the Cold War divide. Governments' ambition to include women in paid work to achieve industrial development and economic growth created room for women labour activists to push their demands for full access to vocational training and women-specific educational activities in trade unions. This was the case especially in (state) socialist contexts where, by the 1970s, women were better educated than men in secondary schooling and their skill levels had significantly improved.¹⁴⁹ Yet, in both the socialist and capitalist contexts, women were over-represented in lower skill grades and lower-paid occupations, the cultural devaluation of women's work continued and women had lesser chances of promotion. Similarly, trade unions often failed to ensure women's equal participation in educational activities.

There have been two major barriers to working women's empowerment through education. One was the difficulty of creating time for participating in vocational (re)training, political education and trade union education to improve women's status in the world of work. Even when they started learning, women often dropped out of educational programmes simply because they could not afford

the time this required on top of their paid jobs and family responsibilities. The second was the sexist and discriminatory attitude of men who did not recognize women as equal partners at work, in the family and in decision-making processes. This not only impeded the appropriate representation of women's interests in workers' organizations but also hampered the higher remuneration of women's work and chances of promotion even when they had the necessary qualifications and skills. As a result, women remained seen as 'add-ons' in work-related education that was designed primarily for men and considered men's needs and interests.¹⁵⁰ Women labour activists' achievements in the field of work-related education notwithstanding, these two barriers have remained constant through the different political and economic regimes and historical shifts and ruptures experienced in the region.

Throughout the twentieth century, many actors and initiatives in the broad field of education targeted working(-class) women to improve their working and living conditions and to empower them vis-à-vis institutions of power ranging from the family to movement organizations and the state. Our focus in this chapter on vocational training, political education and trade union education has inevitably left other, cultural types of education underexplored, including, importantly, those related to self-realization such as arts, sports, literature and sexuality. Further research should investigate these aspects of working women's education and discuss if and how they had an impact on the types of education studied in this chapter and women's overall empowerment in the world of work dominated by men. Equally important would be for further research to identify via comparative analyses the similarities and differences between our region of focus and other areas of the world in terms of the major trends and turning points in the politics of women's education.

Notes

- 1 Ladányi, *Munkásnőkről – munkásnőknek*, 15.
- 2 Cobble, 'International Women's Trade Unionism', 155.
- 3 Briskin, 'Union Women and Separate Organizing', 92.
- 4 See, for example, Dunning, *Trade Unions and Vocational Training*; ILO, *Workers' Access to Education*.
- 5 Merrill and Schurman, 'Toward a General Theory and Global History', 5.
- 6 Education provided by the employer lies outside the scope of this chapter unless the employer is the state.
- 7 Purvis, 'Working-Class Women', 196.
- 8 Gaskell, 'Conceptions of Skill and the Work of Women', 13.

- 9 Armstrong, 'Puzzling Skills', 265; Gaskell, 'Conceptions of Skill and the Work of Women'; Phillips and Taylor, 'Sex and Skill'.
- 10 Some international actors involved in women's education in the region, such as the United Nations Development Programme and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, are excluded from this section due to their lesser significance for our overall analysis.
- 11 Ringer, *Education and Society*, 1–32.
- 12 'Veliké dny našeho sjezdu', 6.
- 13 K. K. Statistische Zentralkommission, *Österreichische Statistik*, 14, Heft 3, 290.
- 14 Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1913*, 257.
- 15 *Die Arbeits- und Lebensverhältnisse*, xiii.
- 16 Fr. B., 'Aus dem Leben'.
- 17 Szeréna Ladányi, 'Tanuljunk!', n.d., Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 69, 20–21, PIL.
- 18 Erdélyi, 'Experts in the Bureau', 203–4; Erdélyi, 'Women's Labour Activism'.
- 19 Appelt, 'Gendering of the Service'.
- 20 Mayer, 'Éducation professionnelle et genre'.
- 21 Névy, 'Kereskedelmi tanfolyam nők számára', 502.
- 22 Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1900*, 158; Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1910*, 158.
- 23 *Pesti Napló*, 'Nőtisztviselők a főváros ellen'.
- 24 'A leányok kereskedelmi szakoktatása'.
- 25 Schack, *A női kereskedelmi szakoktatás*, 2.
- 26 Gárdos, *A nő a történelem sodrában*, 136.
- 27 'Továbbképző tanfolyamaink'.
- 28 'A leányok kereskedelmi szakoktatása'.
- 29 Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1910*, 158; Magyar Kir. Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, *Magyar Statisztikai Évkönyv 1935*, 333.
- 30 'Organized Labour and Workers' Education', n.d., ED 5005/1/31, ILOA.
- 31 Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa, 'L'éducation ouvrière en Roumanie', 1932, ED 5005/1/52, ILOA.
- 32 Henryk Rigier, 'Institut de Formation et de Ré-éducation Professionnelles', n.d., ED 5005/1/50/1, ILOA; 'Pologne', 1934, ED 5005/1/50, ILOA.
- 33 Freundlich, 'Die erste Frauenschule'.
- 34 'A Szakszervezeti Tanács oktatásprogramja', n.d., ED 5005/1/31, ILOA.
- 35 Vlădescu-Răcoasa, 'L'éducation ouvrière'.
- 36 *Čtyřicet let výchovné práce*, 55, 58.
- 37 'Školy a kursy Dělnické Akademie'.
- 38 J. P., 'Podzimní práce vzdělávací a výchovná'.
- 39 *Bericht der Zentralgewerkschaftskommission 1928*, 198.
- 40 *Bericht der Zentralgewerkschaftskommission 1936*, 71.
- 41 'Odborová škola žen'.
- 42 'A központi vezetőség oktatásügyi bizottsága üléseinek jegyzőkönyvei', 1932, 1937, Magyarországi Vas- és Fémmunkások Központi Szövetsége, fond 672, archival unit 91, PIL.
- 43 Weiß, 'Die Gewinnung der Frauen'.
- 44 Sipos, 'A szakszervezetek a munkásművelődésért Magyarországon', 103.
- 45 Szeréna Ladányi, 'Előadásszázlat az MSZDP országos oktatási bizottságának alakuló ülésére', 8 July 1933, Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 39, PIL.
- 46 'Az MSZDP országos oktatási bizottságának és választmányának működési szabályzata, melléklete', n.d., Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 38, 1–12, PIL.
- 47 'A szociáldemokrata nők programja', n.d., Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 58, 1–4, PIL.
- 48 Szeréna Ladányi, 'A nőmozgalom szükségessége', n.d., Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 70, 18–29, PIL.
- 49 'Hogyan dolgozhat a munkásnő a szociáldemokrata párt kiépítésén. Utasítás és szabályzat a praktikus pártmunkára', October 1930, 3–4, Buchinger-Ladányi, fond 696, archival unit 60, PIL.

- 50 Ross, 'Bread and Roses'.
- 51 Böck, 'Abstrakte Menschen'.
- 52 Frydrychová, 'Žena a kultura'.
- 53 Feßler, 'Die Döblinger Frauenschulen'.
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Exit and action: migrant women workers, 1890s to 1980s

Introduction: the nexus of migration, mobility and activism

Embracing the relationship between individual agency and regimes of migration, defined as ‘policies, practices, and infrastructure designed to both foster and limit human movement’,¹ this chapter puts perspectives of women migrants from and to the region of focus centre stage and shows how diverse tactics and strategies of ‘exit’ and ‘voice’ have been part of their repertoires. By ‘exit’, we understand the wide range of individual and collective actions that relied on human mobility as a means of facing exploitative labour conditions, while we use ‘voice’ to refer to migrant women’s labour activism that aimed to change the status quo, outside and within trade unionism. Exploring the tensions between voice, which implies directly addressing the concerns, and exit as responses to deteriorating conditions has been a productive line of inquiry in the sociology of social movements.² Opting for exit, we argue, is often a reaction to marginalization within the labour movement. We conceptualize both exit and voice as parts of women’s labour activist repertoire to grasp the power relations underpinning labour activism. Participation in labour organizing – a “classic” modality of voice – has been, historically, a less accessible option for migrant workers for fear of expulsion from the receiving country or exclusion from trade unions, or because of the unwillingness of local activists to address migrant-specific issues. Women of lower-class backgrounds typically had limited possibilities – compared both to men and to more privileged women – for voicing their concerns through traditional labour organizing.³ Due to this threefold marginalization as women, workers and migrants,

individual and collective exit needs to be considered a characteristic part of women migrants' activist repertoire.⁴ Unlike most other instances of activism discussed in this book, the cases we investigate include not only collective but also individual activism. Seemingly isolated actions of individual migrants, we argue, could have significant consequences for the conditions of those who migrated after them.

Relying primarily on ego documents, oral histories and trade union sources that include printed and archival materials, we explore the nexus of labour, activism and mobility from two main points of view: from the perspective of the women on the move and from the trade union dealings with migrant women and labour migration. Focusing on migrant accounts helps us to step away from thinking about migration in terms of aggregates such as 'patterns', 'flows' or 'waves', and explore instead the individual and collective dynamics of mobility and labour activism. Trade union narratives stress the tensions that surrounded the struggle for labour rights of women migrants within the organized labour movement. The combination of these two perspectives results in the chapter – instead of offering a chronological structure – focusing on the conditions and modalities of migrant women's activism. First, we discuss women workers' strategies vis-à-vis migration regimes, which constituted the legal and socioeconomic context for their migratory and activist choices. In the second section, we address the ambivalence of trade unionists towards organizing migrant women workers and trace trade union discourses about these women, on both the national and international levels, as they shaped migrant women's relationships with organized labour. Finally, we discuss the cases of women migrant workers in and from the region who did act as labour organizers, and pinpoint the historical contexts that facilitated this activity.

Thanks to our focus on lower-class women migrating from and to the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires and their successor states from the 1890s to the 1980s, with a special focus on what nowadays is Austria and Poland ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)), we are able to contribute to the debates about repertoires of women's labour activism in two ways: first, through the reconceptualization of 'exits' as part of these repertoires; secondly, through exploring the specificities of migrant women's activism in the region that were shaped by the ambivalent if not openly hostile attitude of local labour unions. We seek to integrate their histories and activism into the historical literature that champions gender as a central category of analysis for migration studies.⁵ Existing scholarship has tended to focus on long-range migrations (including from our region) to Western Europe and especially the United States,

discussing migrant women as part of working-class neighbourhoods, family migration and gendered patterns of emigration.⁶ We aim to enrich the scholarship by exploring the understudied relationship in the region between labour migration and organized labour. Through this, we highlight the impact of mobility on labour activism, and decentre the idea of a stable and uniform group of 'working-class women' and their activism.

We adopt a 'mobility lens', initially elaborated by geographers and sociologists such as Mimi Sheller and John Urry, to look beyond labour migration as narrowly defined and analyse the role of human movement in labour activism.⁷ A mobility lens offers an inclusive interpretation of human movement, helping us to look beyond the transcultural and transnational migration that has been the focus of earlier histories of migration, and instead analyse shorter- and longer-range movements, as well as temporary and permanent relocations, together. It also 'highlights the relationship of movement, human agency, and power',⁸ allowing us to grasp the nuances of subordination and marginalization that are so relevant when researching historical varieties of women migrants' activism. This concept has profoundly reinvigorated recent historical research on migration.⁹ In this chapter, it has helped us to consider women workers' mobility as a terrain of struggle, and to maintain a focus on the tension-ridden relationship between the local labour unions and migrant workers. Combining this attention to mobility with Marcel van der Linden's reflections on exit as a crucial 'moment' characterizing coerced labour relations along with entry and labour extraction, we not only take into account diverse persistent historical forms of coercion that played a role in the (im)mobility of working women, but also discuss the ambivalent relationship between mobility and labour activism.¹⁰

Writing histories of migration is associated with distinct methodological challenges: actions of mobile, unstable, uprooted agents, as migrants often were, result in fragmented and non-linear histories that 'fall through the cracks' of official documents. At the same time, the history of (labour) migrants appears in documentation related to migration and border regimes, which pose their own set of dilemmas related to researchers' use of highly biased categorizations produced by state officials.¹¹ Personal files, interviews, visual sources, life stories, memoirs and migrants' accounts of their travel are among the sources that can help historians to integrate 'itinerant' perspectives in their analysis.¹² Following Nick Baron and Peter Gatrell, who coined the term, we consider the itinerant perspective 'a particularly appropriate

means of elucidating a period of history characterized by flux: massive population displacements, shifting territorial borders and cultural boundaries, and new political and social formations in the process of self-definition and delimitation'.¹³ While their theoretical reflection on integrating mobile populations was based on empirical work on refugees and forcibly displaced people in the Russian Empire and Soviet Union, these observations are not limited to forced migrations. Indeed, recent historical literature on human mobility and labour has convincingly demonstrated how pervasive, complex and multifaceted forms of coercion have been across time and space, and how urgent the need to study them is.¹⁴

Shifting borders and changing labour and political regimes have defined migratory experiences in the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire and their successor states from the 1890s to the 1980s. Even when migrants did not cross borders, they often moved across distinct cultural spheres.¹⁵ This is especially true for the age of multiethnic empires, but also for the later periods.¹⁶ Labour shortages and the post-World War II surge in industrialization made internal industrial migration an important issue in many countries across the region, including Austria and Turkey. Young women from Styria in Austria, for instance, went to the far west of the country to work in the textile industry.¹⁷ Improvements in transport infrastructure created possibilities for migration at an increased pace, as daily and weekly work commuting became an important phenomenon in the second half of the twentieth century. In state socialist Hungary, the pejoratively termed “black trains” were symbolic of the transportation of weekly commuters to Budapest, mostly bringing Romani workers to the factories of the capital.¹⁸ Technological development in communications also helped the migrants maintain contact across borders: many Yugoslav workers who went abroad as part of the ‘guest worker’ labour regime continued to have strong ties to family left behind and contributed financially to their livelihoods.¹⁹

Activism, and the political persecution that it often met with, further complicated the mobility trajectories of women migrants. The discrimination against and repression of activists on the basis of ethnic, national and/or religious belonging bring this chapter into dialogue with [chapter 7](#) in particular. But, as we discuss, activism not only could entail forced relocations and exile, but also could foster voluntary mobility, as women activists, especially from the lower classes, relied on networks of solidarity and political connections to facilitate their travels.

Challenging migration regimes: exit as part of the activist repertoire

For centuries, authorities attempted to regulate mobility across the region, using residency authorizations, social allowances, work permits and the like to control certain groups based on their ethnicity, place of origin or gender. Despite these attempts to limit, or at least manage, the movements of people, mobility was part of the biographical trajectory of many, and their livelihoods often depended on it. After the fall of the empires following World War I, some of the traditional internal seasonal or even longer-term labour migration routes became international and were partially blocked by newly introduced legislation protecting native-born workers.²⁰ But this also meant that those seeking to migrate often became creative: Bulgarian gardeners, for example, formed co-operatives in the interwar period in order to circumvent employment regulations, as the Austrian Migration Office (Wanderungsamt) had suspected.²¹ However, not only were migration routes blocked, but labour migration also changed its character altogether, as European states increasingly intervened in the placement of labour and the duration of employment contracts.²² Women, as we discuss below, confronted and made use of those labour migration regimes in a variety of ways. Before international regulations that restricted workers' mobility, there were established labour migration routes and local bureaucratic regulations that also shaped migration regimes. Looking at these regimes and state-managed labour migrations in the long twentieth century, we discuss migrant women's tactics and strategies in dealing with bureaucratic practices of border regimes and nation-states and explore their individual and collective activism vis-à-vis structural social and economic inequalities. The individual decisions (such as leaving oppressive working conditions) and actions (such as sending a petition) showcased in this section are an important part of migrant women's activism; they can 'create progressive change in the lives of women, their families, and their communities' and are a 'precursor to political action that transforms a community, develops a formal organization, or extends in scale to reach social networks beyond the initial embeddedness of the instigating activist'.²³

Migration, state control and agency: contesting failing categorizations

Migratory experience is characterized by frequent and often unwanted contacts with various state agencies. Mobile workers needed to navigate

and even challenge bureaucratic procedures. Official categorizations of mobile workers can have decisive and long-lasting consequences on people's lives, yet in historical studies they often prove flawed, fluid or simply unreliable, not to mention the fact that many border crossings were illegal and thus unrecorded or, in the more recent period, made using tourist or other short-term visas that do not grant work permits.²⁴

Officials that applied governmental categories to observe, manage and control the movements of non-citizens could fumble. In the nineteenth century, city clerks in Istanbul (Ottoman Empire, today Turkey), for example, registered the different places of origins of the population with no indication of how long ago immigration had taken place.²⁵ Company clerks and trade unionists in the Weimar Republic often simply subsumed migrant workers incorrectly as Germans.²⁶ Even the seemingly basic question of assessing the numbers of labour migrants becomes complicated when one takes into account the changing political landscape of Central and South-Eastern Europe and the different dynamic forms of inclusion and exclusion as well as racializing and ethnicizing constructions of the 'other'. Recovering reliable numbers regarding the gender of migrant workers is also a challenge, as they have not always been collected. Sometimes women, like children, were omitted altogether from records as dependants. Women and gender historians and sociologists alike have time and again stressed that the distinction of the category of 'migrant wives' misrepresents the fact that these wives were also often employed outside the home. The proportion of migrant women in gainful employment, for instance, was higher than it was among native-born women in Austria in the 1960s and 1970s (for an overview on economically active women in the region, 1950–1990, see [Table 7](#)).²⁷ Below, we further elaborate on this matter as well as on the question of individual and collective dynamics of migration and labour migration when discussing the case of the wives of Polish miners in France.

Perspectives of women migrants, especially those faced with extremely adverse domestic circumstances, could collide dramatically with the ways authorities tried to categorize and treat them. Historical research into trafficking in women has highlighted the diverse types of coercion women were subject to, but has also shown how women challenged the state-sponsored narratives of their mobility. Suspected or actual trafficking in women has emerged as the major issue related to forced gendered migration that authorities and activists across the region attempted to tackle from the late nineteenth century.²⁸

Driven by concerns for women's wellbeing but also biases and prejudices of the time, moral panic was often used to control women's

free movement.²⁹ Emigrant councillors (Auswanderungs-Fürsorger), for instance, were ostensibly charged with serving those coming to them in search of help, as one of them, Annie Ohlert, vividly described in an open letter directed at the impoverished Austrian middle class.³⁰ Yet they also had the function of maintaining control over the moral conduct of the young migrating women. Daily newspapers warned families with daughters willing to leave that emigration would have a depraving influence on young women's (sexual) moral behaviour.³¹ Labour women participated in this discourse as well: they formulated concerns about the dangers for travelling young women and suggested possible solutions. At the meeting of the International Council of Women (ICW) in Vienna in 1930, the Polish women's rights activist and politician Józefa Szebeko (1859–1945) urged the 'better safe-guarding of migrants, especially girl migrants, on railway journeys and at the continental places of destination' (Figure 15).³² In the journal of the Austrian Association of Home and Domestic Workers (*Vereinsblatt*) from 1920, German social democrat Anna Blos (1866–1933) warned young women against 'deciding to emigrate without an absolute certainty of what conditions await them abroad', as they had to be made aware of the dangers of the 'appalling fate of girls trafficked to brothels'.³³ And finally, around the same time, Marianne Beth (1889–1984), a Viennese women's rights activist and advocate, argued that European women migrating to Egypt for better working conditions often chose to rely on a Christian association for young girls rather than the state employment agency, as these could also offer 'protection against trafficking of girls'.³⁴

Some migrant women who were engaged in sex work opposed the role of passive victims commonly ascribed to them. Women from the poorest regions of the Habsburg Empire (Map 1) arrived at the sex market of *fin de siècle* Istanbul by forced as well as voluntary migration. The general impoverishment and utter lack of prospects in their area of origin, typically Galicia, and worsening of labour conditions at local tobacco factories prompted some to leave. One such woman, Sara Friedmann, addressed a petition to the Habsburg court. Friedmann was an adolescent who had left behind her widowed mother and five siblings; she started as a sex worker in various small Galician towns before making her way to Istanbul. There, she was eventually arrested and taken to the Habsburg consulate, where she was presented with a letter that she had allegedly written to her mother complaining about bad conditions in the capital of the Ottoman Empire. Friedmann claimed that this letter was forged by the trafficker who had brought her to Istanbul and who considered himself underpaid for his 'service'. She resolutely refused

to be repatriated and, after her extradition to her native Cieszanów (Cisleithania, today Poland), threatened to leave Galicia at the earliest opportunity and return to Istanbul.³⁵

Many troublesome trails: domestic service

Imperial centres such as Istanbul and Vienna attracted (seasonal) labour migrant men and women from surrounding territories as well as more distant parts of the empires.³⁶ One of the chief types of employment for women migrants from rural areas was domestic work – an occupational sector that was intrinsically connected to migration.³⁷ The employment biographies of domestic servants were rarely stable, as domestic service was often a ‘transitional occupation for young, unmarried women’,³⁸ even though this did not apply to all women engaged in this work. Among domestic servants in Vienna were many women who had migrated from other crownlands of the Habsburg Monarchy, especially Bohemia and Moravia, to work in the better-off households of the capital.³⁹ The numbers of domestic workers without Austrian citizenship sank rapidly in the 1920s, although due to the recurrent labour shortage for domestic service Czechoslovak and Yugoslav women continued to obtain permanent work permits relatively easily, even after the introduction of the Inland Worker’s Protection Act (*Inlandarbeiterschutzgesetz*) in 1925.⁴⁰

Trade unionists regarded labour organizing among these workers as a challenging task. Domestic servants ‘must also come to the realization that their situation can be improved only by a firmly established trade union organization’, an unnamed social democratic trade unionist lamented in 1921, stressing that they would now need to take up an ‘all the more difficult fight’ for a collective agreement in the absence of a strong organization.⁴¹ The difficulties of organizing were rooted in the frequent changes of employer, the constant threat of unemployment and the difficulty of accessing the private homes that were the servants’ workplace. Prior to World War I, unions of domestic workers in Vienna only managed to organize less than 10 per cent of the total labour force. These workers commonly used exit as a strategy of improving their individual working conditions, often instead of organizing: some chose simply to leave households in which they were treated badly, while others used the threat of exit to negotiate little freedoms.⁴²

In interwar Poland, domestic servants constituted one of the largest groups among women involved in paid labour.⁴³ As such, they attracted attention from trade unionists across the political spectrum, yet left-wing parties struggled with the strenuous grassroots activity that was required

to connect with domestic workers. Catholic organizations, on the other hand, had a long tradition of work among domestic workers, and also represented their interests, for instance, by lobbying at the Ministry of Work and Social Assistance (Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej) for a change in labour legislation pertaining to domestic work as early as 1918.⁴⁴ Similarly to Austria,⁴⁵ this involvement of Catholic organizations and laypeople with the issues of domestic workers had a clear cross-class dimension (chapter 9). It was commonly imbued with preoccupation with the 'morality' of young women, but also relied on the religiosity shared by the domestic servants and their employers, sidelining the labour rights infringements many servants were confronted with, such as the absence of paid leave and sick leave, lack of pension, irregular and excessive working times, and limitation on the freedom of movement.⁴⁶ Many of these issues stemmed directly from the live-in arrangements that were common among young women migrating to urban areas for domestic work. As other examples discussed below show, live-in arrangements were also common for recent migrants in both factory (see also chapter 7) and agricultural labour, and often exacerbated women's labour conditions, as they effectively locked women in between the workplace and the living quarters provided and controlled by the employer, also making their position somewhat hidden and less susceptible to any outside intervention, such as labour inspection (for more on inspection, see chapter 9). Like many of the early workers' associations in particular, the associations for domestic servants of various political and religious orientations in Poland and Austria (and other countries) (Figure 4) addressed a variety of agendas. They were not only concerned with the difficult live-in arrangements (including abuse and harassment), but also with health and old-age insurance and other related issues.

Job placement was another area of activism for associations of domestic workers. As job placement increasingly became a public affair, workers' representatives continued to be involved in it.⁴⁷ A job as a domestic servant abroad was a migration route (often informal) taken by many young women, especially in times of economic crisis in the late 1920s and 1930s, or when women workers were considered surplus after World War II.⁴⁸ This was such a common practice that the possibility of emigration was taken into consideration by labour representatives, for example in the Vienna Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer) when discussing vocational training (chapter 5) for young girls.⁴⁹ This well-established migration route would eventually serve as a lifeline. At the beginning of National Socialist rule, some Jewish women from Austria were able to escape the country via the 'domestic-servant emigration' route.⁵⁰

Navigating state-managed migration regimes

Governments started introducing state-run migration programmes and negotiated bilateral agreements in an attempt to manage the surging migration since the late nineteenth century, which led to the emergence of ‘a system of enforced mobility designed to keep foreign workers permanently temporary’.⁵¹ Since such workers were typically tied to a foreign employer, these programmes created a group of migrant workers who were particularly vulnerable to overexploitation, as their possibility of exit was severely limited. Sometimes the only possible exit for workers disappointed by working conditions was not to renew their contracts and to return to their countries of origin, or leave before the end of the contract, facing an arduous journey home, which they would have to pay for themselves.⁵²

One example of such a state-managed migration regime was the agreements between Poland and France in the interwar period. As Poland regained its independence in 1918, the struggles surrounding rebuilding the country’s economy pushed many to emigrate. French authorities, faced with shortages of local labourers, eagerly recruited foreign workers into mining, agriculture and the textile industry, and France became one of the main destinations for Polish emigrants. Both in agriculture and in the textile industry, single women constituted the majority of women migrants.⁵³

In agriculture, Polish young women were often employed to perform work traditionally allocated to men, but, as women, were paid significantly less for the same tasks.⁵⁴ As single women, they faced extreme isolation at secluded farms in the countryside – another example of the live-in arrangements that exacerbated economic and sexual exploitation. A lack of knowledge of French precluded them from escaping these dangerous situations. In some regions, for example Indre-et-Loire, the French government set up committees for the aid and protection of immigrant women. Julie Duval was a Polish-speaking inspector in one such committee; in 1934 alone, she received hundreds of letters from Polish women, reporting physical and sexual abuse and unfair working conditions. A letter from a young woman called Weronika, writing on behalf of her sister, highlights such gender-specific exploitation. Weronika and her sister Józefa worked at farms close to each other and went to the same church. While Weronika’s conditions were adequate, Józefa was violently attacked both by the owner of the farm and by other workers. When she fought back during an attempted rape, she was badly beaten and locked up, then forced to work again, which pushed her to

the brink of suicide. Weronika, citing other unsuccessful attempts to save her sister, identified Duval as the only person who could intervene with the authorities on Józefa's behalf. Whether, and how, Duval helped the sisters is unknown.⁵⁵ A single such letter might appear insignificant, but it had the potential to improve the conditions of a single migrant and eventually, by creating a precedent, the circumstances of future migrating workers. The sheer volume of letters to Julie Duval suggests not only an abundance of irregularities in the labour conditions of these women migrants, but also their readiness to use available bureaucratic procedures to report, and potentially improve, these issues.

Creation of committees like the one Duval was part of can serve as an example of young unmarried women being singled out into a separate category as in need of particular assistance, but migrating married women also faced, and addressed, labour-related issues. For instance, women constituted up to 40 per cent of the Polish mining communities in the north of France. They were typically wives (and, consequently, often widows) of miners and among the most disadvantaged groups during this period, due to their threefold marginalization as women, workers and immigrants.⁵⁶ Few of these women had the chance to stay in France indefinitely: entering the country as part of a family, they were typically not granted a work permit of their own. For their husbands, the workplace was an environment where they could learn at least some of the local language; the wives did not have this opportunity. Due to this disadvantage, and likely because of local xenophobia as well, these women often remained fully anchored in the local migrant community.⁵⁷ Building their community, through religious practice and grassroots associations, was not only a matter of nostalgia or lack of integration: in hard times, community-focused activism could become a tool of survival for the family.

The memoir of a miner's wife who emigrated to Nord-Pas-de-Calais, prepared in 1936 for a competition of migrants' memoirs, offers a glimpse into how social ties could constitute a safety net for struggling families. After giving birth to her third child at the age of 25, the author returned to her household duties too early and instantly fell severely ill. Her husband was unable to work in the mine and run the household at the same time, and during the long six months that she needed to recover her children were placed in the care of other Polish and Czech families in the miners' colony.⁵⁸ Echoing these interwar experiences, migrant women from Yugoslavia in Austria in the 1970s highlighted in their interviews the importance of mutual help and informal solidarity.⁵⁹

The case of Polish labour migration to France points to the emergence during the interwar period of a form of an 'international

labour market', in which states formalized and thus attempted to control the currents of labour migration in Europe and beyond.⁶⁰ Even though migration was not a core early focus of the International Labour Organization (ILO), it quite quickly sought to regulate national migration policies and ensure the protection of labour rights of migrants.⁶¹ In the preparation of its instruments, the ILO also created a section dedicated to 'unemployment and migration' which collected and circulated information about migrant workers and their conditions.⁶² The National Socialist regime tightened control over migrants and often used forced labour, disrupting this international labour market.⁶³ Nevertheless, states across Europe once again relied on recruiting foreign workers for their recovering economies in the aftermath of World War II.⁶⁴ The 'guest worker regime' recruited workers from countries such as Yugoslavia, Turkey and Spain to support the booming postwar economies of Western Europe – and will be discussed in more detail in the next section. State socialist countries also created a specific labour migration regime that included labour exchanges (Figure 26) – mutual agreements between state socialist countries and agreements with non-European socialist-leaning countries such as Vietnam and Cuba.⁶⁵ While the Iron Curtain did shape migration trajectories, its disruptive impact did not entirely preclude cross-border movement, as works on the Polish People's Republic and Czechoslovakia have shown.⁶⁶

Certain political and economic constellations enabled women workers participating in such exchanges to acquire substantial room for manoeuvre in their working environments, as a case of women migrant workers from Poland to Czechoslovakia highlights.⁶⁷ Although groups of women had been coming to Czechoslovakia for short stints to work at textile, confectionery and agricultural factories since the 1960s, in the 1970s their position changed. On the one hand, the receiving country, faced with labour shortages, was eager to keep them and demonstrated 'undue tolerance' towards infringements of working discipline that had previously led to workers' dismissal and forced return to Poland. And, on the other hand, Poland itself, increasingly in need of workers domestically, stopped sending women workers to Czechoslovakia. As Ondřej Klípa has shown, profiting from the competition of the two countries, women workers elaborated a wide array of subtle and less subtle practices to escape the pressures of production that we consider as variations of exit: they took prolonged smoking breaks, used extended sick leaves to shop for wares that were in deficit back in their homeland, and established whole chains of trafficking of consumer goods across the border.⁶⁸ Mobility offered these Polish women the chance to partake

in the informal economy, and they pushed the boundaries of labour discipline and partially evaded the official paid industrial labour to profit from their position in more economically rewarding ways.

Migrant women and organized labour across the scale: an uneasy relationship

From the 1920s onwards, trade unions were increasingly becoming relevant partners in policymaking on the national level. The ILO relied on a tripartite structure that included the representatives of governments, employers and workers in the negotiation of labour standards, thus also formalizing the role of trade unions on the international level.⁶⁹ In turn, trade unions relied on international exchange as an integral part of their response to labour migration and tensions arising from it.⁷⁰ The key players were the International Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU) in the interwar period, and the western-aligned International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and the communist-aligned World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) in the period after World War II (chapter 2, chapter 10). Their role in regulating (women's) labour migration remains understudied.

Among the participants in the 1919 First International Congress of Working Women (ICWW) in Washington, DC, women from Eastern and Central Europe constituted a sizeable group (Table 6). They took part in formulating the far-reaching and ambitious agendas of the congress.⁷¹ The congress urged the International Labour Conference to establish international provisions that would ensure 'equal rights for foreign and native born workers' and equal access to local social welfare systems for foreign workers and their families.⁷² The Polish delegation in particular stressed the importance of regulating migration and ensuring the wellbeing of migrant workers: 'Poland, and not America, is the country which is most interested in some kind of a regulation of the immigration and emigration question', stated a Polish delegate Feliksa Konopska (1887–1975).⁷³ Indeed, she refused on behalf of the Polish delegation to vote on the resolution pertaining to unemployment without a resolution being adopted on matters of emigration as well. Although labour women like the participants of the ICWW were aware of the migrants' plight, trade unions often remained reluctant to promote migrant-specific agendas.

Trade unions in countries and localities experiencing immigration faced specific challenges and often opted for exclusionary tactics, such

as the Bulgarian Tobacco Workers' Trade Union (Tiutiunorabotnicheski suiuz/Тютюноработнически съюз), which listed among its accomplishments that it had pushed successfully for legal regulation against foreign workers at a congress in 1937.⁷⁴ Scholarship has identified three clusters of 'trade union dilemmas' in dealings with labour migration and migrant workers. First, trade unions are confronted with the need eventually to co-operate with employers and the state to mitigate the perceived threats to the local workforce associated with incoming migrant workers. Secondly, trade unions have to come up with a strategy of how to include labour migrants in their organizational structures (that is, as full members or members with reduced rights). Finally, the question arises whether trade unions should push for measures targeting specifically migrant workers or treat them completely equally to local workers.⁷⁵ The cases discussed below showcase how women migrant workers featured in international debates on the regulation of migration, and how trade unionists in the region faced these dilemmas.

Safeguarding 'vulnerable women': international policymaking

Trade union organizations addressed the increasing number of bilateral agreements in the 1920s in their national and international policymaking. At an IFTU conference in September 1924 in Prague, participants paid special attention to questions such as the trade union organizing of arriving workers, international co-operation between trade unions from sending and hosting countries, and special bodies within trade unions dedicated to 'safeguarding the rights of immigrant workers'.⁷⁶ But they also stressed the necessity of protecting the rights of native-born workers and of co-operation between national governments and trade union organizations regarding the regulation of migration.⁷⁷ Women and their possible specific concerns were, as far as we can tell, nearly absent from the immigration discourse of international organizations and the (national) trade union press, at least in countries such as Austria.⁷⁸ Yet, women emigrated in large numbers: in 1927, for instance, they accounted for around 31 per cent of all emigrants from Austria.⁷⁹

By contrast, international women's organizations did engage with the topic in quite a substantial manner, focusing on the vulnerability of migrating women. The ICW, for instance, had not only an Equal Moral Standard and Traffic in Women Standing Committee, but also another one on Emigration and Immigration (from 1930 onwards called the Migration Committee). Women from countries in our region including Austria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Poland were members of these

committees, such as the aforementioned Józefa Szebeko. The ICW was a relevant partner in international politics, and Scottish geologist and women's rights activist Maria Ogilvie Gordon (1864–1939), temporary convener of the Migration Committee, became a member of the ILO panel of experts on the issue.⁸⁰ At a congress in 1930 in Vienna, the delegates discussed several different aspects of effects on women of (temporary) labour migration, such as the payment of alimony.⁸¹ In line with the positions of organizations discussed above, the ICW demanded the creation of housing for unemployed migrant women, the hiring of women officials in consulates to assist female migrants and their children, and an international health insurance scheme that would allow migrants to continue payments they had made in their country of origin.⁸²

Although the special vulnerability of (young) women in the international labour market was discussed in the 1920s and 1930s, these debates were only marginally present in the ILO.⁸³ In a landmark publication on women's labour, however, the ILO made special note of the case of Polish women in France, underlining their character as a 'special category' and remarking on the efforts to protect their welfare as 'the French Government appointed, in some twenty Departments where large numbers of foreign agricultural workers were employed, special inspectorates to supervise the working and living conditions of women immigrants employed in agriculture, and these duties were entrusted to women'.⁸⁴ The Polish government closely monitored the numbers of outgoing and returning migrants, creating a special Emigration Office (Urząd Emigracyjny) within its Ministry of Work and Social Assistance as early as 1920,⁸⁵ but its ability to influence the condition of migrants on foreign soil was limited. Mistreatment of Polish women in France, discussed in detail above, caused a stir in international circles and prompted national responses: the French government organized local committees like the one Julie Duval was part of, while the Polish Emigration Office, in line with the suggestions of the ICW, hired women officials – 'conductresses' – to facilitate migrants' transit by ship and rail and inform them where they could seek help in France.⁸⁶

In the later period, women migrants were also mainly addressed by the ILO as being threatened by sex trafficking or part of (transnational) families of men workers.⁸⁷ During the first post-World War II decades, this was not to change in essence. Only in the 1970s, in the conjuncture defined by an economic crisis and a simultaneous peak of the Western European temporary labour migration regime, did trade unions address the condition of women migrants in a more comprehensive manner.

This brought about knowledge production on the living and working circumstances of these women, offering rare first-hand accounts of migration. A sociological study from 1974 published, together with 19 other short biographies of migrants, the story of a 40-year-old peasant woman from a village in Serbia. She gave an account of her reasons for choosing to work in a hospital in Austria:

I was constantly working as a day labourer, and my husband drank a lot. We often argued, [and] he beat me. I couldn't stand such a life any more. I asked about a job abroad, argued with my husband and left. When he saw that I was making good money, he relented. I did all this for the sake of the children, so they would not later say that their father spent everything on drink.⁸⁸

This woman was part of the 'massive exodus to work abroad'⁸⁹ from Yugoslavia (Map 3). Among 672,000 Yugoslav citizens abroad, 210,000 were women, a particularly vulnerable group of workers, as communist politician and former partisan fighter Vida Tomšič (1913–98) stressed in the newsletter *Women at Work*, published by the ILO in 1981: on average, migrant women labourers were younger than their male counterparts and faced specific challenges related to motherhood.⁹⁰

This emigration of predominantly rural populations observed in the late 1960s and 1970s in Yugoslavia was part of a wider intensification of cross-border migration that led to a deluge of sociological, political and trade union responses.⁹¹ After the discontinuation of labour recruitment agreements at the beginning of the 1970s, Austria and other countries enforced more restrictive policies towards the migrant workforce. In turn, the ILO adopted the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention C143 (1975) and the Migrant Workers Recommendation R151 (1975); the Council of Europe agreed on a convention in 1977. The ICFTU adopted a Charter on Migrant Workers in 1974. The Joint International Trade Secretariats/International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ITS/ICFTU) Consultative Committee for Women Workers (ICFTU Women's Committee) proposed an amendment to this Charter, which was later accepted at the ICFTU Conference on Migrant and Stateless Workers.⁹² In a rather tongue-in-cheek remark on women's equal rights, they wished to 'add after "migrant workers" the words "men and women"' and explained:

It may seem superfluous to indicate that when the term 'migrant workers' is used, it means women as well as men. However,

experience has shown that when employment – and particularly the right to employment – is concerned, the traditional tendency to give priority to men still prevails too often in practice.⁹³

In addition, the committee adopted a resolution on women migrant workers which stressed the goal of achieving equal opportunities and rights, but also acknowledged that women migrant workers faced double discrimination as women and as migrants. Thus, so the resolution ‘reaffirm[ed]’, trade unions would ‘fight at all levels for the elimination of discrimination against women’.⁹⁴ While agreements to promote the rights of migrant workers as well as (working) women were advanced at the international level in the 1960s,⁹⁵ an increased awareness of the differences between groups of women became prominent only in the late 1970s and early 1980s.⁹⁶ Migrant women were constructed as a subcategory in the discourse and practice of the ILO. This can be compared to the emergence, at the same time, of another ‘other of the woman worker’ – women in the Global South. Historian Eileen Boris has shown that ‘women in developing countries’ have been included in ILO policymaking as a subcategory within the organization’s category of ‘woman worker’ – a category that had initially been constructed based on the condition of women from industrialized countries as the default.⁹⁷ In a way comparable to the rising discourse of development and disadvantages of women in the Global South, the discussions surrounding migrant women in international policy-making continued to be formulated in a language of difference that defined them as ‘most disadvantaged’⁹⁸ and ‘vulnerable women’⁹⁹ or as a ‘special category of women workers’.¹⁰⁰ In other words, policymakers instantly addressed the situation of these women as deficient, instead of attempting to understand their position in its full complexity and specificity.

Pushed to the margins: labour unions as gatekeepers

Despite international commitments to fight discrimination against (women) migrant workers, trade union discourses and practices at the local level were often paternalistic and sexist.¹⁰¹ A Programme in Favour of Women Workers adopted by the ICFTU women in a Seminar on Women Workers’ Problems in Gmund/Tegernsee in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1963 criticized this attitude of trade unions in ‘certain industrialised countries’:

In some cases insufficient attention is given to [women migrant workers] in relation to trade union activities and trade union

education. Such workers in these countries should be helped to become a part of the appropriate trade union which caters for their employment. If and when they return to the country of their birth they will take back with them a rewarding and satisfying recollection of their host country.¹⁰²

Although Austria was not directly addressed, an analysis of Austrian trade unionists' dealings with migrant women workers shows that this criticism applied to them. In a large majority and across almost all political affiliations, workers' representatives in Austria first expressed opposition to the recruitment of workers from abroad and then reservations against including migrants as union members with equal rights. In 1955, years before Austria joined other Western European countries in establishing a 'guest worker programme', women trade unionists from Vorarlberg, a region dominated by the textile industry, protested the hiring of foreign women (*Fremdarbeiterinnen*).¹⁰³ After the establishment of the agreements, the leading Vorarlberg social democratic unionist, Lotte Eß (1926–2021), for instance, continuously campaigned to reduce the number of migrant workers. She even argued that the 'guest worker problem' was one of the leading issues of women workers to be tackled by trade unions.¹⁰⁴ Grete Rehor (1910–87), another leading textile trade unionist, but a member of the conservative Austrian People's Party (*Österreichische Volkspartei*), and Minister of Social Affairs between 1966 and 1970, strove to restrict the legal framework for migrant workers. In this capacity, she successfully advocated for stricter control over the allocation of family allowances to migrant workers and limitation of their access to these payments.¹⁰⁵

While trade unions and chambers of labour expanded institutional support for (women) migrant workers in the 1960s and 1970s (including counselling services and informational publications in Turkish and Serbo-Croatian), they did not opt to include labour migrants as equal members, thus mirroring public sentiment. Non-nationals in Austria were not allowed to run for election to works councils until 2002, in contrast to the Federal Republic of Germany where this was possible from 1972 onwards.¹⁰⁶ The right of migrant workers to run for office representing the interests of workers as a group was part of the aforementioned ILO Convention C143 and Recommendation R151. Austrian trade union officials strongly opposed this right to run for official positions within the labour movement in the 1970s.¹⁰⁷ While in the 1970s and 1980s some (mainly men) migrant workers were thus only selectively included as 'guest worker spokespersons' or members of 'guest worker committees', women labour migrants

had even less of a voice. This double marginalization in the labour movement in the context of the structural racism of the migration regimes in Austria reduced spaces for migrant women's activism significantly.¹⁰⁸

Many women workers chose (or were forced) to organize separately. The Federation of Turkish Women in Europe (Avrupa Türkiye Kadınlar Federasyonu, ATKF), founded by women workers' organizations in various places in Europe on the occasion of the 1975 International Women's Year, is an example of effective organizing outside traditional trade union organizations and/or political parties. As a Europe-wide organization, its aim was to challenge similar problems over several countries together. The ATKF had several member organizations in countries that had established recruitment agreements with Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s, among them Belgium, Germany and the UK.¹⁰⁹ Their bulletin *Woman Labourer (Emekçi Kadın)* included news related to women's labouring conditions and the discrimination Turkish women faced, but also to their labour-related action. Part of the broader ATKF network of left feminist (migrant) organizations was the Women's Union Ruhr-Gelsenkirchen (Gelsenkirchen Kadınlar Birliği), which published information in German and Turkish, offered educational courses for migrant women¹¹⁰ and attended demonstrations organized by the German Trade Union Confederation (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB). One such demonstration, held on 8 November 1975 in Dortmund,¹¹¹ opposed rising unemployment, a consequence of the economic crisis that hit migrant workers especially hard.¹¹²

The Ruhr area was a major mining and industrial region in Germany, and many of the women (migrant) workers organized as women and as labour activists alike.¹¹³ At several significant strikes at the Pierburg Ford plant, Yugoslav and Greek women were at the forefront of fighting for equal pay (Figure 25), as many migrant women worked in men-dominated heavy manual jobs, in contrast to German women workers. The management called the police in to repress the strikes: Greek worker Elefteria Marmela resisted her arrest during strike action in August 1973 and was injured by the police. The strike wave put equal pay and the different categories of wages in the newspaper headlines in the mainstream and feminist press in West Germany. Historian Jennifer Miller has stressed that the newspaper coverage of the 1970s used the example of the women's strikes at Pierburg to showcase the emancipatory effect of labour migration – a narrative that was widely used by contemporary sociologists – when, in actuality, it could alternatively be interpreted as an emancipatory effect brought about by migrant women themselves.¹¹⁴

Migrant women raising their voice

Across different contexts, women migrating faced a whole set of gender-specific threats, ranging from sexualized violence to being forced to remain in post because the job included accommodation, so that they could not leave an unsafe situation without losing a place to live. Migrant women who arrived as dependants in host countries were often forced to work illegally, in informal and badly paid jobs as domestic servants or cleaners, or in sweatshops.¹¹⁵ The textile and garment industries especially relied on the underpaid and/or semi-legal labour of migrant workers, be they young unmarried women from the countryside or transcontinental migrants. Some of the best-researched cases of migrant women's labour activism are the instances when women used their voice directly, deployed "classical" forms of labour protest such as strikes and were active within the organized labour movement. [Chapter 2](#) discusses in detail the hurdles that women workers in general faced in labour organizing, such as lack of resources, including time, or lack of access to relevant skills and networks. For women migrants, these hurdles could be even higher, as they faced marginalization based on both gender and migratory background.

The transatlantic mass migrations and a new generation of radical labour activists

In the mass transatlantic migration of lower-class populations to the United States, women had changed from being a minority to majority by 1930.¹¹⁶ Among other ethnic groups from Western, Northern and Eastern Europe, hundreds of thousands of Jewish people made their way to North and South America, seeking to escape the unbearable political and economic conditions in the Russian Empire. Jewish women represent a particular case because of their (at the time) atypically high levels of economic activity. Economic discrimination in the Pale of Settlement drove many to the labour market, leading them to play a crucial role in supporting their families as industrial workers, artisans, traders, or managers of family businesses and workshops.¹¹⁷ At the turn of the century, it has been estimated that women constituted around 28 per cent of all workers in the Jewish population in the Pale. At the same time, as Susan Glenn has underlined, women's economic activity did not help them to leave the subordinate position in their communities when it came to political, religious or civic matters.¹¹⁸ Yet on the level of the family, a woman's 'entry into the cycle of labour made her a full

partner in the family's deliberation on whether to leave the country of origin or to remain there'.¹¹⁹

One of the best-studied cases of women's transnational migration and labour activism is Jewish women from the territories of the Russian Empire migrating to the United States. Many of them built successful trade union careers. Rose Schneiderman (1882–1972), Pauline Newman (1887–1986), Fannia Cohn (1885–1962), Clara Lemlich Shavelson (1886–1982) and Rose Pesotta (1896–1965) all became prominent activists in the early labour and working-class feminist movements there. Jewish immigrant women to the United States generally already had experience of urban life and wage labour, and had to take up jobs, often at an extremely young age, in the sweatshops of New York City and other industrial centres to support their families. Employment and the possibilities of leisure and life outside the traditional family framework fostered the autonomy of these young women, and ghastly working conditions often contributed to their politicization. They became drivers of multifaceted grassroots collective action that included everyday-focused activism such as organizing workers' and tenants' strikes (chapter 8), boycotts and community-building, but also emerged as activists for the rights of women.¹²⁰ Some of them, like Pesotta and Schneiderman, built careers within men-dominated trade unions. A prolific historiography has investigated how these women's transnational histories shaped their activism.¹²¹

Ernestine Hara Kettler (1896–1978) belonged to that same generation of Jewish women migrants from Eastern Europe. Although she is best known for her activism in the suffragist movement, her interviews shed light on her multifaceted labour activism as well. She also touched upon the activist and migrant experience of her mother, thus allowing us to tentatively draw some intergenerational connections. Hara Kettler was born in Craiova (Kingdom of Romania, today Romania) into a family of anarchist parents who had renounced Judaism: 'My father was an anarchist', she noted, '[a]nd my mother was whatever my father was.'¹²² Her mother, Mali Eliescu Hara, emigrated with four children after the death of her father and arrived in New York City in 1907. Although her mother did not engage in political activity in the United States, the family's anarchist background did play a role in Ernestine Hara Kettler's precocious interest in labour activism. To provide for a family of five, her mother found a job in a sweatshop making hats, which also became Hara Kettler's first place of employment during the school summer holidays, when she was around 16. She was forced to quit this job after having suggested to her complaining colleagues that they needed to join a union in order to improve their labour conditions.¹²³

Hara Kettler's early activism was marked by the focus on fighting for women's voting rights. She became member of the National Woman's Party, picketed the White House in 1917 and was subsequently arrested. Faced with deplorable conditions during incarceration, the imprisoned suffragists, Hara Kettler among them, decided to assert their status of political prisoners by refusing to work for the duration of imprisonment, and eventually other women inmates also stopped working.¹²⁴ This anecdote stresses the importance of exit as part of the activist repertoire under coercive conditions: even in extreme circumstances in prison, women were able to challenge the status quo. A migrant background could be used tactically: when her mother visited Hara Kettler in jail, the two switched to speaking in Romanian to communicate privately, although both were fluent in English.¹²⁵

The activist networks Ernestine Hara Kettler was part of fostered and facilitated her mobility within the United States long before she became a member of the Socialist Party of America in 1940:¹²⁶ for example, she was able to stay with a socialist family after moving to Everett, Washington, in 1918.¹²⁷ More generally, the importance of sociability, informal networks and hospitality for sustaining activism runs as a red thread throughout her interviews.¹²⁸ In Hara Kettler's case, mobility and multi-movement activism were tightly interconnected: throughout the 1920s and 1930s, she maintained her itinerant trajectory and her interest in feminism, socialism and in particular the work of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW). Hara Kettler eventually fully pivoted to trade union activism and, after moving to California in 1948, worked as a secretary for the IWW's Los Angeles and San Francisco chapters for nearly twenty years.¹²⁹

Women labour activists organizing multiethnic workforces

On the day after the annual May Day celebration in 1893, a 17-year-old worker from a Viennese Czech family stood up during a snack break in one of the large textile factories in Vienna to address her colleagues. If only they were better organized, Amalie Ryba (later Seidl) (1876–1952) reasoned, they could improve their circumstances and maybe successfully fight for a 10-hour working day.¹³⁰ At the end of the day, she was fired by the factory director, triggering what would become one of the first major women-only strikes in the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy and propelling Seidl to become a leader of the Austrian labour movement and the Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP). In a short commemorative

text twenty years later, she recalled the moment when the numerous textile workers left the factory: 'And just as the women workers walked and stood, barefoot, braving the great heat that prevailed in the workrooms, only half dressed, clothes on their arms, baskets with the meagre lunch or coffee pots in their hands, did they all leave the factory.'¹³¹ As Seidl described, the women were barefoot and minimally dressed because they had to work under great heat – up to 40 to 50 degrees Celsius – for long hours without proper payment or time to eat.¹³² The strike of the textile workers in Vienna lasted several weeks and ended successfully. Many of the approximately 700 striking women, predominantly of Czech origin, were unorganized prior to this labour action. They or their families had come to Vienna from the rural areas of south Moravia and Bohemia to work in domestic service, construction or the textile industry.¹³³ Nevertheless, only one of the speeches on the strike rallies was given in Czech. It was another young woman worker, whose first name is unknown, who talked to the assembled strikers: 'Comrade Wiledal' called for the workers to not be divided by confessional or linguistic differences (see also [chapter 7](#)). Many of the women present cheered and shouted 'výborně' (bravo).¹³⁴

The strike of the women textile workers in Vienna formed part of a wave of strikes in the Habsburg Monarchy in the 1890s and 1900s that were significantly shaped by (often non-unionized) labour migrants in the protesting workforce, many of them women ([Figure 3](#)).¹³⁵ Nevertheless, as historians have shown, engagement in trade unionism looked very different depending on the local context. While Helmut Konrad ascertains that Czech workers were generally well organized in some of the predominantly German areas of the Habsburg Monarchy (without giving any information on the gendered composition),¹³⁶ Reinhard Mittersteiner noted that Italian migrant workers in the western part of Austria, Vorarlberg, participated in strike action but were not members of labour unions.¹³⁷ The striking women textile workers in 1893 were part of a pattern of mass migration from Bohemian and Moravian lands to the imperial capital that also proved to be temporary for many of them. Rural–urban migration at the turn of the century was characterized by a constant 'back-and-forth'; the 'cities and countryside were linked in a relationship of exchange'.¹³⁸ Some of the women trade unionists involved in the textile workers' strike movement later lamented that the success of the strike did not translate into continuous union organization of the women who had participated. One reason for this can, of course, also be found in this hypermobility of migrants. Nevertheless, the 1890s saw a surge in labour organizing among women

(chapter 2, chapter 4), and other labour migrant women joined Amalie Seidl in the emerging social democratic trade union movement: Gabriele Proft (1879–1971) (Table 5) was one of them. Born in Opava (Troppau, Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia), a town in Austrian Silesia with a German-speaking majority, Proft went to Vienna to work as a domestic servant and textile worker. In 1902, aged only 23 years, she was among the founding members of a trade union for home-based workers, mainly seamstresses.¹³⁹

The Viennese case was not unique: a large part of the industrial labour force in Central and Eastern European cities and industrial centres at the end of the nineteenth century consisted of migrant women, who often came from the rural hinterlands of the large cities, but had sometimes travelled long distances in search of work.¹⁴⁰ In interwar Bulgaria as well, migrant women organized in the face of appalling working conditions, as an autobiographical account of labour activist Mitka Grubcheva (1916–93) demonstrates. Born into a poor peasant family, Grubcheva had to start working as a brickmaker at the age of 11. She was eager to be recruited into a textile factory, but her father prohibited this as, typically for the time, he saw migration and factory work as a threat to her morals. Nonetheless, she ran away, reasoning that ‘as bad as it could be there [in the city], it cannot be worse than home’.¹⁴¹ When she found employment at the Platno factory in Sofia, where young migrant women like her were provided with accommodation in addition to wages, she found herself trapped in an exploitative situation she could not have anticipated. Live-in arrangements meant that the workers were utterly dependent on the employer. In her memoirs, Grubcheva reported that low pay and unpaid overtime work, low-quality food and unsanitary living conditions were common. As young women would lose not only their jobs but also their housing if they protested, labour organizing was a considerable risk. Nevertheless, Grubcheva and several other workers, after encountering left-wing activists outside the factory, started to campaign among their colleagues to refuse the unpaid overtime work and protest the unpalatable food by not eating it. They were eventually fired, but thanks to their solidarity network of left-wing militants, they managed to find employment at another textile factory and continued to work and agitate in the city while living in a rented apartment.¹⁴² Grubcheva pursued her activism within the communist movement, took part in the armed resistance movement and was involved in politically motivated murders during World War II; she eventually became a high-ranking functionary in the secret police of state socialist Bulgaria, making her a controversial figure in contemporary Bulgarian history.

These examples highlight the importance of networks external to the factory for the support of protest movements of a group of workers who were particularly vulnerable to exploitation: young women, often coming from outside the cities and in search of jobs without having many options. While Seidl did not stress her national background and migration experiences in her account, Grubcheva reflected on the conditions of her life as factory worker with roots in the village. Seidl, as a leading figure in her party, instead celebrated the strength of the social democratic labour movement, stressing how the experience of class exploitation and solidarity unified the workers.

Conclusion

The precarious, liminal and marginal positions of women migrants often meant that they directed the efforts in bettering their livelihoods towards repertoires that did not necessarily belong within the “classic” range of the labour activism, ones typically associated with trade union membership and organizing. Alienation, fear of expulsion or of having their working permit revoked, lack of language skills, live-in arrangements that made migrant women highly dependent on their employers and vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence: all these contributed to the fact that many of them avoided openly contentious action that could jeopardize their already vulnerable position. By approaching mobility as a terrain of labour struggle, we have sought to highlight the ambivalent relationship it has to labour activism. Mobility in the form of exit has been part of the activist repertoire of coerced and marginalized workers, such as enslaved and indentured workers, for centuries.¹⁴³ For the more recent period, the importance of exit as activism has been somewhat obscured, a challenge that we have sought to tackle in this chapter. Even though we highlight exit and mobility as core tactics open to migrant women, their importance for all kinds of workers, especially those in precarious jobs, cannot be over-stressed. Women continuously faced specific challenges connected to both mobility and forced immobility, such as sexual violence and difficulties obtaining travel documents, but mobility could lead to increasingly coercive labour arrangements for men as well.¹⁴⁴ Collective and individual exit, often facilitated by the hypermobility of migrants, remained a viable tactic for improving labour conditions even for the most marginalized workers.

Mobility, including the rural–urban migration that was so ubiquitous and persistent across Central and Eastern Europe, has been

inextricably connected to different types of coercion, both structural and individual, and the prevalence of coercive migration regimes defined experiences of many women migrating from and to the region after World War I. Individual and collective exit was an option that allowed women to assert their agency under adverse conditions. This could mean, as we have shown, migration itself, but also a range of subtle and less subtle actions associated with human mobility, such as leaving the workplace or changing employer. Mobility could both hinder and enable activism, depending not least on the historical context (labour migration routes and regimes, the political landscape and the situation of labour markets, to name but a few). On the one hand, political persecutions that entailed exile or deportations defined the trajectories of many women labour activists in the region in the interwar period. On the other hand, formal and informal activist networks and hospitality from other activists supported the mobility of women from non-privileged backgrounds, allowing them to move to find better jobs or lodging, or to access education.

The long-term presence of state-managed migration regimes can be identified as a structural regional specificity. Women migrants travelling alone for work were repeatedly singled out in the governmental and public discourse as a group in need of particular control, which often also limited women's choices in terms of activist repertoires. Women travelling as members of families also saw their mobility limited by the fact that they, as 'dependants', were not granted permission to work. Labouring and protesting in a foreign country or region posed additional challenges, such as a lack of networks or language skills. This was further complicated by the often ambivalent relationship of trade unions to women migrants, including their sometimes veiled, sometimes openly misogynist, racist or antisemitic attitudes. On the other hand, trade unionists faced their own dilemmas regarding whether, and under which conditions, to integrate women migrants in their organizations. To understand the stance of national and international labour and trade union organizations on women migrants in a more nuanced and historicized manner, future research is needed.

Finally, the cases discussed in this chapter showcase the participation of migrant women workers in broader strike movements organized by local workers or supported by local unions and political movements. At some points, such as during movements covered in this chapter in the Habsburg Monarchy and the United States around 1900, or during the struggles for the abolition of unjust wage groups in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1970s, migrant women workers even served as agents

of a transnational cycle of protests.¹⁴⁵ Women could carve out spaces for themselves in their respective movements and unions, but their stories cannot be generalized. Further research is needed to explore how, and to what extent, different sociopolitical contexts and migration regimes enabled successful trade union careers of migrant women workers.

Notes

- 1 We follow the definition formulated by Leslie Page Moch and Lewis H. Siegelbaum: Siegelbaum and Moch, *Broad Is My Native Land*, 3.
- 2 Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.
- 3 Several studies have been published on this question. See, for instance, Briskin, 'Union Women and Separate Organizing'; Hauch, "Arbeite Frau!"
- 4 Changing employer as a strategy has been explored for concrete cases of migrant workers, as for example by Unterwurzacher, "The Other Colleagues".
- 5 Donato et al., 'A Glass Half Full?'
- 6 Schrover, 'Labour Migration'; Steidl, *On Many Routes*.
- 7 Sheller and Urry, 'The New Mobilities Paradigm'.
- 8 Gabaccia, 'General Introduction', 6.
- 9 Bernardi et al., *Moving Workers*; Gabaccia, 'General Introduction'.
- 10 Van der Linden, *The World Wide Web of Work*, 84–110.
- 11 Friedrichs and Severin-Barboutie, 'Mobilités, catégorisation et appartenance'.
- 12 Baron and Gatrell, 'Population Displacement'.
- 13 Baron and Gatrell, 'Population Displacement', 55.
- 14 De Vito, Schiel, and van Rossum, 'From Bondage to Precariousness?'
- 15 King and Skeldon, "Mind the Gap!"
- 16 Sparschuh, *Fremde Heimat, fremde Ferne*, 16.
- 17 Hahn, 'Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration', 32.
- 18 Tóth, 'A feketé vonat'.
- 19 Le Normand, *Citizens without Borders*.
- 20 Hoerder and Blank, *Roots of the Transplanted*.
- 21 Richter, 'Construction of Il/Legitimate Migrant Labor'.
- 22 Rass, 'Temporary Labour Migration', 192.
- 23 Martin, Hanson, and Fontaine, 'What Counts as Activism?', 79.
- 24 Çınar, 'The Making of Turkish Migrant Left Feminism', 105; Goeke, 'Wir sind alle Fremdarbeiter!'
- 25 Cora, 'Institutionalized Migrant Solidarity', 62.
- 26 Nicolae-Vladu, 'Kämpfe der Migration', 47–49.
- 27 Mayer, 'Migration & Labor Markets', 37–40.
- 28 Petrucci, 'Pimps, Prostitutes and Policewomen'.
- 29 Diffey, 'Sex and the City'.
- 30 'Auswandern – oder nicht?'
- 31 *Allgemeiner Tiroler Anzeiger*, 'Auslandsstellen'.
- 32 Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, President of the ICW [Isabel Maria Marjoribanks Gordon], *Report on the Quinquennial Meeting*, 663.
- 33 Bloß, 'Mädchenhandel', 23.
- 34 Beth, 'Frauenarbeit in Ägypten', 25.
- 35 Fuhrmann, "Western Perversions".
- 36 Cora, 'Institutionalized Migrant Solidarity'; Özbek, 'Entangled Dependencies'.
- 37 McBride, *The Domestic Revolution*, 34.
- 38 Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*, 22.
- 39 Hahn, *Frauenarbeit*.
- 40 Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*, 24–25.
- 41 'Zur Tarifbewegung', 3.

- 42 Richter, "Bitter Years of Exploitation".
- 43 Jończyk, *Ochrona pracy kobiet i młodocianych*.
- 44 Walewska, 'Ankieta w sprawie służby domowej żeńskiej'.
- 45 Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*, 36–132.
- 46 Walewska, 'Ankieta w sprawie służby domowej żeńskiej', 34.
- 47 Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*, 133–39.
- 48 ILO, 'Report on Requirements on Foreign Manpower and on Resources Available for Emigration in European Countries', 26 June 1948, ARCH00641, folder 93, IISH. Another sector in which Austrian women were placed abroad after 1945 was the textile industry: 'Beendigung der Vermittlung'.
- 49 'Weibliche Berufsausbildung'.
- 50 Bollauf, *Dienstmädchen-Emigration*.
- 51 Hahamovitch, 'The State as Trafficker', 281.
- 52 Dvořák, 'Foreign Workers in Czechoslovakia', 391–4.
- 53 Ponty, 'Des Polonaises parlent', 727.
- 54 Sylvie, 'Des femmes polonaises'.
- 55 The letter was reproduced in Łatka, 'Les ouvrières polonaises'.
- 56 Ponty, 'Des Polonaises parlent', 725.
- 57 The locals, reportedly, often said during the economic crisis of the early 1930s that, if all the Poles left, there would be no unemployed: Ponty, 'Des Polonaises parlent', 733.
- 58 Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego, *Pamiętniki emigrantów*, 43. Of the 49 memoirs submitted to the Institute of Social Economy during the preparation of the volume in the mid-1930s, only 3 were authored by women, and 2 of them found their way into the final 37 published testimonies.
- 59 Tyll-Schranz, 'Freundinnenschaft'; on this issue, see also Helfert, 'A "Special Category of Women"'.
- 60 Rass, 'Temporary Labour Migration', 198.
- 61 The early ILO instruments that regulated international labour migration included: Inspection of Emigrants Convention C21 (1926), in force since 29 December 1927; Maintenance of Migrants' Pension Rights Convention C48 (1935) in force since 10 August 1938; Migration for Employment Convention C66 (1939), which, however, has not been ratified by a single country.
- 62 Rosental, 'Géopolitique et État-providence'.
- 63 Hahamovitch, 'The State as Trafficker', 286.
- 64 Dvořák, 'Foreign Workers in Czechoslovakia'; Hollifield, *Immigrants, Markets, and States*.
- 65 Alamgir, 'Mobility: Education and Labour'; Alamgir, "Inappropriate Behavior".
- 66 Stola, *Kraj bez wyjścia?*; see also Dvořák, 'Foreign Workers in Czechoslovakia'.
- 67 Klípa, 'Escaping the Double Burden', 1024–25.
- 68 Klípa, 'Escaping the Double Burden'.
- 69 Rass, 'Temporary Labour Migration', 200–2.
- 70 Svanberg, 'International Trade-Unionism and Migration', 671.
- 71 Cobble, *For the Many*, 51–76.
- 72 International Congress of Working Women, 'Resolutions', 338.
- 73 International Congress of Working Women, 'First Convention of International Conference of Working Women, National Museum, Washington, D.C., Afternoon Session', 5 November 1919, Mary van Kleeck Papers, 1883–1972, Sophia Smith Collection, Women's History Archive (Northampton, MA), WASI, 37.
- 74 *Отчет на управителния съвет*, 6. The regulation mentioned is probably Ministerstvo na turgoviata, promishlenostta i truda, *Naredba N 4251*. This regulation also discriminated against women, as it gave priority to employing workers from 'tobacco workers' families', defined as families where the 'head of the family', explicitly defined as 'the husband/father and if there is none – the wife', worked in the industry. As a result, women whose husbands/fathers worked outside the tobacco industry were laid off, their work experience, qualifications and family income notwithstanding.
- 75 Penninx and Rosslad, *Trade Unions, Immigration, and Immigrants*, 4–12.
- 76 'Eine internationale Gewerkschaftskonferenz', 375. See also Brown, *World Migration and Labour*.
- 77 Poy, 'The "World Migration Congress"'.

- 78 There was nonetheless a lively discussion on immigration and emigration, as for example in Rager, 'Die Auswanderungsfrage'.
- 79 Proksch, 'Ein- und Auswanderung', 323–24.
- 80 Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, President of the ICW [Isabel Maria Marjoribanks Gordon], *Report on the Quinquennial Meeting*, 211.
- 81 Urban, 'Der internationale Frauenkongreß in Wien'.
- 82 Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair, President of the ICW [Isabel Maria Marjoribanks Gordon], *Report on the Quinquennial Meeting*, 74–75.
- 83 Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*, 208–10.
- 84 International Labour Office, *The Law and Women's Work*, 11.
- 85 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Rozporządzenie Rady Ministrów'.
- 86 Nithammer and Richter, 'Polish Conductresses'.
- 87 Michel, 'Mothers Working Abroad', 321–23.
- 88 Tanić, *Seljaci na evropskim raskrnicama*, 273.
- 89 Tanić, *Seljaci na evropskim raskrnicama*, 147.
- 90 Tomšič, 'Women as Migrant Workers'.
- 91 On the question of research, see for example the ground-breaking work of Mirjana Morokvašić, who started to publish on women migrant workers in the 1970s: Morokvašić, 'Les femmes yougoslaves'; at around roughly the same time Turkish migrant women activists rallied transnationally not only for better working and living conditions, but also for studies that focused on migrant women without a misogynist and racist lens, as for instance at a conference in Amsterdam in June 1985: Hollanda Türkiyeli Kadınlar Birliği (HTKB), *Türkiyeli Göçmen Kadınlar Avrupa Konferansı*.
- 92 ICFTU Women's Committee, '31st Meeting', 3 October 1974, ARCH00622, folder 1557, IISH.
- 93 ICFTU Women's Committee, '30th Meeting', 4 April 1974, ARCH00622, folder 1556, IISH.
- 94 ICFTU Women's Committee, '30th Meeting', Appendix II: Possible Proposal for Amendment of the ICFTU Migrant Workers' Charter.
- 95 Cobble, *For the Many*, 377–79.
- 96 Kofman, 'Female "Birds of Passage"', 269–70.
- 97 Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*, 91.
- 98 ICFTU Women's Committee, '60th Meeting', 23 October 1989, ARCH00622, folder 1587, IISH.
- 99 ICFTU Women's Committee, '62nd Meeting', 25 October 1990, ARCH00622, folder 1589, IISH.
- 100 ICFTU Women's Committee, '31st Meeting'.
- 101 Nicolae-Vladu, 'Kämpfe der Migration'.
- 102 ICFTU Women's Committee, '9th Meeting', 16 July 1963, ARCH00622, folder 1535, IISH.
- 103 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften 1982*, 24.
- 104 *Frauenarbeit in den Gewerkschaften 1982*, 76–78.
- 105 Letter, Grete Rehor to Josef Klaus, 31 May 1966, 2586, Karl von Vogelsang-Institut; and other papers regarding this question in the same collection.
- 106 Trede, *Zwischen Misstrauen, Regulation und Integration*.
- 107 Chamber of Labour, Vienna, 'Summary Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Policy Committee', 10 May 1976, AC SV/AUS 2.1.5.24/K/R1: Ausschüsse für Sozialversicherung und soziale Fürsorge, 1963–1994, IHSF.
- 108 On this topic, see also Helfert, 'A "Special Category of Women"'.
- 109 *İşçinin Sesi*, 'Avrupa'daki kadınlarımızın örgütlenmeleri geliyor'.
- 110 Çınar, 'The Making of Turkish Migrant Left Feminism'.
- 111 *Emekçi Kadın*, 'ATKF'den Haberler'.
- 112 Morokvašić, 'Birds of Passage', 888.
- 113 *Kadın*, 'Dünya Kadınlar Günü 8 Mart Kutlu Olsun'.
- 114 Miller, 'Her Fight Is Your Fight'.
- 115 Kadioğlu, 'Migration Experiences of Turkish Women'.
- 116 Gabaccia, 'Women of the Mass Migrations'.
- 117 The Pale of Settlement was a region in the Russian Empire to which residency of Jewish people was largely restricted. Established in the eighteenth century, it had changing borders, and included territories in present-day Belarus, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

- 118 Glenn, *Daughters of the Shtetl*.
- 119 Alroey, "And I Remained Alone in a Vast Land", 44–45.
- 120 Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*; Poy, 'A Tale of Two Cities'.
- 121 Kessler-Harris, *Gendering Labor History*; Orleck, *Common Sense*; Tamboukou, 'Fannia Mary Cohn'.
- 122 Ernestine Hara Kettler and Sherna Berger Gluck, Kettler, Ernestine Hara (audio interview #2 of 6), 29 January 1973, CSU DA, <http://hdl.handle.net/10211.3/214933>.
- 123 Hara Kettler and Berger Gluck, Kettler, Ernestine Hara (audio interview #2 of 6), side 1, segment (7:12–12:00).
- 124 Hara Kettler and Berger Gluck, Kettler, Ernestine Hara (audio interview #2 of 6), side 2, segment (11:08–12:31).
- 125 Veith, *Unbeugsam*, 192–93.
- 126 Hara Kettler and Berger Gluck, Kettler, Ernestine Hara (audio interview #2 of 6), side 1, segment (29:51–31:09).
- 127 Ernestine Hara Kettler and Sherna Berger Gluck, Kettler, Ernestine Hara (audio interview #3 of 6), 7 February 1973, CSU DA, <http://hdl.handle.net/10211.3/214934>.
- 128 This echoes, if on a national level, a recent article that stresses how prominently transnational informal women's networks underpinned international socialist movement in the postwar period: Lewis, 'Women, Hospitality and the Intimate Politics'.
- 129 Rosenstein, 'Biographical Sketch of Ernestine Hara Kettler'.
- 130 Seidl, 'Der erste Arbeiterinnenstreik', 66.
- 131 Seidl, 'Der erste Arbeiterinnenstreik', 67.
- 132 Koller, 'Weiblich, proletarisch, tschechisch', 187.
- 133 Hahn, *Frauenarbeit*; Steidl, *On Many Routes*, 32.
- 134 Koller, 'Weiblich, proletarisch, tschechisch', 195.
- 135 Mittersteiner, 'Die "Wälschen" bleiben "sozirein"'.
136 Konrad, 'Zur regionalen Arbeitergeschichte'.
- 137 Mittersteiner, 'Die "Wälschen" bleiben "sozirein"'. He ascribes this to their rural background and tendency to migrate as families.
- 138 Steidl, *On Many Routes*, 49.
- 139 Hauch, "Arbeite Frau!"
- 140 Hoerder, *Cultures in Contact*, 344–56.
- 141 Grubcheva, *В името на народа*, 13–19 (quote p. 19).
- 142 Grubcheva, *В името на народа*, 21–58.
- 143 Rediker, Chakraborty, and van Rossum, *A Global History of Runaways*.
- 144 Peck, 'Reinventing Free Labor'.
- 145 Koch et al., 'Migrationsforschung & Geschlecht', 320.

Lines of division, lines of solidarity: minoritized women, 1880s to 1980s

Introduction: minoritization and women's labour activism

The long twentieth century, most of which is spanned by the chronological scope of this chapter, has been a time of turbulent, and often extremely violent, changes of the multiethnic landscape in our region of focus. Ruptures and reconfigurations prompted by the world wars, the fall of the Habsburg, Ottoman and Russian Empires ([Map 1](#)), the emergence of nation-states ([Map 2](#)) and the advance of (state) socialist regimes ([Map 3](#)) set the complex and often troubled background of women's labour activism. Women's labour activism in the region was affected by ethnicity, race and religion as categories of difference, along with the categories of gender and class. Unequal power relations that were associated with ethnic, racial and religious difference took diverse shapes in the world of labour, affecting women's right to work, wage equality and labour conditions. Women activists faced these in a wide range of ways. The concept of minoritization, which we understand as a process that results in legal, political, linguistic, cultural, economic or social subordination of an ethnic or religious group, helps us to grasp the multiple dynamics of subordination. Therefore, we refer throughout the chapter to minoritized women. This perspective differs starkly from a purely quantitative understanding of minorities: not all demographic minorities have been historically minoritized. Stressing the dynamic character of subordination is crucial for the long-term view we adopt, as during the century in focus the positions of ethnic and religious groups changed dramatically due to continuous political transformations. Racism, understood as discrimination based on ascribing stable

and inherited characteristics to a group of people, was among the most extreme forms and consequences of minoritization. Although in this chapter we focus primarily on struggles in the realm of labour, minoritization could also lead to social and cultural stigmatization and even dehumanization.

In the world of labour, minoritized groups faced exclusion from professions, industries and types of employment, difficulties in finding waged work, limited access to education and vocational training, relegation to dead-end jobs, discrimination and harassment on the shopfloor and wage inequality. In this chapter, we analyse how with their activism women addressed subordination produced by the intersection of ethnicity, race, religion, gender and class, using the unpublished reports, letters and ego documents as well as the published articles and autobiographies of minoritized women labour activists as sources for intersectional analysis. Mobilizing perspectives of minoritized women allows us to explore how they navigated and faced these ‘interlocking, interactive’ systems of subordination.¹

Autobiographies are rarely reliable sources of factual information, and typically imply that the author has significant cultural capital and, in the case of published autobiographies, often also social capital that has enabled the publication. The emergence of workers’ autobiographical writing, however, meant that working-class women also deemed their experiences valuable enough to be recorded for posterity.² When contrasted to other types of sources, autobiographies foreground women’s argumentation and interpretations of events and processes that are rarely documented otherwise, and point to the biases and silences of the more conventional sources of labour history. These silences may also be multilayered and characterize not only the original documents, but also their subsequent reproductions: for instance, the otherwise relatively reliable edited collections of vast numbers of original documents on the history of the working class, published in state socialist Hungary, omit mentions of antisemitic incidents, as these negatively impacted the image of the workers, without flagging these omissions.³

Minoritized women have been overlooked as agents of social change, not only because of their subordinate position, but also due to researchers’ tendency to focus on the better-documented activism of women from the elites of ethnic and religious communities, rather than the often more ephemeral, situational or community-focused activism of working-class women (see also [chapter 8](#)). Autobiographies shed light on women’s multiple belongings, highlighting how they formulated their ethnic, religious, gendered and class interests and pursued them

across different mixed-gender and women-only movements and organizations, or opted for the arduous route of self-organizing. Such initiatives of minoritized women activists have rarely turned into mass institutionalized movements. Within larger organizations, as we discuss in more detail below, minoritized women pursuing their ethnic interests sometimes clashed with the representatives of men-dominated parties and trade unions or those associated with the established ethnic majority; such conflicts further marginalized their position. Within the social democratic and communist parties across the region, for instance, the issues related to the condition of both women and workers from the ethnically minoritized groups were often considered particularistic, and thus secondary to the core class-based agenda. This did not deter women from becoming activists in these movements, but it did produce specific interplays between their ethnic, gendered and class interests.

In this chapter, we analyse these specificities of minoritized women's labour activism. We reconnect the fragmented histories of minoritized women labour activists by focusing on their agendas and repertoires and offer contextualized analysis of several particularly illustrative cases. Conceptualized in dialogue with the recent literature on minoritized working-class women's activism in other contexts, and thus speaking to the broader historical scholarship on intersectionality, this chapter discusses the specificities of agendas and repertoires of minoritized women. The multiple, overlapping and shifting identities of these women shaped their labour activism and how they prioritized certain causes or groups of causes. These women tackled issues that went beyond their gender or class interests and often addressed the fact their minoritized communities were excluded from the schemes providing for the general populations. In practical terms, this could include efforts to provide education in the native language or improve the community's access to resources and infrastructure. At the same time, as we discuss in detail, some women activists chose to direct their activist work specifically towards elevating the position of women within their communities. These activist choices and the agendas and repertoires they shaped are at the heart of this chapter.

Focusing on the labour activism of four minoritized women in the first section of the chapter, we elucidate how their agendas were shaped by the interlocking systems of subordination they faced and how these agendas translated into a spectrum of activist repertoires depending on what these women prioritized in their intersecting ethnic, religious, gender and class interests. The second section turns to the concept of solidarity, a key principle of thinking and organizing which

informed left-wing movements throughout the period studied here; it eventually became a state-embraced principle in state socialist regimes. The section examines how minoritized women mobilized class solidarity in their repertoires of action working towards bridging ethnic and religious divides in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires at the turn of the century, and how activists in state socialist Hungary used class solidarity to attempt to improve the conditions of Roma, the country's largest minoritized ethnic group. We also investigate the circumstances that enabled or undermined minoritized women activists' attempts to bridge the ethnic and class divides, such as the wider contexts of men-dominated labour and political movements and state policies.

Facing intersecting pressures: broadening agendas and repertoires

For minoritized women labour activists, addressing the intersectional subordinations they experienced in the world of work was inseparable from fighting against the ethnic, racial or religious oppression and subordination and the consequent structural inequalities and exclusion their communities as a whole were facing. The agendas of women from oppressed and stateless ethnic and religious groups in the Habsburg Empire and those in colonial regimes were in this respect similar, addressing the needs and seeking to improve the lot of the entire community, rather than women only.⁴ A comparison of black and white women's welfare activism in the United States between the late nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth, for example, has shown that black women activists, whose communities have historically had less access to material resources and cultural and political institutions than the white majority, fought for issues such as their communities' access to schools as part of their welfare activism.⁵ Ukrainian women's activism from the late nineteenth to the late twentieth centuries have been deeply shaped by 'the Ukrainian experience of prolonged and repeatedly frustrated statelessness'. This context 'explains the women's movement's preoccupation with nationalist goals' and their 'insistence on combining' cultural, ethnographic and linguistic issues with welfare work.⁶ Minoritized women were far from the only ones engaged in community-based activism (chapter 8): in working-class communities, women mobilized around issues that connected directly to their gendered, typically unpaid labour within the community, such as childcare, access to livable housing and procuring food. Yet looking

at minoritized women adds another dimension: as we discuss below, minoritized women sought to tackle labour-related issues that stemmed specifically from the ethnic and racial subordination their communities suffered from.

The agendas and repertoires of four minoritized women are at the core of this section: Puah Rakovsky (1865–1955), Hanna Sturm (1891–1984), Renée Heves (1902–44) and Mária László (1909–89) (Figure 22). Each of these women addressed the consequences of their minoritization differently. A close-up biographical approach allows us to trace how they adjusted and adapted their agendas, repertoires and membership in movements and organizations during times of tumultuous political, social and economic change. In building their agendas, each of them prioritized different issues they faced as minoritized working women. Puah Rakovsky, an educator and lifelong Zionist active in Congress Poland (Russian Empire, today Poland) before 1918 and then in independent Poland, stressed the gendered interests of women among the Jewish minority and favoured women-only organizing, but also expressly connected the advancement of women to the improvement of conditions for the Jewish community as a whole. Due to her own experiences of harassment and exploitation, Hanna Sturm, coming from the Croatian minority in the Western counties of Hungary (today Burgenland/Austria), was acutely aware of the difficulties faced by minoritized women workers on the shopfloor. She prioritized organizing within the framework of larger left-wing movements – first social democratic and then communist – as the key to overcoming the intersecting subordination that Burgenland Croatian women faced. Renée Heves, social democratic and communist labour activist from Transylvania (Hungary, then Romania after World War I) (Map 1, Map 2), prioritized ethnicity and gender in her struggles. She focused on Hungarian women workers,⁷ and it was only in the context of the wartime persecution of the Jews in the late 1930s and early 1940s that she addressed the consequences of antisemitic discrimination.

Mária László was the first secretary general of the first nationwide organization for Roma in Hungary, the Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary (Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége, MCKSZ) between its establishment on 26 October 1957 and the end of 1958.⁸ Attentive to the political conjuncture and opportunities offered by the state socialist regime, László prioritized ethnic interests in her labour activism. In the second half of the 1950s, there was a shift in the politics relating to Roma in Hungary, from an earlier chance of their acknowledgement of being an ethnic minority, based on the example of the

early Soviet Union, to their categorization as a social stratum of the population to be assimilated into the working classes.⁹ As a result, László was dismissed from the association at the end of 1958, and in 1961 the association was closed down.

Despite the radically different political situation and disparate status of the minority groups in question, and despite the different choices of these four women, their cases show how dominant their experiences of ethnic and religious subordination were, and point to similarities in the ways their agendas were shaped by these experiences. All four women stressed how crucial the activism of minoritized women – in different movements – was not only for the improvement of their position *as women*, but also for the improvement of the lot of their communities.

Framing agendas in terms of the needs of the entire community

Post-colonial and critical race feminist scholarship has pointed to the ‘multifaceted agendas’ of the activism of indigenous women, who mobilized around ‘multi-issue oppression’ and for whom the categories ‘colonialism, ethnicity, race and class’ were central to their activist politics.¹⁰ Women community activists ‘develop[ed] an awareness of the processes of domination that structure[d] their daily lives’, which in turn ‘contribute[d] to their politicization and oppositional consciousness’.¹¹ The agendas, priorities and discourses of grassroots women activists, whose communities were excluded from infrastructure and services, differed from middle-class feminists.¹² The broader power structures that shaped these women’s lives ‘extend[ed] the scope of their agendas in crucial directions’.¹³ Minoritized women activists in the United States called for the articulation of the full dimensions of racism and sexism in both feminist and anti-racist politics to address the issues particular to the position of women of colour.¹⁴ Similarly, Romani women activists in Eastern Europe have ‘translate[d] experiences of structural inequalities into political struggles by defining their own spaces of action’ and have urged the incorporation of anti-racist politics into feminist politics.¹⁵

Fighting against ethnic, racial and religious marginalization and discrimination and consequent structural inequalities affected the agendas and repertoires of minoritized women labour activists in Central and Eastern Europe in diverse ways.¹⁶ Renée Heves devoted most of her activist life as a member of the Trade Union of Private Clerks and Trade Workers (Magántisztviselők és Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Szakszervezete) and the Communist Party of Romania (Partidul

Comunist din România, PCdR) in 1930s and early 1940s Kolozsvár (Cluj, Klausenburg, Romania, later Hungary, today Romania) to improving the situation of Hungarian-speaking women workers.¹⁷ Heves came from an Orthodox Jewish family in Tasnád (Tășnad, Trestenburg, Hungary, today Romania) in Transylvania, and her father, who was a rabbi, did not allow her to attend school beyond the six years of primary school. When she left her hometown in 1928 at the age of 26, she ‘wanted to break with everything’ that had to do with her past life.¹⁸

In Kolozsvár she worked as a private clerk and a journalist and published in various leftist and liberal Hungarian-language newspapers between 1935 and 1940. As a trade union member from 1931, a member of the seminar committee of the PCdR from 1933 and then a party member from 1934, she attended trade union and underground communist seminars, organized trade union learning circles for working-class women, and participated in the educational activism of the PCdR by giving courses on Marxism and Leninism to Hungarian workers and university students in Kolozsvár. As a board member of the women’s group of the Workers’ Atheneum (Munkás Atheneum), a workers’ united front cultural organization set up by Romanian and Hungarian intellectuals in Kolozsvár following the banning of the social democratic party in 1938, Heves participated in educational and cultural activities organized for working-class women and the improvement of the city’s child protection system.¹⁹

Transylvania, which became part of Romania after the fall of the Habsburg Empire at the end of World War I, was an ethnically mixed region, where Hungarians were exposed to Romanian nationalization and had limited access to native-language educational and cultural institutions and political representation. Heves argued that it was of key importance for women to get involved in Hungarian minority politics.²⁰ She contributed to a series of articles addressing Hungarian minority politics in Romania in the radical weekly of Kolozsvár, the *Independent Paper* (*Független Újság*) in 1936.²¹ She insisted that, even though the woman question might not seem to be related to this topic, ‘[i]t is precisely from a minority point of view that [the woman question] needs to be clarified’.²² Comparing the histories of the ‘minority problem’ and women’s oppression, she highlighted that the solution offered by National Socialist Germany and fascist Italy to the former problem was harmful for women’s emancipation. In the mid-1930s in Romania, where a right-wing authoritarian regime was gaining political ground, she emphasized that it was only in democratic states that minority agendas, such as the free use of their mother tongue, access to minority-language

schooling and the protection of women's rights, could be achieved. She urged women to become politically active by joining the organizations of minoritized groups, because otherwise women's political and economic agendas could not be realized.²³

The work of Renée Heves reflects her shifting priorities as an activist. While in the early 1930s she did not address antisemitism explicitly, towards the end of the decade she started exposing the challenges faced by Jewish working-class women. For instance, she authored a story in the Hungarian-language democratic paper, *The Papers of Brassó (Brassói Lapok)* (Braşov, Kronstadt, Romania) on the eve of the outbreak of World War II.²⁴ The story – presented, to escape censorship, as a fairy tale – responded to growing antisemitism with a testimony to the solidarity among working-class women across ethnic divides.²⁵ Heves recounted the support that a Galician Jewish woman worker, who had been dismissed from a factory in Kolozsvár in 1939 as a result of antisemitic practices, received from her former Romanian colleagues. They collected money to support her and provided food for her children: 'The Jewish woman worked among three hundred Romanian women, and the hearts of three hundred Romanian women plunged at the thought of the unemployed family.'²⁶

Kolozsvár belonged to the territories of Romania that were reattached to Hungary in August 1940, following the Second Vienna Award Decision arbitrated by National Socialist Germany and fascist Italy. Heves decided against going into hiding with falsified papers.²⁷ Only three months before being killed at Auschwitz, and after the government decree which obliged those categorized as Jewish to wear a yellow star taking effect in Hungary in early April 1944,²⁸ Heves wrote: 'I have never hidden my Jewishness. It belonged to my way of life, to my inner culture, to the development of my personality. I have never felt ashamed of it.'²⁹ In the last month of her life, before her deportation and death at Auschwitz in June 1944, she worked as a social worker among Jews as one of those ghettoized by Hungarian authorities at the brickyard of Kolozsvár.³⁰

Puah Rakovsky's activism was embedded within Jewish social life from early on. While her siblings, relatives and friends got involved with various strands of left-wing political movements from anarchism to communism, for her, providing education to Jewish girls remained at the heart of the agenda. Combining this with women's organizing, she aimed to improve the position of the Jewish minority in Poland via transforming the position of women within the community. The title of Rakovsky's book in the original Yiddish, *Zikhroynes fun a yidisher revolutsionerin*

(literally *Memoirs of a Revolutionary Jewish Woman*), highlights the centrality of three aspects of her identity, as a Jew, a woman and a revolutionary, all three of which feature prominently in her narrative. Paula E. Hyman, who published Rakovsky's autobiography in English, favoured the term 'radical' rather than 'revolutionary' in her translation and emphasized that the 'definition of radicalism in strictly political terms, and in terms of men-dominated movements, has led historians of East European Jewry to ignore the lives and accomplishments [of those women] whose radicalism and activism found expression outside the realm of partisan politics or in specifically women's settings'.³¹ Rakovsky stressed the radicality of her personal choices (see also [chapter 3](#)), ones that directly challenged societal conventions, such as abandoning traditional Jewish religiosity or getting married for the third time to a man 10 years her junior; these decisions, she underlined, could inform the choices of younger Jewish women.

In Rakovsky's memoir, providing and facilitating access to education for Jewish girls and women were at the heart of her lifelong activism. She sought to overcome class divides and stressed that she was 'concerned with all classes of working women, from the toiling to the so-called petite bourgeoisie'.³² For her, education was inextricably connected with Jewish women's chances in the world of labour (see also [chapter 5](#)). Throughout the memoir, she repeatedly refers to her efforts to help women of different backgrounds to find better jobs, with the goal of escaping poverty, emigrating abroad or managing to flee the Pale of Settlement³³ by choosing a profession that would allow them to settle elsewhere in the Russian Empire, such as dentistry.³⁴ Rakovsky's activism was strongly shaped by the inaccessibility of education and political representation to women in traditional Jewish communities, and she saw women-only organizing as the chief way of challenging this status quo.

Minoritized women's positionalities with regard to gender-, race- or ethnicity-related issues varied according to the context of their activism in terms of both women's position within the community and the community's minoritized position. Research shows that women activists from Pacific Island societies, for example, while fully aware of the gendered inequalities in their own communities, 'shifted their speaking position on the internal politics of gender according to the pressures of other issues and of particular audiences'.³⁵ During their struggle for independence and indigenous land rights, women activists spoke up for the common interests of men and women as members of their communities. In this context, addressing gender discrimination would

have divided men's and women's interests and hindered women's active involvement. Women activists also refrained from calling the network of women's groups they founded to fight for this cause a feminist organization and accentuated instead 'the exploitation, oppression, suppression, disadvantages, low status, lack of welfare and lack of well-being of the ... woman and those in her charge' in their communities as the main concerns.³⁶ Once that fight was over, however, they became vocal in criticizing the dominant attitudes of men in their communities and their 'reluctance to treat women as equals'.³⁷

On a similar note, minoritized women were often critical of movements dominated by more privileged women. In the context of the United States in the mid-1920s and mid-1960s, 'black women dissociated themselves from feminist struggle when they were convinced that to appear feminist, that is, radical, would hurt the cause of black liberation ... Those black women who believed in social equality of the sexes learned to suppress their opinions for fear attention might be shifted from racial issues.'³⁸ More generally, 'people of colour often must weigh their interests in avoiding issues that might reinforce distorted public perceptions against the need to acknowledge and address intra-community problems'.³⁹ They are 'often compelled to answer the question – which is more important: feminist movement or black liberation struggle? – women's rights or civil rights? – which are you first: black or female? ... This question is not a simple one. For some people it is raised in such a way that they are compelled to choose one identity over another.'⁴⁰ Analysing discourses, policies and practices manifest at the community, national and transnational scales which have led to the reinforcement of this divide in the context of persistent anti-Romani racism in 1990s Romania, Alexandra Oprea has termed it 'one of the dilemmas of intersectionality' that minoritized women are forced to choose between their gender and ethnic identities, because 'they are constructed as mutually exclusive'.⁴¹ bell hooks has emphasized that both the feminist and the black civil rights movements are undermined 'when these divisions are promoted' and stressed that, as much as liberatory feminist movements must challenge 'the politics of domination on all fronts', the struggle against racism too is linked to 'all struggles to resist domination'.⁴² Our research in this collective monograph shows that women labour activists across time devised multifaceted agendas and repertoires, and engaged in multi-movement activism, in order to be able to pursue their interests as women, labourers and representatives of minoritized ethnicities and escape such dilemmas. Mária László's lack of explicit engagement with Romani women's issues in the fight for Romani

emancipation in early state socialist Hungary, similarly to indigenous women activists' considerations, speaks less of her lack of awareness of the gendered inequalities in Romani communities and more of her repertoire of action aimed at negotiating with state authorities for better living and working conditions for all Roma.

In 1950s Hungary, despite the new constitution of the People's Republic that, based on communist principles, declared the ethnic, gender and class equality of its inhabitants, the racialization of Roma prevailed.⁴³ While targeted policy efforts to integrate members of the country's largest ethnic group, Roma, into productive work were first issued in the 1960s, their mass entry into the labour force was, like the path imagined for the emancipation of women, in the 1950s also the planned means for the emancipation of Roma. At the same time, Roma were unacknowledged victims of the Holocaust, who – due to their marginalization and racial persecution since the second half of the nineteenth century and the loss of their traditional means of living with the erasure of the private sector in the early 1950s – were acutely affected by poverty and low levels of education.⁴⁴ The majority of Roma in Eastern Europe lived in segregated and poor neighbourhoods – so-called 'Gypsy settlements'.⁴⁵ In Hungary, parallel to the efforts towards the improvement of their situation, racist prejudices that labelled Roma work-shy and consequent practices, such as the Ministry of Interior's issuance of different colour identification cards to Roma between 1954 and 1961, persisted.⁴⁶

Against this background, central to the activist agendas and repertoires of Mária László in state socialist Hungary was the improvement of the material conditions of working and living of the entire Romani community. She used the opportunities offered by the new regime's commitment to class-based equality to lobby for the establishment of the MCKSZ in the early 1950s.⁴⁷ Her work during the brief period when she headed the association demonstrates how diverse and pervasive the hurdles to paid employment of Roma in the 1950s were. László listed a broad range of issues, from the majority population's prejudiced attitude towards Roma to a variety of other hindrances, including poverty and the lack of the most elementary conditions of living, such as running water in the segregated Romani settlements, that affected their successful employment.⁴⁸

One of the issues she lobbied for was to maintain the employment of craft workers, such as the nail smiths, and basket and carpet weavers, whose livelihood was endangered at the time. Some of the nail smiths were organized into co-operatives in the 1940s, and László visited several

locations to facilitate their survival and establish new co-operatives by mediating between the co-operative members, various authorities and the local population. In an undated report about counties where in her opinion 'good work' had been done regarding the improvement of the situation of Roma, and specifically in support of Romani nail smith craft co-operatives, she remarked:

The antipathy of the local population causes a serious problem everywhere. In this large undertaking [the improvement of the situation of Roma] much support can be provided by the state organizations. They could offer the local population politically persuasive presentations, [and] the Gypsies social support to start with, [they could ensure their] humane treatment, and [carry out] enlightenment work among them. Our state organizations could provide local authorities much help in their work concerning Gypsies. We are often confronted with a lack of understanding, but also with the fact that due to not knowing the specificities of the life of the Gypsies, well-meant efforts remain without results. It would be of great help if after checking on Gypsy settlements, state organizations could assist with solving the problem of drinking water. This is a primary and indispensable need to [ensure a higher level of culture among Roma]. [State organizations could also help with] [w]ork opportunities, house plots, and engagement with [the Roma].⁴⁹

The lack of access to drinking water was primarily a gendered issue, since women were responsible for the provision of food, daily hygiene and cleanliness, but it formed part of the 'large undertaking' of improving the situation of Roma. László made efforts to co-operate with national and local authorities and the state organizations, including the National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT), the National Council of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, MNOT) and the Hungarian Red Cross (Magyar Vöröskereszt) to support the employment and education of and the social services provided to both Romani men and women.⁵⁰ She was successful in having Romani women activists included in the work of MNOT organizations at local level.⁵¹

Framing agendas in terms of gender and class interests

While all four women discussed here were sensitive to ethnicity-related subordination, they also posited that elevating the position of minoritized women would lead to the improvement of the everyday and

labour conditions of their communities. They developed women-specific agendas within wider movements and promoted women-only organizing as the way to improve minoritized working women's condition.

Renée Heves described herself as having 'always been interested in the woman question' and wrote most of her published articles as a journalist in the 1930s up to 1940 about working women.⁵² In 1940, when Kolozsvár became part of Hungary, she could no longer publish due to antisemitic legislation.⁵³ From 1934 on, as a member of the PCdR, she was responsible for dealing with women-related issues in the party's Hungarian-language weekly organ, the *New Word* (*Új Szó*). As part of the paper's editorial board between August 1935 and the ban on the *New Word* in October 1936, she addressed the situation and problems of working women, including their roles as paid workers and care providers in the family.⁵⁴ From 1937 she edited the weekly women's section, 'Working Woman and Housewife' ('Dolgozó nő és háziasszony'), of the *Fresh News* (*Friss Újság*) – the Hungarian-language, at the time communist-edited, daily of Nagyvárad (Oradea, Großwardein, Romania, later Hungary, today Romania) – and from 1938 she contributed to 'The Woman' ('Az asszony') section of the *Papers of Brassó*. Heves identified 'the vocation' of the women's section as reaching out 'to uninformed women' and 'making them comfortable with serious topics': 'Whether it is peace, child-rearing, public health, education, women's bread-winning work or women's political rights, [the section] puts women's issues first and tries to generate interest among women readers.'⁵⁵

Heves took the subjects of her writing from the everyday lives of working women and dedicated her articles to raising the political awareness of working-class women. She was sensitive to the working conditions not only of women workers in the industries but also of agrarian women. She stressed the role of unpaid labour in women's toil, closing one of her articles about the museum of ethnography pointing out that the life of agrarian workers presented there was not relegated to the past: 'Little happiness, little time to rest, nameless desire and endless work are what come to life within the walls of the museum. The life of the people. The life of our women.'⁵⁶ She addressed critically the Catholic position on the 'woman question' and in particular the fact that Catholic public politics urged women to preoccupy themselves with home and family instead of wage work, construing the latter as 'unnatural' for women. In opposition, Heves raised the lot of working-class women, 'who have worked for centuries', asking if they did not count as women.

Heves connected the 'woman question' and the 'class question' with the 'minority question' concerning the politics of the minoritized

Hungarians in Romania. She drew attention to the Romanian Constitution of 1938, which granted women limited suffrage rights.⁵⁷ She underlined too that the political representatives of the Hungarian nationality in Romania emphasized the importance of their joining King Carol II's party, the National Renaissance Front (Frontul Renașterii Naționale), to work for the interests of Hungarians through that framework.⁵⁸ She then posited:

daycare centres, mother and infant protection and public health institutions will be available in sufficient numbers, and the minority woman's vocation as a mother can be asserted in and through them, only if the minority communities are strong enough to organize their institutions and integrate them into state life. Do you think that women have no role to play here?⁵⁹

In the case of Puah Rakovsky, a broad range of efforts directed at the improvement of minoritized women's condition represented the definitive, and consistent, characteristic of her activism throughout the decades. Rakovsky privileged women-only organizing as the optimal way of achieving lasting change in Jewish women's socioeconomic status. For her, an urban intellectual, activism among lower-class women stemmed from an ideological commitment to nationalist, Zionist goals, as she saw the improvement of the livelihoods of Jewish women as creating better 'human material for the Land of Israel', which was for her a *sine qua non* for creating a better future for the Jewish nation.⁶⁰ She saw two interconnected ways of achieving this: the education of a wide stratum of Jewish women and the promotion of self-organizing among them, which would lead to the emergence of a core group of experienced activists. Her activist work even as early as during the Kingdom of Poland period included a wide range of activities:

Jewish women's associations [which she helped create and supported] also ran children's homes, held vocational courses, took care of children and orphans, engaged in social work, supported mothers and children, offered legal aid to deserted women, and established serious and honest co-operatives that were administered better by women than by men.⁶¹

Faced with political change, Rakovsky still pursued the same activist pattern in independent Poland. She was a trail-blazer when it came to offering Jewish girls education in Hebrew, but there existed other,

mixed-gender organizations that also effectively sought to create a parallel welfare and educational infrastructure for the Jewish community, which faced exclusion and minoritization. Historian Bina Garncarska-Kadary, describing the conditions of the Jewish working-class communities during the interwar period, noted the wide-angle activist approach of the Jewish trade unions that ‘provided job centres, medical and legal aid, sanatoriums for children suffering from tuberculosis, summer camps, etc.’.⁶² Organizations and associations across the political spectrum, including cross-class associations (chapter 9), focused on providing education and vocational training to both women and men (chapter 5). The Organization for the Development of Industrial, Artisanal and Agricultural Labour among the Jewish Population in Poland (Organizacja Rozwoju Twórczości Przemysłowej Rzemieślniczej i Rolniczej wśród Ludności Żydowskiej w Polsce), for instance, was a mixed-gender association that ran vocational training for women in sewing in Warsaw and in weaving and knitting in Łódź (Figure 14).⁶³

The Jewish Women’s Association (Yiddishe Froyen Asosiatsiye), of which Rakovsky was a founding member, aimed to achieve Jewish women’s inclusion in political life at all levels, as well as ‘to train young Jewish women for productive work, not only girls from the working class, but also from the middle classes and even Hasidic circles’.⁶⁴ For Rakovsky, it was the contempt from Jewish men towards women’s position in society and in the realm of politics that was the first hurdle for the advancement of Jewish women, while antisemitism shaped the wider backdrop of all Jewish activism. She lamented that, although Jewish women in independent Poland were able to participate in municipal government and the Sejm (lower chamber of the parliament), they were, despite their ‘constant battle’, never made part of the Jewish community organizations (kehile).⁶⁵ The separate women’s organizing that Rakovsky hailed as the key to solving women-specific issues and educating a new generation of socially committed women activists was not accepted by either the conservative Jewish organizations or the General Jewish Labour Bund in Poland, which considered these issues secondary to the general struggle of the working class. As she put it, Jewish women ‘could not expect support from the men. Our movement was attacked from both right and left.’⁶⁶

The socioeconomic backgrounds of minoritized women also shaped their understanding of labour struggles. Puah Rakovsky came from a relatively prosperous family and was, in her generation, one of only a handful of girls among Polish Jewry who received the traditional education in Hebrew that was typically reserved for boys. Her memoir is

that of an intellectual, and not only reflects her lifelong commitment to secular Zionism, but is also deeply rooted in Jewish culture, with frequent references to religious texts. In contrast, Hanna Sturm came from the countryside; she was born into a carpenter's family that constantly faced poverty during her childhood. She started working at the age of eight and remained illiterate until the age of 18, when she rented a bed in the apartment of a politically active Czech family in Vienna. The family treated her like 'their own daughter' and taught her how to read and write German.⁶⁷ In her activism, Sturm remained committed to the struggles of Burgenland Croats but did not stress their cultural particularity, underlining instead the difficulties they had faced in labour organizing due to their lack of knowledge of German and the contempt of better-organized German-speaking workers.

Sturm's activism and her ideological convictions stemmed from her experience of underpaid, exhausting labour, workplace sexual harassment and thieving superiors. She organized her first strike, mobilizing other Croatian women at a factory in Neufeld (Lajtaújfalu, Hungary, today Austria) at the age of 14, she claimed, without knowing what a strike actually was.⁶⁸ Having started working at a textile factory at the age of 11, Sturm presented her labour activism as an almost natural response to the inherent abuses of factory employment, as the Croatian workers 'were almost slaves'.⁶⁹

Even the title of Hanna Sturm's book, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin. Vom Burgenland nach Ravensbrück* (*The Life Story of a Woman Worker: From Burgenland to Ravensbrück*), signals how crucial the issue of self-identification is when studying the activism of minoritized women. Stressing her working-class background, Sturm fully acknowledged the historical importance of her life story not only as unique individual experience, but also as reflective of experiences of the groups that she most closely associated herself with – the workers and the Burgenland Croatian minority she was part of. The style of her memoir is truly peculiar, not least because she refers to herself in the third person throughout the book. Unlike the memoir of professional educator Rakovsky, Sturm's memoir remained unpublished until a researcher stumbled across it in an archival collection.

Sturm subscribed to a universalist programme directed against capitalist exploitation, first as a member of the Austrian Social Democratic Workers' Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP) (until 1925), and then as a member of the Communist Party of Austria (Kommunistische Partei Österreichs, KPÖ).⁷⁰ Not unrelated, she gravitated towards the more classical repertoires of labour activism, organizing strikes

during her adolescence, as noted, as well as once she became a trade union organizer and party activist. In Sturm's case, gendered issues manifested themselves above all in the workplace. She reported, for example, that after she was sexually harassed by a foreman and hit him on the head in defence, her employer attempted to fine her but then backpedalled once she announced she planned to leave the factory. The conflict around this event, as was typical for similar cases, eventually did lead to her departure from the factory.⁷¹ While Sturm did not explicitly address this issue in her labour organizing efforts at the time, in her autobiographical narrative, nevertheless, she drew attention to the threats of workplace sexualized violence specific to women workers.

Unlike most Burgenland Croats, Sturm spoke German fluently and was therefore particularly sensitive to the distinctions between the Austrian and the Croatian workers. This also put her in a unique position from early on. While she found the level of organization of Austrian workers, and their capacity to push back against the employers, admirable, she was enraged by their prejudices against Croats, who were accused of driving down wages, ridiculed for not speaking German and suspected of being strike breakers.⁷² Disparaging attitudes towards Croats persisted at the Neufeld factory, and in the 1920s, when Sturm returned to work there, Austrian workers still treated Croatian textile workers, mostly young women, as 'second-class' colleagues (see also [chapter 6](#)).⁷³

For Sturm, the way to counteract this was for Croats to organize. She remained committed to the struggles of women employed at textile factories upon her return to Neufeld. Her memoirs describe in detail the tensions that arose between the Croatian labour force and the employers. The Croatian tradition of Carnival was extremely important for young women, who constituted a large part of the workers at the factory, as it was the key event in which they could find a future husband. Yet even for Sturm, with her precocious experience of labour organizing, negotiating a three-day leave was a challenging task. Having granted the leave for 50 Croatian employees, the employer then changed his mind and fired the workers after three days of absence, she recalls. In protest, Sturm organized a solidarity strike among all Croatian workers to reinstate their fired colleagues, and to prove that they were not 'dumb Croats' and could stand up for their collective rights.⁷⁴

Sturm connected one of the largest pivotal points in her activist trajectory, namely the switch from the SDAP to the KPÖ, to the lack of freedom in decision-making that trade unionists like her had in the SDAP. Having lost her job during the textile industry crisis of 1925, she was also active within the KPÖ on behalf of the unemployed.⁷⁵

Mobilizing across ethnic, racial and religious divides under the banner of socialism?

The analysis of the narratives of Rakovsky, Heves, Sturm and László shows the different ways in which their gender and class agendas and ensuing repertoires of action were affected by the fact of being minoritized and the shifting points of emphasis in their labour activism across time. This section investigates a specific agenda of socialist, social democratic and communist labour activism, namely class solidarity, through which left-wing movements aimed to cross ethnic, racial and religious divides. Class solidarity in this context is understood in two related ways. On the one hand, it is a set of practices among minoritized working women that aimed to build coalitions and communities relying on gendered experiences in the field of paid and unpaid work they shared with women from other ethnic groups. Such practices include engagement in organizing and in political action towards achieving better living and working conditions for minoritized working-class communities. News reports in the socialist and social democratic press mentioning the involvement of minoritized women in labour activism in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggest that, in addition to their shared experiences in the world of labour, it was the internationalist orientation of their movements that motivated women activists to engage in organizing and action that aimed to bridge ethnic, racial and religious differences. In the cases examined, harsh governmental retaliation against socialist activism and a change in social democratic politics towards embracing nationalist thought hampered women activists' efforts to realize class solidarity.

On the other hand, class solidarity – across gender, ethnic and religious difference – was a principle state socialist regimes in Europe embraced and professed within and beyond their national borders. Minoritized women labour activists mobilized this principle to improve the working and living conditions of their communities. Mária László's reports from the second half of the 1950s and the personal recollections of Hungarian trade unionist Éva Bíró (1930–)⁷⁶ addressing her activism in 1970s Hungary show that, despite labour activists' efforts, changes in the regime's politics towards Roma at the end of the 1950s and the unresolved problems of poverty among Roma, respectively, were factors that hindered them in realizing their agendas. In both historical periods, there were other decisive factors beyond women activists' individual efforts and collective action that enabled or impeded the achievement of class solidarity. These included the decisions in relation to the larger

political context taken by the men-dominated leadership of the mixed-gender movements the women activists and women's structures were part of, the shifting national and transnational political priorities and state agendas, and the presence and strength of nationalist, antisemitic and other racializing currents.

The mainstream of the left-wing parties in the interwar period often considered activists who stressed problems of minoritized women as aiming to split the general (men-dominated) workers' movement. Being politicized in such environments meant that simply belonging to a subordinate minority did not result in a heightened awareness of ethnicity- or gender-specific issues, not to speak of their prioritization. The autobiographical account of Prive Friedjung (1902–2005), a Jewish communist from Bukovina (Austro-Hungarian Empire, today a region divided between Ukraine and Romania) (Map 1) who was active in interwar Vienna, illustrates this. In 1933, Friedjung was appointed the editor of the KPÖ journal the *Red Women's Post* (*Rote Frauenpost*), but admitted that it was a purely formal appointment and, despite being a Jewish woman employed as a seamstress, she considered both the gendered and the ethnicity-based issues, and consequently the publication of a women's journal, to be 'utterly peripheral' to the communist movement.⁷⁷

Struggling for class solidarity in the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires

In the Habsburg Monarchy, working-class women activists' efforts to build women's class solidarity across the ethnic divide developed against a backdrop of the unequal status of the various nationalities populating the empire. Related political tensions impacted the labour movement too. In Cisleithania (Map 1) the major Czech, Polish and Yugoslav social democratic movements formed autonomous organizations, so that the SDAP in 1897 reconstructed itself as a federation of national social democratic parties. Yet its leadership remained in German-speaking hands.⁷⁸ In Hungary, key legal regulations made the political participation of the national minorities impossible, and mainstream social democracy remained centrally organized and Hungarian-dominated. Taking this into account, calls from non-minoritized, that is German- and Hungarian-speaking, socialist women activists and platforms for cross-national collaboration must be analysed with caution. Such calls, directed at minoritized 'sisters', could easily go hand in hand with silent, continued adherence to German-Austrian or, alternatively, Hungarian

dominance in the movement. Silencing and marginalization within the movement could occur in a subtle manner even when formal inclusion was achieved (see also [chapter 9](#)). In turn, not least for this reason, minoritized women activists could have good reason to meet such calls with scepticism. While such dynamics are hard to identify, it is necessary to be aware of this dimension while discussing class solidarity.

Within the mixed-gender organizations of the independent social democratic movement (független szociáldemokrata mozgalom) – which became the Independent Socialist Party (Független Szocialista Párt, FSZP) in 1897 – agrarian women organized in ethnically mixed women's groups in the Hungarian part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁹ As historian József Farkas has shown, it was not just women members striving to bridge national divides, but the movement as a whole aimed to unite workers of different nationalities by embracing the minoritized groups' goal of more national sovereignty.⁸⁰ The Serbian agrarian socialists, for example, started their own paper in October 1897.⁸¹ For István Várkonyi, the leader of the movement, class solidarity and breaking down of ethnic, national and gender differences were central to agrarian workers' successful (trade union-like) organizing.⁸² As a group of workers from Orosháza (Hungary) appealed to their comrades in the movement's paper, the *Agrarian Worker* (*Földmívelő*), in 1897: 'Each with their brothers and sisters, each professional with those of the same profession, each profession with other professions forms a union, no matter the national, racial or gender differences.'⁸³ The separate women's groups that peasant women started to set up parallel to their participation in the mixed-gender organizations in the second half of the 1890s in southern Hungary ([chapter 4](#)) show a great variety in the ethnic background of their members. The women's group of Bács-Szent-Tamás (Srbobran, Hungary, later Yugoslavia, today Serbia) in Vojvodina that announced its founding in the 28 May 1897 issue of *Agrarian Worker* was one of the several women's groups that were formed in the spring and summer of 1897. The surnames of the women suggest that they counted among their members women of Romanian, Serbian, German and Hungarian ethnic backgrounds.⁸⁴ Women from localities with a high percentage of minoritized populations expressed shared issues related to their gendered labour experiences in *Agrarian Worker*. They discussed difficulties associated with carrying out household and childcare work while also engaging in paid work outside the home.⁸⁵ Ágnes Papp from Bács-Szent-Tamás complained about the difficulties among which women workers had to raise their children, topped by an absent husband, who was away from dawn to sunset as a day labourer.⁸⁶ The women of Puszta-Földvár (today Pusztaföldvár, Hungary) in turn raised

the troubles of working mothers, who could neither work properly, because they had to leave their children at home unattended, nor attend to their children, because they needed to go to work.⁸⁷ In 1898, severe government reaction, including the banning of *Agrarian Worker*, the imprisonment of Várkonyi and the introduction of Act 2 of 1898,⁸⁸ aiming to preclude further strike waves through more restrictive legislation, hampered continuing activism, including cross-ethnic organizing and action.

The case of German and Czech social democratic women's activism in the Habsburg Empire in the late nineteenth century similarly offers several examples of their efforts to build a shared class-based solidarity across the national divide. Although there existed a separate network of German- and Czech-speaking social democratic associations in the Bohemian lands (Map 1) at the end of the nineteenth century, historian Jakub S. Beneš identifies the period before the early 1900s as a time when the German leadership of the SDAP in Habsburg Austria, which had a decisive influence over the policies of the labour movement, was still promoting an internationalist orientation.⁸⁹ The newspapers of both the German-Austrian and the Czech women's organizations and the German social democratic press from this time period contain short reports about several activist events, which demonstrate that Czech–German tension was not constantly present among women workers on the ground and point to women activists' efforts towards realizing class solidarity.

The *Women's Paper* (*Ženský list*), the Czech-language paper of social democratic women labour activists in the Bohemian lands, as a rule did not report on national friction between Czech and German women workers. Instead, it presented examples of co-operation between German and Czech activists. Czech women, for instance, translated and published a letter from their 'sister newspaper', the *Women Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*) produced by Austrian social democratic women. The letter criticized in a sarcastic tone the 'harsh' everyday life of bourgeois women in comparison to working-class women, who were 'fortunate' enough to be able to devote 16 hours a day to useful work.⁹⁰ Here labouring women united across the national divide in their critical stance towards women of the middle and upper classes, who could afford not to take up paid work. The *Women's Paper* was published in Brno (Brünn, Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia), at the time a Czech-German city. German workers did not have their own local association but rather joined the Vienna-based one. At the same time, Czech women workers, while they had their own outlets, still encouraged members to read the *German Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiter-Zeitung*) 'if they know German'.⁹¹

The German *Women Workers' Paper* in turn reported on several activist events at the end of the 1890s, where German and Czech women workers aimed at raising solidarity between members of the two nationalities and strengthening their united stand on issues affecting labouring women across the ethnic divide. It informed its readers about a rally of women workers that included speeches in both German and Czech: at a workers' meeting at Turn near Teplice (Teplitz, Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) on 26 February 1897, attended by nearly two hundred girls and women, 'Comrade H. Bartel from Teplice spoke in German about "the rights of women"'. Because a number of Czech women workers were attending the meeting, Comrade Joh. Treijdal spoke in Czech on the same subject.⁹² Here it was the issue of women workers' rights that activists brought forward. The same year, the *Workers' Paper* also referred to fundraising for strike actions, such as for the 1897 blacksmiths' strike, in which 'Czech women workers' from Vienna's nineteenth district (Döbling) provided support.⁹³

In 1899 the *Women Workers' Paper* discussed a women's meeting held on Easter Monday at Siegl's Gasthaus in Inzersdorf (Cisleithania, today Austria), attended by about three hundred people, the vast majority of whom were women workers. Two women comrades, Glas and Krapka, who were of German and Czech background respectively, addressed the 'position of women in today's society and the value of the press' which were 'the only items' on the meeting's agenda.⁹⁴ The report laid emphasis on the shared feelings between the German and Czech women by elaborating how the presentations of the women comrades affected all the women gathered:

The presentations of the comrades obviously made a deep impression, especially on the women. Many were unable to hide their tears at the descriptions of the lives of the children of the proletariat and the joyless existence of women workers, who know nothing of the splendour and many wonders of this world.⁹⁵

The two speakers called on the women brick workers in particular to join their union and to subscribe to the German or the Czech women workers' newspaper. The second half of the report emphasized cross-ethnic solidarity in strengthening the organizing of women workers by highlighting the need for unified activism of men and women workers:

Together with the men the women have to work, starve and suffer – together with the men the women have to fight! In recent years,

the women brick workers have shown themselves to be good, loyal supporters of Social Democracy, so that it is to be hoped that they will soon succeed in getting those who are distant from the organization and those who are indifferent into our camp. Other comrades, workers' wives, are also very active for the organization in Inzersdorf. The women's organization is also making progress, if only there is the will and the necessary zeal.⁹⁶

Other multiethnic locations in the region also offer examples of class solidarity-based attempts to bridge ethnic divides. A disturbance in the Ottoman Empire that took place in 1910 shows how women workers united across ethnic and religious divides in a strike, demanding better pay and labour conditions. By the early twentieth century, mostly young and adult women worked in the silk factories of Bursa (capital of the Hüdavendigâr administrative unit (vilayet) in the Ottoman Empire, today Turkey), the former capital of the Ottoman Empire and an important hub in silk trade. In addition to the Greek workers who lived in the city, young Turkish, Armenian and Jewish women and girls from nearby villages travelled to Bursa, stayed in dormitories built next to silk factories and engaged in silk production as seasonal work. Aged between 10 and 25, they worked up to 16 hours each day. They 'met problems while coming [to work] early before the sun rises and leaving late in the night, since the factories were usually away from the [main] streets, and bad and drunk men disturbed' them.⁹⁷ Low wages, long work days and unhealthy working conditions along with the state authorities' refusal to attend to these problems prompted workers to organize a strike in 1910. On 15 August 1910, up to 3,000 women workers went on a strike demanding a 20–25 per cent pay raise, reduced working hours and a one-hour lunch break during the work day. There were no trade unions behind the women's strike, but the Armenian socialists, particularly those associated with the Social Democrat Hunchakian Party (Տոժիալ Դեմոկրատ Հիւնձակեան Կուսակցութիւն), supported the strike and the event was covered in Bulgarian, Armenian and Turkish socialist newspapers.⁹⁸ However, factory owners did not accept the workers' demands, and the strike failed as the work season was over by the end of August.⁹⁹

While for the working-class women interethnic organizing typically unfolded in the workplace or its immediate vicinity, women with more education and privilege established cross-regional activist networks facilitated by correspondence and international travel. One such case is the connection between four women witnessed in their triangular

exchange of letters: Elsa Grailich (1880–1969), a socialist journalist living in Pozsony (Bratislava, Pressburg, Hungary, later Czechoslovakia, today Slovakia); Szeréna Ladányi (1884–1940), a leading activist in the Hungarian social democratic women’s movement in Budapest; Auguste Fickert (1855–1910), a Viennese school teacher and active member of the General Austrian Women’s Association (Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein, AÖF), who entertained close relations with socialist women; and Adelheid Popp (1869–1939), the leading representative of the (German-)Austrian socialist/social democratic women’s movement in Vienna. The letters exchanged among these women are in German and Hungarian, and demonstrate the influence and importance of the Austrian socialist and social democratic movement on and for Eastern European activists (see also [chapter 4](#)). For example, Popp addressed Ladányi in German about issues related to the Seventh Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) that was held in Budapest from 15 to 21 June 1913, and which several socialist women from Europe attended.¹⁰⁰ In a letter in German from early 1910, Fickert asked Grailich to promote the AÖF’s journal, titled *Documents of Women* (*Dokumente der Frauen*), and elaborated the steps Grailich should take to do so.¹⁰¹ Grailich, in turn, writing in Hungarian to Ladányi in the early 1910s, promised on different occasions to contribute to the Hungarian *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*) ([Table 4](#)).¹⁰² In August 1913, she mentioned her plans to write a biography of August Bebel based on what was published in the (German-)Austrian social democratic journal, the *Workers’ Paper* (*Arbeiter-Zeitung*).¹⁰³ Grailich’s letters also demonstrate that the Women’s Section of the Workers’ Education Association ‘Forwards’ (Frauensektion des Arbeiterbildungsvereins ‘Vorwärts’) in Pozsony, which she founded together with Maria Pocisk (Pocziszk) in 1909, took care to present itself as bilingual. The stationery of the association she used had the association’s name printed on it both in Hungarian (‘Előre’ pozsonyi munkás önképzőegyesület női szakosztálya) and German.¹⁰⁴ For native speakers of Hungarian, Slovak and other minoritized languages in the Habsburg Empire, in other words, it was imperative to learn German to take part in these exchanges, while German speakers did not need to make the effort of learning the other languages of the region.

Mobilizing class solidarity to improve the condition of Roma

In the 1950s, state representatives involved in efforts towards the emancipation of Roma in Eastern Europe turned for support to Romani

community representatives. Romani activists used the opportunities offered by the state-level engagement in the 'Gypsy question' by making their voices heard in the public sphere and negotiating their own agendas.¹⁰⁵ In Czechoslovakia in 1952, Romani activist Elena Lacková (1921–2003) responded to an invitation by the Ministry of Information and Education (Ministerstvo informací a osvěty) to give a speech at a training course for Romani activists about 'The Struggle for the Soul of the Gypsy Person' by both emphasizing that she hoped to be able to 'accelerate the "rebirth" [Slovak, *prerod*] of her kinsfolk' and pointing out that Roma 'encountered "racist and damaging attitudes" daily' in the cities of Košice and Prešov (Czechoslovakia, today Slovakia).¹⁰⁶ Basing their arguments on the state-embraced principles of anti-racism and equality, Lacková and other (labour) activists in Czechoslovakia, some of whom had been mobilized after attending such training courses, successfully negotiated improved employment and living conditions along with the granting of cultural rights for Roma.

In a similar manner, in the Hungarian context, in her short period of time as secretary general of the MCKSZ, Mária László discussed with state authorities and institutional representatives at several locations across the country the question of how to 'improve the situation of the Gypsy population'. She used these occasions to emphasize the will and ability of Roma to participate in productive work and at the same time to claim equal access for them to public services and institutions as well as the opportunities for social mobility the People's Republic promised to all its workers. At a meeting of the Health Standing Committee of Fejér County at Székesfehérvár (Hungary) on 30 July 1958, she spoke to representatives of the municipal health and cultural standing committees, a county-level representative of the cultural committee, a representative of the MNOT, a county physician, the head physician and a nurse from the municipality, and a school director, who had all convened to discuss issues to be resolved around the 'Gypsy question'. While in her contribution László referred to the entire Romani community, the topic of the meeting and the composition of those who attended point to gendered awareness in tackling community health issues. László highlighted that the 'Gypsy question' was 'a social issue, not an issue of criminality'.¹⁰⁷ This statement referred to the racial persecution of Roma under the previous regime and during the war and to their perceived association with criminality. It appealed to the new politics concerning Roma as the state socialist regime sought to distance itself from that past. László underlined that Roma were undertaking productive work by alluding to the co-operatives, which had, as the contemporary sources demonstrate,

both men and women members.¹⁰⁸ László stated that ‘in many locations, co-operatives were formed among Gypsies, who could not read and write. These co-operative members perform well at work. The bookkeeping and administration tasks at these co-operatives are done by the educated Gypsies themselves.’¹⁰⁹ Appealing to the state’s promise of Romani emancipation and the principles of class-based equality, she put forward the desired path towards the integration of Roma:

Gypsies should not feel ashamed of their origins. Settlement inhabitants and local authorities should enable the mobility of those individuals and families who want to leave the Gypsy settlement so that isolated Gypsy settlements, viewed by the inhabitants of the locality with a certain amount of disdain, cease to exist. It should be made possible for Gypsies to attend local cultural facilities, [such as] the cultural centre and the cinema, and they should be involved in cultural activities, such as the choir, and acting and folk music groups.¹¹⁰

Despite the overload of work that the small and understaffed office of László bore, it reported successes in mediating between state authorities and Roma and in securing work opportunities.¹¹¹ It was due to the shift in the politics towards Roma at the end of the 1950s, however, that László’s activist career came to an abrupt end.

Trade union activist Éva Bíró’s account of her activism in 1970s Hungary reveals that the mobilization of class solidarity to improve the condition of the Roma was part of trade union women’s agendas and repertoires. Within the enterprises, trade union women were in charge of identifying women workers who might be entitled to receive social benefits. Talking about her activist engagement at factories for the improvement of the working and living conditions of women labourers, Bíró recalled that she and her colleagues were ‘very keen on helping’ Romani women to get a job.¹¹² The solidarity of non-Romani trade union activists like Bíró, however, was not sufficient to integrate Romani women workers into waged employment, due to larger structural social and economic problems, such as persistent minoritization and poverty among Roma. In a statement reminiscent of László’s accounts from the 1950s, Bíró pointed out that in many cases, even though Romani women were hired, poverty hindered them from focusing on their jobs:

In the morning on their very first working day they started with contacting the trade union to ask for employee social benefits.

They have not worked even one day, poor things. Yes, because they did not have anything at home. They had several children, and they had no money to buy food and could not wait a week or two to receive their first salaries. That was the situation unfortunately.¹¹³

Bíró underlined that poverty created such hurdles to the successful employment of Romani women workers that trade union women's activism, which was supportive towards Roma, was not able to solve the problem.

Conclusion

While the broader power structures that shaped minoritized women's lives, namely the political and socioeconomic position of their communities across the region, especially in the interwar period, have been studied in detail, a close-up biographical analysis provides an opportunity to trace how women activists responded to these pressures and which ones they considered most urgent. Persistent ethnicity-based discrimination in the world of labour – on the shopfloor and in labour organizing alike – acquires concrete shapes when narrated by women activists, as they detailed how ethnicity- and gender-based subordination intersected in a fluid and interlocking, rather than simply additive, manner. While some activists, such as Renée Heves and Puah Rakovsky, underlined the importance of organizing work among women, others, such as Hanna Sturm, favoured more universalist agendas and primarily addressed the position of minoritized women workers through the lens of class. Their accounts throw into relief the difficult choices they had to make and the positionalities that these entailed. Some, like Rakovsky, ended up being more outspokenly critical of the gendered discrimination in their own communities, while others stressed the common minoritization of women and men together. There were also those who, like Mária László, addressed the material needs of their minoritized communities and sought to improve women's labour conditions through such tactics.

A long-term view helps to pinpoint continuities and dissimilarities across systemic divides in how minoritized women in the region sought to improve their labour and living conditions, and trace the factors that enabled or hindered their efforts. Shifting political contexts shaped activists' efforts in ways that cannot be overlooked. The wider political context, especially the consolidation of power by the right-wing

authoritarian regimes in the 1930s, could be particularly detrimental and disruptive for minoritized women's activism. The activists could appeal to particular historical iterations of state principles, such as socialist class solidarity, to promote their agendas. But changing political priorities, as the case of László shows, could once again hinder such efforts.

Education, not limited to vocational and professional training (chapter 5), has been an early, and persistent, point on the agendas of minoritized women. Another major continuity consists in the fact that agendas of minoritized women were rarely focused on one direction exclusively, but instead commonly combined a broad range of interrelated goals that ranged from facilitating women's labour and grassroots political organizing and educating women activists to addressing the shortcomings of infrastructure their communities faced.

Evoking cross-ethnic collaboration could have historically different meanings for minoritized and non-minoritized women. The examples of activist efforts to collaborate across ethnic divides in the Habsburg Empire suggest that it might have been easier for the common people to cross ethnic lines, because compared to those in leadership positions, including party and trade unions, they were less invested in the 'national question'.¹¹⁴ These cases also support scholarship indicating that the role that national government and party politics, in interaction with local conditions, played in creating or hindering possibilities for cross-ethnic co-operation or conflict might have been more influential in the success or failure of bridging ethnic divides than individual women activists' agendas.¹¹⁵

Minoritized women labour activists shifted and adapted the framing of their agendas to the social and political contexts they worked in. Renée Heves, determined to transgress with her socialist and communist activism the gender-specific limitations Orthodox Jewish communities in early twentieth-century Transylvania imposed on the educational opportunities and independence of their women members, initially framed her labour activist agendas addressing women workers. Her agendas were further defined by the interwar political context in Romania, in which Transylvanian Hungarians were losing their former privileged position compared to other nationalities in the region and had limited access to political representation. It was in response to right-wing authoritarian regimes and increasingly violent antisemitism between the late 1930s and 1944 that she addressed discrimination against Jews and Jewish working-class women. The newly established People's Republic in Hungary, where class-based equality and anti-racism became state-embraced principles, offered Romani activists a chance to lobby for improved living and working conditions for their communities. Mária László used her position

at the MCKSZ to achieve as much as possible for the recognition of Roma as equal citizens and built on class solidarity to eliminate racial discrimination against them. In dealing with the authorities, she formulated issues as concerning both men and women in Romani communities. At the same time, co-operating with the MNOT, she provided information on Roma to non-Romani women activists and achieved the inclusion of Romani women among local-level MNOT activists.

Notes

- 1 Nakano Glenn, 'From Servitude to Service Work', 1.
- 2 For more on autobiographical writing, see especially Lebow, 'Conscience of the Skin'.
- 3 Çağatay et al., 'Introduction: Women's Labour Struggles', 10.
- 4 Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves*.
- 5 Gordon, 'Black and White Visions of Welfare'.
- 6 Kebalo, 'Exploring Continuities and Reconciling Ruptures', 54.
- 7 Despite pervasive Romanian nationalism, Hungarians still enjoyed a special status in interwar Romania due to former Hungarian dominance in Transylvania as well as the protracted process of depriving Hungarians of their former privileges, which had not been concluded by the 1930s.
- 8 Sággy, 'Cigánypolitika Magyarországon'; Kóczé, 'Roma Civil Rights Movement'.
- 9 Purcsi, *A cigánykérdés 'gyökeres és végleges megoldása'*; Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*; Varsa, "The (Final) Solution of the Gypsy-Question".
- 10 Grimshaw and Loney, 'The Local and the Global in Women's Organizing', 163.
- 11 Naples, 'Women's Community Activism', 21.
- 12 Rodriguez, 'Barrio Women'.
- 13 Grimshaw and Loney, 'The Local and the Global in Women's Organizing', 164.
- 14 Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins'.
- 15 Kóczé et al., *The Romani Women's Movement*; Oprea, 'Romani Feminism'.
- 16 For an overview of recent literature on the Central and Eastern European situation in the pan-European context, see Dalle Mulle, Rodogno, and Bieling, 'Introduction'.
- 17 Heves, 'Heves Renée'.
- 18 Heves, 'Hogyan jöttem el hazulról?', 186.
- 19 Heves, 'Heves Renée'.
- 20 Heves, 'A dolgozó nő helyzete'.
- 21 Heves, 'Heves Renée', 23.
- 22 Heves, 'A dolgozó nő helyzete'.
- 23 Heves, 'A dolgozó nő helyzete'.
- 24 Heves, 'Mai mese'.
- 25 This echoes the tactics of Polish political activists such as Halina Krahelska (see [chapter 9](#)), who in the second half of the 1930s, in an atmosphere increasingly characterized by political persecutions, resorted to documentary fiction as a means to at least partially circumvent censorship.
- 26 Heves, 'Mai mese'.
- 27 'Dr Köppich Anna visszaemlékezése', 125.
- 28 A m. kir. minisztérium 1944. évi 1.240. M. E. számú rendelete, a zsidók megkülönböztető jelzéséről.
- 29 Heves, 'A bélyeg', 205.
- 30 'Dr Köppich Anna visszaemlékezése', 124.
- 31 Hyman, 'Introduction', 3.
- 32 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 85.
- 33 A geographical embodiment of the Russian Empire's anti-Jewish policies, the Pale was first installed under Catherine the Great, and continuously defined the social and economic life of

- the Jewish minority until 1917. By the end of the nineteenth century, the territory of the Pale consisted of 25 provinces, 10 of them in Poland. At the time, roughly 95 per cent of Jews of the Russian Empire, or five million people, were only allowed to reside in the Pale.
- 34 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 55, 59.
- 35 Grimshaw and Loney, 'The Local and the Global in Women's Organizing', 176.
- 36 Molisa, 'The Vanuatu National Council of Women', quoted in Grimshaw and Loney, 'The Local and the Global in Women's Organizing', 173, fn. 56.
- 37 Grimshaw and Loney, 'The Local and the Global in Women's Organizing', 174.
- 38 hooks, *Ain't I a Woman*, 236–37.
- 39 Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins', 1256.
- 40 hooks, *Talking Back*, 124.
- 41 Oprea, 'Arranged Marriage', 140.
- 42 hooks, *Talking Back*, 50, 124–25.
- 43 Bernáth, *Kényszermosdatások*; Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*; Purcsi, *A cigánykérdés 'gyökere és végleges megoldása'*; Varsa, *Protected Children, Regulated Mothers*.
- 44 Purcsi, *A cigánykérdés 'gyökere és végleges megoldása'*; Majtényi and Majtényi, *A Contemporary History of Exclusion*; Kóczé, 'Roma Civil Rights Movement'.
- 45 In this book we use the word 'Gypsy' only with reference to the contemporary sources.
- 46 Purcsi, *A cigánykérdés 'gyökere és végleges megoldása'*.
- 47 Mária László, 'Felirat a Magyar Népköztársaság Minisztertanácsához a Magyarországon élő cigány néptöredék gazdasági, politikai és kulturális életszínvonalának emelése tárgyában', 9 January 1956, NM SZK 50 3.d., NM.
- 48 Mária László, untitled report about the situation of Roma, n.d., NM-MK 7114, NM.
- 49 László, untitled report about the situation of Roma.
- 50 Mária László, 'Munkajelentés', 15 January 1958, SZK 50, 1.d., NM; Mária László, 'Jelentés az 1958. II. negyedév elvégzett munkáiról', 10 July 1958, SZK 50, 1.d., NM.
- 51 Mária László, '1958. jan.15.–1958. ápr.15-ig elvégzett feladatok', 15 April 1958, SZK 50, 1.d., NM.
- 52 Heves, 'Kard és toll a férfié ...'; Heves, 'Heves Renée', 39–40.
- 53 1939. évi IV. törvény cikk a zsidók közéleti és gazdasági térfoglalásának korlátozásáról, excluded those categorized as Jewish from holding a position at a newspaper, through which they could 'dictate the intellectual direction of the paper or otherwise exercise a controlling influence' in its editing.
- 54 Heves, 'Heves Renée', 22.
- 55 Heves, 'Heves Renée', 25–26.
- 56 Heves, 'Élet a tárgyak között'.
- 57 Székely, 'The History of the Romanian System of Public Administration'. The constitution of 1938 was a step towards establishing the royal dictatorship of Carol II in Romania. Women's suffrage was first instituted under the royal dictatorship.
- 58 Buzatu, 'The Adherence of National Minorities'. Established by Carol II in 1938, the party aimed to win the support of national minorities in Romania.
- 59 Heves, 'Kard és toll a férfié ...'.
- 60 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 84.
- 61 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 84.
- 62 Garncarska-Kadary, 'Some Aspects', 251.
- 63 ORT was founded as the Society for Artisanal and Agricultural Labour among Jews in Russia (Obshchestvo remeslennogo i zemledel'cheskogo truda sredi evreev v Rossii) in 1880 in St Petersburg. For an overview of ORT's international activities in the interwar period, see Ivanov, 'From a Russian-Jewish Philanthropic Organization'.
- 64 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 153.
- 65 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 153.
- 66 Rakovsky, *My Life*, 83.
- 67 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 97–98.
- 68 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 92.
- 69 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 203.
- 70 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 217.
- 71 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 95–96.

- 72 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 83–84, 91–92.
- 73 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 198.
- 74 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 197–202.
- 75 Sturm, *Die Lebensgeschichte einer Arbeiterin*, 217–21.
- 76 ZARAH DB, 'Bíró, Éva. Special Record (Person)'.
- 77 Friedjung, 'Wir wollten nur das Paradies auf Erden'.
- 78 Löw, *Der Zerfall der 'Kleinen Internationale'*.
- 79 At the peak of the agrarian socialist movement in the mid-1890s, a rapidly growing group of poor peasants under the leadership of István Várkonyi split from the Hungarian Social Democratic Party (Magyar Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSZDP) due to the lack of attention it paid to the cause of agricultural workers. They started their own weekly paper called *Agrarian Worker (Földművelő)* and, following two congresses, in 1897 they founded the FSZP. On agrarian women's organizing, see Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 80 Farkas, 'Agrárszocializmus és nemzeti kérdés'.
- 81 Farkas, 'Agrárszocializmus és nemzeti kérdés', 180.
- 82 For an activist biography of István Várkonyi, see Farkas, *Várkonyi István*.
- 83 *Földművelő*, 'Tiltakozás'.
- 84 The Romanian-, Serbian- and German-sounding family names are, however, not a one-to-one reference to the number of women of different ethnic backgrounds, since due to persistent Magyarization in the Hungarian part of the Monarchy, people with Hungarian-sounding names could also have had other ethnic origins.
- 85 Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 86 Papp, 'Beküldetett. Bács-Szent-Tamás'; Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 87 *Földművelő*, 'Beküldetett. Pusztá-Földvár'; Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'.
- 88 1898. évi II. törvénycikk a munkaadók és mezőgazdasági munkások közötti jogviszony szabályozásáról.
- 89 Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*.
- 90 'Zajímavý dopis'.
- 91 'Soudružkám, německé řeči znám'.
- 92 'Turn bei Teplitz'.
- 93 *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 'Für die streikenden Feilenhauer'.
- 94 'Inzersdorf'.
- 95 'Inzersdorf'.
- 96 'Inzersdorf'.
- 97 Çelik, 'Sweatshops in the Silk Industry', 34.
- 98 Çelik, 'Sweatshops in the Silk Industry'.
- 99 Van Os, 'Bursa'da Kadın İşçilerin 1910 Grevi', 7–8.
- 100 Letter, Adelheid Popp to Szeréna Ladányi Concerning the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Conference in Budapest, 10 June 1913, fond 696, archival unit 163, PIL, WASMME.
- 101 Letter, Auguste Fickert to Elsa Grailich, 11 January 1910, Handschriftensammlung IN 70453/17, Wienbibliothek im Rathaus, WASMME.
- 102 Letter, Elsa Grailich to Szeréna Ladányi, 17 August 1913, fond 696, archival unit 156, PIL, WASMME; Letter, Elsa Grailich to Szeréna Ladányi, 8 November 1913, fond 696, archival unit 163, PIL, WASMME.
- 103 Letter, Grailich to Ladányi, 17 August 1913.
- 104 Letter, Grailich to Ladányi, 8 November 1913.
- 105 Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*.
- 106 Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*, 72–73.
- 107 'Jegyzőkönyv', 30 July 1958, SZK 50, 6.d., NM.
- 108 Németh, 'A szegkovácsoknál', n.d. SZK 50, 1.d., NM; Molnár, 'Az újpésti cigányság története'.
- 109 'Jegyzőkönyv'.
- 110 'Jegyzőkönyv'.
- 111 For example Mária László, 'Munkajelentés', 15 January 1958, SZK 50, 1.d., NM; Mária László, 'Jelentés az 1958. II. negyedév elvégzett munkáiról', 10 July 1958, SZK 50, 1.d., NM.
- 112 Bíró, interview, ZARAH DB.
- 113 Bíró, interview.
- 114 Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*; Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities'.
- 115 Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*; Nemes and Unowsky, *Sites of European Antisemitism*.

Beyond the workplace: activism and the everyday in the twentieth century

Introduction: women labour activists and the politics of the everyday

Historically, caring for and providing for families have marked the daily routines of women – especially of working-class and peasant women. Such unpaid labour and care work, alongside the struggle to combine it with paid work, have been at the core of actions of women labour activists. Or, in Hungarian social democratic organizer Mariska Gárdos's (1885–1973) (Table 3) words from 1910:

the fact that her landlord, her grocer, is extorting her is something the working-class woman understands at once, because this is her most immediate problem, the most urgent one. She holds meetings and organizes, she protests by making noise with pots in the house and by walking in the street and ... she even uses her fist against the strike-breaking neighbour.¹

Much in line with Gárdos's early twentieth-century assessment of the political importance of everyday-life issues, postwar feminists, gender historians and sociologists have focused on 'the everyday ... as a field of political struggle'.² Drawing on approaches that stress that the 'everyday' needs to be historicized and problematized, including Alltagsgeschichte,³ this chapter constructs and documents the notion of 'everyday activism'. We employ this concept largely in accordance with such previous work, especially in order to show transnational links and global parallels. However, we build up this concept especially to make visible the interrelation of forms and trends in

women's labour activism related to the everyday specific to our region of focus.

By women's 'everyday activism' we understand a kind of activism focused on improving life and living conditions of working women, their families and their communities. Everyday activism builds its forms of action on women's networks and draws its claims from women's gendered experiences – particularly those related to unpaid household and care work. It captures women reacting both to the slow erosion of life circumstances and chronic issues (such as poor infrastructure) and to social emergencies (food shortages, industrial conflict). Such activism was everyday-focused activism, even when it was part of agitation work; at times it could entail community-based activism but could just as easily be activism within the labour movement, within party organizations or within the state apparatus, or draw on women's experiences as providers for families to pursue activist agendas through clandestine work or knowledge production and dissemination.

We build on Dorothee Wierling's notion of the 'everyday life'. For Wierling, 'the everyday' is 'the dimension that is delimited by (soft) boundaries which result from the modest scope of everyday *action*, although open for an unlimited variety of experiences, depending on the complexity of the given society and the tempo of its change'.⁴ This conceptualization is in line with calls by feminist scholars to research women's transformational potential in relation to 'the everyday'⁵ – a potential not recognized for women in Henri Lefebvre's *Critique of Everyday Life*,⁶ for instance.

Since the 1970s, gender and women's historians have problematized 'the everyday'. Historians of women's movements point out that, from the late nineteenth century, women's activism of various ideological persuasions developed a focus on reforming or radically transforming the everyday.⁷ The everyday was to be transformed because it was a domain of drudgery, of (seemingly) mundane concerns, of uninterrogated assumptions about behaviour and social relations and of violence of various kinds that went unnoticed. In certain contexts, such activism was linked to the transgression of the societal norm of separation between 'private' and 'public',⁸ as well as between 'work-related' and 'family-related' concerns.⁹ At the same time, they have shown that activism linked to the everyday could protect communities and foster social movements (see also [chapter 6](#), [chapter 7](#)). In working-class communities, women's 'everyday struggles for dignity and pleasure', for undoing large as well as seemingly small injustices, along with creating enjoyment for themselves and their

communities, were ‘not just foundational for social movements; they [made] them possible’.¹⁰

Everyday activism is a gendered kind of labour activism. Dana Frank has situated activist practices like those of consumer organizations at the ‘meeting point between the sexual division of labor in the home and capitalist relations of production at the waged workplace’.¹¹ Whether employed or doing unpaid work within the home, women became engaged in forms of activism and organizing around ‘quality of life’ agendas with greater frequency and in clearer language than men. Certainly, men engaged in activism beyond their workplaces. Many of the demands of men labour activists were directly connected with family responsibilities. For example, many (men) workers supported or demanded ‘family wages’ – that is, wages that could sustain dependants so that a second income would not be necessary for a family to live well.¹² However, women labour activists who did paid work outside the home were more likely to organize to also deal with issues not merely concerning the immediate world of the workplace but in the realm of the everyday linked to care work. Conversely, in workplaces, women workers were often urged by male trade union colleagues to get involved in areas connected with family or children’s matters.¹³ In turn, such engagement with issues of the everyday influenced the forms, claims and timing of labour activism that was directly tied to wage work.

In the twentieth century, women were drawn towards everyday activism because they played specific roles in working-class and peasant communities. As we will show, many women in our region carved out social roles for themselves as mother-providers, while women labour activists advanced political claims specifically directed at working mothers.¹⁴ Many women, including those who were wage workers and primary supporters of their families, were spouses, mothers and housewives as well, and considered care work their duty and area of expertise.¹⁵

A woman’s skill in managing the family’s earnings was key to a family’s wellbeing, even survival.¹⁶ Social research conducted in the late 1930s in a working-class neighbourhood in Bucharest argued that women from the neighbourhood considered the power to decide on how the family’s usually limited budgets were allocated as key to their work as mothers (see also [chapter 1](#)).¹⁷ Similar patterns could be observed for the everyday life of Viennese workers in the early twentieth century. In Vienna, women were families’ bookkeepers. Men often delivered only a small portion of their income to their wives; wives frequently struggled to keep up with everyday housekeeping on small budgets, which were

only meagrely supplemented by their own incomes.¹⁸ The power to dispose the joint household budget and a higher own income for women became a central concern for many women labour activists.

As Maureen Healy's and Diane P. Koenker's works suggest,¹⁹ especially in the first half of the twentieth century, women were pushed towards everyday activism in part by lack of power in parliamentary and local politics and limited power in the labour movement. Unlike working men, in the region we discuss in this volume, women were excluded from most formal rights and associations until the end of World War I. In 1918–20, women won the franchise in Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland, but women's voting rights were curtailed in Hungary from 1922, and granted only in local elections in Romania (to women who had at least eight years of lower secondary school or vocational or teacher training, or were part of a few other specific groups, such as war widows or clerks) in 1929.²⁰ During the first half of the twentieth century, fascist dictatorships and authoritarian regimes restricted civic rights in most of the region, while after 1945 political activism in (state) socialist countries occurred (mostly) within party and state organizations or, eventually, in informal settings. In Europe's labour movements, women were present but prone to marginalization in decision-making (chapter 2), partly because men labour activists saw women as a politically uninterested, disloyal and complicated-to-organize group of workers.²¹

In fact, in the countries covered in this chapter – the Habsburg Empire and its successor states (especially Austria, Hungary and Romania) and to a lesser extent the Ottoman Empire and its successors (Map 1, Map 2, Map 3) – activism around issues of the everyday was often strongly connected to political causes and movements and long-term socioeconomic shifts. Sometimes, the connection of everyday activism and political causes was explicitly drawn by activists themselves, as, for instance, in the case of hunger protests and (wildcat) strike movements at the end of World War I in the Habsburg Empire, but went largely unnoticed by political observers and historians.²² As we will demonstrate in the chapter, protests against political and economic circumstances often took the form of protests against their 'practical everyday manifestations'²³ instead of addressing the underlying political causes directly.

In this chapter, we discuss working women's protests and activities, in the workplace or in their neighbourhoods, against economic and political conditions that made it difficult to find decent living spaces, to buy enough food to feed their families and to stay healthy in hazardous environmental conditions. Also, we consider labour activist women's

interest in the everyday of women workers. We look at activists' work at grassroots level and (to a lesser extent) within state-aligned institutions to implement initiatives to better their lives or to find other solutions for the pressing issue of women's 'triple workload'²⁴ – as Austrian social democrat Therese Schlesinger (1863–1940) called it in 1916, referring to the labour of taking care of the household, rearing children and gaining income through paid work outside the home.

Organized in three sections, this chapter discusses, based on sources such as police records, memoirs, newspaper articles and organizations' archival material, everyday-focused repertoires of women's labour activism. Using an inclusive perspective on work, activism and the sites where they occur, we consider organizational forms, activist repertoires and agendas of everyday activism that took place in households, community institutions and neighbourhood spaces, as often as in union halls or large public squares, across the twentieth century. With the long view on the twentieth century, we are aiming to identify some of the region-specific cycles and trends that have shaped women's everyday activism. First, we discuss everyday activism that reacted to social emergencies, such as unavailable or poor-quality food and high rents, revealing the links of such activism with larger contemporaneous social movements. Secondly, we reveal instances of women's hidden everyday activism in agitation work during labour conflicts and on behalf of radical social movements. Thirdly, we discuss the alternative set-ups for the reproductive work women activists organized mainly as part of radical left or grassroots movements and the social research and film-making from the region as linked to women labour activists' attempts at re-imagining and restructuring household work and childcare as part of working mother-related agendas.

Fighting for a better life: food, housing and environmental issues

Everyday activism demands related to improving living conditions often focused on women's problematization of insufficient supplies of food and other essential goods, lack of access to affordable and adequate housing, and 'quality of life' concerns related to environmental pollution. As we discuss in this section, to press these demands, women resorted to mass forms of protest as well as to individualized strategies, and sometimes did so in spontaneous, issue-based collectives, within trade union organizations or even state institutions.

A recurrent struggle: hunger riots in long-term perspective

Food riots and hunger demonstrations were a dominant form of social protest in Europe between the late eighteenth and mid-nineteenth centuries.²⁵ Recent research has focused increasingly on social protest movements in the twentieth century sparked by food shortages or the availability of only inadequate nutritional products. In war times, large parts of the population were affected by hunger and related diseases,²⁶ in particular the working class and the poor and, among them, the most vulnerable (that is, children, pregnant and breastfeeding women, elderly and chronically ill people). When economic hardship coincided with moments of political unrest, as in the period before and after World War I – when radical socialist movements promoted a different, equal society – hunger riots flared up, becoming frequent in several countries of the region. In 1911, for example, around 100,000 people protested inflation in Vienna; the ensuing deadly rebellion destroyed perceived places of (state) authority, such as schools.²⁷ Towards the end of World War I, in places including Bulgaria, Austria, Hungary and Slovenia, hunger demonstrations and strikes were especially frequent.²⁸ A significant wave of hunger strikes, with mainly women participants, also affected cities such as Rijeka (Fiume), Osijek (Eszék, Essegg), Vukovar (Vukovár) and Split (all Habsburg Monarchy, later Italy and Yugoslavia, today Croatia).²⁹ These forms of collective protest continued after the years of war: riots at marketplaces were an ongoing phenomenon until the early 1920s at least.³⁰ Hunger demonstrations were part of labouring women's protest movements in the postwar period in Austria and elsewhere.³¹

At the end of the twentieth century, as at its beginning, protests could be triggered by occasional supply deficits or sudden price increases – in the Russian city of Novocherkassk in 1962, for example, a protest became a massacre³² – or by long-lasting structural shortages and political discontent, as in state socialist countries in the 1980s. The hunger marches of Polish women workers in the summer of 1980 were not simply the spark that started the movement known as the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union 'Solidarity' (Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy 'Solidarność'),³³ but illustrate that social, economic and political reasons for protest were often intertwined.

Especially for the twentieth century, historians have discussed the phenomenon of food riots as specifically a *women's* form of protest – in contrast to previous centuries. Historians characterized these protests as spontaneous and unorganized; observers sometimes described them as

‘instinctive’,³⁴ with women protesting in semi-public places of everyday life, ones associated with the ‘women’s sphere’, such as marketplaces. The demands were considered to not have been of a political nature but rather only related to social and economic grievances.³⁵ Although women’s food protests seemingly made straightforward, basic demands, they were often also about broader political themes (peace, for instance), and discontent was expressed at places of (local) governmental power.³⁶

Collective food protests were often undertaken by working-class and peasant women and did not require the participation of institutional organizations, yet members of the protest movements could be party functionaries. Parties, including the communist and social democratic parties, very happily used social protests to set forth their demands. Although in many cases protests against poor-quality, expensive or insufficient food took a contentious form, there were instances where women used formal ways of protest to achieve their goals. During World War I, women in various countries of the region organized to send petitions to the Ministries of Interior Affairs in their respective countries, asking for food aid to be more widely available and better distributed. In the Ottoman Empire, poor women and children whose men family members were enlisted in the army faced a serious shortage of food caused by the simple lack of equal distribution of everyday goods by local authorities. In 1917, for example, five women from the town of Arabsun (today Gülşehir) complained in a petition that the officer of the warehouse distributed most of the food to his acquaintances, leaving the rest of the community to starve. In 1918, nine women from the Yozgat province who identified as ‘wives of soldiers’ sent a petition to the ministry; they emphasized their disadvantaged position compared to the wives of civil servants and army officers. The petition protested the disproportionate amount of food aid given to middle-class families while lower-class women struggled to find any food to feed their children. In both cases, the ministry responded to poor women’s claims with the decision to investigate the discriminatory practices of local authorities.³⁷

This form of hunger protest, in which working-class women brought forward their claims related to insufficient provisions, continued well into the twentieth century and combined different forms of action, including rallies and petitions – forms of actions that were persistent regardless of whether or not women had the right to vote.³⁸ Women in post-1945 Austria similarly gathered in central squares in their districts or villages; demanded more and better food, for lower prices, and prosecutions for illegal practices; and assembled in demonstrations, sometimes with thousands of participants, such as

one with 3,000 women participants in the mining town of Leoben in March 1947.³⁹ In 1950, during a nationwide strike movement triggered by rising prices among other things, some women joined with food protests. In the southern Austrian province of Carinthia, for instance, 15 women gathered at a demonstration on the main square in St Veit an der Glan. They were led by the 'known communist' Karoline Hebein and carried banners bearing the following inscriptions: 'Into the dungeons with the profiteers' and 'Those who are against the price increase, demonstrate with us'.⁴⁰

As illustrated by the previous cases, women rallied in front of places of local power and sent delegations to high functionaries of the provinces or the state to protest scarcity and unjust social, economic and political conditions. However, although many of those protest movements mobilized women across class boundaries, they could also turn against minorities and/or be antisemitic. This occurred in many instances in the twentieth century, including the post-1945 protests in Austria, a testimony to the antisemitism that persisted even after the end of World War II and the fall of the National Socialist dictatorship.⁴¹ In the Kingdom of Poland, for instance, haunted by fears of a presumed Jewish dominance over the Polish political and economic landscape, activists across the political spectrum viewed boycotts as a way to weaken alleged Jewish influence. In 1912, as antisemitic hostility grew, writers and journalists of different political affiliations called for a general boycott of Jewish businesses. One of these voices was Iza Moszczeńska (1864–1941), a socialist and a prominent figure in the Polish women's movement.⁴² Influenced by Moszczeńska, the Union of Equal Rights for Polish Women (Związek Równouprawnienia Kobiet Polskich), a major organization fighting for women's suffrage, also supported the antisemitic boycott.⁴³

The unruly working class: rent strikes and the tenants' movement

In a similar way to hunger demonstrations, the tenants' protests in the first half of the twentieth century repeatedly raised 'quality of life' issues, in this case the issue of affordable and adequate housing. Tenants' protests occurred in Europe, including cross-regionally, and in other parts of the world, such as in North and South America. Although compared to hunger protests rent strikes are not as much identified as a form of specifically women's protest, research – on Buenos Aires and New York City in 1907 and 1908, on Veracruz (Mexico) between 1870 and 1927, on Vienna in 1910–12 and on Budapest in 1906–12 – shows

the importance of women workers, often migrants (chapter 6), in community struggles against rising rents in the poorest neighbourhoods of industrial centres and big cities.⁴⁴ In February 1911, for instance, during a multi-year wave of riots against rent increases and tenant strikes (the collective refusal to pay rent or any increase in rent) several hundred women in the Viennese workers' district Brigittenau participated in a *Prackerdemonstration*, a 'rally with bats'.⁴⁵ A commentator in the *Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiter-Zeitung*) considered the strong presence of women 'as a leading and spurring element' in the tenants' movement to be 'very gratifying', claiming: 'Who, for example, would not laugh his heart out when he learns that recently in Brigittenau several hundred women were waiting for their greedy slumlord [Zinsgeier] with bats in their hands to show him their admiration.'⁴⁶

The intensification of different forms of tenant protest movements before World War I – riots, strikes, illegal settlements and squats – observed internationally and in Europe was linked to the rapid increase in populations in industrial centres. In Vienna, the population rose from 430,000 in 1850 to 2.1 million in 1914, and in Budapest the rise was from 280,000 in 1874 to 880,371 in 1910.⁴⁷ At the time, in Budapest, apartments were among the most overcrowded in Europe. According to contemporary statisticians, the rents were even higher than in Vienna with lower average wages.⁴⁸ In these conditions, a tenants' movement emerged and was very active in the Hungarian capital between 1906 and 1912.

The forms of protest in the Budapest tenants' movement were diverse: they ranged from self-help (such as co-operative building activity), through individual and collective violent protest, to more organized resistance such as refusing to pay rent, staging large demonstrations and co-ordinating house boycotts. In a house boycott, all parties living in a house terminated or threatened to terminate their lease and denounced the dishonest rental practices in public via posters or leaflets. As in a production strike, in the tenants' strikes and house boycotts, shop stewards were elected to deliver and negotiate the demands.

Many women (and children) were a visible part of this tenants' movement, and some common protest practices are linked to the domestic sphere, as the example of charivari at protests – singing satirical songs and making noise with pots and pans – illustrates. In February 1908, for example, protesting tenants made noise until midnight with kitchen utensils such as pots, pans and lids, among other things, in the streets; they sang mock verses at the owner of a house at Madách utca 17 in Budapest.⁴⁹

The Hungarian tenants' movements show that everyday activism often developed alongside party politics and fostered women's participation in social movements. Realizing the political potential of the Budapest tenants' discontent, the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt, MSZDP) eventually called for a general tenants' strike. In August 1910, Mariska Gárdos, the outspoken leader of the Association of Women Workers of Hungary (Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület, MME) within the MSZDP, reflected in the movement's daily *People's Voice* (*Népszava*) on the tenants' movement's role for women's political mobilization (Table 4). Gárdos pointed out that unlike in other public rallies, including May Day, 'a mass of women workers ... participated in all the converging [district tenants'] marches in a well-proportioned percentage [harmonikus százalék]'.⁵⁰ Women had joined in great numbers not only because social democrats had done the legwork of mobilizing tenants, Gárdos argued, but also because party activists had known how to strike the right chord with proletarian women. They had understood that women were heavily affected by and invested in the rent issue, and were eager to march for that cause.

Everyday activism in our region of focus was, early on, attuned to global developments. The case of the marching and protesting Budapest tenants highlights transnational links and trends. In a 1904 Budapest demonstration attended by 15,000 people, the tenants' movements in New York City were referenced.⁵¹ In many parts of the world, in the aftermath of World War I, the forms of struggle for affordable housing changed – including in Budapest. As Temma Kaplan outlined in her path-breaking 1987 article, women in many cities of the combatant and neutral countries engaged in communal strikes that brought together demands for housing, food and fuel. Affordable housing was an important site of activism of women of the urban working class in Russia, Italy, Spain and Mexico alike.⁵²

Housing remained an important demand in Vienna and Budapest as well. In 1918–19, revolutionary workers' councils interfered in what had been rather spontaneous neighbourhood protests against evictions in Vienna, and issued resolutions prohibiting landlords from evicting tenants, triggering court cases and discussions in the city council.⁵³ In Budapest, the revolutionary period allowed for 'wildcat' requisitions of apartments;⁵⁴ in the heated disputes over flats, political and personal interests blurred and ethnic and class conflicts came to the fore.⁵⁵ Illegal settlement was another strategy of the poor used in both Budapest and Vienna as well as in Athens and Ankara in the interwar period. From the

1960s on, squatting became a widespread form of protest in many bigger European cities.

Protest against eviction of tenants was a recurrent theme in the immediate aftermath of World War II, for example, in Austria, where social, economic and political motives intertwined (Figure 19). On 28 November 1946, for instance, 300 to 400 people demonstrated in front of an apartment building in Vienna's Siebenbrunnengasse against the eviction of a municipal employee. The protesters were successful insofar as the removal was postponed until the new year. The people's anger was mainly directed, as noted in a police file, 'against the former owners of the flat, who were known National Socialists'.⁵⁶ In another case, 30 people demonstrated together with the tenants and the concierge against an eviction in the Viennese district of Hütteldorf and against the current owners of the house, who had "aryanized" the building – that is, stolen it from the previous Jewish owners.⁵⁷ In these and similar cases women participated in large numbers; often, they were the majority among protesters.

Protesting environmental destruction 'as mothers and as consumers'

In the second half of the twentieth century, women's problematization of living conditions increasingly expanded beyond the domain of housing and neighbourhood infrastructure to include issues such as pollution and environmental degradation. Linked with issues of social justice, concerns about the 'negative impact on the natural environment' of developments in western industrialized countries – developments including consumer culture and unbridled economic growth – gained a foothold in the alternative social movements and a strengthened civil society.⁵⁸ This broadened even more as the boom of environmentalism in western countries was linked to the economic crises of the 1970s and nuclear anxiety caused by the Cold War.⁵⁹ In Eastern Europe and Turkey, environmental concern was articulated especially as preoccupation about the effects of pollution on people, particularly on vulnerable groups, such as children.

In Western and Central Europe, the link between women's interests and ecology was articulated in an increasingly vocal manner by ecofeminism from the late 1970s.⁶⁰ In Austria, some of the feminists of the 1980s highlighted the fact that women were doubly affected by the consequences of pollution: 'As mothers, they suffer with the environmental diseases. As housewives and consumers, they are responsible for

repairing the destroyed environment.⁶¹ The concern that women were affected by health issues caused by pollution, on the one hand, and by the extra work that sustainable and ecological housekeeping could entail, on the other, became even more urgent after the 1986 nuclear reactor accident at the Chornobyl' power plant (near Pryp'iat', Soviet Ukraine, today Ukraine). In the wake of the catastrophe, some Austrian feminists contended that, while 'housework' had become a symbolic 'place of resistance' within the ecological movement, because this housework was still done within what feminists understood as the 'exploitative nuclear family system', it was not a suitable 'approach to liberation'.⁶² At around the same time, the women's congress of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB) asserted that environmental protection must not lead to more domestic work and that consumers should not have to give up labour facilitation devices in the household.⁶³ Despite this criticism, the nexus of environmental issues with the realm of the everyday led to the creation of women-only groups rallying for specific concerns – 'an eco-partnership of women' instead of a 'social partnership of men', as one journalist put it when reporting on a cross-party women's initiative on drinking water issues in Austria in 1984.⁶⁴

At the same time, in much of the region covered in this volume, namely in (state) socialist countries, environmental protection was not argued for with reference to an ethical relationship with nature or as a critique of patriarchy to the same extent. Rather, it was strongly linked to 'quality of life' issues (including pollution), with women spurred to organize to improve living conditions for themselves and their children. This is the case of the movement for '(at least) clean air' initiated by six women from the city of Ruse, in state socialist Bulgaria. The movement grew to become a landmark dissident campaign of the late 1980s (Figure 31).⁶⁵ Beginning in September 1987, the six women mobilized Ruse inhabitants to protest chronic incidents of atmospheric pollution caused by an industrial plant releasing high levels of chlorine into the air. The women, called 'mothers with strollers' or the 'Ruse mothers', drew on both family networks and professional skills and ties they had developed as technicians in the city's parks service (Parkstroï) to organize a series of peaceful demonstrations. They began protesting after public incidents – such as a public ceremony organized by the Pioneer youth organization during which schoolchildren had to improvise masks out of red cravats – underscored that children or certain categories of adults, such as pregnant women, were especially vulnerable to toxic air.⁶⁶ Although mobilization was initially local, and

only later national, from the beginning the protest had an intrinsically transnational dimension: the chlorine was released into the air by a plant in the neighbouring Romanian town of Giurgiu, a city on the other side of the Danube from Ruse. Another aspect makes the example of the Bulgarian ‘mothers with strollers’ pertinent for discussing women’s environmental activism: many protests about particular environmental issues, but also against the policies that caused major environmental disasters, were led by women, who justified their actions primarily as mothers of affected or potentially affected children.⁶⁷

In Turkey, community-based and campaign-oriented activism by working women about environmental issues took hold especially in the late 1970s. It sometimes overlapped with labour union agendas concerning workers’ health and pollution in the workplace and residential areas.⁶⁸ The Association of Progressive Women (İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, İKD; see also [chapter 3](#), [Figure 28](#), [Figure 29](#)) linked working-class women’s problems to ‘quality of life’ agendas. Environmental issues such as lack of running water, non-operational sewage systems and air pollution near factories occupied an important part of their agenda. The İKD organized petition campaigns, public panels and street protests to address these issues. It participated in broader alliances and co-organized, for instance, the congress ‘End Air Pollution’ in 1977.⁶⁹ Between 1976 and 1978, İKD members succeeded in solving several neighbourhood-based problems by pressing local municipalities to respond to their demands. For example, in Istanbul, the Pınar neighbourhood in the Sarıyer district gained access to clean water, and the Piripaşa neighbourhood in the Hasköy district obtained a primary school building that met health standards.⁷⁰ In return, the İKD’s activism was belittled by men comrades and ridiculed as ‘municipal socialism’.⁷¹

While there were certainly synergies between trade unions and environmental movements, in some instances, trade union leadership took an active stance against environmental protesters. This was the case during the protests against the construction of a power plant on the Hainburg floodplains near Vienna in 1984–5. The ÖGB organized a counter-demonstration in favour of the plan.⁷² Nevertheless, this opposition was not uniform – some workers’ representatives, including the conservative Marga Hubinek (1926–2016) and activists from the new green movement, campaigned against the project. A handful of alternative trade unionists called ‘wide-mouthed frogs’ (Breitmaulfrösche, from the title of their magazine) lobbied within the ÖGB and the company VOEST: ‘What those affected have to say is important’, asserted one of the Breitmaulfrösche, Gerda Koszky.⁷³

Despite the difficult relationship between many trade unions and representatives of the new social movements in Austria, environmental protection issues became increasingly important in the course of the 1980s on the national and international scales.⁷⁴ In 1986, in her speech supporting the Green Party's presidential candidate Freda Meissner-Blau (1927–2015), works councillor Burgi Wilder explained how the candidate was 'in favour of breaking open [the] authoritarian structures' of the ÖGB and 'of including the people affected, in other words, the workers themselves'. Wilder continued that the candidate's policies were closely related to demands for wage justice, demands which she explained were the result of Meissner-Blau's experiences as a working woman.⁷⁵

The hidden part of activist work

During episodes of labour struggle, women engaged in forms of labour activism that drew on their work as mothers and as wives as often as on their experience of paid work. Similarly, within social movements, women commonly chose to play not only highly visible roles (as publicly outspoken activists, for instance) but also less prominent ones (such as providing food and caring for children during labour conflicts) and even fully covert ones (as illegal communist 'technics').⁷⁶ They were often made to fulfil these roles by men peers in their movements, certainly, but women were nevertheless drawing from their positions in neighbourhood networks or communities as a resource and cover for their activism.

Strike kitchens, childcare and related reproductive strike work

In the historiography of labour, activities in support of strikes tended to be represented as auxiliary to the actual labour conflict.⁷⁷ Recent work emphasizes the significance of gendered 'reproductive strike work', as well as the emotional charge and the 'affective work' of support activities during strikes. As Veronika Helfert and Katharina Hermann have recently argued, based on evidence for Austria and Switzerland in 1916–18, a strike 'is not only about the act of stopping work and the resulting consequences, but also [about] the conditions that make this act possible in the first place, and the work that needs to be done when the machines are stopped'.⁷⁸ However, the same historians noted that documents evidencing women's reproductive strike work, and especially

documents that show in detail how such work was organized in the region, are surprisingly difficult to come by.⁷⁹

Before World War II, strike support work became formalized into auxiliaries in certain contexts – but not in our region of focus. In the United States, for instance, large federations of ‘women’s auxiliaries’ linked to major trade unions ‘organized boycotts of non-union goods, ... functioned as social, fraternal and charitable organizations’ and ‘mobilized during strikes and lockouts, setting up picket lines and soup kitchens’.⁸⁰ Existing scholarship on our region, in part scattered and dated, does not document the existence of formalized women’s auxiliaries before World War II. However, we find a similar gendered division of labour related to industrial action of reproductive strike work: co-operatives (see also [chapter 1](#)), women’s sections, allied (women’s) associations and informal networks stepped in to support the strikers and their families. To an extent, this lack of union-related formalization may have contributed to the historical invisibility (including lack of archives) for such key actors in labour struggles. At the same time, the lack of auxiliaries can be read as displaying a region-specific history of organizing such labour, and by extension a distinct, long-lasting praxis of everyday activism related to industrial conflict.

After World War II, in the context of unions’ activities within the state apparatus in much of the region discussed here, open labour protests were not aimed for and thus neither were activities in support of labour protests. So-called auxiliary tasks, in fact forms of everyday activism in themselves, formed part of a gendered division of labour in the world of statist unions ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 10](#)). For instance, in Romanian tobacco factories, union women saw community and care-related tasks as part of their union work – in the 1960s almost as much as in the 1920s.⁸¹

Women’s work in strike kitchens or otherwise to provide food during labour conflicts is one type of reproductive strike work activity that was crucial for maintaining the strike action, but was rarely documented. For instance, whereas several media reports on strikes in Transylvania during the 1930s mention the existence of strike kitchens, organized either by the union that had called the strike or by supportive members of the local community, those (most likely women) who dealt directly with the distribution of the food were not mentioned. For example, writer Sándor Huszár remembered being sent, as a boy, by his father to pick up hot food from the ‘strike kitchen’ organized in the yard of the Leatherworkers’ Union in Cluj (Kolozsvár, Klausenburg, Romania) sometime in the 1930s – no woman appears in his narrative (see also [Figure 9](#)).⁸²

Importantly, beyond strike kitchens, women were involved in providing food for workers engaged in labour conflicts in many other ways. Often, these efforts were only loosely linked to the organizing efforts of strike committees. For example, during a May 1918 strike in the Austrian city of Steyr, workers avoided returning to their homes for meals for fear of being sent to the front lines. Women kin would meet the striking men with food in designated places.⁸³ Such support work allowed (men) workers to continue their strike and protected them from retaliatory conscription.

Although in many instances this supportive work was co-ordinated by trade unions or family members and within neighbourhood networks,⁸⁴ other organizations would also get involved, such as co-operatives ([chapter 1](#)) or women's groups – effectively serving as auxiliaries. Part of an international trend of labour protests, especially in the mining and metal sectors in western countries, triggered by economic shifts due to deindustrialization,⁸⁵ in 1977 the Mine Workers' Union of Turkey (Türkiye Maden İşçileri Sendikası, Maden-İş) launched a strike in multiple workplaces for better pay and working conditions. Engaging many actors in left-wing politics in support of workers' demands, the strike lasted for eight months. The İKD organized various actions in support of the strike, most notably the 'Jam for Workers on Strike' campaign in which more than a tonne of jam was provided for the striking workers, and visited villages to collect non-perishable food from villagers to support the Maden-İş strike.⁸⁶ In addition, in some strike locations, İKD members became fully responsible for providing food for workers for a given period, such as the İKD Şişli branch in Istanbul, which provided food for the Bebişot vehicle factory workers every day for two months.⁸⁷

Many women became involved in industrial action by being organizers for the provision of childcare. A text with instructions on how to organize a general strike from an anarchist group in Białystok (Russian Empire, today Poland) in 1904 underlines the (ideological) importance of childcare: 'Some women workers could dedicate themselves to provide food and water to the children and get them dressed, and amid the noise of battle explain to them the meaning of the struggle taking place as the battle for workers' liberation, for freedom and for the children.'⁸⁸

In practice, children were often sent away during strike action. This involved a larger organizational effort. Discussing the transfer of children during the August 1913–January 1914 Dublin lockout, Theresa Moriarty, for instance, argued that such a 'removal of children from the scene of industrial conflict to be looked after in the homes of the

sympathizers elsewhere improvised on and combined traditional family strategies with contemporary industrial practice'.⁸⁹

As pointed out above, household survival strategies were managed most often by women in striking households and via women's solidarity networks. In contemporary reports, the gendered nature of this form of support work was rarely discussed. In 1913, in Hungary, during a general strike related to suffrage rights, the placing of children with sympathetic families became a key household survival strategy and an important mobilization tactic. In February 1913, the socialist *People's Voice* published a letter by a man who identified as a 'radical teacher'. He wished to notify the readers of the newspaper that, in solidarity with the planned mass strike, his community was prepared to 'take upon ourselves the care and maintenance of 25 children of our proletarian brothers and sisters for the duration of the struggle'.⁹⁰

Similarly, in 1919, in Romania, during a general strike of workers in the oil industry, the radical press reported that: 'The strikers' children are entrusted to their comrades for maintenance; to this end several hundred children have already been sent to the capital city to different workers who offered to keep, at their own expense, the children of oil workers.'⁹¹ Considering that most working families lived modestly, the taking in of another child 'at their own expense' was surely a significant commitment, and placed an additional burden on how a woman managed the household, even supposing families received some support with expenses from solidaristic colleagues.

In some cases party-linked organizations like the social democratic Friends of the Children Austria (Österreichische Kinderfreunde) took care of children during strike movements, as in the case of children of striking jute workers in 1928, who were sent from Burgenland to Vienna via train (Figure 7). But although organizations often took on these tasks, it was mostly informal networks of working(-class) women that created the environment for these solidarity practices.⁹²

Agitational everyday activism during strikes and within social movements

Strike support work entailed not only managing the food supply and providing for the children of striking workers, but also rallying communities around those striking, and supporting the families directly affected by the labour conflict. Women, for instance the wives and daughters of workers in Istanbul's Kasımpaşa shipyard in the Ottoman

Empire in 1873,⁹³ supported striking family members by participating in demonstrations and from the sides of picket lines. Over the course of the next hundred years, various other Turkish strikes would involve not only men workers but also, prominently, their women family members: in 1927 during the Adana–Nusaybin railway strike, in 1963 during a strike at the Fargo rubber factory in Istanbul and in 1991 during the Petkim Aliğa refinery strike in İzmir.⁹⁴

Furthermore, as many studies on women's clandestine political work have shown, labour activism meant not only agitation work, but also enabling communications and distributing information. In the monthly magazine *The Communist Women's International* (*Die kommunistische Fraueninternationale*), the Czech communist Anna Křenová (1874–1944) particularly praised the numerous women comrades who had been arrested. Many had been engaged in the information service during the December strike of 1920 and carried out relief actions for the prisoners and their relatives in the form of a 'proletarian "Red Cross"' after the end of strike action.⁹⁵ In other countries as well, including Austria and Romania, the so-called Red Aid was a communist-aligned organization that provided prison support and poverty relief for the families of imprisoned communists, while also supporting women workers during labour conflicts (Figure 9).⁹⁶ As chapter 3 discusses in more detail, the activism of radical women workers not only blurred the boundaries between political and labour-related clandestine work, but could also cross borders: during the Spanish Civil War, Karla Pfeiferová (1886–1969) and other communist women in the Hradec Králové region (Königgrätz, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) helped the families of those International Brigade volunteers who fought in the war by knitting various items and sewing children's clothes and smuggling them to Prague, from where they were dispatched to Spain.⁹⁷

Often, such activities were carried out by both women and men, but women's informal ties within neighbourhoods and their often less conspicuous appearance played a crucial role in securing support for strikes.⁹⁸ During a 1929 strike of tobacco workers in Plovdiv (Bulgaria), neighbourhood commissions and neighbourhood treasuries were created. As part of these commissions and treasuries, teams of women and men collected information about families most affected by the strikes, and distributed aid from the strike fund; they also collected donations from around the neighbourhoods for the strike fund.⁹⁹ Women's agitation groups distributed the strike bulletin in the city's neighbourhoods and, in the process, sought to understand the police presence in workers' neighbourhoods and to gain information about the mood of inhabitants:

These girl-women did [agitation] work around the clock with plain words, elusive along the walls in the dark streets, crossing easily through courtyards' connecting doors ... They had their neighbourhoods and streets: each had a specified place where the strikers from 'her' district came at the appointed hour; the word of the leaders reached them, then they told them – what was going on in the neighbourhood, what were people talking about, were the strike pickets holding, were the police beating [them] ... So the information flowed from the centre to the masses and from the masses to the centre; one knew every day what had happened and where.¹⁰⁰

At the neighbourhood level, women mobilized people to participate in political demonstrations. During the 1950 October strike in Austria, in the mining town of Mürzzuschlag in Styria, women described by police as 'communist female functionaries' went from flat to flat in a workers' housing estate (Arbeitssiedlung) and declared that, if necessary, the residents would be forced to participate. Flyers from the communist-leaning Federation of Democratic Women Austria (Bund Demokratischer Frauen Österreichs) were deposited at the doors.¹⁰¹ Similar to this strike (chapter 3), which was not supported by the ÖGB, in 1931 women in a coal-mining community in the Jiu Valley, in Romania, took it upon themselves to go 'from house to house, from man to man', to convince people to declare a general strike, as the level of misery had become unbearable. The centre-left press reported that 'the trade unions had to intervene, with authority and energy, to stop a strike that was bound to fail, because the mining societies were sitting on mountains of unsold coal. They [the mining societies] would have loved a strike.'¹⁰²

At times, social movements and the women activists who were part of certain social movements made use of the invisibility of women's work as mothers and housewives to facilitate mobilization.¹⁰³ In the case of the aforementioned Austrian strike of October 1950 (Oktoberstreik), police reports noted that certain housewives or workers' wives had distributed 'inflammatory' flyers and newspapers, seemingly disregarding the fact that some of the women involved were relatively experienced communist activists.¹⁰⁴

Similarly, communist women in interwar Croatia were arrested for illegal activities such as distributing leaflets and continued to play a crucial role after the invasion of Zagreb by the National Socialist army in 1941 by organizing the printing, delivering and storing of material.¹⁰⁵ In the 1930s, the illegal Communist Party of Romania (Partidul Comunist

din România) relied heavily on women's work as 'technics' to carry out various high-risk missions under the guise of their everyday actions as caregivers and housekeepers.¹⁰⁶ Suzana Pârvulescu (1898–1942) was one such woman; she travelled between cities with manifestos hidden in a basket: 'Whoever watched her would have said that she is a careful housewife, who had travelled to Bucharest for a great deal of market shopping, as proven by the heavy suitcase and shopping basket.'¹⁰⁷ Another time she spied on military operations in a military barracks by claiming she was a mother who had come to look for her son.

Reorganizing the everyday through grassroots practices, policymaking and knowledge production

Throughout the twentieth century women activists who were engaged in grassroots groups, trade unions and (state) socialist organizations thought about and advocated solutions for organizing reproductive work. In this section we discuss women's everyday-focused labour activist efforts linked to nurturing themselves and their dependants, including fulfilling necessary tasks at home, shopping and taking care of children – outside of crises and social emergencies. Women activists in the labour and women's movement conceived of and offered alternative or supplementary means to organize everyday life in instances where state-centred and employer-based solutions were not sufficient or were completely absent. These means could be organized through self-help as well as through cross-class activism taking the form of philanthropic work. These methods were accompanied by and based on rich knowledge production and dissemination as well as artistic (mainly documentary) reflection on working-class women's lives.

Proposing alternative set-ups for reproductive work

A study of Viennese working-class families from before World War I found that 80 per cent were dependent on the gainful employment of women.¹⁰⁸ Especially for the women in these double-income-dependent families, it proved almost impossible to manage the work required to run the household. Many things, including food, had to be bought – often quite expensively.¹⁰⁹ Domestic tasks and their organization were thus a constant concern for women workers – 'thoughts and worries' that did not end 'at the factory gate', as the social democrat Käthe Leichter (1895–1942) noted in a study on the lives of women workers in the

1930s: ‘they are brought to work’. These thoughts and worries included questions such as: ‘Will [my] husband take the boiling water off the stove in time; will [my] youngest child be dressed warmly enough; will there be enough food for everyone at lunchtime?’¹¹⁰

At the core of the worries of working-class mothers and social reformers alike was the wellbeing of children. Thus, since the nineteenth century, good and proper nutrition, especially for the poor, was a field not only of scientific research, but also of activism.¹¹¹ As part of both class-conscious and cross-class activism, social workers, but also women activists, often with close links to the labour movement, engaged with this matter. For instance, the physician Margarethe Hilferding (1871–1942)¹¹² gave numerous lectures on ‘nutrition in the household’ and related topics in the 1920s to a working-class audience, for example in the Workers’ Club (Arbeiterheim) (Figure 3) in the Viennese district Favoriten in 1921.¹¹³

On a concrete level, the concern with nutrition of children led to the widespread practice in the region of distributing milk to undernourished children. In the Kingdom of Poland, a group of middle- and upper-class professionals created and ran organizations called A Drop of Milk (Kropla mleka) starting from 1904–5 (see also chapter 9). Perhaps the best known of them was based in the major industrial city of Łódź. Its task was to provide fresh, sterilized milk to babies to combat the staggering infant mortality among children of women employed at the city’s numerous textile factories. Often, Kropla mleka organizations were managed by women doctors, such as Wanda Szczawińska (1866–1955) in Warsaw and Zofia Garlicka (1874–1942) in Łódź.¹¹⁴

In Romania, the Bucharest-based, communist-aligned Association for the Protection of Woman and Child (Asociația pentru Protecția Femeii și Copilului), active from January to November 1935, created social centres for ‘sheltering children up to the age of five, whose mothers are busy outside the home during the day’.¹¹⁵ A centre was set up in each district of the capital city; the centres provided, as well as free childcare, literacy courses for children’s mothers, free medical and legal consultations, and tutoring for school exams. The association also distributed (uncontaminated) milk, with the district social centres functioning as ‘milk points’. The association was financed by donations from their several dozen women members. Nonetheless, four of the five main organizers (Zlota Fleach, Feiga Kofman, Irma Rosenberg – later active in the French Resistance under the name Irma Mico (1914–2022) – and Iloșă Kamenischi), young Jewish women students, were arrested and accused of being communist agents.¹¹⁶ They were tried and imprisoned for months.

In many parts of our region, self-organization to provide support and services to vulnerable members was crucial for the Jewish communities, who had been pushed to the periphery of economic and political life. Bina Garncarska-Kadary has noted that in interwar Poland ‘the Jewish trade unions provided job centres, medical and legal aid, sanatoria for children suffering from tuberculosis, summer camps, etc.’.¹¹⁷ Women were at the forefront of these efforts. For instance, socialist Zionist activist Puah Rakovsky (1865–1955) described in her memoirs not only her work as organizer and provider of vocational education for Jewish women, but also the wide variety of efforts beyond any formal organization, such as making her home available as a place for meetings, hosting activists who found themselves in dire straits, helping people find jobs, and establishing informal networks of press and book distribution ([chapter 7](#)).¹¹⁸

Many organizations that were close to political parties or the labour movement provided concrete services in the same way welfare associations did, to ease the everyday lives of women workers. Women activists participated in and often animated these grassroots practices. Bearing in mind the difficulties of ‘working motherhood’, trade unionists and social democrats in our region went further and called for women’s needs to be considered when conceiving of municipal politics and regulating working hours wherever they had influence (see also [chapter 4](#)).

Ensuring that women had the time to care in the first place was a fundamental concern of policymaking. In tandem with the demand for a general reduction in statutory working hours, some activists argued that full-time working hours should be shorter for women in general. For example, in 1927, Käthe Leichter argued that Saturday afternoons had to be reserved for domestic work that had been left undone, ‘otherwise there would be no Sunday rest for women’: ‘The shorter working hours are only a small substitute for the extra work that women do beyond the workplace, one more way of giving them the opportunity to relax and thus be able to fight’, Leichter claimed.¹¹⁹ After World War II, a day off to do housework was included in a few collective agreements in Austria (though only briefly) – communist trade unionists in particular, such as Grete Kalteis (1901–96), campaigned vehemently for it.¹²⁰ Originally introduced under National Socialist rule, the day off for housework remained an important policy instrument in the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik, GDR). It was expanded over the years under pressure from working women, in particular. Initially available only to married women, it was later extended to unmarried women and, under certain circumstances, also to men.¹²¹

Despite other ideas being discussed, western countries (and later international organizations such as the ILO and UN) primarily promoted part-time employment after World War II as a way to mobilize women into the workforce while maintaining care and housework in the realm of women – albeit under protest from many trade union women who feared negative consequences for working women.¹²² (State) socialist countries were characterized by a “‘working mother’ gender contract”,¹²³ one honoured only in part, with variable degrees of political and financial commitment, between the 1950s and the late 1980s.¹²⁴ The twice-monthly lifestyle and fashion magazine *Practical Woman* (*Praktična žena*) exemplifies this. Launched in socialist Yugoslavia in 1956, the magazine declared its mission to be to ‘instruct woman as a wife, a mother and a housewife about many useful things’.¹²⁵ In several issues, the magazine presented problems related to women’s ‘double burden’ from different angles: it offered readers information by functionaries running different services aiming to relieve the weight of women’s multiple everyday duties and gave women workers a platform to share their experiences. After a couple of months, the magazine published suggestions for solutions, including a demand to increase the effort to socialize reproductive labour and encourage trade unions to continue helping working women not only with their workplace-related issues, but also with those arising from their unpaid work.¹²⁶ When economic crisis and austerity began affecting (state) socialist states, including – by the 1980s – Poland and Romania, working women’s double burden was exacerbated by recurring shortages, including at times in the supply of food and other basic resources as well as household appliances.¹²⁷

Knowledge production and reflection on working-class women’s everyday lives

As alluded to in the previous section, research on women’s everyday work and related concerns was an important part of everyday activism. Knowledge garnered through surveys, statistical data and the documentation of the lives of working women was used to change attitudes or policies related to women’s everyday concerns or, indeed, to preserve policies that alleviated such concerns. Academic scholars and other experts in women’s work thus played a crucial role – especially in (state) socialist countries, as Marie Láníková has ascertained. It was not uncommon for them to be involved in women’s or other pertinent organizations themselves.¹²⁸

Since the end of the nineteenth century, activists have identified costly and time-consuming household management as a problem for working women. They saw solutions in the collectivization of reproductive activities (such as kindergartens and apartment blocks with communal kitchens or canteens – that is, ‘one-kitchen houses’ or *Einküchenhäuser*, advocated by, among others, women’s rights activists such as Auguste Fickert (1855–1910), the policy of short distances (that is, communal housing that took the needs of working women into account, as realized in Vienna in the 1920s and early 1930s), and the mechanization and rationalization of the household. A 1951 survey on the housing situation of 332 women workers and 216 women clerks conducted by the Women’s Department of the ÖGB showed that the vast majority did not have electrical appliances: only 11 per cent stated that they had a (non-automatic) washing machine, 15 per cent an ice box with block ice (0.7 per cent an electric one) and 17 per cent a vacuum cleaner. At least 68 per cent had an electric iron. The trade unionists should be ‘propagandists for these things’, emphasized women’s chair Wilhelmine Moik (1894–1970) (Table 9).¹²⁹ At a similar time, in 1957–8 – albeit under different socioeconomic and political circumstances – the Hungarian trade unions undertook a ‘washing machine campaign’.¹³⁰ In the 1970s, washing machines – indispensable to help with one of the most time-consuming household chores – became the norm in many countries including Poland, Hungary and Austria.¹³¹

Across the twentieth century, time-use studies – research into how much time individuals spend on which activities over the course of a day – have been a particularly influential form of knowledge production, especially on the topic of women’s unpaid work in families and its complications. Pioneered in the 1920s by women experts involved in the domestic science movement in the United States, by the 1960s time-use research would lead to the creation of the first systematic cross-national surveys in the world.¹³²

Addressing participants in the major 1975 World Conference of the International Women’s Year, held in Mexico City, Hungarian sociologist Alexander (Sándor) Szalai argued that ‘there is no other social phenomenon in which time-budget research has produced such unambiguous, well-documented and dramatic insights into social reality as the sexual division of labour’.¹³³ At the time, Szalai was leading the UNESCO-funded Multinational Time-Budget Project. From the mid-1960s, the project had been collecting information from 12 countries, including Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.¹³⁴ The findings of the project

confirmed that, for instance, time-saving devices had not significantly reduced the time women spent on household tasks (despite labour activist women's expectations to the contrary).¹³⁵ It established that, across the world, married men with children did less housework and devoted less time to childcare than did their women partners, and that 'mothers, be they full-time employed or housewives, have no choice except to do all the rest'.¹³⁶

In (state) socialist countries, the Multinational Time-Budget Project and especially the results from related national surveys generated (and politically justified) deep reflection on gendered inequalities created by the 'division of labour within the family'. In 1969, activists from the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh), among them Maria Dinkova (1928–?)¹³⁷ (chapter 10), organized the social partners necessary to conduct what was most likely the first sociological survey of Bulgarian women to create detailed time budgets.¹³⁸ The research was done very likely in relation to the Time-Budget Project. Based on these survey results, the KBZh created a programme that centred on reconciling women's responsibilities as workers, mothers and citizens.¹³⁹ Their programme, though in a partial and watered-down form, served as a base for a 1973 Politburo decision on the role of women,¹⁴⁰ which resulted in significant expansion of the social infrastructure to support working mothers. Similarly, Jaroslava Baueroová (born 1930), a sociologist and expert on working women, presented means to reduce the time working women with family responsibilities spent on household work based on time-budget surveys conducted in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s. Similarly to policies discussed above, Baueroová proposed to increase the share of community services (canteens, laundries) as the main solution to ease the burden of women. Beyond the unequal share of household responsibilities between men and women, she directed attention to the fact that, following the introduction of free Saturdays, women devoted this time to cleaning and other housework.¹⁴¹ In 1971, in an English-language journal meant to showcase Hungarian research and literature, sociologist Júlia Szalai (1948–2022) used the Time-Budget Project's survey results from Hungary to make a point about older and newer policies: while the crèche–kindergarten system was open only to employed women, the recently created child-welfare allowance (gyes) allowed women to 'choose ... after maternity leave expires, whether or not they want to take up their earlier job with unchanged conditions' (chapter 10).¹⁴² Although grim reflection on men's unhelpfulness can be detected in the article, Szalai refrained from explicitly referring to

unequal power relations within heterosexual couples (see [chapter 3](#) for a contrasting approach by one of her Hungarian colleagues). Similar research and reflection occurred in Austria and the GDR around the same time.¹⁴³

In our research, documentary and feature film-making and film screenings emerged as an unusually effective method of activism around the burdens of the everyday, perhaps in part because the medium – which defined the twentieth century – could depict the minutiae of housework and its difficulties. Film production often took place in parallel with studies on the living conditions of female workers. A film on ‘the life of working women’ (*Frauenleben – Frauenlos*, 1931–2) was produced by the women’s section of the Independent Trade Union Federation (Freie Gewerkschaften) in Vienna and was shown ‘more than a hundred times’.¹⁴⁴ With a screenplay written by leading trade union functionaries Anna Boschek (1874–1957) and Wilhelmine Moik, it was created in close co-operation with the Women’s Department of the Vienna Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer). Under the direction of Käthe Leichter, the Vienna Chamber of Labour had conducted three studies on the living conditions of women domestic servants (1926), home-based women workers (1928) and industrial women workers (1932). In 1933, the popular film kept topics discussed primarily by the social democratic experts on the lips of women workers ([chapter 4](#)) – only a year before the Social Democratic Workers’ Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, SDAP) was banned by the austrofascist Ständestaat. Activist experts such as the ones conducting the studies and scripting the film were rapidly being proscribed by authorities at the time.

After World War II, movies produced almost simultaneously by three directors working in (state) socialist countries allow a frank view into the life of women workers. In Yugoslavia, pioneering documentary film-maker Krešimir Golik (1922–96, director of *Od 3 do 22* (*From 3 to 22*), 1966) captured the heavy toll of housework and lack of childcare for a young worker and mother. Additionally, it criticized the unequal division of labour within the (heterosexual) couple, by depicting how the woman took on the largest part of the (very strenuous) housework.¹⁴⁵ Similarly, as Masha Shpolberg shows, documentaries by Polish film-maker Krystyna Gryczelowska (1931–2009), produced in 1967 and 1971, depicted the monotony of women’s shiftwork in factories followed by queuing for meagre groceries and dreary housework in narration-less *cinema vérité* style. They were activist and regime-critical films because they were meant not just to create empathy for protagonists but also to transmit to the viewer a sense of fatigue.¹⁴⁶ In similar

fashion, Márta Mészáros's (1931–) film *A lőrinci fonóban* (*In the Lőrinc Spinning Mill*, 1971)¹⁴⁷ critically documents three women who represent three variations of relating to life as a textile worker in a factory in a suburb of Budapest. The film paints a hard-hitting picture of the difficulties and accommodations of the women doing physically strenuous labour, in a landscape of spinning mills and flying scraps of wool that cling to the women's hair and clothes. As the women talk about their lives, the factory is omnipresent even in scenes shot at their homes. Only one of the women, who is in close relationship with the party (which is evoked as elegantly as it is unobtrusively), has made it into a life of marriage, motherhood and her own (humble) flat. Throughout the span of the movie's 16 minutes, the soundtrack captures the never-ending background roar of the spinning mills. The only interruption, of not more than a few seconds, is in the middle of a scene when the woman stands serving dinner to her husband and children, who themselves are sitting around the kitchen table. A hit song plays, about a textile worker whom everybody liked because she was 'kind to everyone and did not complain'. The film was shot at a historical moment when, for a short period of time, government, party and trade unions endorsed a wave of proactive policies of improving the lot of women workers.¹⁴⁸

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have looked at forms of women's labour activism connected to the everyday. Building on history of everyday life (*Alltagsgeschichte*) and feminist approaches, we used the notion of 'everyday activism' to capture forms of labour activism that were historically linked with each other, sometimes in a region-specific manner; such links have not always been visible (partly due to their gendered nature) in labour historiographies. We considered forms of everyday activism that were preoccupied with the survival of communities and dependants, and investigated ways in which such activism became linked to various social and political movements throughout the twentieth century. In doing so, we aimed to map repertoires and agendas of women's labour activism in our region and contribute to the global historiography of labour by historicizing, from a regional viewpoint, the link between women's unpaid work and labour activism.

We argued that gendered assumptions about women's work, and women's duties, shaped activism for families and individuals throughout our region of focus. Working women were publicly vocal and visible

in protests, contributed to re-imagining reproductive work, supported labour struggles and engaged with more or less radical political movements emphasizing labour issues. By conceptualizing everyday activism as problematizing 'quality of life' issues, including the struggles of reconciling unpaid and paid labour, and as drawing on women's status within communities, we captured the variety, originality and resourcefulness of working women's politics and its links to the concerns of *the everyday*.

In this chapter, we have shown how women activists skilfully leveraged their gendered roles in the realm of the everyday to enhance the agitational efforts of their organizations or movements. Particularly in the first half of the century, when many of their activities faced legal restrictions or political persecution, women activists found sometimes innovative ways to organize, rally, and support strikes and political causes. As the personal trajectories of many women – including Käthe Leichter, Irma Rosenberg (Mico) and her comrades, and Puah Rakovsky – involved in these types of activism show, political violence and persecution, National Socialist extermination policy and displacement profoundly disrupted networks and political organizations in the 1930s. It led to the loss of women activists, whose lives and contributions were cut short – a tragic shared legacy of the region that is clearly visible in this book.

Looking at the activist repertoires and agendas present in women's labour-related everyday activism, we focused on what we understand to be a genuine and pressing interest of working-class women in quality of life issues. We did not discuss in depth whether women in some organizational contexts also chose these activities because they were the only ones available to them, or because they served strategic purposes and were useful in gradually mobilizing women into more easily recognizable political activism. Rather, we have suggested that both can be true at the same time.

Many of the concerns, protest forms and activist cycles presented in this chapter, especially those before World War II, are in line with waves of activism in other regions of the Global North and are built on transregional transfer and transnationally shared activist practices. At the same time, we have found that some forms of activism that were prevalent in the Global North in relation to everyday activism were not the norm in our region of focus. Whereas women organized in trade union auxiliaries in the United States, for example, we did not find evidence of organizing reproductive strike work in such frameworks in our region. The gendered division of such labour, rather, took

place within the unions or associated organizations and non-formalized networks. Although the context of activism and the legal and political framework regarding women's work differed, we nevertheless observe a circulation of knowledge on women's work and environmentalism since the 1970s, crossing the Iron Curtain and intersecting with forms of activism on a local level under different sociopolitical conditions. As we have seen in the region, issues related to quality of life and environmental concerns were raised increasingly frequently from the 1970s onwards – around the same time as the emergence of feminist critique on the topic in non-(state) socialist countries. As other chapters in this volume have also shown, women's (especially mothers') discontent about worsening everyday-life conditions for themselves, their families and their children could transform into broad criticism of the existing social order. Often engaged in neighbourhood-based and women-only protest groups, working women put public pressure on and sometimes came into conflict with trade unions which understood those demands as a threat to jobs, their longer-term strategies and/or certain working-class cultures. In state socialist countries, women's everyday activism incorporated environmental issues – with cases such as the Bulgarian 'mothers with strollers' protests eventually shaping anti-communist dissident movements.

Overall, we found that across the region covered in this chapter, issues relating to food supply were especially salient in everyday activism in times of economic and political crisis, whereas knowledge production had upswings in the late 1920s to the early 1930s and from the 1970s onwards. Clandestine agitational work related to the everyday was especially important in times of political repression. We tentatively conclude that protest-based forms of everyday activism – often crystallized when strenuous living and working conditions left no time for care work – influenced authoritative knowledge production, as in time-use research, shaping key welfare and labour policies affecting women in different countries in our region of focus and transregionally. This can be seen in the protests and knowledge production cycle from the 1910s to 1930s and in the 1970s and 1980s. The links between community-based protests in our region in the first half of the twentieth century and the development of expert knowledge on issues related to women's unpaid work from the 1930s to the 1950s deserve further research. Building on our conceptualization of everyday activism, future research should look more deeply into regional and cross-regional trends and rural-urban similarities and differences in repertoires of activism.

Notes

- 1 G., 'Asszonyok harci vonalban'. The article was signed 'M. G.', and the author is identified in the publication of the National Council of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa) as Mariska Gárdos.
- 2 Bargetz, 'The Politics of the Everyday', 4.
- 3 Bargetz, 'The Politics of the Everyday'; Smith, *The Everyday World as Problematic*; Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*.
- 4 Wierling, 'The History of Everyday Life', 151.
- 5 Redden, 'Feminist Engagements', 164.
- 6 Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*.
- 7 Rowbotham, *Dreamers of a New Day*, 1–17.
- 8 See for instance Feinberg, *Elusive Equality*, 4.
- 9 Davidoff, *Worlds Between*, 151–79.
- 10 Guglielmo, *Living the Revolution*, 113.
- 11 Frank, *Purchasing Power*, 6.
- 12 See for example Frader, 'Engendering Work and Wages'.
- 13 Koenker, 'Men against Women', 1443.
- 14 Mesner, 'Geschlechterpolitik'.
- 15 Bönker, 'Schlecht haushaltende Frauen und sparsame Männer?'; Tilly and Scott, *Women, Work and Family*, 73–78.
- 16 Ross, *Love and Toil*, 22.
- 17 Popoviciu, 'Munca femeii', 660.
- 18 Sieder, 'Zur alltäglichen Praxis'.
- 19 Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*; Koenker, 'Men against Women'.
- 20 'Ten Years of Women's Suffrage'; Cheşcebec, 'The Achievement of Female Suffrage in Romania', 367.
- 21 Hauch, "„Arbeite Frau!"; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 76–77.
- 22 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 91–118.
- 23 Dakhli and Bonnacase, 'Introduction', 12.
- 24 Schlesinger, 'Zur Industrialisierung', 28.
- 25 Gailus and Volkmann, *Der Kampf um das tägliche Brot*; Varsa, "„The Rulers Are the Causes of the War”".
- 26 Dimitrova, 'Hunger, Diseases, and Bulgarian Women's Revolts'.
- 27 Bauer, 'Die Teuerungsrevolte in Wien'.
- 28 Dimitrova, "„Дайте ни мъжете"; Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 91–118; Selišnik, Cergol Paradiž, and Koncilija, 'Frauenproteste in den slowenischsprachigen Regionen'; Varsa, "„The Rulers Are the Causes of the War”".
- 29 Kecman, *Žene Jugoslavije u radničkom pokretu*, 17.
- 30 Helfert, 'Verzweiflung, Empörung und Wut'; Stibbe et al., 'Socialist Women and the Great War'.
- 31 On men and women workers' violent protests for 'winter aid' in Romania in 1946–7, see also Grama, *Laboring Along*, 117–20.
- 32 Bönker, 'Schlecht haushaltende Frauen und sparsame Männer?'
- 33 Tatur, *Solidarność als Modernisierungsbewegung*.
- 34 Gaál, 'Csongrád megye főispánjának jelentése'.
- 35 Hagemann, 'Men's Demonstrations and Women's Protest'; Taylor, 'Food Riots Revisited'.
- 36 Report by the mayor of Kecskemét (Kingdom of Hungary) to the Ministry of Interior, 21 May 1917, reprinted in Romsics, *Dokumentumok az 1918/19-es forradalmak*, 93–97. See also Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 110–13.
- 37 Mahir Metinsoy, 'I. Dünya Savaşı'nda Osmanlı Kadınlarının'.
- 38 Bocking-Welch et al., 'Women's Campaigning'.
- 39 '3000 Frauen'.
- 40 Sicherheitsdirektion für Kärnten, 'Information', 30 September 1950, 127.591-2/50, box 2, Oktoberstreik, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 41 *Salzburger Volkszeitung*, 'Appell des Bundeskanzlers'; Healy, *Vienna and the Fall of the Habsburg Empire*, 22–23; Unowsky, 'Peasant Political Mobilization'.
- 42 Blobaum, 'The "Woman Question" in Russian Poland', 813.

- 43 Stegmann, *Die Töchter der geschlagenen Helden*, 212–19.
- 44 John, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 1', 51–53; Lawson and Barton, 'Sex Roles in Social Movements'; Poy, 'A Tale of Two Cities'; Wood, *Revolution in the Street*.
- 45 John, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 1', 51.
- 46 *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 'Heraus mit der Mieterorganisation!'
- 47 John, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 1', 4; Lichtblau, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 2', 303.
- 48 Lichtblau, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 2', 298–302.
- 49 Lichtblau, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 2', 297–358.
- 50 G., 'Asszonyok harci vonalban'.
- 51 Lichtblau, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 2'.
- 52 Kaplan, 'Women and Communal Strikes'.
- 53 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 275–77.
- 54 Lichtblau, 'Mieterbewegungen und Mieterselbsthilfe 2', 309–25.
- 55 Gioielli, "'Home Is Home No Longer'".
- 56 'Tagesbericht', 29 November 1946, box 5, Abteilung 2, Generaldirektion für Öffentliche Sicherheit, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 57 'Tagesbericht', 18 October 1947, box 8, Abteilung 2, Generaldirektion für Öffentliche Sicherheit, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 58 Benton, 'Socialism and Ecology', 664.
- 59 Goedde, *The Politics of Peace*; Uekoetter, 'Consigning Environmentalism to History?', 7.
- 60 Schmacks, "'Motherhood Is Beautiful'".
- 61 Martina Närr, 'Umwelt-Hoffnung Frauenpolitik,' *an.schläge* (December 1994/January 1995): 24, quoted in Scharf, 'Die Umweltbewegung in Österreich', 257.
- 62 Singer and Geyrhofer, 'Grün gekocht ist halb gegessen', 53.
- 63 *Stenographisches Protokoll: 10. ÖGB-Frauenkongress*, 254.
- 64 'Pressekonferenz: Parteienübergreifende Fraueninitiative'.
- 65 Marcheua, 'Анатомия'.
- 66 Antonova and Kamenova, *Демонтаж*.
- 67 Scharf, 'Die Umweltbewegung in Österreich', 249. For the 'Chernobyl mothers', see Schmacks, "'Motherhood Is Beautiful'", 827.
- 68 For a broader outlook, see Bailey and Gwyther, 'Red and Green', 4.
- 69 İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, 'İKD I. Olağan Genel Kurul Çalışma Raporu (4 Temmuz 1976)', reprinted in Pervan, *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*, 70; Pervan, 'Sunuş', 416.
- 70 İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, 'İKD Şişli Şubesi 2. Olağan Genel Kurul Çalışma Raporu (30.05.1976–16.04.1978)', reprinted in Pervan, *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*, 128–33.
- 71 Kılıç, interview, ZARAH DB.
- 72 Rut, 'Die Heldinnen von Hainburg', 6.
- 73 Dworzak, 'Initiative Linke und Gewerkschafter gegen Hainburg', 10.
- 74 As can be seen by the increased frequency of discussions of the topic within the protocols of the Austrian Trade Union Federation Women's Congresses and of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. For instance, the ICFTU decided to include the topic of 'environment' alongside 'democracy' as an official agenda item for the 1991 congress and made it part of the training seminars for trade unionists from former socialist countries. See ICFTU Women's Committee, '64th Meeting. Conclusions and Recommendations of the Ottawa Conference', 9 October 1991, ARCH00622, folder 1590, IISH, especially Agenda Item 3: Report on Activities.
- 75 'Pressekonferenz Freda Meissner-Blau'.
- 76 The term has its roots in the practice of Comintern congresses of designating activists (primarily women) for administrative and linguistic tasks during proceedings. In illegalized communist movements, such as the one in Romania for much of the interwar, the 'technics' (again mostly women) led, as far as authorities were concerned, a fully non-political life. In reality, technics organized secret communications, arranged meeting places and safe houses, and generally maintained networks of activists who otherwise had little knowledge of each other's activities. See Studer, *Travellers of the World Revolution*, 46.
- 77 See for instance the definition in van der Linden, *Workers of the World*, 195–96.
- 78 Helfert and Hermann, 'Women on Strike', 9.

- 79 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*, 138.
- 80 Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*, 23.
- 81 Ghiț, 'Gendered Work', 24.
- 82 Huszár, 'Szülőföldem nyomában'.
- 83 'Kriegszeit und Revolution', 86.
- 84 Cameron, 'Bread and Roses Revisited'.
- 85 Sutcliffe-Braithwaite and Thomlinson, 'National Women against Pit Closures'.
- 86 Akal, *Kızıl feministler*, 180.
- 87 İlerici Kadınlar Derneği, 'İKD Şişli Şubesi 2. Olağan Genel Kurulu Çalışma Raporu', 120.
- 88 'Листок № 3'.
- 89 Moriarty, "'Who Will Look After the Kiddies?'" , 118.
- 90 Népszava, 'Készülődés a tömegsztrájkra'. In the weeks that followed, Circles of Democratic Teachers in Budapest and several other cities in Hungary organized collections for the children of the general strikers and held meetings where children were present.
- 91 Article from *Chemarea*, 10 August 1919, quoted in Goldberger, *Greva generală*, 75.
- 92 Satı, "'Long Live Our Father'" .
- 93 Çakır, 'Yıl 1908'.
- 94 Çelik, 'İşçi Sınıfının Ayağa Kalktığı Yıllar'.
- 95 Krenowa, 'Die Beteiligung der Frauen'.
- 96 Georgescu and Georgescu, *Mișcarea democratică și revoluționară*, 134–37; Schorr, *Österreichische rote Hilfe*.
- 97 Pfeiferová, *Paměti*, 145–46.
- 98 Wenninger, 'On the Role and Patterns', 168–71.
- 99 Terziiski et al., *Големият път*, 127.
- 100 Abadzhiev, *Спомени от изминатия път*, 125–26.
- 101 'Lagebericht der Sicherheitsdirektion für die Steiermark um 11:25 Uhr', 4 October 1950, 134.948-2/50, box 2, Oktoberstreik, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 102 *Dimineața*, 'Minerii din Valea Jiului'.
- 103 Farkas, 'Várkonyi Mariska', 302; Helfert et al., 'Socialist Women and Revolutionary Violence', 80.
- 104 Bundespolizeidirektion Wien, Liste der Aktivitäten der Sicherheitskräfte im Zusammenhang mit den Demonstrationen, 26. September bis 6. Oktober 1950, 132.011-2/50, box 2, Oktoberstreik, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR; Bundespolizeidirektion Wien, Versammlung des Exekutivausschusses der Betriebsräte, 4 October 1950, 132.017-2/50, box 2, Oktoberstreik, Bundesministerium für Inneres, ÖSTA, AdR.
- 105 Lovreković, "'Ti ne smiješ pasti'" , 224; Rajković, *Dugi ženski marš*, 228–36.
- 106 Homenco and Ioniță, *Suzana Pârvulescu*, 19.
- 107 Homenco and Ioniță, *Suzana Pârvulescu*, 21.
- 108 *Wirtschaftsrechnungen und Lebensverhältnisse*.
- 109 Mikoletzky, "'... durch vernünftige Führung der Haushaltung'" , 73.
- 110 Leichter, *So leben wir*, 79.
- 111 Durand, *Nourrir la machine humaine*, 4–17.
- 112 List, *Mutterliebe und Geburtenkontrolle*, 66–76.
- 113 *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, 3 February 1921.
- 114 Labbé, 'Les débuts de la protection sociale infantile'; Męczkowska, Putowska, and Wrzosek, 'Garlicka Zofia'.
- 115 Constantinescu-Iași, *Organizații de masă legale*, 70.
- 116 *Dimineața*, 'Verdictul'. At least some of the names of the women accused were likely misspelt. We sought to establish the correct version by comparing sources but this was not edifying in all four cases.
- 117 Garncarska-Kadary, 'Some Aspects', 251.
- 118 Rakovsky, *My Life*.
- 119 Leichter, *Frauenarbeit und Arbeiterinnenschutz*, 85.
- 120 'Für die berufstätige Frau'.
- 121 Sachse, *Der Hausarbeitstag*.
- 122 Helfert, 'Part-Time Work'.
- 123 Bonfiglioli, *Women and Industry in the Balkans*, 55.

- 124 Gal and Kligman, *Reproducing Gender*; Jarska, 'Trade Union Activists'; Zimmermann, 'Gender Regime and Gender Struggle'.
- 125 *Praktična žena* 1, no. 1 (1956).
- 126 Petrović, 'Do čega smo došli'.
- 127 Klich-Kluczewska, 'Single Mothers, Lonely Children', 138–40; Massino, *Ambiguous Transitions*, 231–32.
- 128 Lániková, 'The Czechoslovak Women's Union'.
- 129 ZARAH DB, 'Moik, Wilhemine. Special Record (Person)'; Wilhelmine Moik, 'Die Frau in Beruf und Sozialgesetzgebung in Österreich', in 'Protokoll des 1. Frauenkongresses des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes: Wien, 29. und 30. September 1951', 1951, 138–41, ÖGB-Archiv.
- 130 Gagyiova, 'Modern Housekeeping Worlds'.
- 131 Stańczak-Wislicz, 'Practicing Modernity at Home'; Gagyiova, 'Modern Housekeeping Worlds'.
- 132 Bauman, Bittman, and Gershuny, 'Short History of Time Use Research', 2–3.
- 133 Alexander Szalai, 'The Situation of Women in the Light of Contemporary Time-Budget Research (Conference Background Paper)', World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City: United Nations, 1975, 6, UNDL, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3800485>.
- 134 Szalai, 'The Situation of Women', 8. Other countries included in the Time-Budget Project were: Belgium, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Peru and USA.
- 135 Szalai, 'The Situation of Women', 13.
- 136 Szalai, 'The Situation of Women', 19.
- 137 Dinkova, *The Social Progress*.
- 138 Ghodsee, 'Pressuring the Politburo'.
- 139 Komitet na bulgarskite zheni, 'Концепция за осигуряване на оптимални условия за съчетаване задълженията на жената като производственичка, майка и общественичка – 1-ви проект', 1971, f. 417, op. 4, a.e. 61, TsDA.
- 140 'Enhancing the Role of Women'.
- 141 Bauerová, *Zaměstnaná žena*, 141–54.
- 142 Szalai, 'Division of Labour within the Family', 63. On the politics of gyies in Hungary, see Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'.
- 143 Schröter and Ullrich, 'Wer putzte in der DDR das Klo?' On the role of knowledge production by labour women and experts on women's work in regard to part-time work in Austria, see Helfert, 'Part-Time Work'.
- 144 'A Film on the Life'.
- 145 Bonfiglioli, 'A Working Day That Has No End'.
- 146 Shpolberg, 'Filmmaking as Activism'.
- 147 The film was made publicly available by the Hungarian National Film Museum: Mészáros, *A lőrinci fonóban*.
- 148 Zimmermann, 'Dance around a "Sacred Cow"'.

Part III

Women's labour activism across class and political divides: gender at the core?

In the third part of the book, we discuss how women labour activists identifying with different political regimes or world views reached out to or confronted each other as they attempted to improve the lot of working women. The region studied in this book witnessed both manifold collaborations between women activists across class and political divides, and tension and intense political competition when activists engaged with (what they construed as) the gendered labour interests of working(-class) women. The question of whether and how women's common gender interest – if there was such a thing – and women's engagement with other women's gendered problems, which have historically served to bring together women differently positioned in society and culture in national as well as international settings, has long occupied women's and gender historians.

Excavating instances of such “sisterhood” (as some would call it) in the history of women's (labour) activism, and encountering tension, conflict and division which hindered, limited or destroyed such collaboration, scholars have pondered foundational questions concerning the historical groundings and political driving forces of women's activist collaborations and conflicts. Undoubtedly, women belonging to all social groups and classes have, with rare exceptions, suffered from gendered disadvantage (the varieties thereof notwithstanding), marginalization and oppression. Yet simplified ideas about how this gendered difference faced by women across class, ethnic, global and political divides translated into a common consciousness, which in turn spurred women to joint action, have long been refuted.

The debate on the correlation between the lived experience of gendered difference and women's social action has a long history.

The ubiquitous gendered difference affecting all (or most) women in society and culture does not necessarily translate into women's shared awareness of their subordination, nor does the shared experience of gendered subordination provide a "natural" springboard for common action. Relatedly, women who encountered gendered subordination or disadvantage (as most of them, with rare exceptions, do) did not automatically prioritize collaboration with fellow women whose position (or self-positioning) regarding other dimensions of difference and subordination stood in contrast to their own. For instance, (some) working(-class) women have opted to prioritize class over gender in their activist choices. They have also framed their agendas in a manner that challenged class-based interests of other women, translating class-based differences between women into a political divide – an instance repeatedly experienced in activism addressing the 'servant question'.

Last but not least, the approaches of women to collaboration with other women shifted depending on wider political and social contexts. In historical moments when national demands played an overriding role in the political culture of an ethnic group without independent statehood, (some) women belonging to this group refused or found it difficult to collaborate with women even of a similar class position belonging to a dominant ethnic group. In terms of women's collaboration across political divides, mixed-gender labour organizations, construing issues specific to women's work as 'less political' or 'less controversial', have advocated women's collaboration as a means of building bridges across political divides. In a more generalizing take, it has been speculated that, as a result of the long-term trend (waves and backlashes notwithstanding) towards reduced social and political inequality between women and men, women's interest and inclination to collaborate 'as women' across class and other divides diminished. The history of women's labour activism in the long view cannot be written without critically interrogating and considering within a common conceptual frame all these and other tendencies that can be discovered when studying women's activist engagement with class and political divides.

The two chapters constituting the third part of this book show that coalitions and conflicts between women activists whose position or self-positioning differed regarding class and politics evolved around issues considered of capital importance for women across social classes, and in relation to groups of working women who occupied a special gendered position in the economy and society. [Chapter 9](#) discusses key clusters of women's labour activism which evolved around, or centrally engaged with, the class divide between women. Focusing on the period

between the late nineteenth century and the political rupture of World War II, when women's class-based difference was a pronounced feature of all societies in the region of focus, the chapter examines activisms concerned with the expansion of lower-class women's economic opportunities, with the lot of urban domestic servants (household employees) and with the engagement with women factory workers by women working as (activist) professionals in the labour inspectorate. Women of different classes historically played an important role in terms of political and social engagement with working women's gendered labour issues, and the class divide among women deeply shaped women's activism on behalf of working women.

In the post-World War II decades in Eastern Europe, activism endeavouring to cross or challenge class differences between women lost urgency and attracted less political engagement. [Chapter 10](#), focusing on women's communist-aligned trade union activism in this large subregion and in international trade union politics, addresses a topic which at the time was identified by women across political divides as one of the most burning problems of working women, namely the 'special' needs of expectant mothers and mothers of small children in the world of work. The politics of the 'working mother', a term often used at the time, was considered key to improving not just the status of this group of women but of women workers more generally. This politics included myriad larger and smaller elements. The chapter foregrounds the large theme of care for young children of working mothers. In the (state) socialist period, this policy arena played an essential role for Eastern European women labour activists and policymakers and triggered intense transnational engagement. These women reacted to labour market developments that made European countries (those both belonging to and outside the region of focus) stand out in global comparison at the time, with women of child-bearing age moving into standard employment with long working hours at a fast pace, and their proportion in the labour force growing steadily. Transregionally, the activism of these women involved strong Cold War political competition with women identifying with non-communist world views as well as political tension with communist-aligned women from the west whose demands responded to realities of women's work in non-state socialist contexts.

The chapters in this part of the book point to the longevity of women activists' emphasis, across class and political divides, on working women's gendered labour issues. They showcase that women's labour activism, across these divides, was deeply shaped by gendered difference in the world of work. Historical context and circumstances matter when

illuminating the instances when women of different social background and/or political alignment defined common gendered labour interests and/or developed solidarity or political collaboration in pursuing such interests. In the long view, class difference and political competition within the left and between self-identified left-wing and feminist women emerge as key factors limiting and thwarting activist collaboration grounded in the idea of working women's common gendered interest. At the same time, women labour activists, while competing over the representation of working(-class) women across class and political divides, repeatedly acted together-apart, pursuing overlapping and sometimes similar agendas. Class divides between women made a distinct contribution to bringing about the historical variation of how women activists construed themselves and working women as (a)political collective subjects. These constructions divided middle- and lower-class women's activisms, even when they pursued overlapping agendas, whereas the competing women's activisms on the left were invisibly connected by similar constructions of working women's collective subjectivity as they pursued shared agendas. Women labour activists' visions for change were deeply coloured by the historical contexts within which they developed, and their ideas about women's betterment and emancipation exhibited limitations that reflected their class and political alignments.

Women addressing women workers: revisiting the class divide, 1860s to 1930s

Introduction: lower-class women's gendered labour interest at the core

This chapter considers three clusters of women-dominated and women-centred labour activism in Central and Eastern Europe: the women's crafts movement, servants politics and the gendered labour inspectorate. We have coined these three terms ourselves, to capture the clusters during our research on this topic. The three clusters of women-dominated and women-centred labour activism emerged in historical sequence and overlapped chronologically, reflecting working women's changing circumstances, broader historical change and women's class-based agendas as construed by the activists. The interest in conceptually crossing and bridging historical divides between social movements and the long-term perspective which inform this book allow us to revisit one long-standing debate in the historiography on women's (labour) activism: the role of the class divide between women.

These three clusters of activism developed in an uneven manner historically in Central and Eastern Europe, and were of divergent historical relevance in different spaces. After 1945, in the world of state socialism in particular, women's distinctly cross-class activism addressing lower-class women's gendered labour interests played a less pronounced role in the overall spectrum of women's labour activism as compared to the period before World War II.

Beginning in the later decades of the nineteenth century, middle-class women engaged in labour activism to expand economic opportunities for themselves and lower-class women. The women's crafts movement aimed to involve women more systematically in gainful

economic activity in selected manual trades and crafts considered within reach for them, to raise the material value of and the social appreciation attached to this work, to prepare women to take on these economic roles and to support them in doing so (see also [chapter 1](#), [chapter 5](#)). The movement progressed unevenly in different lands of Central and Eastern Europe, reflecting uneven economic development and women's involvement in national (and nationalist) competition.

Women-led politics addressing domestic servants and their circumstances – servants politics in the following – appeared in the region of focus wherever urban agglomerations, in which many lower-class women were employed as servants, thrived and expanded. Before World War I, in some big cities, domestic workers or household employees (the latter term was already used by some activist groups before 1914 and more commonly from the 1920s onwards) constituted the single largest group in the overall female labour force. In Vienna, the capital of Cisleithanian Austria and the imperial capital of the Habsburg Monarchy, in 1890, 34 per cent of the female labour force were servants, and in six further large Cisleithanian cities the figure on average was 39 per cent, while in Budapest in the Kingdom of Hungary it was 40 per cent in 1910¹ ([Map 1](#)). The roots of servants politics reached back into the nineteenth century. In some lands servants politics came to be characterized by intense political-ideological competition between middle-class women on the one hand and left-wing women on the other, the latter claiming working class-based identification with the interests of domestic workers. Among these groups, this chapter studies those middle-class women who self-identified as moderate or conservative (omitting groups who self-identified as feminist) and left-wing women who identified as socialist/social democratic ([chapter 4](#)). The engagement of middle-class and left-wing women in servants politics somewhat overlapped in terms of agendas and repertoires. At the same time, class-based gendered engagement was characterized by divergent visions regarding the subjectivity which domestic workers as a social group should acquire.

In the ranks of the labour inspectors and their assistants, women were not included, or only marginally, in the period in Hungary and Romania, while Austria and Poland took on frontrunner positions in this regard. The gendered factory inspectorate connected women employed in the professional staff of the inspectorate – including factory inspectors, assistant inspectors and medical doctors (and excluding administrative employees) – with women factory workers and women doing home-based industrial work. While middle-class and socialist/social democratic women competed for the positions of the women (assistant)

inspectors, it was clear that only women with appropriate training or experience would be hired. In Central and Eastern Europe, the decades-long trend of including women in the factory inspectorate began with the employment of the first woman assistant labour inspector in 1906 in Vienna.² The scope, and the timing of the enactment, of women-specific labour law that construed women factory workers as a category of workers in need of gender-specific special protection varied considerably across Central and Eastern Europe. The region-specific outlook and development of the gendered labour inspectorate, while speaking to the increasing involvement of women's cross-class labour activism with public institutions,³ also showcase the limited interest of the more minimalist liberal and later the right-wing authoritarian states in the region in gendered labour protection as advocated by many women who were involved in the cross-class labour activism. Still, educated women middle-class reformers as well as women identified with the labour movements pursued, with a measure of accomplishment, an interest in both the professional advancement of women in the inspectorate and gendered supervisory attention to industrial, including home-based, women workers.

Discussing the history of these three clusters of activism invites us to revisit the role of class divide between women in the history of women's labour activism. Construing class as the core category of the history of the labour movement, mainstream scholarship with sympathies for left-wing organizing has tended to neglect women's cross-class labour activism, interpreting it variously as anti-lower class or as irrelevant for the liberation of working-class women. In turn, to demonstrate the relevance of gender for the history of labour activism, feminist historians have highlighted the role of women-only and women-centred activist networks and organizations, including both middle class-dominated networks and circles self-identifying with working-class women, in improving the lot of lower-class working women. They have highlighted how working-class women's activism taking place within mixed-gender labour movements was stifled by men's lack of interest or their focus on men, and discussed it as 'dividing' the women's movement, which was inclusive of lower-class working women's issues, by virtue of its interest in women's gendered labour issues.⁴ Both paradigms stayed close to patterns of argumentation used by contemporary protagonists of the competing women's and labour movements ([introductory chapter](#)).

This chapter moves beyond these contrasting and simplifying views, showcasing how the gendered interest of women from non-working-class and working-class social backgrounds in the working lives

and labour conditions of lower-class women differed and overlapped. Middle-class activisms and the political competitions – between different middle-class women’s networks as well as between the activisms of these groups and working class-based activisms – which co-shaped them played a significant role in the history of women’s labour activism in the period. Bringing together the history of three different clusters of activisms helps us to flesh out the range of the differences and overlaps. Two more elements of the analysis presented in this chapter contribute to moving our understanding of this range beyond binary ideas about middle-class activisms as foregrounding gender-based issues and working-class activisms as foregrounding class-based issues. First, we pay close attention to the variety of the ways in which activists belonging to all the activist networks evoked both gender and class, and the connection between the two, as they construed working(-class) women’s interests.⁵ Secondly, we aim to capture visions of women’s cross-class collaboration and class-based difference ingrained in constructions of (collective and individual) *activist* subjectivity and activists’ ideas about the desired (transformation of the) subjectivity of working(-class) women as a social group. Taking seriously all varieties and elements of activist practices and (what we can know about) material and mental dimensions of activists’ engagement with other women and with each other helps us to move beyond simplistic and schematic ideas about class and/or gender ‘consciousness’ as driving forces of activism.⁶ We look for the constructions of working(-class) women’s interests as well as activist subjectivity and activist ideas about working(-class) women’s subjectivity in documents produced by the activists and documents supportive of and closely engaged with their activism. We thus mostly capture activist (self-)constructions, including those of how women turned into activists and how activisms engaged working(-class) women. Other documents might help in learning more about non-activist working(-class) women’s engagement with these activisms.

Revisiting the class divide between women in the arena of labour activism helps in putting aside abstract debates about the relationship between gender and class in the history of labour. Gender, in many nuanced ways and yet consistently, played a significant role in women’s labour activism because women, across class, sought to take responsibility for women who were disadvantaged as a social group which itself was structured by the class divide.

The women's crafts movement: professionalizing women's manual work

Beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century, the women's crafts movement, through offering courses, maintaining facilities, operating 'bazaars' and running exhibitions, brought together women from different social classes in an organized manner. The movement integrated these women into a deliberately gendered world of manual work and training for such work (Figure 14, Figure 18). This was the case even though class difference and middle-class dominance remained strongly present in this shared women's world. Its tangible and immaterial goals taken together, the women's crafts movement envisioned and aimed at transformations of women's subjectivities on both sides of the class divide through their involvement with the world of work thus created. The activist subjectivities of the middle-class women leaders of the women's crafts movement remained tightly bound to the roles they played in the movement.

Improving women's status in the economy: unequal development engendered

In the hubs of modern economic development in Cisleithania, where the clothing industries and supplementary trades constituted one lead industrial sector dominating the market in the Habsburg lands, the women's crafts movements gained momentum early on. The Czech Women's Industrial Association (Ženský výrobní spolek český, established 1871), founded by Karolina Světlá and Eliška Krásnohorská in Prague (Bohemia/Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) (Map 1, Map 2, Map 3, Map 4), operated a women's school from 1871. Marie Bahenská has discussed the history of the association. Its many members – 1,680 in 1872 – came mostly from middle- or upper-class backgrounds. After 1880, Emilie Bártová took over the leadership. The goal of the school managed by the association, which offered training in practical subjects, was to generate and enhance the income-earning capacities of unmarried women and widows from all social strata. The tuition fees for the school were quite low, and lower-class girls could be completely exempted from paying them. The departments of the school – with changes over time – offered language education, provided business training, industrial training (drawing, engraving) and training in handicrafts (sewing, embroidery), and added extracurricular classes, from mathematics and history to singing and calligraphy. In 25 years,

13,775 students attended the school, with 47 per cent of them exempted from paying fees; 39 per cent came from locations other than Prague. The association maintained its operations through fees, contributions by members and donations from public bodies, among which the Prague and Bohemian authorities were the most important ones. The association employed former students as clerks and teachers.⁷ It also ran a free-of-charge placement service, the 'employment agency' (poptavárna). Between 1871 and 1876 the agency, which served both graduates of its own school and others looking for employment, arranged jobs for 625 women.⁸

In Cisleithania, not only the dynamic growth of the textile and related industries, but also the competition between women's associations identified with different national and denominational groups, fuelled the development of the women's crafts movement. In the Bohemian and Moravian lands, alongside the Czech associations, German-Austrian associations emerged, including the Women's Industry Association (Frauenerwerb-Verein) in Brünn (Brno, Moravia/Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia). As in other cases, among the initiators and supporters were women and men, although the *de facto* leadership fell to women. In 1913, Franz Kögler, teaching at one school operated by the association, explained the circumstances that had triggered the foundation of the association in the early 1870s:

Since the working women and girls had not received the appropriate vocational training, they were generally paid starvation wages; the constantly increasing supply of female labour was also used to depress wages ... Insightful women and men ... sought to improve the situation of the female labour force ... by creating favourable opportunities for good vocational training ... and thus put them in a position to demand the wages of qualified labourers; moreover, they were anxious to create new job opportunities.⁹

For the economic development of Vienna, the clothing and supplementary industries played a key role. In 1910, 130,000 individuals, or 13 per cent of the overall Vienna labour force, worked in the clothing industry alone.¹⁰ Training girls and women for the handicrafts trades was big (women's) business in nineteenth-century Vienna. As Waltraud Schütz has shown, in 1861, 4,216 girl pupils attended 81 industrial schools (work schools) where handicrafts were taught, and which were run by private individuals and associations. Many of these schools were operated or supported by women's associations. Before the liberalization

of the exercise of trades in Austria in 1859, which made it easier for women to work as self-employed seamstresses and employ other women, the schools repeatedly served as cover to circumvent existing restrictions preventing self-employed women from putting other women to paid work.¹¹ The boundaries between training and work remained blurred. In 1867, the Women's Association for Work Schools (Frauenverein für Arbeitsschulen), founded in the early 1850s, ran 16 'tuition-free' work schools 'for poor girls without distinction in religion' in several districts of Vienna. The schools took orders, and the 'profits were donated to the pupils of the association'.¹²

The Vienna Women's Industry Association (Wiener Frauen-Erwerb-Verein), established in 1866 by, among others, Helene von Hornbostel (née Winkler, 1815–88) and Iduna Laube (née Budeus, 1808–79), formed part of a lively activist network of women engaged in the promotion of women's education and the elevation of women's status in society – a network which in retrospect constituted the emerging first wave women's movement. The association operated several schools, including a tailoring school and various 'sewing parlours' (Nähstuben), with some 300 pupils in any given school year in the mid-1870s. It also commissioned orders for the sewing rooms, served as a broker for other orders and ran a placement service.¹³ Soon a laundry school for delicate fabrics (established in 1877), an embroidery school (1881) and a training course for milliners (1883) completed the trades education profile of the association. In the school year 1906/7, tuition-free training – presumably targeting lower-class women – was offered in hand sewing, machine sewing and underwear cutting, and in the laundry school for delicate fabrics. In this year 184 women and girls studying with the association were exempt from tuition, while 527 were fee-paying. The respective courses were kept separate from each other.¹⁴ German-language associations running similar schools existed, in Brno as well as in Klagenfurt (Celovec, Austria) and Prague in the last decades of the Habsburg Monarchy.

Less than a year after the Vienna Women's Industry Association began to operate, in early 1867 a group of Jewish women founded the Girls' Support Association (Mädchen-Unterstützungs-Verein).¹⁵ Before granting permission for this association, the authorities asked the founders to include in the description of the association's purpose that it worked with 'Israelite girls alone',¹⁶ obviously to restrict the scope of operation of the newly founded, competing association. As compared to the Vienna Women's Industry Association, the founders of the Girls' Support Association – Regine Kohn, later Ulmann (1847–1939),

Ida Stiassny, later Diamant (1844–?), and Marianne Neumann, later Benedikt/Benedict (1848–1930) – were very young. The two associations pursued essentially identical goals in terms of vocational training, yet the Girls' Support Association put a greater emphasis on education free of charge. The principle was spelt out explicitly in the 1867 statute, and was also reflected in the professions listed for the fathers of the pupils. Soon the association also paid stipends and offered free meals and other welfare support for pupils in need.¹⁷

The National Women's Trade Association (Országos Nőiparegylet) in Budapest, founded in 1872, was well connected and worked in close interaction with other associations¹⁸ which, just as in Vienna, together constituted the emerging first wave (Hungarian-speaking) women's movement. From the early 1880s onwards, the National Women's Trade Association began to direct more attention to women of the 'lower classes'.¹⁹ Goals now included 'qualifying poor and abandoned women for work', combating prejudice against women's gainful work, setting up a trades and commerce training school for women, exhibiting and selling women's handicrafts and cottage industry-based produce, and supporting women to set up their own crafts businesses. This reorientation towards lower-class women was driven by the hope of making textile production in Hungary more competitive on the Habsburg Monarchy markets. The association envisioned itself as a motor of women's large-scale engagement in textile and garment production, aiming to handle 'orders for mass production' and to conduct intensive short-term training in specific skills (such as machine knitting) in response to incoming or potential orders. Most of the production was to be home-based, and the association planned to open its own production workshops (presumably combining on-site and home-based work). It repeatedly underlined that its initiatives were in support of 'native' textile and apparel industries in the Hungarian lands, so that, for instance, cut-out glove material must not be assembled in Bohemia and Moravia. Against the background of the customs union with the industrially more developed Cisleithanian lands, it comes as no surprise that the endeavours to greatly expand and make marketable en masse women's crafts produce wielded limited results.

In addition to its economic activities, the Hungarian National Women's Trade Association played, just like the associations discussed above, a pioneering role in making crafts and trades training available to women, as did other women's associations in Central and Eastern Europe. The Charitable Co-operative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad (Dobrotvorna zadruga Srkinja Novosatkinja/Добротворна задруга

Српкиња Новосаткиња, DZSN) invested significant effort in the education of girls, providing opportunities for learning in high schools, training for pedagogical occupations, and practical education in trades and crafts.²⁰ The DZSN, founded in 1880 in Novi Sad (Újvidék, in the Vojvodina region in Hungary, later Yugoslavia, today Serbia), started its own magazine *Women's World: Journal of the Charitable Co-operatives of Serbian Women* (*Женски свет: лист добротворних задруга Српкиња*) in 1886. This magazine published articles and information about women's handicraft and embroidery work, promoted and facilitated by various charitable co-operatives of Serbian women, who produced for their own and commercial use. It gave insight into the life, work and achievements of Savka Subotić (1834–1918), who played a substantial role in educating peasant women in handicrafts, and providing them with information on hygiene, health and child-rearing. Often celebrated for her achievements in promoting and modernizing handicrafts production, Subotić was a regular member of the DZSN and an honorary member of many other charitable co-operatives of Serbian women.²¹ As a lifelong promoter of women's education, she was labelled in *Women's World* as a 'travelling folk teacher' who made her services available for 'free' to everybody, and 'a lady of class', whose words had a significant influence on people, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, when she had begun her work.²² In 1921, alongside supporting the education of lower-class girls, the DZSN founded its own trade school for women, which trained its students in various skilled trades.²³

Romanian women's associations in Transylvania (Erdély, Siebenbürgen, Hungary, later Romania) (Map 1, Map 2) linked their women's crafts agendas to the nationalities' politics pursued by Romanians (and allies such as the Slovaks) in Austria-Hungary from the late 1860s. Named Women's Reunions (Reuniuni ale femeilor), and united in a Union of Romanian Women (Uniunea Femeilor Române) from 1911, the network grew rapidly in the period from 1890 to 1918. Members and patrons were women from the ethnic Romanian commercial bourgeoisie and liberal professions. Reunion activists promoted handicrafts because this enabled them both to focus on women's gainful employment and to promote what they saw as authentic expressions of ethnic specificity and durability. The leader of the Reunion of Romanian Women from Hunedoara County (Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Comitatul Hunedoarei) Elena Pop Hossu Longin (1862–1940) was especially active in developing household industry with an emphasis on peasant folk art.²⁴ In 1905, the Reunion of Romanian Women from Sibiu (Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Sibiu, founded in 1880) (Sibiu, Nagyszeben,

Hermannstadt, Hungary, today Romania) opened a school for home economy and industry. In 1911, the school was reorganized, to provide training not only in housekeeping, but also in industrial textile work. These courses were aimed at Romanian-speaking women from peasant backgrounds and lasted three to five months. The students were expected to work in the school workshop producing objects that included 'luxury items in the [Romanian] peasant style'.²⁵

Further to the south-east of the region discussed in this chapter, the women's crafts movement took root at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The Bulgarian association Women's Charity Organization 'Constancy' (Женско благотворително дружество 'Постоянство'/Zhensko blagotvoritelno druzhestvo 'Postoianstvo') in 1936 commemorated four decades of the school it supported, similarly named 'Constancy'.²⁶ The school was located in the city of Plovdiv and offered vocational and professional training for girls. It started in a small way in 1896 with just two one-year courses, one specializing in undergarments and one for other clothing. These courses were gradually lengthened in time, and the curriculum was broadened with additional subjects. From 1903, the courses were made three- and two-year courses respectively, including one year of practice. New subjects included embroidery and drawing as well as general education in the Bulgarian language, mathematics, religion, hygiene and pedagogy. Throughout the first 40 years of its existence, the school, pursuing a politics of counterbalancing the material disadvantage of girls from lower-class social backgrounds, trained an impressive number of pupils. From 1924, institutional reorganization by the Bulgarian state allowed the school to expand its special crafts courses (three years of education and one year of practice) designed for students who did not have the minimum education level for the other programmes. After finishing the school and passing an exam at the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Turgovsko-industrialna kamara/Търговско-индустриална камара), students were granted the status of master craftsman.

Between 1896 and 1936, the school had 8,982 students, of which 46 per cent paid full fees and 27 per cent half fees; the final 27 per cent were exempt from tuition. The summary report published in 1937 claimed that from 1926 onwards the school provided poor students with free meals. Between 1923 and 1936, 286 pupils graduated from the crafts courses, and 738 from the practical school, which similarly concluded with a master craftsman award but required a seventh-grade education (meaning up to the age of around 14) upon admission. From 1935 onwards Constancy created a placement bureau, which assisted

graduating students in finding work after graduation. In cases of crisis, it also employed them in its own workshop and paid them wages.

In a move typical of left-wing women's opposition to middle class-led women's cross-class activisms, communist women in the early 1920s criticized the Constancy schools for their involvement with the authorities and for the fact that they were not free for everybody and thus anti-working class. They considered the self-perception of the middle-class women in charge of such schools as benefactors of working-class girls to be false, and that by selling what the students produced in their practice courses the schools were exploiting their unpaid labour.²⁷

Displaying women's contribution in a multinational space

The women's crafts movement played an important role in presenting 'female industriousness'²⁸ in a multitude of exhibitions and shows which were mushrooming across the Habsburg Monarchy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and in promoting the cross- and transregional travel of information on women's manual work within and beyond Central and Eastern Europe.²⁹ The exhibitions included the famous international Vienna World's Fair (Wiener Weltausstellung) in 1873, many national and regional exhibitions (often labelled 'country-wide' in the original languages) of a more general character, and more specialized trades and crafts exhibitions; there were also separate women's work exhibitions. The sets of objects made by women included products deemed both traditional- and modern-style work, which were sometimes displayed side by side.

For the women's crafts movement, the display and advertisement at the exhibitions of the crafts work created by 'female exhibitors of all classes'³⁰ formed an important activist repertoire. The exhibition politics of the women's crafts movement served a fourfold set of goals and interests, connected by how women belonging to middle and upper social classes aimed to use the high-profile public space of the (for the most part not women-specific) exhibitions to promote their gendered and nationally tinged cross-class activist agendas.

The first goal pursued by showcasing crafts work by women of all classes was meant – in line with the principal aims of the associations driving the women's crafts movement – to promote the professionalization and commodification of women's quality work. Frequently, the products presented were also for sale.³¹ The presentations, of course, tended to gloss over the actual character of the work done by working-class, including peasant, women, or, especially in the earlier decades,

even masked the fact that this was real work.³² Secondly, in the women's crafts movement, the exhibition as an activist repertoire played a key role in the politics of generating more appreciation for women's manual work and, in turn, enhancing the self-esteem – as a social group – of the women who produced the objects shown. At the 1873 Vienna World's Fair the – huge – Cisleithanian-Austrian section featured a special exhibition of 'Work by Women' which was displayed 'in the rear wing' of a somewhat remote pavilion as an 'Additional Exhibition' (Additionelle Ausstellung).³³ The special women's exhibition featured a large section on 'work produced by female amateurs', and sections on 'national female home-based' industries, craft pieces produced in vocational schools, and women's work in big industry; it also included pieces produced in orphanages, convent schools and prisons.³⁴ In her formal 1874 report to the ministry, Aglaia von Enderes (1836–83), manager of the women's exhibition (appointed secretary of the Vienna Women's Industry Association in the same year),³⁵ declared that the amateurs' products section had 'placed the small, insignificant fabric next to the master craftsmanship ... thereby making women realize the value and importance of their achievements. ... It has opened up a rich field of imitation for the female worker, [and] offered many a stimulus and encouragement.'³⁶

The exhibitions constructed, thirdly, a gendered public space in which handicraft production, portrayed euphemistically as the heart and soul of women's gendered work, played a key role in construing common ground between women across social classes and, detailed further below, across various nationalities. The (heavily men-gearred) national Hungarian exhibition which formed part of the Vienna World's Fair did not feature a separate women's section and was characterized by an extreme preponderance of men, with only a tiny number of women named among the 2,500 plus exhibitors mentioned in more than 20 sections. By contrast, the exhibition catalogue, when documenting the section on 'National Home Industries' cultivated across the Hungarian Kingdom, listed some 150 individual exhibitors (following 310 non-named entries indicating exhibitors who represented multiple nationalities). More than 40 per cent of these individuals were women, and the towels, boxes and earthenware produced by a few baronesses and countesses were displayed together with the products delivered by women of all other classes and nationalities, many of which belonged to the genre of folk art.³⁷ Portraying for an extensive audience women's handicrafts as a common ground where women of all classes met constituted an (envisioned) contribution to generating an enriched common gendered subjectivity of

all women. In Hungary, in 1881 the National Women's Trade Association organized a women-only National Women's Trade Exhibition (Országos Nőiparkiallítás) in Budapest, where 4,500 exhibitors from across the Hungarian Kingdom were represented by more than 40,000 objects. The exhibition was visited by the Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary Francis Joseph I and his wife Empress Elisabeth. The organizers went to the lengths of including a section showcasing the 'necessary handicrafts' associated with the 'family hearth', demonstrating how much work done by women was involved in 'preserving objects', including 'mending and utilizing seemingly worthless materials'. According to the summary report presented to the association by its own (male) rapporteur Mór Gelléri, this was where the greatest rigour in judging the objects was naturally required.³⁸

In the widely read daily newspaper *Sunday Paper* (*Vasárnapi Ujság*), Gelléri reported on a different topic, the much admired 'Békéscsaba section' of the exhibition, where 'Mrs Mihály Griecs-Tomo, the industrious peasant woman [pórnő] of Csaba' (Figure 1) performed traditional hand-weaving in front of the marvelling public. Békéscsaba (Békešská Čaba, Bichișciaba) is a town in the extreme south-east of present-day Hungary. The Békéscsaba section featured what Gelléri, using the language of the time, called 'Slavic' (tót) women's handicrafts. For Gelléri, Mrs Griecs-Tomo's hometown 'has won glory, and of all that glory she has a good share, who all by herself represents all her colleagues, and who with proud self-confidence watches the lines of visitors who speak highly of her manufacture'. The 'banded woollen fabrics', displayed in the same section, '[w]ith regular supervision and development ... could become a lucrative source of income and provide a rewarding, permanent occupation for the women of B. Csaba'. Fine embroidery, lace and stitching 'prove that in this town it is not just the commoners who are industrious, but all classes of society'. To support the efforts of the local middle classes to develop 'the art of women's needlework on a regular basis', the Békéscsaba women's associations were now endeavouring to connect the local medium-level girls' school – which also had provided objects – 'with a women's industrial school'.³⁹

The fourth characteristic of the engagement of the women's crafts movements with the exhibition bustle evolved around how the agenda of elevating women's manual work across social class was intertwined with national differences between women as portrayed within the exhibition space. This question has not yet been addressed in the scholarship in comparative perspective across the lands of the Habsburg Monarchy. Our initial findings relate to the status ascribed to minoritized women's

crafts work in the exhibitions and the position of the crafts movements driven by women belonging to (or self-identifying with) the minoritized nationalities in the Habsburg Empire ([chapter 7](#)). One general trend is that the exhibitions inevitably exoticized the handicraft work of women of the agrarian lower classes and minoritized women. Recent research has highlighted the connection between these characteristics of the exhibitions' engagement with women's crafts work and the endeavours to commodify the work thus displayed.⁴⁰

Two more specific, additional trends can be observed regarding the status of minoritized women's handcraft work in the world of the exhibitions. The first one concerns the representation of the work of minoritized women in exhibitions, which were organized under the auspices of (somewhat) dominant nationalities.⁴¹ In this type of exhibition, inclusiveness in terms of the cross-class women's agenda that characterized the women's crafts movements could have a tangible impact in terms of integrating – even if in an exoticized or otherwise unequal manner – the craft work of women from dominated nationalities too. The above example of the 1881 National Women's Trade Exhibition organized under Hungarian auspices (displaying only women's work) illustrates this tendency. The 1894 Provincial Universal Exhibition (Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa) in Lwów (Lviv, Lemberg, Galicia/Cisleithania, later Poland, then Soviet Union, today Ukraine) ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)) underscores, at least in terms of how the show was represented in the vast exhibition catalogue, this tendency as it translated into a mixed-gender exhibition under Polish auspices in the crownland of Galicia. Overall, the Provincial Universal Exhibition overwhelmingly displayed Polish-identified objects.⁴² In section no. 24, dedicated to 'products of women's work in the areas of household work, handicrafts, education and charity',⁴³ we find a nuance in terms of the representation of minoritized Ukrainian (Ruthenian) work which departed from the overall Polish character of the exhibition. While in section no. 24, too, Polish names dominated among the individually named exhibitors, the Club of Ruthenian Women (Klub rusynok/Клуб русинок/Klub Rusinek (in its Polish spelling)), from Lwów, later merged with others into the Women's Community (Zhinocha hromada/Жіноча громада), still later renamed the Ukrainian Women's Union (Soiuz ukrainok/Союз українок), was present with 760 assorted objects. The exhibition catalogue, however, gave neither the names of the Ukrainian/Ruthenian women who had created these objects nor any specifics about their products. While the representation given in the catalogue thus simultaneously presented and downgraded Ukrainian women's work,

the women's section no. 24 did more in terms of highlighting the work of Ukrainian women as compared to section no. 23, which exhibited ethnographic objects. In the overall exhibition, the latter was the only section which gave Ruthenian-identified objects a strong presence,⁴⁴ but it did little to make the work of Ukrainian/Ruthenian women visible as women's work.⁴⁵

The examples of both the Hungarian-identified National Women's Trade Exhibition and the Polish-identified Provincial Universal Exhibition show that inclusiveness in terms of displaying minoritized women's work was based on an invitation to participate according to the terms set by the host – that is, the crafts movements led by women self-identified with a (somewhat) dominant nationality.⁴⁶ In the National Women's Trade Exhibition the work of minoritized women was confined to a subsection – or at least it was identified as such – dedicated to the 'popular crafts branches' (*népiparágak*), and the various contemporary reporters spoke (as they also often did when reflecting on the work of women belonging to their own national group) about the need to teach and elevate the practitioners of the popular crafts and 'adapt' their work.⁴⁷ It is, however, difficult to know what *exactly* the terms of the women's craft movements' invitations to minoritized women were, or would have been, in these and other cases. Organizing and contributing to the exhibitions, the responsible committees and organizations of the women's crafts movements faced many challenges when collaborating with men leaders and organizers, and as a rule their decision-making capacity with regard to how, in the end, the exhibition pieces were selected, assorted and classified in the exhibition space, and represented in the official catalogue, was limited.⁴⁸

National hierarchization, in any case, was and remained present in the voices of the middle- and upper-class women leading the crafts movements identified with the dominant nationalities. In addition, the tendency to include the work of minoritized women – if always on the terms set by women's groups identified with dominant nationalities – was not present to the same degree over time, and it took different forms in different contexts. The exhibition of Austrian-Cisleithanian women's work at the Vienna World's Fair 1873 was assembled under the auspices of the German-Austrian-dominated Vienna Women's Industry Association, with co-commissions in cities across Cisleithania (though not in Prague). Among the 501 amateurs featured in the catalogue, who resided in many places across Cisleithania, the large majority had German family names (though some might have been Germanized when entered into the catalogue). Here too, the work of minoritized women was

concentrated in the de facto ethnographic ‘national female home-based’ industries section, designed to exhibit only ‘works for use in the home ... in accordance with old, traditional customs’ and to exclude work ‘created for the market’. Aglaia von Enderes effusively extolled the somewhat exotic splendour and quality of the work on show. While declaring that ‘we must stand before [it] with respect’, von Enderes underlined that this work, produced by the women of the many ‘peoples’ (Völkerschaften) of Cisleithania, was ‘fading and disappearing’. It constituted a holdover from the past deemed to be replaced by ‘something more original and better’.⁴⁹

The Czechoslov Ethnographic Exhibition (Národopisná výstava československá) which opened its doors in Prague in 1895 is an example of a self-styled mono-national exhibition which displayed Slovak-identified material in a bid to promote ethno-linguistic unity between the Cisleithanian Czechs and the Slovaks, the large majority of whom lived in the Slovak lands within the Kingdom of Hungary (Map 1, Map 2). The cultural-historical exhibition section of the Czechoslov Ethnographic Exhibition devoted a section to women’s contributions to the national cause.⁵⁰ The fact that Slovak women’s work was included here was masked by the title ‘Czech Woman’. The purpose of the section was to ‘present a picture of women’s work and show the importance of the woman question’.⁵¹ Exhibition items highlighted the cultural accomplishments of ‘Czech’ women and women’s efforts at emancipation; the exhibition displayed artworks, literature and women’s magazines and presented middle class-identified women’s associations. A ‘modern industry’ section, which was not strictly part of the Czechoslov Ethnographic Exhibition but was present as an ‘associated exhibition’, showcased artefacts of many women workers, mostly from the textile industry.⁵²

The second specific trend which can be established regarding the status of minoritized women’s handicraft work in the world of the exhibitions concerns the role of these shows for the activism of women’s organizations identified with minoritized nationalities. For several of these organizations, women’s craft agendas and the activist repertoire of displaying the crafts produced by women of all social classes belonging to their national group played a pronounced role in their overall activist agendas and repertoires. The exhibition of crafts produced by women of all social classes identified with a given minoritized nationality could help promote the vision of national unity and “completeness”. It also could serve to denote the claim to women’s important role in the creation and advancement of the nation while simultaneously keeping this claim

apart from what most men (and many women) would consider an activist or otherwise undue political intervention.

For the organizations of Romanian women in Hungarian-dominated Transylvania, exhibiting handicrafts was an important activity early on. In 1868, nationalist leader George Bariț (Barițiu) encouraged the Reunion of Romanian Women from Brașov (Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Brașov, founded in 1850) (Brașov, Brassó, Kronstadt, Hungary, later Romania) to exhibit handcrafted items. This was to display the culture of the region and drum up support for schools for women's handicrafts planned by the new Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (Asociațiunea Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român, ASTRA).⁵³ From the 1890s onwards, related activities played an ever more pronounced role in the work of the Reunions. The activists sent blouses and photographs of peasant folk dresses to potential allies in Britain and France, including to Oxford-based socialist writer Oona H. Ball.⁵⁴ In 1897, Romanian handicraft items from Hunedoara (Hunyad) county were exhibited and sold in a Viennese shop, where they drew the attention of Baroness Helene von Dithfurth (born von Kussevich, 1853–1929). At her request, the Reunion provided items to be exhibited in Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia) to raise funds for flood victims in the region.⁵⁵

By the turn of the century, promotion of home industry was deeply linked to women's organizing within the Romanian nationalist movement. In 1900, the Reunion of Romanian Women from Sălaj county (Reuniunea Femeilor Sălăjene, founded in 1881 in Sălaj (Szilágy) county) began collecting textiles, embroidery and folk costumes from villages in the region. In 1901, they exhibited homemade textiles created by the Hunedoara Reunion in a different county, for the benefit of fire-stricken peasants in that county.⁵⁶ On this occasion, 'it was noticed with joy that women and girls from [Sălaj] villages made copies of the most beautiful [Hunedoara] weaves in order to imitate them'.⁵⁷ In 1907, the Hunedoara Women's Reunion opened a formally registered weaving and stitching workshop. The activists claimed to be inspired by similar initiatives in the Romanian Kingdom, rather than being at all related to any developments in activism within Austria-Hungary, signalling cross-border national belonging. The workshop produced exquisite folk costumes for middle-class families who purchased or borrowed them to be worn at reunions and balls,⁵⁸ including the important ASTRA annual ball.⁵⁹

For the Charitable Co-operative of Serbian Women from Novi Sad, exhibitions of women's handicraft work similarly formed one of

the core activities. The Charitable Co-operative was based in the region of Vojvodina, which at the time was part of the Kingdom of Hungary and later Yugoslavia (today Serbia) (Map 1, Map 2, Map 3, Map 4). Its activities ranged from large professional shows, to supporting the display of handicrafts and arts in schools on ceremonial occasions.⁶⁰ Key activist Savka Subotić detailed the preparations for two major exhibitions in a 1904 booklet. One of these exhibitions took place in Novi Sad in 1884, while the second was the National General Exhibition (Országos Általános Kiállítás) for Hungary (including Croatia) in Budapest in 1885.⁶¹ The Novi Sad exhibition was later celebrated by the DZSN for its significant impact on the region and beyond.⁶²

The women's crafts-related activities of the (Saxon Lutheran) Women's District Association of Burzenland (Burzenländer Frauen-Bezirks-Verein) in Burzenland (Țara Bârsei, Barcaság) in Transylvania in the Hungarian Kingdom (today Romania) fell between the two specific, overall trends regarding the status of minoritized women's handicraft work in the world of the exhibitions. This reflected the position of the Transylvanian Saxons, who enjoyed more autonomy in relation to the dominant Hungarian group as compared to other nationalities. When exhibiting 'old Saxon patterns' of handicrafts in the Kronstadt (Brassó, Braşov, Hungary, today Romania) city hall in the late 1880s, the Women's District Association, when describing its aims, pointed to both inclusiveness for all nationalities and competition with the Hungarians. The exhibition was to supplant Hungarian-speaking women's handicrafts on the regional tourist market, and the association claimed that '[o]nly through the exhibition 'did we have the opportunity to see the diversity of women's work in our Burzenland and how little we city dwellers were aware of it'.⁶³

Addressing women domestic workers: common grounds and political rivalry

The lot of women household employees – endlessly rehashed by contemporaries as the 'servant question' – attracted the keen attention of women's activists in many lands.⁶⁴ Many non-working-class women shared the gendered space of their homes with the domestic workers employed there. A considerable number of these middle-class women began to turn to servants politics in the late nineteenth century, claiming a gendered responsibility for this group of working women. Left-wing women also responded to the circumstances of domestic workers,

engaging with and aiming to reshape the class divide between women in thorough competition with the middle-class activists.

This section will show that the competing groups, sharp differences notwithstanding, also took common paths in their activist concern with the lot of domestic workers. This group of workers epitomized key special characteristics of women's work and gendered social problems related to women's work in a rapidly changing society. For young women who migrated to the big cities ([chapter 6](#)) it was difficult to live independently, or as subtenants in the households of others. Well into the twentieth century, the work of domestic workers, who were integrated into the households of their employers, was legally set apart from "real" wage labour, and these workers were socially and materially heavily marginalized. Mainstream, men-oriented social movements of all political leanings implicitly and explicitly construed domestic workers as a *politically* marginal group of the working population and entertained little interest in this section of the labour force.

The motivations of socialist/social democratic ([chapter 4](#)) and middle-class women engaged in servants politics in Central and Eastern Europe varied. They stretched from inclusive views on who constituted the working class and was to be mobilized on behalf of its liberation, to the vision of women's special role in establishing peace between different social classes, a peace to be preserved by both domestic servants and their mistresses. The women's groups and organizations engaged in servants politics were sharply divided in terms of their affiliation to competing political organizations, parties and other institutions. Yet in terms of more practical agenda setting and related social action we find a mixture between diversity and common ground which was specific to servants politics. The commonalities, denied by the protagonists themselves and often neglected or only touched upon by historians (who have tended to focus on either middle class- or working class-identified activists⁶⁵ or who were sometimes sympathetic to the world view of one of these groups), can be described as a shared politics of practice. These two groups of activists, however, envisioned and aimed to promote vastly different subjectivities of the domestic workers as they addressed them as a social group.

The servants politics pursued by activist women's groups evolved around four sets of agendas: the provision of services that helped strengthen domestic workers' position vis-à-vis labour-related challenges they encountered; the training of domestic workers in their profession; the development of a more purposeful self-identification of domestic workers; and (not discussed in this chapter) the change of the legal

framings of domestic workers' position including in labour law and social policy. Self-identification in terms of social class played a key role in generating common ground or overlap as well as sharp distinction in terms of what the activists aimed to achieve.

Mitigating the most pressing risks of working life for domestic workers

One of the most relevant pitfalls in the working life of domestic workers concerned the time span when they were out of employment. They faced the pressing and eminently practical problems of finding interim accommodation and surviving without income, and the similarly practical problem of how to spot a suitable placement. Middle-class women's groups and associations engaged in servants politics often captured the problems and needs domestic workers encountered when out of employment as gendered moral endangerment, whereas left-wing women considered them a gendered risk of working life.

Still, confronted with the practical problems faced by domestic workers away from work, the politically competing activists pursued shared practical agendas, such as establishing dormitories and placement services for unemployed domestic workers. Over time, they added additional social services. In Hungary, the Valeria Association for the Education of Women Servants (Valeria Nőcseléd-képző Egylet), established in 1871, quickly opened the first documented specialized dormitory for unemployed maid servants in the capital, Budapest. Paying a fee, the women could generally stay for up to eight days.⁶⁶ In the first decade of the twentieth century middle class-led servants politics took on momentum. The non-confessional Márta Association (Márta-Egylet, established in 1893, renamed Márta Welfare and Non-Profit Association in 1912)⁶⁷ located in Budapest, its namesakes across the country and various Catholic organizations played a leading role. A Márta initiative in the southern Hungarian city Szeged, led by the local Protestant women's association and including organized Jewish women, as well as men, illustrates the character of the practical side of middle-class women's servants politics. The Szeged Márta Association (Szegedi Márta-Egylet) opened a servants' home with 20 beds, in a four-room apartment it had rented for the purpose, (likely) on 1 August 1900.⁶⁸ The home was managed by a female guardian whose instructions the residents had to follow. During the first two to three days of their sojourn in the home, the residents were to mend their own belongings, after which the guardian directed them to 'other housework'.

In return for a 'very small fee' the residents received full board. For the housework they performed in the home they were paid. The originators of the Szeged Márta initiative plainly expressed the intricate connection between tangible employer interests, welfare elements of the Márta activities, and specific ideas about the good servant:

The guardian also runs a servant placement service for the members of the [Márta] association ... and the members of the association who are looking for a servant get a useful, honest servant. The master alone pays for the placement service ... the servants will only pay a very small sum into the *servants' fund* which will be established ... From this ... fund servants in need of help will be assisted and servant girls who are marrying will receive a wedding present. The [Márta] association will also contribute to the fund.

While awaiting the opening of the home on 1 August, the Szeged Márta Association had already attracted around 300 regular members, most of them women.

In the decade preceding World War I, the Budapest Márta Association greatly expanded its dormitory services and job placement activities. In 1913, its servants' home served nearly 16,000 meals daily and counted 2,174 overnight stays by 1,066 servants.⁶⁹ Within the orbit of the Catholic women's organizations, the National Federation of Catholic Housewives (Katholikus Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetsége, KHOSZ; see [Appendix 1](#), National Catholic Women's Protection Association), which specialized in the 'abandoned servant matters',⁷⁰ took the lead in servants politics.⁷¹ KHOSZ and many local Catholic women's protection associations ran dormitories and railway missions (which directed arriving rural women into both domestic and factory work) and offered placement services ([Figure 15](#)).⁷² KHOSZ also hosted servants who were dismissed during their mistresses' summer holidays, giving them a chance to garner a 'certain income' over the summer through home-based work.⁷³ In the 1920s, the discursively omnipresent 'servant shortage' was mirrored in reduced activity by the middle-class associations. KHOSZ reported that in 1926–7 an average of six to seven servants per day stayed in its servants' home, around one-third of them – who stayed somewhat longer than the others – free of charge. The placement service found 1,515 positions for its clients.⁷⁴

The overall reach of the middle class-run placement services (with servants' homes often attached to them) remained limited as compared to the informal and private servant placement market.⁷⁵ At the same

time, in the years before World War I, in Hungary, competition between the women's organizations operating these services and women activists aligned with the socialist labour movement visibly contributed to the overall expansion of women-led initiatives aimed at the support of domestic workers. Socialist/social democratic engagement with servant organizing was driven by left-socialist women who in later years, with the increased integration of the social democratic women's movement into the party, were relegated to the margins. These women recognized female domestic workers as a social group marginalized not only in society at large but also in the socialist labour movement, and considered organizing them, as part of their radical programme, to be an essential step towards building a more inclusive class-based social movement (see also [chapter 4](#), [chapter 8](#)).

This intention did not prevent socialist servant leaders from engaging with the most pressing needs of domestic workers in a very practical manner whenever they could. When in Budapest, in late 1906, for a short historical moment, the servants' association founded by socialist women could legally operate, its first act was to 'turn into a regular service the placement service' operating in the location used by the association.⁷⁶ Yet the more radical wing of the socialist/social democratic women's movement – with the exception of the revolutionary period between late 1918 and the summer of 1919 ([chapter 3](#)) – was never able to build a stable network of working class-based social institutions in the service of domestic workers. These women lacked political support in the party and trade union leadership and, consequently, material resources and personnel. In the rare moments when such support was offered, they instantly (re)turned to the politics of practice. From 1925, the Association of Women Workers of Hungary (Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület, MME), which had survived from the pre-war period, operated a 'female domestic workers' section'.⁷⁷ Etel Kiss, a leading domestic workers' activist of the interwar period, remembered the section as a self-reliant organization, speaking of it as 'our trade union', which to a degree was overseen by the Trade Union Council of Hungary (Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Tanács).⁷⁸ From 1925, when the domestic workers' organization could rent a spacious facility (a former party club) with 'several' larger rooms, 'we set up a temporary home [for unemployed domestic workers] and a job centre',⁷⁹ which was 'free of charge' and operated with long daily opening hours.⁸⁰ The establishment of the Women Domestic Workers' Home (soon mustering 15 beds) was made possible by financial support from the Budapest municipality, thanks to the efforts of two social democratic women leaders who

served as ‘city mothers’ (that is, municipal councillors).⁸¹ The opening of the home was the occasion for all-movement social democratic pomp and celebration.⁸²

The new, women-led initiatives would, once again, prove short-lived: in less than three years the new institutions were gone.⁸³ Etel Kiss in retrospect blamed the Catholic KHOSZ for the demise, saying its representatives ‘were not well-disposed towards our autonomous organization, and sent their well-recruited domestic employees, who with their machinations managed to morally, but also financially, undercut our union and our institutions’.⁸⁴

Training domestic workers

The institutions that supported the practical needs of domestic workers were often closely connected with training opportunities and services (chapter 5). In Hungary before World War I, the training of servants had already attracted much attention in middle-class women’s circles, always with the double goal of acculturating them to middle-class lifestyles and transforming them into economically useful beings. The leading protagonist of the women’s education movement, Ilona Stetina Mrs Sebestyén (1855–1932), contemplated in depth in KHOSZ’s journal exactly what type of handicrafts servants who were expelled during the summer months from their employer’s household should be taught when spending this period in the KHOSZ servants’ home. The training must combine novelty and a measured difficulty level so that the young women would not lose motivation, with limited space and investment requirements so that the women could continue the work in the home of their employers and later in their own households.⁸⁵ If before World War I the focus was on the mistresses’ gendered cross-class moral and practical leadership, in the interwar period, considering the increasing workload of middle-class women and the discursively omnipresent ‘servant shortage’, the focus gravitated towards the more rational organization of the household and the professionalization of domestic workers’ training. Middle-class housewives were no longer, it was argued, in a position to ‘time and again introduce the young village girls, who usually do not command any skills, into household work’. KHOSZ now contemplated offering formalized vocational training for household employees.⁸⁶ For the time being, KHOSZ professionalized its own servant education (see also Figure 10). From 1927 it offered, expanding on its classical Sunday afternoon servant circles in which needlework was taught and practised, ‘household knowledge education

courses' given one afternoon per week. One goal was to enable the employers to 'safely entrust [the servants] to look after their household equipped with novel ... support appliances'.⁸⁷ KHOSZ also operated a central 'household school' for young girls preparing for a 'servant career', and was involved in training 12- to 15-year-old orphan girls for such a career.⁸⁸

In the capital of interwar Romania (Map 2), Bucharest, middle class-based women's organizations similarly aimed to raise girl orphans' educational attainment. From 1919, the Orthodox National Society of Romanian Women (Societatea Ortodoxă Națională a Femeilor Române) ran a municipality-funded orphanage for girls; the residents were mostly encouraged to become domestic servants. In 1932, the orphanage was turned into a professional training school for future housekeepers, at the insistence of municipal council women drawn from the local feminist movement, who disapproved of the practices that characterized the work of the National Orthodox Society.⁸⁹ Social democratic women in Hungary, while in favour of transforming the 'robots of the household' into 'qualified skilled women workers' through training in specialized professional schools, aspired to a future in which social democratic municipalities would run public schools.⁹⁰ They never commanded the resources to engage in vocational training of domestic workers themselves. They did, however, at the short junctures when their servants activism gained momentum, engage in general and trade unionist educational activities for domestic workers, such as the 'cultural lectures' scheduled on official holidays in the mid-1920s.⁹¹ At the time, the MME – or rather its domestic workers' organization – also asked employers to whom it had sent members to grant these employees a few hours' leave each Thursday evening, when 'scientific lectures' were on offer for them. The employers' side, so the report quoted here claimed, 'willingly grant[ed] the leave, seeing that in return they get a more intelligent, more dutiful worker'.⁹²

Harsh divisions and common ground: transforming the subjectivity of domestic workers as a social group

Competing for the loyalties of domestic servants, working class- and middle class-identified women's groups alike paid keen attention to consciousness-building as a key element of their political and practical work. While at first sight the two camps pursued sharply contrasting politics when it came to transforming the subjectivities and self-identification of domestic workers as a social group, upon a closer look

there was common ground in this realm too. This concerned in the first place the repertoires of action mobilized for the purpose. In addition, the opposing camps were united in their view that domestic workers needed to acquire a higher level of personal development – while at the same time there was a remarkable contrast regarding the question of what this transformed, superior subjectivity of domestic workers as a social group should look like.

The various women's groups invested a lot of energy in the building of servant communities and the organization and orchestration of leisure activities. At the core were activities and entertainments on Sundays, and evening performances, organized for and with the domestic workers.

For the middle-class groups, the moral development of servants and their development into stable personalities, to make them into good workers and underpin the hierarchical social order, were the aim. In Habsburg Galicia ([Map 1](#)), the activism of Polish Catholic laywomen's associations that addressed servants specifically dated back to the 1890s. For these associations – mostly named after St Zita, a medieval Italian maidservant who silently defied the malice of her fellow servants and became a benefactress of the poor herself – the politics of transforming the collective subjectivity of both the middle-class women and their servants formed a key element of their activism. Historian Dominika Gruziel emphasizes that fostering the gendered responsibility of fellow better-off women for servants and other individuals with whom they interacted in their daily lives, and who were in need of support, guidance and protection, was the key driving force of this politics. In the years before World War I, these Polish associations existed 'in almost all Galician cities', and representatives of the movement felt they were ahead of their German-speaking Cisleithanian sisters.⁹³

In Hungary, KHOSZ before World War I invented the (Saint) Zita Circles ((Szent) Zita-körök), which soon became a key institution in Catholic social work, and remained so throughout the interwar period. The circles assembled and entertained domestic servants on Sunday afternoons, when the women heard useful lectures, did needlework, and were gently or less gently coached into the Catholic faith. On special occasions such as Carnival, evening entertainments were added. Loyal long-term servants were awarded medals on festive occasions, with their employers present.⁹⁴ A report in the local daily, giving an account of a festive evening in the southern Hungarian city of Pécs in May 1924, offered, so it claimed, 'a glimpse into the Zita Circle's self-educating and soul-ennobling work'. The programme included the performance of the comedy 'That's What I Heard' which satirized 'the genesis and

the dissemination of gossip', a recitation, the appearance of a choir, and the presentation of a living tableau and a solo scene. All 14 'Zita girls' who performed were mentioned by name in the local newspaper.⁹⁵

In 1927 KHOSZ operated at least 9 Zita Circles in the various districts of the capital Budapest alone, rising to 25 in 1937.⁹⁶ The federation's approach combined the belief in the potential for moral elevation with the goal of creating domestic servants attached to their work by inner duty:

They too have the germ of interest in all noble things, it just needs to be awakened and its nobler values must be developed ... Through the Zita Circles we can create a society of servants who are ... more devoted, and whose discipline is not an external constraint, but a lived, habitual, inner strength, a spiritual contentment that will help them through the trials of duty and morality.⁹⁷

Socialist/social democratic women, by contrast, wished to transform domestic employees into class-conscious, self-confident workers and members of the working class with a political awareness of themselves as a social group (Figure 4). The introduction of 14-year-old seamstress apprentice Irén Singer (1890–1964) to the Budapest socialist labour movement occurred, so Singer (who later became a well-known activist under her married name Mrs Ernő Müller) remembered, through her direct encounter with the socialist domestic workers' movement. On the way home from the morning workshop cleaning on 15 March, the day of remembrance for the 1848 Revolution, Singer was walking with her apprentice companion when they encountered a socialist street rally which included a 'large colourful group of women ... the domestic workers' group'. The women repeatedly shouted slogans against the 'servant-enslaving [cselédnyűzó] madams with the 'powdered mugs [kifestett pofájú]'. These slogans spoke straight to the souls of the two girls, who found themselves shouting these words at the top of their lungs as they spontaneously moved on with the group.⁹⁸

The endeavours of socialist/social democratic women to transform the subjectivities of domestic workers as a social group were present in a large range of movement repertoires, from leadership-related action to leisure time activities for the unorganized. In 1904, the first large-scale public gathering, labelled a 'servants' assembly', was organized in which 'servants alone participated'.⁹⁹ In 1906 it was proudly reported that members of 'the leadership' of the socialist servants' association were 'chosen from the ranks of the servants'.¹⁰⁰ In the interwar period – recalled

Erzsébet Futó, a communist activist in later years – the social democratic servants' movement was led by 'a very small, courageous group, who, 'de-classed' from the industries, had been turned into domestic workers, and who knew the inherent power of organization'.¹⁰¹ Etel Kiss, whose short memoir we have quoted above, was one of these women. She described entering service to escape unemployment as a 'last resort' and referred to the early attempts at organization as driven by 'nothing more than to establish the respect due to us both as human beings, and for doing the so often and so cruelly strenuous household work'.¹⁰² The domestic workers' organization had an independent leadership in which household employees filled important positions, but Kiss also points to the fact that leading social democratic women functionaries, including Katica Horváth (chapter 3), were included.¹⁰³ It was clear, in sum, that a group of socialist/social democratic women aimed to create, and supported, formats and elements of political organization that would allow domestic workers to develop a sense of self which built on an awareness of themselves as a gendered and classed social group which owned the capacity to politically act for itself.

In their cultural activism, socialist/social democratic women similarly pursued, beyond more narrowly conceived political goals, strategies that aimed to enhance and transform domestic servants' sense of self-worth. In 1907 and 1908, the well-read general daily *People's Voice* (*Népszava*) of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary (Magyarországi Szociáldemokrata Párt) regularly published small ads through which the 'free' domestic workers' organization called domestic workers to participate in Sunday excursions (into the 'woods of Rákospalota') and entertainments ('in all the rooms of the underwear cleaners trade union [fehérneműtisztító munkások szakegylete] ... [a]fter the programme, dance until 1 p.m.'), and hear lectures. In 1910, the MME arranged for a Sunday late afternoon regular 'special course' for domestic workers, separate from its general lecture series for women workers on Friday evenings.¹⁰⁴ The events organized by the radical socialist/social democratic women for the servants started where the servants could be found. In their everyday-life agitation, they aimed to give a *language* to the humiliating experiences of the servants, offering a self-confident counter-model. The coverage of these events in the socialist/social democratic women's press added an extra layer to this class-based struggle for a new collective subjectivity of domestic workers:

Our servant sisters in Nagyvárad [Oradea, Großwardein, then Hungary, today Romania] have conducted a very nice agitation, and

with really amazing results. On 24 February [1907] they organized a big public dance amusement ... which Comrade Zsófi Kalmár from Budapest opened with an exposition ... She pointed out the prejudices that surround the servant worker as a human being. Everything can be thrown at her, she can be pushed anywhere ... Many people think: sure, she's just a servant, that's enough for her. But if the ladies of the house were forced to do without the servant workers, they would quickly realize that this persecuted 'servant' with her calloused hands is everything for the family.

At the end of her speech, she called on the two hundred or so servant workers present to be fond of one another. It is only mutual indelible love, organization and learning which can help us to achieve the humane way of life we deserve.¹⁰⁵

The cultural politics pursued by the radical socialist/social democratic women faced two challenges. Not all domestic workers seemed to share in the ideal of connecting the newly achieved self-consciousness with the attitude of the 'intelligent, more dutiful' worker – an element of the envisioned transformation of the subjectivities of domestic workers as a social group, which had some elements in common with the ideals of the middle-class women. In summer 1906 domestic workers were mobilized into a large socialist street rally. An incident occurred when they shouted the popular 'powdered mugs' slogan at neatly dressed passers-by. After it surfaced that the ladies being attacked were the wives of trusted and well-known comrades, *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*), the social democratic women's journal, lectured the servants that it was not right to 'hate the lovely clothes'.¹⁰⁶ A second problem was the lack of understanding, even within the ranks of the organized women workers, the activists experienced of the far-reaching nature of the task of transforming domestic workers' subjectivity. During a brief, final upswing of social democratic women's servants politics in the early 1930s, *Woman Worker* discovered that 'what the household worker suffers, what she is forced to endure, only a few female worker comrades, only the most self-assured, can understand'.¹⁰⁷

The gendered labour inspectorate: women protecting women?

In pursuing their agendas, both the women's crafts movement and the women's organizations engaging with servant matters created, as we

have seen, their own institutions, including placement services and schools. Frequently, the women also encouraged public authorities to support, develop and take over these institutions. While such change repeatedly came with alterations of the profile of the institutions, provoking criticism from women activists, these women also found a new place for their women-centred work in the emerging public institutions, some of which built directly on their earlier autonomous activities. The labour inspectorate, as one of the earliest state institutions aimed at protecting the industrial labour force, had a different history, and this was mirrored in the position of women therein. The labour inspectorate was invented in the nineteenth century as a public institution, and the few women employed there in marginalized positions acted in a men-dominated world of officialdom,¹⁰⁸ which was vastly different from the world of the civic women's organizations that engaged in protecting and supporting women industrial workers. The statist character of the labour inspectorate is one decisive factor that explains the unevenness and limitations of women's involvement with this institution in many lands across Central and Eastern Europe. Still, both middle class- and working class-identified women engaged from within this institution with the gendered interests and needs of women factory and home-based industrial workers.

Uneven development

The instalment of women (assistant) labour inspectors was delayed in Central and Eastern Europe (in 1906 in Vienna) as compared to France, Britain, the United States and Germany.¹⁰⁹ The gendered labour inspectorate developed unevenly in the Habsburg lands and the post-1918 successor states ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#)), mirroring state priorities in labour politics. In Cisleithanian Austria, towards the end of World War I, eight or nine assistant woman inspectors were employed, five of whom were assigned to territories of the future First Austrian Republic and three to other territories, then part of Cisleithanian Austria. The inspectors in Brno, Prague and Lwów were installed in 1908. After World War I, in Austria the women assistant inspectors were renamed 'Specialist Inspectors for Women's Work', and step by step their employment relationship moved closer to that of men.¹¹⁰

The inclusion of women in the Cisleithanian labour inspectorate – a long-standing demand of middle-class and organized social democratic women – reflected the (selectively) interventionist, gendered character of Austrian labour policy. Here, gendered, paternalistic ideas about the

special protection women workers needed gained considerable traction in welfare and social policies.¹¹¹ In contradistinction to the Kingdom of Hungary, restrictions on women's night work were introduced early on (in 1885) in Austria and later extended to smaller enterprises, and the female inspectors had to monitor the female-dominated smaller businesses.¹¹² In interwar Austria, the supervision of home-based work, children's and apprentices' work, and gender-differentiated working time regulations in all types of enterprises were added.¹¹³ The young First Austrian Republic took decisive legal steps to regulate and formalize home-based industrial work and enlarge the competences and powers of the factory inspectorate,¹¹⁴ in this way expanding on the Cisleithanian heritage of gendered labour protection.

In Hungary, where semi-periphery-type economic liberalism remained strong, state welfare policy built much less on special, sex-specific regulations of women's work. Organized social democratic women demanded the instalment of women labour inspectors before the end of World War I,¹¹⁵ yet when in the pre-war years the Hungarian government contemplated this step, *People's Voice* was suspicious that this might be meant to enlarge the 'sphere of activity' of denominational middle-class associations.¹¹⁶ A 1918 ordinance finally decreed the employment of woman labour inspectors,¹¹⁷ yet only under the Hungarian Republic of Councils did this innovation become a reality, for a short historical moment. The first woman who, two decades later, would serve for a more extended period of time was the physician Dr Irén Mária Kovács, who, after having been employed in the trades ministry as a 'temporary technical trainee' since 1936,¹¹⁸ was promoted in 1938 to become an 'assistant labour inspector'.¹¹⁹

In the Second Polish Republic, established in the aftermath of World War I (Map 2), the inclusion of women in the new nationwide labour inspectorate signified the building of a modern nation-state which granted voting rights to women and made positions as state officials within the state apparatus available to them. The gendered labour inspectorate here was also inspired by the politics of the International Labour Organization (ILO), which prioritized building up and promoting efficiently functioning state labour inspectorates as a means of enforcing international labour standards and information collection since its inception in 1919. The ILO's constitution itself stressed that women were to take part in inspections. In 1919, Poland included the labour inspector Zofja Praussowa (Table 6) as government adviser into its delegation to the first session of the International Labour Conference of the ILO.¹²⁰

The interwar developments in Poland built on a highly uneven institutional heritage. While one woman inspector had served in the lands of Cisleithanian Galicia which later became Polish ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#)), women assistants had not been included in the labour inspectorate either in the (former) Prussian Province of Posen (Poznań, Prowincja Poznańska) or the Katowice (Kattowitz, German Silesia) district before these territories became part of Poland in 1920.¹²¹ The centralized Labour Inspectorate (Inspekcja Pracy) of the Second Polish Republic, which functioned independently from the municipal authorities, was formed within the Ministry of Work and Social Assistance (Ministerstwo Pracy i Opieki Społecznej, MPOS) in 1918, establishing a body of inspecting personnel.¹²² Women were part of the Labour Inspectorate from its creation. The inclusion of women formed part of a broader policy of the MPOS, which offered the possibility of employment to upper- and middle-class, educated Polish women concerned with labour and social issues. The gendered labour inspectorate of interwar Poland responded, just as in Cisleithanian and interwar Austria, to deeply entrenched ideas about women workers' gendered position and needs.

Addressing women and adolescent workers

In interwar Poland, labour inspectors and assistant inspectors directly addressed workers' conditions by visiting sites of industrial labour, recording infringements and enforcing labour legislation. The 1927 law on labour inspection granted workers, including women workers, the chance to participate in an institutionalized manner in the inspection as assistants.¹²³ Implementation of the workers' clause, however, was not immediate. The MPOS released additional regulations in 1935, requiring assistants to have at least elementary schooling, and setting the number of such assistants across Poland to 17, 3 of whom were explicitly dedicated to the affairs of women and underage workers. In the same year, the official journal of the MPOS reported that the first three assistants – unclear whether they were women or men – were finally appointed in Łódź.¹²⁴

Perhaps the most vocal of women inspectors, Halina Krahelska (1886–1945), critically assessed the social composition of the inspectorate, stressing that 'the majority of labour inspectors come from the propertied spheres, or from the spheres of the intelligentsia, subordinated to the influence of the propertied classes', which curtailed their capacity to adequately protect the rights of workers.¹²⁵ An activist in the underground socialist movement before 1917, Krahelska repeatedly

stressed the importance of an activist pro-workers' stance for inspectors as the only way to counteract this, and singled women out as the most downtrodden group of the working class.

Women could achieve the status of full inspectors, even if their purview remained concentrated on women and underage workers.¹²⁶ Although legally, according to the 1919 temporary decree and the 1927 law,¹²⁷ the authority of labour inspectors extended over all waged workers, in practice the efforts of the inspectorate remained focused on urban industrial workers. The challenges of uniformization of labour legislation and welfare provisions across the lands of the former Polish partitions shaped much of the early effort of the MPOS. In this context of intensive state-building and ongoing updates of the legal framework, inspectors, including women inspectors, performed a wide range of tasks that went beyond their duties of factory visits and reporting, such as the mediation of labour conflicts.

For women inspectors, such an extension of activities beyond the more technical aspects of inspection remained a prominent feature of their work throughout the 1920s and 1930s. They researched different aspects of waged labour of women, led press campaigns, organized training and introduced other measures aimed at bettering conditions for labouring women. Their approach was visibly shaped by gendered cross-class sensibilities similar to those discovered with regard to women factory inspectors in pre-World War I Germany.¹²⁸ Responding in a context-specific manner to the labour conditions they encountered, (some) Polish inspectors developed strong activist subjectivities. They adopted a wide-angle view on women's factory work, which was based on deep knowledge of how it was shaped by women's position in society.

From early on, they highlighted the gendered nature of labour-related issues such as workplace accidents. In 1928, Halina Krahelska implied that the mental and physical exhaustion of women factory workers made them especially vulnerable to accidents, underlining that 43 per cent of all accidents involving machines occurred at textile factories, where the overwhelming majority of workers were women.¹²⁹ In 1932, the Kraków assistant inspector Irena Zimmerspitzówna stated that women workers' life outside the factory, including their marital status and number of children, affected their susceptibility to occupational fatigue and resulting accidents.¹³⁰

The most prominent among women inspectors' campaigns had as its goal the installation of factory day nurseries. The wellbeing of children of factory-employed mothers was a long-running concern of

middle-class activists. They identified infants born to women factory workers as a particularly vulnerable group, susceptible to elevated mortality and stunted physical development. Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, a mixed-gender group of Polish medical professionals and social reformers organized in Łódź (then Kingdom of Poland, Russian Empire), the centre of the Polish textile industry, an association called A Drop of Milk (*Kropla mleka*) (see also [chapter 8](#)) which provided a range of support for factory-employed mothers, including education about hygiene, medical care and sterilized milk for infants.¹³¹

The activities carried out by the women inspectors in the interwar period built on this heritage of civic women's cross-class labour activism. In their capacity as inspectors they pursued, within and beyond the state institution that employed them, comparable politics of special support for women workers with small children. They aimed at the creation of an infrastructure of childcare, following the law regulating the labour of women and underage workers that was adopted on 2 July 1924. It obliged all enterprises employing more than 100 women to create day nurseries for infants.¹³² The campaign for its enforcement started in November 1927 and was spearheaded by inspectors Halina Krahelska and Maria Leśniewska. The inspectors mobilized nationalist rhetoric to support this measure, and argued that the future of the nation was directly dependent on the health of children, but employers, and especially private entrepreneurs, remained reluctant to create nurseries.¹³³ Managers of state enterprises were more co-operative, but only 24 state-run enterprises employed more than 100 women.¹³⁴ Factory-based nurseries were costly for entrepreneurs. Responding to these circumstances, inspectors encouraged the installation of other childcare options outside the factories, and ensured the quality of their service.¹³⁵ In Łódź, only two nurseries had been created by the end of the 1930s, while the overwhelming majority of children remained at alternative care facilities established by A Drop of Milk or other associations or, ostensibly, in the care of relatives.¹³⁶

The Great Depression thwarted the creation of new childcare facilities throughout the first half of the 1930s.¹³⁷ The number of women labour inspectors was increasing,¹³⁸ but, with economic and political pressure mounting, their agendas shifted. Janina Miedzińska (1891–1976), who became the chief inspector for the affairs of women and underage workers in 1931, was an expert on labour conditions and wages of underage workers.¹³⁹ Women workers became a specific topic in her publications in 1933.¹⁴⁰ At that stage, she first reported health benefits for women workers as a result of organizing, in co-operation

with the State Agency for Physical Education and Military Training (Państwowy Urząd Wychowania Fizycznego i Przysposobienia Wojskowego), both breaks for physical exercise and women-only summer camps. Miedzińska's writings highlight the mediating position of (women) labour inspectors. She was concerned with the wellbeing of women who could end up crippled by the adverse effects of monotonous physical labour, and underlined the importance of maintaining and even improving labour productivity.¹⁴¹ Similar tension is present in her article detailing the results of research on occupational fatigue among women employed to bottle liquor at the State Alcohol Monopoly, which she pursued in collaboration with medical professionals.¹⁴² Concerns about worsening health also extended to underage women workers. Women inspectors had been preoccupied with the health of underage workers of both genders since the 1920s, as the 2 July 1924 law prescribed regular medical examinations for them.¹⁴³ The inspectors oversaw and co-ordinated the examinations of underage workers that were first introduced in 1927 in Łódź, Kielce and select districts in Warsaw and its surroundings, and were aimed at detecting, and limiting, the nefarious effects of labour on adolescents. It could be extremely strenuous for the young workers who had not yet reached 'physical and mental maturity' to work at the same pace and in the same conditions as adult workers.¹⁴⁴

In Austria, the second country in Central and Eastern Europe where the gendered labour inspectorate flourished in the interwar period, conditions also worsened in the 1930s. From the onset of the Great Depression and throughout the authoritarian period, the women inspectors reported in ever 'more drastic' tones on the further deterioration of the conditions of the swelling army of women home-based workers. The difficulties of carrying out real supervision became insurmountable, and not only employers but also women home-based workers themselves evaded control and the inspectors' efforts to formalize their work.¹⁴⁵

The cross-class activism of women labour inspectors focused on support for the most vulnerable groups of women workers. Affected by insufficient coverage and restricted real power, it lingered between control without real improvement and limited service for these women. Middle-class inspectors' representations about women workers implied that working mothers deserved special, targeted assistance. Women labour inspectors did facilitate women workers' access, even if in a limited manner, to the expertise and services of medical and other professionals.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that translating the inclusive approach to the history of women's labour activism into research innovation can furnish pioneering results. The conceptual innovation on which the chapter builds includes: the study of vastly different activisms within a common framework searching for commonalities, overlaps and differences; a focus on activist competition; an interest in the construction of activists' subjectivities and visions of working women's subjectivities; and the attention given to the full range of gendered activist repertoires from large-scale action to small-scale practices. This combined approach has allowed us to offer an even-handed or, more precisely, a *conceptually* equidistant assessment of activist motivations, choices and political allegiances (see also the [introductory chapter](#)).

Recalibrating the activisms unfolding in the decades examined in this chapter, we can highlight five findings about women's labour activisms that engaged with the class divide among women. First, however divided they were by social class, women developed deeply gendered and women-specific types of labour activism that evolved around or critically addressed the class divide among women and/or women's gendered position in the world of work. This was so for two reasons: women of all social classes lived in deeply gendered lifeworlds and worlds of work, and middle-class (as well as working-class) women entertained, as women (activists), a special interest in the gendered position of working-class women. Within the realm of the activisms studied here, the tendency seems not to have been reversed in the interwar period when women's legal status became more assimilated to that of men, and it remained salient (also beyond the interwar period) once women were in a position to add professional to civic engagement with working(-class) women's labour issues. This finding does not sit comfortably with some of the established scholarly wisdom about women's activism shifting from cross-class and women-only activisms to closer alignment of women with men's political worlds and parties as women's status improved and became more equal to that of men.¹⁴⁶ While the presence of women in the latter political worlds definitely became more pronounced, women's special engagement with working-class women's labour issues seems not to have gone away. This was so, we argue, for the two reasons just indicated, which appear to be of long-term historical relevance, historical change and development notwithstanding.

Secondly, women's gendered activisms, when involving women across the class divide, did not override the class divide nor did they

prioritize common gender-based demands over class-based issues in how they engaged with working women's labour interests. Rather, as middle-class women (re)negotiated and sometimes challenged (certain elements of) the class divide between women, and however much their cross-class gendered sensibilities were conducive to and sustained their activist engagement, the class divide and their own class position continued to shape the activism of these women. This became visible in particular in how they construed their own activist subjectivities as taking responsibility for and over the women workers whom they targeted with their activism. There was somewhat more variety in how middle-class women construed the desired subjectivities of the women workers whom they addressed. In the arena of servants politics, middle-class women put more emphasis on how domestic workers should fill the social position they occupied in a more responsible and educated manner, whereas in the crafts movement and the labour inspectorate there was a stronger emphasis on working women acquiring more self-elevating subjectivities. Socialist/social democratic activists, in contrast, mobilized references to an insurmountable class divide in the most pronounced manner in the arena of servants politics. It is important to note that in middle-class women's activism the relevance of class-based self-positioning and class divide between women combined with at times highly critical engagement with the interests, behaviours and politics of men of their own class.

Thirdly, as and when left-wing women developed a strong activist focus on particularly vulnerable and specifically marginalized women workers' special gendered interests, political competition between women across the class divide on who was to represent these interests gained momentum. Sometimes, the competition visibly promoted engagement – within both mixed-gender working-class movements and women-dominated activist networks of various political allegiances – with working-class women's labour interests. In some cases “fighting each other” could also have destabilizing effects for some groups and organizations, as remembered by Etel Kiss. Working-class women confronted gendered disadvantages within the social class to which they belonged, along with class-based disadvantages as compared to middle-class women. The chapter has shown that these intersecting disadvantages were a key driving force of the activist competition between working class-identified women, who developed a strong activist interest in particularly vulnerable groups among working-class women, and (some) middle-class women, who developed a gendered activist interest in these same women. ‘Thinking-together’ these activistisms helps move working-class women centre stage in the history of labour activism.

Fourthly, the scope, timing and accomplishment of women's cross-class activisms were directly connected to larger contextual factors characterizing the Central and Eastern European lands in this period. These included: the uneven progress of urbanization, with effects on the 'servant question'; the different composition and development of the middle and the working classes in various lands of this region; uneven economic development (including customs policies that undergirded and contributed to it) that greatly affected the demand for and the economic competitiveness of women's crafts products produced in different lands in Central and Eastern Europe; labour politics which, as they addressed women workers in highly divergent ways (ranging from a focus on unrestrained exploitation to strongly gendered 'protective' attitudes), translated into different attitudes towards the gendered labour inspectorate; and national and nation-building endeavours pursued by minoritized communities inhabiting these lands and the interactions of the dominant nationalities with these – interactions to which the women's crafts movement gave its own, carefully modulated, gendered answers.

Finally, women's labour activisms addressing the class divide between women stretched across a large spectrum of cultural and political attitudes, reaching from condescending, patronizing and disciplinary approaches to tangible material support, supportive politics of practice and emancipatory cultural practices. And yet these activisms had one more thing in common. They aimed to develop a new culture of self-respect among marginalized groups of working(-class) women and to enable them to recognize their own social contribution as a valuable one.

Notes

- 1 Banik-Schweitzer, 'Die Großstädte', 42; *AMagyar Korona Országainak 1910 évi népszámlálása*, 52: 198.
- 2 Lemberger, 'Die Aufsichtsbeamtin im Gewerbe-Inspektionsdienst'.
- 3 In many places both the women's crafts movement and women's servants politics contributed to public institutions' increasing involvement in the professional training of women and the management of women's employment. Activist women's networks contributed to involving women in the labour inspectorate as a public institution from the start and played a visible role in enhancing women's status within this institution. These topics are not discussed in this chapter.
- 4 Examples of scholarship that have made important contributions to overcoming the biases discussed in this paragraph include Jacoby, *The British and American Women's Trade Union Leagues*; Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*; Orleck, *Common Sense*; Stevenson, *The Women's Liberation Movement*; Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*.
- 5 The debate among gender historians continues.

- 6 Roper, 'Slipping out of View'; Hunt, *Writing History*, 78–118; Thomas, 'Historicising Agency'.
- 7 Bahenská, *Počátky emancipace žen*, 104–22.
- 8 'Pátá výroční zpráva', 104.
- 9 *Festschrift zur Erinnerung an den 40jährigen Bestand*, 4, [7].
- 10 Banik-Schweitzer, 'Die Großstädte', 40.
- 11 Schütz, 'Noch nie dagewesen?'
- 12 *Morgen-Post*, 'Arbeiterindustrie-Ausstellung'. Schools operated by the association existed at least to the turn of the century.
- 13 *Illustriertes Wiener Extrablatt*, 'Vereins-Chronik'. For the early period, see also Friedrich, 'Versorgungsfall Frau?'
- 14 *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Stadt Wien für das Jahr 1906*, 421.
- 15 The statutes of the two associations were approved in summer 1866 and spring 1867 respectively. For the Vienna Women's Industry Association, see Friedrich, 'Versorgungsfall Frau?', 275; for the Girls' Support Association, see Malleier, *Jüdische Frauen in Wien 1816–1938*, 220.
- 16 This is from Bericht der k.k. Polizeidirektion ... 1867 in WStLA, MAbt.119, A32: 5228/38, as cited in Malleier, *Jüdische Frauen in Wien 1816–1938*, 220.
- 17 All information on the Girls' Support Association is taken from Malleier, *Jüdische Frauen in Wien 1816–1938*, 218–29, except on the life dates and name variations for Benedict, which is taken from biografia, 'Benedict Marianne'.
- 18 Török, 'A Wohl-nővérek emancipációja', 103–5.
- 19 Gelléri and Szukováthy, *Az Országos Nőiparegylet Évkönyve az 1882-ik évről*, 6–9. For a more extensive account, including this and the following quotes in this paragraph, see Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*, esp. 24, 123–25, 157–64.
- 20 Vittorelli, *Frauenbewegung um 1900*, 99–112; Stojaković, 'Prilog za istoriju ženskog pokreta', 66.
- 21 'Савка Суботићка'.
- 22 'Прослава 70-годишњице гђе Савке', 247.
- 23 Vittorelli, *Frauenbewegung um 1900*, 108.
- 24 Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Comitatul Hunedoarei, *Reuniunea femeilor*. The county name in Hungarian was Hunyad megye.
- 25 Reuniunea Femeilor Române Sibiu, 'Prospect'. The database WASMME contains further key documents about the Reunions (compiled and curated by Alexandra Ghiț) which have been used in composing this paragraph. Plosca, 'Mișcarea feministă din Transilvania', has studied the Reunions in some depth.
- 26 The information in this and the following paragraph is taken from Zhensko blagotvoritelno druzhestvo 'Postoianstvo', *Отчет на Женското благотворително дружество*.
- 27 Shvashka rabotnitsa, 'Жената в шивашкото и плетачно производство'. The author's name was a pseudonym which translates into English as 'Seamstress'.
- 28 *Az Országos Nőiparegylet Évkönyve az 1880. évről*, 7.
- 29 See also Geering, 'Handmade by Peasants'.
- 30 This is from *Weltausstellungs-Correspondenz*, 3 December 1872, no. 714, as cited in Barth-Scalmani and Friedrich, 'Frauen', 186.
- 31 *Welt-Ausstellung 1873. Catalog Frauenarbeiten*.
- 32 Barth-Scalmani and Friedrich, 'Frauen'.
- 33 *Wiener Weltausstellungs-Zeitung*, 6 July [1873].
- 34 *Welt-Ausstellung 1873. Catalog Frauenarbeiten*; Barth-Scalmani and Friedrich, 'Frauen', 187–202, describe the reduction of focus during the preparations and the (in the end greatly reduced) section on big industry.
- 35 Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon, 'Enderes, Aglaia von; geb. Podhaisky (1836–1883), Schriftstellerin'.
- 36 Von Enderes, *Die österreichische Spezial-Ausstellung*, 44.
- 37 *Welt-Ausstellung 1873. General-Catalog*, 568–614. In the home industries section much of the work that was listed via entries which did not give the name(s) of the creator(s) similarly was (obviously) produced by women, and in various other sections, when men employers were listed as exhibitors, women's work certainly was also present.
- 38 Gelléri and Szukováthy, *Az Országos Nőiparegylet Évkönyve az 1881-ik évről*, 6–16, including all quotes above.
- 39 Gelléri, 'Az országos nőiparkiallítás'.

- 40 Barth-Scalmani and Friedrich, 'Frauen'; Geering, 'Handmade by Peasants'. These aspects certainly constitute key elements of any full history of how minoritized women's work fared at the exhibitions.
- 41 Minoritization, of course, meant different things in different contexts; it was never a fixed category. For instance, when Hungarian (Magyar-speaking) women were invited to participate in all-empire women's activism, they found themselves in a minoritized position, whereas when they invited, within the Hungarian Kingdom, non-Magyar women, that is women minoritized within the kingdom, to collaborate, they occupied the role of women belonging to the dominant nationality. See Zimmermann, 'The Challenge'; Zimmermann, 'Reich, Nation, und Internationalismus'.
- 42 *Katalog Powszechnej Wystawy*; see also Wendland, 'Eindeutige Bilder'.
- 43 *Katalog Powszechnej Wystawy*, 247–63; see also Hüchtker, *History as Performance*, 101.
- 44 Wendland, 'Eindeutige Bilder', section 5.
- 45 *Katalog Powszechnej Wystawy*, 237–46; Wendland, 'Eindeutige Bilder'.
- 46 In the Habsburg Monarchy, women's organizations identified with minoritized nationalities repeatedly rejected invitations on terms set by dominant women's organizations. See Dudeková, 'V ženskom, alebo národnom záujme?'; Zimmermann, 'The Challenge'.
- 47 Stetina Mrs Sebestyén, 'Az Országos Nőparkiállítás Budapesten' (quote 'popular crafts branches', 178); Gelléri and Szukováthy, *Az Országos Nőiparegyelet Évkönyve az 1881-ik évről* (quote 'adapt', 9).
- 48 Barth-Scalmani and Friedrich, 'Frauen'.
- 49 *Welt-Ausstellung 1873. Katalog Frauenarbeiten* (quotes ix–xi).
- 50 Geering, "Is This Not Just Nationalism?", gives information on Prague-based Czech women's involvement in the endeavours to nationalize material culture through exhibitions.
- 51 Kafka, *Národopisná výstava československá*, 453.
- 52 Kafka, *Národopisná výstava československá*, 456 and 472–74.
- 53 Letter, George Bariț (Barițiu) to Reuniunea Femeilor Române Brașov, 19 November 1861, file 5237, fond 1299, f1, SJBVAN, WASMME.
- 54 Letter, Oona H. Ball to Emilia Rațiu, 23 July 1894, file 757/1894, fond 1246, ff. 1–2, WASMME. On commodification, see also Geering, 'Handmade by Peasants'.
- 55 Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Comitatul Hunedoarei, *Reuniunea femeilor*.
- 56 Vicaș, *XXV ani din viața Reuniunei*.
- 57 Vicaș, *XXV ani din viața Reuniunei*, 65.
- 58 Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Comitatul Hunedoarei, *Reuniunea femeilor*, 63.
- 59 Rebreanu, 'La "Astra"'.
60 Subotić, 'За Српску Вишу Девојачку Школу', 146.
61 Subotić, *О нашим народним тканинама и рукотворинама*, 16–55.
- 62 Vittorelli, *Frauenbewegung um 1900*, 120.
- 63 Lurtz, *Zweiter Jahresbericht*, 2–5.
- 64 One excellent recent study is Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*.
- 65 Exceptions include Richter, *Die Produktion besonderer Arbeitskräfte*; Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*
- 66 Rózsay, *Budapest főváros jótekonysági intézetei*, 35–36. Until 1874, the Valeria Association operated under a different name.
- 67 Martha, considered the patron saint of domesticity, has been present in the social work of various Christian denominations, including Protestant ones. See Márta Közjótékony-sági és Közhazsnú Egyesület: *Alapszabály*. Gyáni, 'A Chapter of the Social History', points to the strong presence of (assimilated) Jewish women and men in the Márta Association.
- 68 *Cselédotthon: A szegedi Márta-Egyesület alkalmi lapja*; the following quotes are from this source. The home operated for a couple of years.
- 69 Márta Közjótékony-sági és Közhazsnú Egyesület: *Évkönyv 1913. évről*, 17–18.
- 70 *Az Országos Kath. Nővédő-Egyesület jelentése 1907/8*, [5] (including quote); *Az Országos Kath. Nővédő-Egyesület jelentése 1910*, 81.
- 71 For a more recent overview of the history of the Catholic women's movement in Hungary, see Sándorfi, 'Az Országos Katolikus Nővédő Egyesület'.
- 72 *Az Országos Kath. Nővédő-Egyesület jelentése 1907/8*, 32. For Catholic railway missions in Transylvania, Romania, in the interwar period, see Lengyel, 'A szürke testvérek láthatatlan tevékenysége'.

- 73 *Az Országos Kath. Nővédő-Egyesület jelentése 1910*, 118.
- 74 'Szövetségünk életéből'.
- 75 Gyáni, 'A Chapter of the Social History', 384.
- 76 'A cselédkérdés'.
- 77 *Népszava*, 'A Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület'.
- 78 Etel Kiss, Typescript without title, n.d., Szakszervezetek, társadalmi szervezetek 1945-ig, fond II. 347, archival unit 1, PIL.
- 79 Kiss, Typescript without title. Kiss's retrospective report mistakenly dates the start of these initiatives to 1926.
- 80 *Népszava*, 'A Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület'.
- 81 Kiss, Typescript without title, names Szeréna Stern and Mrs Pál Knurr as repeatedly facilitating municipal support; contemporary trade union sources speak about support by various branch trade unions; 'Magyarországi Munkásnő-Egyesület Háztartási Munkásnő Otthona'; 'Otthon'.
- 82 *Népszava*, 'A háztartási munkásnők otthonavatása'; *Népszava*, 'A háztartási alkalmazottak'.
- 83 'Otthon'.
- 84 Kiss, Typescript without title.
- 85 Stetina Mrs Sebestyén, 'Cselédeink nyári tanfolyama'.
- 86 'Háztartási alkalmazottak nevelése'.
- 87 *Nemzeti Ujság*, 'A Katolikus Háziasszonyok'; 'A háztartások racionalizálása'.
- 88 '1908–1928'; *A Katolikus Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetsége 1932*, 27.
- 89 Ghîț, *Welfare Work without Welfare*, chap. 4.
- 90 'Szakiskola háztartási munkásnők részére'.
- 91 Kiss, Typescript without title.
- 92 'Magyarországi Munkásnő-Egyesület Háztartási Munkásnő Otthona', 137.
- 93 Gruziel, 'At the Crossroads', esp. 147–48, 153–59, 176–77, 182–84, 207–12, 226, 230–34. Lengyel, '"Nemzetmentők és nemzetrontók"', 233, makes a similar argument for the (Hungarian-speaking) Catholic women's movement in interwar Transylvania (Romania). Gruziel, 'The Unusual Suspects of Social Change', gives insight into the relationship between the Jesuit order and Catholic laywomen, and elaborates on her argument summarized above, the size of the networks of Catholic laywomen in Galicia and their outreach beyond religious boundaries, but does not discuss the engagement of these women with domestic worker issues.
- 94 'A Kath. Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetségének évi rendes közgyűlése'. Each Zita Circle was supervised by a male official.
- 95 *Pécsi Est*, 'A Zita-kör ünnepélye'.
- 96 'A Kath. Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetségének évi rendes közgyűlése'; *Nemzeti Ujság*, 'A háztartások és az otthon'.
- 97 *Nemzeti Ujság*, 'A háztartások és az otthon'.
- 98 Müller, *Eszmélés*, 5–8.
- 99 'Az országos értekezlet'.
- 100 'A cselédkérdés'.
- 101 Erzsébet Futó, 'Futó Erzsébet visszaemlékezése a Háztartási Alkalmazottak Szakszervezetben végzett tevékenységéről', 1968, Visszaemlékezések, fond V. 867, archival unit f-47, PIL. Futó remembered the names of Etel Kiss and Mária Vigh. The sources repeatedly also mention Etel Molnár.
- 102 Kiss, Typescript without title.
- 103 Kiss, Typescript without title; *Népszava*, 'A háztartási munkásnők otthonavatása'; *Népszava*, 'A Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület'.
- 104 Including the notes published in the daily *Népszava* (referenced several times in this chapter), on 28 November 1907, 5 April, 7 June, 8 August 1908, and 12 January 1910.
- 105 'A nagyvárad cselédmunkások mozgalma' (additional paragraph breaks in the original).
- 106 Fekete, 'Hogyan viselkedjünk'.
- 107 'Orosházi levél'.
- 108 On women in the early factory inspectorate, see Karl, *Fabrikinspektoren*; Schweitzer, *Les inspectrices du Travail*.
- 109 In these countries the process began in the 1880s and 1890s: Karl, *Fabrikinspektoren*, 240.
- 110 Lemberger, 'Frauen von heute'; Wilda, 'Die Eingliederung und Arbeit der weiblichen Beamten'.

- 111 For welfare politics, in comparison to Hungary, see Zimmermann, 'Das Geschlecht der Fürsorge'.
- 112 Austria-Hungary was one of the 13 original signatories of the 1906 agreement on the ban on night work for female industrial workers, the Berne Convention: Ziegler, *Frauenarbeitverbot*; Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*, 69–89; Wilda, 'Die Eingliederung und Arbeit der weiblichen Beamten', 153.
- 113 Lemberger, 'Die Aufsichtsbeamtin im Gewerbe-Inspektionsdienst', 274–75; Wilda, 'Die Eingliederung und Arbeit der weiblichen Beamten', 154–55.
- 114 Luif, 'Women's "Return" to the Household?' The author discusses the enormous gap between these legal advances and the practice of the Austrian gendered labour inspectorate.
- 115 Ágoston, *A magyar szocialista nőmozgalom története*, 11.
- 116 Népszava, 'A foszfortilalom'. The draft of a new trades law published in 1908 authorized, in principle, the employment of women labour inspectors: Rónai, 'Munkásnővédelem az ipartörvény tervezetében', 424; see also Zimmermann, *Divide, Provide and Rule*, 70–72.
- 117 *Budapesti Közlöny*, 'A kereskedelemügyi m. kir. miniszter 100.027/1918 K. M. számú rendelete'.
- 118 *Nemzeti Újság*, 'Az iparügyi minisztériumban'.
- 119 *Budapesti Közlöny*, 'A Magyar királyi iparügyi minister ...'.
- 120 Stegmann, 'Grenzgänger und Entsandte'.
- 121 Ministerium für Handel und Gewerbe, *Jahresberichte der Preußischen Regierungs- und Gewerberäte 1920*, v–xxv. One woman assistant inspector served in Ratibor (Racibórz) which after a referendum in 1921 was part of Germany.
- 122 Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors', 5.
- 123 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej'.
- 124 Gadomski, 'Asystenci inspekcijni'.
- 125 Krahelska, *Praca kobiet*, 127.
- 126 Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors', 5.
- 127 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Dekret tymczasowy', 1919; *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej'.
- 128 Quataert, 'A Source Analysis', esp. 116–18.
- 129 Krahelska, 'Ochrona pracy w Polsce', 362.
- 130 Zimmerspitzówna, 'Formy walki'.
- 131 Labbé, 'Les débuts de la protection sociale infantile'.
- 132 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Ustawa z dnia 2 lipca 1924 r.'
- 133 Leśniewska, 'Wykonywanie przepisów'.
- 134 Krahelska, 'Realizacja ochrony macierzyństwa'.
- 135 Leśniewska, 'Wykonywanie przepisów', 73–74.
- 136 Pawelska, 'Opieka nad dzieckiem pracownicy', 168; *Inspekcja pracy w 1936 roku*, 13.
- 137 Pawelska, 'Opieka nad dzieckiem pracownicy', 166.
- 138 Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors', 6.
- 139 Her longest article on the topic was Miedzińska, "Nauka zawodu". Overall, between 1931 and 1933 she authored seven articles about underage workers in this official outlet of the MPOS.
- 140 Miedzińska, 'Wychowanie fizyczne'.
- 141 Miedzińska, 'Rozwój akcji wychowania fizycznego'.
- 142 Miedzińska, 'Praca kobiet'.
- 143 *Dziennik Ustaw*, 'Ustawa z dnia 2 lipca 1924 r.'
- 144 Zawadowska, 'Badania lekarskie młodocianych', 12.
- 145 Luif, 'Women's "Return" to the Household?'.
- 146 Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; Gruber and Graves, *Women and Socialism*.

Women addressing working mothers: trade unionists and the welfare state during the Cold War

Introduction: agendas, geopolitics and arguments in the politics of the working mother across and beyond Cold War divides

In 1975, the World Congress of Women, convened with reference to the United Nations' International Women's Year (IWY) under the auspices of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF), met in Berlin (the capital of the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik, GDR), today Germany).¹ In preparation, a working paper laid before the commission dedicated to the problems of women working in industry underlined that explanations for

[t]he inequality of the conditions of [women's] participation in working life primarily refer to the specific biological function of women in the reproduction of the population, but in the first place [this inequality] is socially conditioned. Only the biological specifics are natural and therefore relatively constant, while the social conditions are subject to change and can and must be deliberately influenced.²

In the decades after 1945 women trade union activists on both sides of the Iron Curtain put great effort into advancing working mother-related agendas of women's labour activism to change the 'social conditions' that stood in the way of solving the inherited tension between women's employment and their childcare responsibilities. This chapter discusses the politics of the working mother in Eastern Europe and internationally in the state socialist decades, with a focus on the contribution of women

trade unionists from Eastern Europe and their border-crossing organizing and networking (Map 3). In Eastern Europe and in communist-led settings, such as the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), the term ‘working mother’ early on served as a key notion to address the group of women who cared for children and simultaneously were employed or earned wages. In the politics of women’s work pursued by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the relationship between women’s paid employment and their responsibility for caring for (young) ‘dependants’ – a term in use in the International Labour Office, the executive and administrative helm of the ILO, in the 1930s – moved to the centre of attention from the 1950s onwards. Here and elsewhere various notions were used to describe this group. Reference was made, for instance, to mothers of families or to ‘married women’ and, occasionally, to working mothers.³ Over time, the *terminus technicus* ‘employment of women with family responsibilities’ would replace inherited forms, and came to dominate mainstream international discourse, for which ILO global standard-setting formed a key point of reference.

Internationally, Eastern European women trade unionists were active within or collaborated with the WFTU and the WIDF, both of which were communist-aligned organizations. These women were also present within the forums of those leading global state internationalisms in which communist-aligned policies were often marginalized and confronted. This included, as well as the ILO, the Commission on the Status of Women (UN CSW) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations. Within these forums, and through their internationalist engagement more generally, Eastern European women trade unionists were in contact with and learned about the activities and agendas of women trade unionists and activists who adhered to competing, often anti-communist, world views. They also used these forums to connect with fellow women trade unionists from (state) socialist countries, share their experience of labour activism, and discuss the practical methods and approaches they used to advance the politics of women’s work.

In their larger-scale policy engagements and their politics of practice, Eastern European women trade unionists were centrally and often near-exclusively concerned with the problems of working women. This, and the special position assigned to trade unions in the state socialist politics of work, made them into experts and authorities in devising and overseeing the politics of the working mother in Eastern European countries (both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus). On the international level, two further factors contributed

to making these women into relevant actors. The communist-aligned WFTU – and the WIDE, which is not discussed in this chapter except in relation to the WFTU (see also [chapter 3](#)) – made the politics of women's work an important element of its own profile as an international organization and of its activities aimed at and carried out within state-internationalist organizations. In addition, within the ILO, international trade union organizations enjoyed elevated constitutional status, as they were called upon to act as representatives of the workers, who, alongside the employers' and the states' representatives, constituted one of the three constitutional pillars of the organization. Within the dominant international organizations, the ILO was responsible for all matters related to work and labour. The UN bodies mentioned above co-operated closely with the ILO on matters related to women's work and often (re)directed related initiatives to the ILO.

Through their activism and politics, women trade unionists aimed to influence a triangle of factors which decisively shaped the position and opportunities of the working mother: family and labour law, welfare and social policy measures, and the attitudes and power of both women and men. The chapter focuses, in multiscale perspective, on the development of Eastern European women trade unionists' agendas, arguments and actions regarding key elements of the politics of the working mother. These included maternity benefits and services, daycare facilities, childcare leave and the provision of goods and additional services aimed at easing women's 'double burden'. These measures were at the core of the state socialist policies aimed at enabling and sustaining stable employment relations for women with small children in Eastern Europe. The chapter also touches upon the discourse on husbands' and fathers' participation in family work. Part-time employment and home-based work played a less pronounced role in the debates and demands of women trade unionists from Eastern Europe and the WFTU.

From the 1940s onwards, communist-aligned women trade unionists pursued, within the state socialist world of Eastern Europe and internationally, a politics of the working mother which constituted an alternative to both the male breadwinner model of the family and the unfettered double exploitation of women's wage work and reproductive labour. The chapter centres on contributions of women trade unionists and other functionaries and activists from state socialist Eastern Europe who engaged with the politics of women's work. While including a focus on women's Cold War competition in relation to the politics of the working mother, the chapter does not address contributions by women trade unionists from Austria and Turkey.

The vision of communist-aligned trade unionists during the post-1945 decades regarding the politics of the working mother combined two foundational elements. The first concerned women's full equality in all spheres of life. These activists believed that women, including working mothers, should actively participate – that is, take 'their unrestricted share in the political, economic and social life of their countries' by 'developing [their] own abilities as a full member of society'.⁴ The second foundational element concerned the pronounced assertion of motherhood-related rights. The connection between these two elements was simple. Communist-aligned trade unionists considered extensive motherhood-related rights, and thus the assertion of women's difference in labour and social policy, as indispensable to achieve the full equality of women that they demanded. The insight that '[m]otherhood, a social function which is beneficial to society, bestows rights upon working women that must be recognised and guaranteed by the State and the employers'⁵ guided their related agenda and action. They were aware that discriminatory effects of special support measures could be circumvented only within a specific set of larger political and economic circumstances. As spelt out in the opening quote of this chapter, theirs was a vision of women's emancipation via waged employment buttressed by a carefully designed full array of family, labour and welfare policies. This chapter shows how Eastern European women trade unionists, drawing on their engagement with the unique realities of working mothers in their countries, over time developed innovative thinking and action aimed at putting into practice their overarching dual vision just described. This evolution included a move from an emphasis on institutional childcare to the advocacy of a wider range of choices and a deeper engagement with the politics of practice, which can be read as a gendered critique of the real-life conditions of working mothers in state socialist countries. Neither their shifting emphases nor the debate and sometimes diverging policy (vision) within and between their countries as well as internationally deterred women trade unionists from state socialist countries from pursuing their foundational dual vision.

The chapter, as it presents this history, builds and expands on cognate approaches to the transnational history of labour feminisms. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane in their pathbreaking 1991 volume on maternity and the welfare state summarize that 'the democratic welfare states everywhere would look very different' without the contribution of the women's movements; women who worked 'with and within other political and intellectual currents' and insisted 'upon their own and unique contributions to society at large' ensured that women's

motherhood-related ‘needs were incorporated into policymaking’.⁶ We demonstrate that women trade unionists used the political spaces available to them within communist-aligned, state socialist and internationalist contexts to pursue a somewhat similar course of action. Dorothy Sue Cobble has argued that at certain moments during the early Cold War ‘WFTU feminists sounded much like their ICFTU [International Confederation of Free Trade Unions] adversaries – especially in terms of gender policy.’⁷ On the global stage the strictly anti-communist ICFTU was, along with the Catholic International Federation of Christian Trade Unions (Confédération internationale des syndicats chrétiens, IFCTU), the main competitor of the WFTU. Already at the time, during the 1950s and the 1960s, the ILO officers responsible for women’s issues, when engaging with WFTU approaches to women’s work, including maternity-related matters and women’s family responsibilities, found that the WFTU had ‘no basic preoccupations ... which we do not share’ and that there were ‘no controversial points as regards programme content and emphasis’.⁸

The chapter examines both the points of convergence and the divergence in emphasis in the politics of the working mother over time and across political divides. Setting aside simplifying assumptions about the political irrelevance and the top-down or the non- or anti-feminist character of communist-aligned women’s trade unionism, each section focuses on one key element of the politics of the working mother which Eastern European women trade unionists foregrounded in the 1950s, the 1960s and the 1970s respectively. The first section, zooming in on the political conjuncture around the WFTU’s 1956 World Conference of Women Workers, focuses on the politics of institutional support, meaning a system of childcare institutions and other extra-familial institutional measures, in support of the working mother. In the 1960s, the ILO’s policy initiative on the ‘employment of women with family responsibilities’ formed one core of international policymaking. Within this context, the second section zeroes in on the role of policy innovation and initiative in state socialist Europe in moving extended childcare leave to the centre of international attention. In the 1970s, transregional collaborations acquired additional momentum. Before, during and after the IWY, these women within their international and Eastern European networks emphatically engaged in exchanges about the ‘travails of the plains’ (Bertolt Brecht)⁹ towards which their politics of the working mother were moving within the state socialist world of Eastern Europe. The contributions by and exchanges between Eastern European women trade unionists when preparing and meeting in regional and international

conferences and seminars point to the development of their politics of practice (Figure 24). We would, however, need to examine a different set of historical source materials to give a full picture of these women's individual contributions and their real-time interactions as they strove to move forwards their politics of the working mother on the ground within Eastern Europe.

Each section aims to 'think-together' Eastern European and global dimensions of communist-aligned politics of the working mother as pursued, promoted and envisioned by Eastern European women trade unionists. To capture this complex relationship, we conceptually draw on four interrelated considerations. First, the geopolitics of the engagement of communist-aligned and state internationalisms with state socialist Eastern Europe produced ambiguous results for our protagonists and their politics. On the one hand, the experience with the working mother as a mass phenomenon, which was particularly pronounced in Eastern Europe, and state socialist policy responses thereto attracted global attention. On the other hand, this experience and the related policy vision were treated with reserve not only within the relevant forums of dominant state internationalisms. The WFTU focused firmly on demands directed at capitalist and (post-)colonial countries, and communist-aligned women's trade unionism in these world regions. By contrast, the politics of women's work pursued in Eastern European countries (both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus) was often presented as a nearly perfect role model, leaving limited opportunities for women trade unionists from state socialist Europe to pursue their agendas and concerns on the global stage of the WFTU.¹⁰ Establishing instances of both global visibility and sidelining of Eastern European women trade unionists and their agendas therefore forms part of the analysis.

Secondly, with a focus on Eastern European women, the chapter discusses the agenda and arguments driving the politics of working mothers as pursued and envisioned by women trade unionists across political divides. This lays the groundwork for capturing the degree to which Eastern European women's version of the dream that working women's full equality could be achieved by granting them both equality and acknowledging their difference (as they construed it) left an imprint on the politics of women's work (introductory chapter). Thirdly, while the politics of the working mother promoted by communist-aligned women trade unionists had much in common with (some) labour feminisms developing elsewhere, Eastern European women trade unionists also responded to the specific circumstances shaping the state socialist politics of women's work. Their action was influenced not only

by their communist-aligned world view but also by their specific position within state socialist political systems. Importantly, their politics also responded to a different positioning of the working mother in state socialist labour markets. Over the decades, the numbers and proportions of women likely to have young children who were drawn into the labour force were distinctly higher in most Eastern European state socialist countries as compared to other European countries (Table 7). Fourthly, we move change over time to centre stage. This helps to fully historicize – rather than only making explicit – the contribution of Eastern European women trade unionists to the politics of the working mother in the Cold War decades.

Crèches and kindergartens: tension in Eastern Europe and policy restraint internationally in the 1950s

The 1950s have often been associated with the image of the suburban housewife and mother, and a general conservatism regarding gender relations. Women trade unionists on both sides of and sometimes acting across the Iron Curtain, whether communist-aligned or sympathetic to a social democratic world view, during the decade pursued politics (often overlapping) in support of the working mother which was grounded in vastly different points of reference. During the decade, far-reaching institutional care for small children as a precondition for working mothers' full integration into the labour market was at the core of the politics of communist-aligned Eastern European women trade unionists. In the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe, the rapidly progressing integration of women with young children into paid employment confronted these activists and functionaries with an array of problems which they aimed to address through a particular politics of practice that complemented their principal vision of the politics of the working mother. In their international networks, these women encountered ambiguous responses to their concerns. The geopolitics of international engagement with state socialist Europe left its unmistakable mark on the fate of Eastern European women's trade unionism within the WFTU, and on the politics of the working mother pursued by the ICFTU and the ILO.

The WFTU in 1948 – before the de facto split between the communist-aligned and anti-communist camps within the organization in January 1949 – made itself into an outspoken advocate of a politics of the working mother that centred on a far-reaching set of 'collective institutions such as crèches, nurseries, canteens, laundries and household

helps', administered by trade unions and financed by public authorities, and the use of 'labour saving devices' in the household.¹¹ At this point in time, these gender-specific measures in support of working mothers were demanded without any reference to regional specificity, and it was clearly spelt out that the measures were to help in equalizing women workers' performance with men's. This classical socialist vision of engaging with the working mother was presented as a global, universal (role) model. During the 1950s, fissures appeared in communist-aligned global trade unionist universalism, mirroring both (state) socialist divergence in terms of the politics of the working mother and the intra-WFTU politics that was somewhat unfavourable to Eastern European women trade unionists' agendas. Geopolitics also played a conspicuous role in how elements of the politics of women's work, which became increasingly associated with state socialist policy models and ideological Cold War divides, fared on the global stage of state internationalism.

The First World Conference of Women Workers and global trade union politics

When in June 1956 the WFTU organized its First World Conference of Women Workers in Budapest, the capital of Hungary, a milestone in the WFTU's new proactive women's politics that brought together '497 delegates from 42 countries of all continents',¹² the WFTU's geopolitics had changed as compared to the late 1940s. With a view to maintaining the 'unity of action' strategy and the global goals of the WFTU, the acclaim for state socialist achievements was kept comparatively low-key. The WFTU's unity of action strategy, which referred to the intention to reach out beyond communist-aligned trade unions and trade unionists and '[t]o unite the largest possible number of workers in trade unions', that is, 'to involve the unorganised in active trade union work as often as possible and to receive them into an effective trade union membership', unmistakably shaped the agenda of the 1956 conference.¹³ Refraining from reference to the state socialist model as a template for global politics, leading French trade unionist and key speaker at the conference Germaine Guillé (1906–97), the secretary of the General Confederation of Labour (*Confédération générale du travail*, CGT), called on the conference participants to come up with a universally relevant 'minimum common programme' that was to include 'some demands common to all'.¹⁴ The General Resolution adopted by the conference enlisted the full range of institutional politics in support of working mothers, asking women workers, with the help of their trade unions, to 'draw up the

programmes of their demands on the basis of the present Resolution ... considering the specific conditions in each country'.¹⁵

The new intra-organizational political priorities generated a measure of disharmony among WFTU-aligned trade unionists from Eastern European and Western European countries, related to geopolitics, agendas and arguments. The disagreements centred around how the challenges faced by women workers in the process of 'building socialism' in state socialist Eastern Europe were acknowledged, and the role foreseen for Eastern European women trade unionists on the global political stage provided by the WFTU. The draft version of Guillé's conference speech contained nothing but praise for the achievements of state socialist countries, claiming that equal pay and women's full equality had already been attained in these countries. It was implied that working mothers enjoyed all the special support from the state necessary to reach this goal.¹⁶ For delegates from Eastern Europe, by contrast, the fact that, in the process of 'building socialism', the full and equal involvement of women in wage work had already generated new problems constituted an important experience of global relevance. Deficiencies in policy support for working mothers were at the core of these new problems. Eastern European women wanted to discuss these problems at the conference and to use the global political stage provided by the WFTU to showcase their related practical activism and advocate their solutions.

The women trade unionists, who had come to Budapest from all over the world, made a noticeable effort to overcome these tensions. In the final version of Guillé's speech, an additional paragraph was added to the section on the state socialist countries, which singled out the question of support for working mothers as a policy arena in which the socialist countries 'certainly' still encountered 'problems to solve'. The speech concluded by pointing out that, '[a]lthough the network of social institutions at the disposal of the women workers in these countries is very great, it does not yet entirely satisfy the increased needs of families and working mothers'. Guillé declared that when the delegates from these countries 'mount[ed] the rostrum' of the conference, they themselves would talk about 'their living conditions'.¹⁷

In state socialist Hungary, the problems of working mothers had moved centre stage already during the preparations for the 1956 conference. In dozens of open gatherings in all plants with more than 100 workers, and in trade union and ad hoc meetings in smaller enterprises, the trade union representing the food industries did not encounter many questions related to the World Conference of Women Workers. By contrast, speakers time and again turned directly to the problems of

working women, highlighting the fact that mothers of several children needed more support from daycare centres. For instance, addressing the problem of children's frequent illnesses and the consequent necessity for the mother to stay home with them, speakers discussed possible solutions, including the establishment of 'sickrooms' for children cared for in the daycare centres. They argued that 'when the mother needs to stay home with her child, this causes many absences from work'.¹⁸

During the WFTU's 1956 World Conference, Mrs Ferenc Peterecz, the Hungarian speaker, a textile worker and a recipient of the Hero of Socialist Labour award,¹⁹ duly transmitted similar concerns to the conference stage. In the opening of her speech, Peterecz resorted to harsh words when repudiating what she perceived as the sidelining of the concerns of women trade unionists from the state socialist countries in the two key reports presented. '[W]e, too, have problems', Peterecz insisted, 'even if they present themselves differently than in the capitalist countries; these are living [élő] problems, which our trade union movement must resolve.'²⁰ She started her lengthy discussion on women workers' difficulties by describing the many measures of special protection of and support for working women in place under state socialism as an indispensable condition for achieving true equality between women and men. However, she then emphasized both material interest and gendered and classed power relations as the root causes of the 'living problems' standing in the way of achieving true equality between women and men workers, even though a full range of special protection measures for working women was already in place:

The fact that a woman is not only a worker but also a mother who gives birth and cares for her sick child often means absence from work. That is why some employers [igazgató], even some union leaders, prefer a male workforce ... In the mindset of some men we still find many backward features, and there is carelessness and disparagement towards women's work. All this cannot be abolished at one stroke via laws and regulations. The trade unions must therefore do serious educational work not only among women but also among men ...

Various leaders and employers ... get caught up in the magic circle of fulfilling the production plan and ... forgetting that they were once workers too; [they] become indifferent to the workers' small concerns and commit violations of the law. I will give just one example. [Take] the employer in one of the largest textile factories, herself a mother of four children. A worker asked for leave to take

care of her sick child, but she [the director] approved it only at the expense of [the worker's] paid leave, although she herself knew very well that our laws regulate this differently.

Of course, such directors must be brought to their senses. ...

Comrades, you can see that, although our laws ensure equal rights for women in every respect, this is by no means as smoothly and easily realizable in practical life as might be inferred from the presentation.²¹

Peterecz repeatedly emphasized the central role of trade unions in initiating additional institutional support for working mothers and ensuring compliance with existing regulations. The General Resolution as adopted at the end of the conference, in a softened echo of this attitude, emphasized the desired role of the state socialist trade unions in 'raising the wellbeing of the women workers still further'.²²

Peterecz's speech, while framed as a call for a new trade unionist politics of practice for working mothers in state socialist countries, can also be read as a global message to women labour activists around the world, and across political divides, to engage seriously with the full range of real problems surrounding the involvement of working mothers in paid employment en masse. This appeal related to a social fact that characterized the state socialist system that was considered by definition socially more advanced than the capitalist system. It also implicitly invoked the global future for other world regions, which would follow state socialist advancement, particularly in terms of women's full involvement in wage work, a development that had already taken on momentum. There was, thus, much to be learned from the efforts of communist-aligned women trade unionists in Eastern European countries, who focused on mitigating the multiple tensions encountered by working mothers.

Yet the global message related to the problems faced by working mothers, which women trade unionists from state socialist Eastern Europe aimed to convey during the 1956 World Conference of Women Workers, was not identical to the geopolitics that guided the top-level WFTU leadership in relation to the conference. The WFTU was focused on achieving global unity of action. General Secretary Louis Saillant repeatedly highlighted that the conference's focus on equal pay was chosen because this was a demand that was 'valid for all capitalist countries' and that provided 'an extremely solid basis for co-operation and unity of action between unions in the same country, as well as between organizations in different countries'.²³ The tension between Eastern European women trade unionists' regional concerns and the

priorities of the WFTU leadership when envisioning its agenda of a global politics of women's work remained unresolved throughout the 1950s.

At the same time, on the world stage of competing international trade union federations, the WFTU's global campaign for working women's rights, launched in 1953, yielded results that diverged from fostering 'unity' as intended by the leading WFTU functionaries. The WFTU campaign contributed to bringing about changes in the ICFTU's views on women's issues, which in turn were ambiguous in character. Cobble has shown that the WFTU's campaign was instrumental in broadening the space of action available to women trade unionists within the ICFTU, the main and heavily anti-communist political rival of the WFTU.²⁴ In response to the WFTU's action, and the ICFTU's women trade unionists' efforts to prompt their men-dominated top leadership to deeper engagement with the politics of women's work, the ICFTU in April 1956, just a few months before the WFTU's World Conference of Women Workers convened, installed its first permanent women's committee. The 30-page pamphlet *Women! It's Your Fight, Too!* was also published before the opening of the WFTU's conference. While the ICFTU's competition with the WFTU helped ICFTU women trade unionists to move forward their agendas, it also contributed within the ICFTU to both reify inherited attitudes regarding the question of working mothers and invigorate classical anti-communist views on women's position and women's politics in state socialist Eastern Europe. The pamphlet *Women! It's Your Fight, Too!* described the fact that in state socialist countries women had to be involved in hard physical labour as appalling and underlined that '[n]owhere in the world are so many mothers of small children forced to work'.²⁵ This negative attitude towards the involvement of mothers in wage work bolstered the ICFTU's new policy statement regarding the politics of women's work, which was adopted in April 1956 by a subcommittee of the ICFTU Executive Board and given in full in the pamphlet. The statement declared that it was the 'first responsibility' of 'young mothers' to 'care [for] their small children' and therefore proposed to ease the double burden working mothers faced by introducing '[s]ufficient wages for the husband and father, family allowance and tax reductions'.²⁶ In other words, the ICFTU's top leadership maintained an approach to working women's politics that was firmly rooted in the traditional male breadwinner family model.

Institutional childcare on the ILO stage

On the global stage of state internationalism, the aspiration to full-scale institutional support for working mothers via crèches and kindergartens

similarly became increasingly associated from the late 1940s onwards with the politics of women's work pursued in the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe. This was the case notwithstanding the fact that some women activists and trade unionists from western countries also advocated for childcare institutions as a key measure of the politics of the working mother and that many of these women entertained reservations about part-time work as an alternative measure.²⁷ In most state socialist countries, the accelerated expansion of a network of institutional care facilities, often directly associated with the workplace and (co-)managed by the trade unions (which in state socialist Eastern Europe played a key role in devising and managing the large networks of enterprise-based welfare measures), had begun from the first years following World War II. Trade unions and women workers alike played a pronounced role in moving forward the related agendas.²⁸

Implicit and explicit reference to this development fed into a double geopolitical shift in state internationalism, which in turn played a role in shaping the ILO's course of action during the 1950s. The global message Eastern European women trade unionists delivered at the 1956 World Conference of Women Workers, highlighting the need to fully engage with the problems arising from the state socialist model of vastly increased full-time employment of women, was lost in this double geopolitical shift. The first shift involved a changing emphasis in the politics of women's work in western countries that impacted directly on the ILO's course of action. The second was the mounting role of Cold War competition in shaping agenda setting at the ILO.

Within the ILO, the key institution in state internationalism regarding all matters connected to the politics of women's work, the early postwar period was characterized by the *de facto* absence of Eastern European women's voices and a strong focus on institutional support for working mothers, a course of action that was still informed by the war experience in western countries. World War II and the postwar conjuncture brought a boost in the involvement of women with family responsibilities in gainful employment as a consequence of labour shortages. This triggered intense engagement with questions of how to mobilize for paid employment and support these workers. Concomitantly, in the postwar years and into the early 1950s, the International Labour Office repeatedly expressed a strong interest in full-scale institutional support for full-time working mothers. When convening an in-person meeting of a group of Experts on Women's Work in Switzerland, in Geneva, in December 1951, the office emphasized that the institutional support systems must be developed in such a manner

that they would be of 'real use' to women (full-time) workers, including long opening hours and good locations.²⁹ During the 1950s, the ILO's focus gradually shifted towards alternative priorities. These additional elements of the politics of the working mother were connected to employment models that constituted an alternative to lifelong full-time employment of women, which, in turn, was the guiding star of the state socialist politics of women's work in the 1950s. In November 1956 the International Labour Office convoked another Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment. The report prepared for the discussion of part-time work stated as a matter of fact that this type of employment of women was 'of topical interest today in a number of countries of the Western Hemisphere'.³⁰ For the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe (and countries in the Global South which the ILO addressed in terms of women's work in a region-specific manner),³¹ part-time work was an element of the politics in support of the working mother which in the 1950s had hardly any practical relevance. The ILO's new focus on part-time work contributed to a larger international trend. At the request of the UN CSW, within which part-time work as a measure to support working mothers attracted considerable attention, the ILO delivered reports on part-time work in 1953, 1955, 1956 and 1957; in 1958 a report on the situation of working women with family responsibilities was added.³²

The shifting emphasis at the ILO, which often responded directly to ongoing changes in the western world, was at odds with the developments in Eastern Europe, and in addition Cold War tension was on the rise. Under the impact of this double geopolitical shift, policy innovation in state socialist Eastern Europe, where a politics of the working mother fully focused on institutional support had taken root and developed dynamically, fared poorly on the ILO stage. Under the impact of the increasing ideological and policy competition characterizing the Cold War, pro-western policymakers, including within the ILO, increasingly associated full and broad-based institutional support for mothers working full-time with the state socialist system alone – which, as the ICFTU pamphlet quoted above would have it, 'forced' mothers of small children to work. For pro-western policymakers who aimed to influence the ILO's course of action, the communist model of a politics of the working mother fully focused on institutional support came to function as a key signifier of political difference. This was one of the elements that contributed to the fact that alternative policy scripts of how to support working mothers gained traction within the dominant state internationalism, including the ILO.

Communist-aligned women trade unionists from Eastern Europe aimed to bring to the global stage of state internationalism engagement with the evolving problems of their social system, which was based on working mothers' strenuous full-time employment supported by institutional childcare. The ideas and interests of these trade unionists were lost within the double geopolitical shift described above. The sequence of international events and interactions in the period during which the WFTU prepared, conducted and followed up on its 1956 World Conference of Women Workers showcases how this political constellation played out in practice. Following up on decisions taken by the June 1955 session of the International Labour Conference (ILC), the ILO leadership in November 1955 decided to convoke the Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment planned for autumn 1956 mentioned above.³³ ILC decision-making in June 1955 foreshadowed that part-time work might be at the core of the agenda of the Meeting of Experts. The ILC adopted two resolutions that urged the Governing Body (the executive leadership of the ILO) to 'continue' its 'work' regarding part-time work and to 'intensify' its 'studies' regarding the employment of women who had dependent young children.³⁴ When the Governing Body set the agenda of the Meeting of Experts, the question of working mothers with young children did not figure as a planned agenda item, whereas part-time employment – as a select measure discussed in this wider context – did.³⁵

Women delegates from state socialist Eastern Europe were prominently present at the 1955 session of the ILC, likely mirroring the new emphasis on the politics of women's work in the communist-aligned internationalism of the WFTU and the WIDF. A number of leading trade unionists from Eastern Europe, including Maria Kirilova from Bulgaria, Marie Trojanová from Czechoslovakia (Table 9) and Irena Andrzejewska from Poland, attended. In addition, for the second time after 1945 delegates from the Soviet Union, Belorussia and Ukraine, each of which had been a member of the ILO since 1954,³⁶ joined their fellows from other state socialist countries. In her plenary speech, the Belorussian Aleksandra F. Nichipor made a strong case for the state socialist system of institutional support for working mothers.³⁷

The Governing Body of the International Labour Office decided that – in tune with the new role of the Soviet Union and the Soviet republics, in an effort to demonstrate inclusiveness and with a view to 'obtaining information on the items on the agenda on a well-balanced geographical basis' – the Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment should include experts from Poland and the Soviet Union (as well as

from Turkey).³⁸ This decision was in line with the view of the WFTU's General Secretary Louis Saillant that the ILO's expert committees should include representatives 'coming from the WFTU'. Saillant also hoped that the ILO 'would follow closely' the preparations for the WFTU's World Conference of Women Workers and that its officers would participate in the conference.³⁹

When the ILO's Experts on Women's Employment assembled in November 1956, a few months after the WFTU's First World Conference of Women Workers had taken place, women from Eastern Europe participated for the first time in an ILO-sponsored in-person Meeting of Experts on Women's Work.⁴⁰ One of them was Maria Jakubowicz (Table 9), a chief of section in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare in Poland.⁴¹ The experts discussed the agenda that had been adopted in November 1955. The sources do not give insight into the contributions of any individual expert to the debate. In the proceedings of the Meeting of Experts, however, it is evident that many leading western-aligned women trade unionists who were active in the ICFTU and influential in preparing the work of the experts entertained great reservations regarding part-time work.⁴² At the same time, the formal proceedings demonstrated a shift away from the emphasis on full-time work. When the experts discussed the conclusions to be adopted, the goal that women be enabled to 'take up full-time employment with full worker's status' and that they be supported by institutional childcare still featured in the material.⁴³ This point disappeared from the final materials that were adopted by the meeting and subsequently approved by the Governing Body.⁴⁴

During the meeting, the experts also formulated a demand that the ILO establish a tripartite committee on women's work,⁴⁵ which, by implication, would meet regularly and enjoy a higher status than the ILO's existing Correspondence Committee on Women's Work.⁴⁶ The WFTU, in turn, underlined its strong support for this demand in an official communication with the ILO.⁴⁷ The demand was also highlighted in a memorandum that an WFTU delegation consisting of four women (and one man) presented to the ILO's Director General on 19 November 1956, less than two weeks after the closing of the Meeting of Experts. The delegates to the World Conference of Women Workers in June 1956 had decided to present the 'essential demands of women workers', on which they had agreed, to the ILO.⁴⁸ To entrust a delegation of women with top-level negotiations of this kind constituted a historical innovation in international trade unionism. The delegation included Elena Teodorescu (1908–?) (Table 9), member of the Executive Committee of the Romanian

General Council of Trade Unions (Consiliul General al Sindicatelor, CGS), who as full-time salaried secretary within the executive leadership of the WFTU had risen to a position in international trade unionism in September 1956 that was unrivalled by any other woman at the time.⁴⁹ In the rather long list of issues discussed in the WFTU's statement circulated at the meeting with the ILO's Director General, extra-familial services in support of working mothers – in contradistinction to the General Resolution adopted by the First World Conference of Women Workers and the memorandum following up on the resolution⁵⁰ – were not listed. The geopolitical conjuncture of the mid-1950s was not conducive to highlighting this element of the politics of the working mother, which at the time symbolized the distinctiveness of state socialist Europe more than any other element of the politics of the working mother.

Extended childcare leave: 1960s policy innovation in Eastern Europe and a shifting geopolitical scene

Extended childcare leave constitutes a policy innovation of the second half of the twentieth century which made its way into international labour law in the middle of the 1960s. The ILO included this policy invention, namely the right of young mothers to retain their employment rights for a prolonged period of absence after maternity leave, in its first international instrument that addressed women workers with family responsibilities. The ILO instruments include Conventions and Recommendations that have been at the core of international labour law. Full versions of extended childcare leave schemes combine the guarantee of employment rights with a material benefit initially for women and later men who wish or need to stay home with their young children for a prolonged period of time, that is, beyond maternity leave. The measure was not at the core of international debate before the ILO embarked on the policy process leading up to the adoption of its Recommendation R123, Employment (Women with Family Responsibilities), in 1965. In the evolving politics of the working mother in state socialist Europe, extended childcare leave began to play an important role from the 1960s.⁵¹ During that decade, related Eastern European developments left an imprint on the international action of the ILO and the WFTU. Yet this impact was downplayed and in part made invisible on the official stage of state-internationalist policymaking as documented in the official sources recording the ILO move towards support for extended childcare leave.⁵²

Advances in the politics of women's work in the WFTU and the ILO

When the ILO's newly installed Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers convened for the first time in autumn 1959,⁵³ Antonina Vistavkina, Senior Inspector of the State Labour and Wages Committee in the Soviet Union, was the only representative in attendance from a European state socialist country. For the WFTU the Italian Ines Cerlesi was present as an observer.⁵⁴ The panel's deliberations included measures intended to help keep women with young children in the labour market and stabilize their employment relationships in innovative ways. The report the International Labour Office laid before the panel mentioned the recent expansion of paid maternity leave to 14 weeks (in some cases 16) in several Eastern European countries. In Yugoslavia women could work part-time for a certain period of time after they had exhausted their maternity leave; elsewhere in Eastern Europe, guarantees of employment rights for a period of time after maternity leave, with reduced or without pay, were '[i]ncreasingly frequent in law and collective agreements'.⁵⁵ The printed summary of the discussion on the employment of married women during the meeting of the Panel of Consultants noted that one (unnamed) consultant recommended that the ILO do further studies of 'the period of authorized maternity leave without forfeit of job rights', while another advocated 'a full-fledged system of state care for children'.⁵⁶

It may safely be guessed that it was the Soviet delegate who emphasized the latter, that is, the classical, socialist position prioritizing institutional facilities in support of working women with children. On the large stage of state internationalism, representatives of state socialist countries at the time were still sidelining the search for complementary solutions that were supposed to respond to unresolved problems in the system of institution-focused care for very small children in Eastern Europe. For its part, in the years to come, the WFTU remained faithful to the foundational dual vision of its politics of women's work, insisting on the fundamental trope of ensuring women their full share in all spheres of life via promoting their equality while acknowledging their differences. It continued to advocate, in line with the unity of action doctrine, a global programme of politics around women's work which eschewed both questions that were deemed political and maximalist demands that were unachievable in many parts of the world. At the same time, from the early 1960s the emphasis shifted from wage to social issues within the WFTU.

The WFTU World Congress that gathered in December 1961 decided to convene a Second International Trade Union Conference on

the Problems of Women Workers, planned for 1963.⁵⁷ In spring 1962, when preparations for putting working women's issues on the agenda of the ILC were already underway in the International Labour Office, the WFTU turned to renewed advocacy regarding women's issues at the ILO. In April 1962, in a meeting of top-level WFTU functionaries with ILO Director General David A. Morse, the WFTU Secretary Elena Teodorescu argued that there were 'questions of greater importance' than women's salaries and advocated for the ILO's instrument-making on women's 'social problems'.⁵⁸ When meeting the ILO officer responsible for women's issues, Elizabeth Johnstone, earlier in the same month, Teodorescu had expressed her hope that an 'early session' of the ILC would tackle the question of the employment of women.⁵⁹ In the meantime, women activists from the United States and Latin American and African countries as well as women aligned with the ICFTU continuously urged the ILO to hold a discussion on the problems of women workers and develop new instruments.⁶⁰ Eventually, in late 1962 the leadership of the ILO decided to include the topic 'Women Workers in a Changing World' as an agenda item for the 1964 session of the ILC. Here, the topic of 'Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities' was singled out as the theme on which an international labour standard might be developed⁶¹ and, foreseeably during the 1965 session, adopted.

The double burden of working mothers continued to be a special concern of Eastern European women delegates at the WFTU Second International Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women which assembled (with a delay as compared to the original plan) in Bucharest just before the 1964 session of the ILC. Mrs Oszkár Barinkai, leader of the Hungarian delegation, insisted on addressing 'our problems as well', pointing to the continued difficulties working women encountered in terms of 'reconciling their work with their calling as a mother [anyai hivatás]'.⁶² Her approach was echoed in the contribution of Milada Netušilová (1911–99) from Czechoslovakia.⁶³ The proposed solutions from the conference participants included the traditional socialist-style reference to increasing the number of crèches and kindergartens. In his main conference speech, WFTU General Secretary Louis Saillant similarly pointed to institutional childcare as the precondition for equality between men and women, which women enjoyed already in state socialist countries.⁶⁴

The overarching Charter on the Economic and Social Rights of Working Women adopted by the conference once again laid down a global basic programme aimed at the 'creation of trade union unity'.⁶⁵ In tune with the WFTU's new focus on social questions, the Charter displayed a

strong focus on both the politics of the working mother and the special role of the trade unions. 'Trade unions in all countries – capitalist, newly developing and socialist – are all seeking ways and means to make sure that the social function of woman in modern society – motherhood and work – should be protected and backed by today's legislation.'⁶⁶ Reflecting on the discussions about the draft Charter, which had been circulated long before the opening of the conference, Saillant underlined that even though the conference had already achieved 'more clarity on the future we anticipate ... particularly, for working mothers', there were pressing questions still outstanding to which the WFTU was to give more concrete answers only 'at some future date'.⁶⁷ The dispute lurking behind this note likely concerned the question of part-time work and/or reduced working hours as a women-specific measure to ease the double burden. At the conference, Saillant made a strong case against part-time work and repeatedly underlined the non-gendered character of the demand for the reduction of working hours as 'common to both men and women', remarking that children suffered from too long a separation 'from their parents who work long hours in industry'.⁶⁸ The Charter as adopted by the conference participants advocated a 'reduction of working hours without loss of wages to give women the possibility of accomplishing their duties as workers and as mothers'. It did not explicitly state whether such a reduction should apply only to women workers or to all workers. The wording also included a broader call for a 'progressive reduction of working hours without wage reduction'.⁶⁹

In a Preliminary Memorandum to the Director General of the ILO, the conference expressed its desire for the envisioned international instrument (which would soon be discussed at the 1964 session of the ILC) to take the form of a legally binding Convention rather than a Recommendation. This would provide only non-binding guidelines for policy development in the ILO member states, while Conventions became binding once countries chose to ratify them. The Memorandum also underlined that the ILO's instrument-making should 'reflect the claims laid down in the Charter' adopted by the conference.⁷⁰

At the time, the policy vision and the politics of practice in state socialist Eastern Europe had begun to move beyond the classical model of a politics of the working mother that focused on institutional support alone. Compared to the 1950s, Eastern European thought on future policy directions was palpably more variegated regarding key questions in this policy field. The state socialist countries had begun to search for and experimentally implement new policy answers both to the pressing childcare-related problems that the ever-expanding mass of

working mothers of young children experienced and to the complementary problems encountered by industrial management and labour force planning when trying to cope with these women's 'survival' strategies. When the 1964 session of the ILC, assembled soon after the WFTU's Conference on the Problems of Working Women, discussed the topic of working women with family responsibilities, it had to hand information on the position of the ILO member states regarding many (potential) regulations aimed at easing the burden of working women with family responsibilities. One of these was the measure by which women who stayed home with their infants after maternity leave would be enabled 'to maintain their employment and the rights afferent thereto for a period of up to one year'. Several, mostly western, countries reported the existence of conditional opportunities for leave, typically outlined in collective or local agreements (exceptions were Italy and Austria, where somewhat more general regulations were in place). The existing regulations often included severe limits to the safeguarding of related rights and entitlements. Many governments, though not the Eastern European ones, warned that extensive rights for additional childcare leave might result in disadvantages for women in terms of employers' willingness to hire them. Hungary (where women could be granted, yet were not entitled to, unpaid leave until the child reached the age of three), Ukraine and the Soviet Union (where more limited options were in place), and Czechoslovakia expressed full support for the measure. Yugoslavia, by contrast, emphasized the classical socialist notion that 'favourable conditions' should be created 'which will allow mothers not to leave their employment'.⁷¹

During the discussions at the ILC, the delegates from the state socialist countries of Eastern Europe (both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus) were united, once again, in their emphasis on women's full participation, via wage work and complementary measures, in life in their countries. Yet when it came to their propositions for concrete policy measures supporting mothers at work, the representatives of the Eastern European countries espoused a variety of perspectives. This was so notwithstanding the fact that the Eastern European contributions to the discussion commonly supported the emphasis on the relevance of a densely knit system of crèches and kindergartens. In the conference committee preparing the draft of the conclusions to be adopted, Liudmyla Shendryk, the Soviet workers' representative and a secretary of the Ukrainian Republican Council of Trade Unions (Ukrains'ka respublikans'ka rada profesiinykh spilok/Українська республіканська рада професійних спілок), proposed a whole list of items to be enshrined in the conclusions. Shendryk explicitly included in her list of demands that

conditions be created 'permitting women to continue in employment ... during the nursing period',⁷² a measure that epitomized the state socialist model of women's full employment. Yet the Polish government representative, Maria Jakubowicz (now an officer in the Polish Labour and Wages Committee), made a case for part-time and home-based work for 'mothers of large families'.⁷³ The Hungarian officer in the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and government representative, Edit Konrád, drew attention to the combined role of maternity leave, the extension thereof 'for a period of three years', the lightening of household tasks, and wide availability of crèches and kindergartens – the latter was a topic that was stressed time and again by state socialist representatives in particular.⁷⁴ The measures proposed by women delegates from the western countries included part-time work (a measure pushed by the American Esther Peterson), provision of childcare, reduced working hours for men and women alike, and shared family responsibilities; ICFTU women trade unionists maintained their reservations about part-time work.⁷⁵

In the end, the 1964 session of the ILC decided that an item named 'The Employment of Women with Family Responsibilities' would be included in the agenda of the next session, with a view to preparing an ILO Recommendation. When the 1965 session of the ILC adopted the Recommendation R123, extended childcare leave formed one pillar of this ILO instrument (the first apart from the instruments on maternity leave) on women with family responsibilities.⁷⁶

This innovation in the politics of women's work pursued by state internationalism built on ongoing changes in which the Eastern European politics of the working mother played an important role. Initial varieties of what, in the years to come in Eastern Europe, would develop into full-scale systems of extended childcare leave played an important role in this context, even though the connection was downplayed or at least not fully documented, as we shall see in the following subsection. This mirrored, once again, dominant state-internationalist geopolitics, which continued to be inhospitable to internationalizing Eastern European policy innovation. By contrast, the WFTU's turn to 'social problems' as the new key theme in the politics of women's work, which in this decade complemented the organization's inherited focus on equal pay for equal work, now was in tune with ongoing change in Eastern Europe.

Eastern European policy innovation in multiscale perspective

In the middle of the 1960s, Hungary played the role of a frontrunner within state socialist Europe and globally, regarding the invention and

introduction of a full-scale extended childcare leave scheme. Here, leading women trade unionists made themselves, in line with top-level labour force planners and party functionaries, into prominent advocates of this innovation. Hungary was the first state socialist Eastern European country that introduced by law a full-scale scheme of optional, paid extended childcare leave. The scheme became effective on 1 January 1967. It combined the right to lengthy absence past maternity leave (up to 30 months, soon extended to 36) with a substantial monthly benefit.⁷⁷

Preparations for the introduction of the new scheme were well underway before the Second International Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women organized by the WFTU and the 48th session of the ILC assembled in 1964. In spring 1964, the National Council of Trade Unions (Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa, SZOT) worked intensely towards the development and adoption of the future scheme, referring to the imminent decision-making of 'several world organizations'.⁷⁸ SZOT's committee in charge of issues related to the 'special situation of working women' (see also [Figure 23](#)) produced the relevant material, and SZOT adopted the proposal devised by the committee for the new scheme in July that year.⁷⁹ Meanwhile, the ILO's flagship journal *International Labour Review* in March 1964 published an article by Hungary's key labour force planner János Timár which de facto announced the imminent implementation of the scheme. After these preliminaries, as far as SZOT was concerned, the matter was put to rest, until in summer 1965 the (co-)responsible ministry in Hungary turned to SZOT as it moved towards the definite framing of the new scheme.⁸⁰ Mrs Ernő Déri (Erzsébet Déri), the SZOT officer responsible for women's issues, now turned to action, examining in person on the ground in several enterprises the problems of working mothers, and asking women workers about their problems, needs and wishes. Giving a lively description of those problems 'on the ground' – which had been and would be found in other state socialist countries too⁸¹ – Déri reported to her supervisors:

There is no sufficient supply of nurseries for working women with children. The establishment of nurseries is expensive ... 70 per cent [of the existing nurseries] are not up-to-date and adequate ... At present, we speak about the general overburdening of women, in particular where there is a small child. Homes are not adequately equipped with machinery, and existing apparatuses are expensive ... A woman who has an infant cannot meet her workplace's expectations because she must care for the family and the infant, or, more

precisely, she is not a full-value member of the workforce. Until the child reaches the age of one ... they miss 160 out of 290 working days. Their irregular absences negatively influence production ... In factories with two and three shifts, 25 per cent of the mothers of infants leave their jobs permanently, giving child-rearing [as justification] ... The present state is an impediment from the perspective of the mother and the infant, too.⁸²

Déri also quoted directly from the women workers' responses, giving them, she claimed, 'as close to their original words as possible'. One woman explained:

My main shift foreman is a woman, and she still doesn't understand my trouble. She criticizes me a lot, telling me she can't count on me because I am absent a lot; but it's not my fault, it hurts me the most when my child is sick, and on top of that, I don't make any money. I do understand her as well, because for her, the [production] plan, and not my personal problems, is the most important.⁸³

Déri made sure to obtain confirmation that women workers would be happy with the introduction of extended childcare leave with an allowance of around 40 to 50 per cent of the wages they had previously earned.

Hungary's extended childcare scheme, operational from 1 January 1967, would soon figure as an "iconic" role model of innovation in the state socialist politics of the working mother. When the International Labour Office in 1973 published another report on women workers in a changing world, it highlighted that the extension of leave beyond regular maternity leave 'is now common practice in the Socialist countries in Eastern Europe ... Certain other European countries have also introduced somewhat similar arrangements.'⁸⁴ In most cases, the schemes came with a degree of material compensation (in Poland and the Soviet Union this was the case only from the early 1980s). In contrast, the ILO's Recommendation R123 adopted in 1965 did not contain reference to a material benefit to complement the guarantee of employment rights for working women with young children.

In state socialist Eastern Europe, extended childcare leave gained ground as one of several measures signalling a large-scale transformation of the politics of the working mother. This shift also included in some countries the right to part-time work for mothers of young children. To varying degrees, this transformation was connected to a pro-natalist

turn, which in some countries, such as Romania, took on coercive traits including newly introduced restrictions on abortions.⁸⁵ Leading representatives of women's organizations opposed restrictions of choice in reproductive policies. Women trade unionists instigated, promoted and supported the transformation of the politics of women's work, and advocated choice as the credo of the revised politics. They were at the forefront of those actors who insisted that the new right to extended childcare leave helped to enable working mothers with young children to 'make a practical choice' when deciding how long to stay away from their workplace.⁸⁶ They advocated, in other words, a multiplication of women's options, whatever limiting interests some (or many) other actors pursued.

Based on the conceptualization of motherhood as 'a social function which is beneficial to society' – as enshrined in the WFTU's 1964 Charter on the Economic and Social Rights of Working Women – Eastern European women trade unionists 'call[ed] for reform' of the existing conditions and institutions of motherhood.⁸⁷ In the state socialist context of the 1960s, this included three key developments. The first concerned the material recognition of mothers' unpaid work, a goal that was realized, however partially, via the politics of extended childcare leave from the 1960s onwards. There was, secondly, an increasing emphasis on a politics of practice. With it Eastern European women trade unionists aimed to ensure that extended childcare leave and other new measures, while indeed enhancing women's difference in the world of wage work, would not translate into women's disadvantage or discrimination. Thirdly, transnational collaboration and exchange between Eastern European women trade unionists began to take on momentum.

Regional trade union internationalism: the 'travails of the plains' of making women's double burden work in 1970s Eastern Europe

The 1970s brought significant changes for Eastern European women activists and functionaries dedicated to moving forward the politics in support of the working mother. Responding in new ways to the double burden that continued to put massive strain on working mothers even though a system of multiple measures supporting these women was in place, the focus of their action shifted towards the 'travails of the plains'. At a time when the geopolitics of state and social movement internationalism had shifted somewhat in their favour, Eastern European activists

simultaneously moved towards self-confident networking on their own. They also complemented their earlier politics of the working mother with an additional focus on the critical reconsideration of gender relations in the private sphere.

Participating in regional and transnational seminars and gatherings, these women embarked on a path of translating key working mother-related agendas into concrete policies and practices. They vividly exchanged insights emerging from their experience with the implementation of the relevant policy measures. Advocacy of the equal division of childcare and household work between men and women became a more pronounced focus of the policy vision pursued by Eastern European women trade unionists, functionaries and professionals engaged in the politics of women's work.

Seizing the moment? The International Women's Year

The IWY, announced by the UN for the year 1975, became an opportunity for Eastern European women trade unionists to promote, locally and globally, their working mother-related agendas and demands. In 1972 the UN General Assembly approved the proposition of the WIDF and representatives from the Soviet bloc countries to proclaim 1975 as the IWY. The IWY was dedicated to three main topics – equality, development and peace – and aimed to investigate the existing discrimination against women, promote gender equality, and increase women's contribution to national and international development.⁸⁸ Various women's organizations and activists in both east and west saw the IWY as an opportunity to overcome adverse geopolitics on the scene of state internationalism, obtain more support from the UN and make the issues of working women's rights and gender equality more present at the UN. They saw the IWY as an event that would contribute to forging new global alliances, including across Cold War divides, and help increase women's contributions to national and international development. The participants in the WFTU's Third World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women, convened in Prague in 1972, similarly welcomed the UN's IWY initiative.⁸⁹

The World Congress of Women in (East) Berlin – we referred to preparations for it at the opening of this chapter – and the World Conference of Women in Mexico's capital, Mexico City, proposed by the UN CSW and organized by the UN, were two key events of international scale in 1975.⁹⁰ Both conferences planned to foster global networks and aimed to bring the problems of working women to the table of

debate, regardless of political, ideological and geographical divides. Women trade union activists from Eastern Europe attended both events. Drahomíra Hanzalová (1931–) (Table 9) from Czechoslovakia, for instance, represented the WFTU at the Mexico City World Conference of Women, while Maria Dinkova (1928–?) (Table 9) and Elena Lagadinova (1930–2017) (Table 9) served there as delegates from Bulgaria.⁹¹ For women activists from state socialist countries and various international organizations, including the WFTU, the World Congress of Women in East Berlin became a central event.⁹² The delegates there discussed, among other topics, smaller- and larger-scale developments, both ongoing and desired, related to the politics of women's work. The organizers of the World Congress described the event as

a forum of the peoples, reflecting such a broad spectrum of public movements guided by the desire to unite their efforts in order to solve one of the vital problems that confront humanity today, that of enabling women as workers, mothers and citizens to make the same contribution as men to social progress.⁹³

Preparing for the IWY and planning the events, the WFTU, in its appeal to trade unions around the world, called upon everyone to use the occasion to organize meetings and similar activities dedicated to the IWY on all levels where trade union organizing and activism took place. While discussing organizational matters, trade unionists aimed to use this opportunity to further develop and strengthen co-operation and to forge new connections and networks. They stressed the need to organize regional and local conferences, gatherings and seminars and considered that such initiatives would offer insight into the real needs of working women.⁹⁴ Local and regional trade unions indeed scheduled numerous meetings, seminars and workshops, including in state socialist countries such as Hungary and Bulgaria. They also initiated on-site inspections of women's labour conditions. In Soviet Ukraine, for instance, the women's departments operational on all levels of trade union organizations undertook inspections of women's working conditions within the framework of activities dedicated to the IWY. Although the inspections were initiated in a top-down manner, they allowed the collection of a vast amount of data regarding women workers' problems and needs. This brought to light numerous complaints about the lack of adequate social and institutional support for working mothers.⁹⁵ In a recently conducted interview, Inna Samarina (1934–), who was the head of the enterprise-level trade union at the House-Building Plant (Domobudivnyi

kombinat/Домобудівний комбінат) in Bila Tserkva (Soviet Ukraine, today Ukraine) (Map 3, Map 4), pointed out that until the late 1980s working women at her enterprise continuously addressed trade unions with questions related to the availability of childcare facilities.⁹⁶ The data collected by the trade unionist inspectors confirm this statement. They show that crèches and kindergartens remained in short supply even during late state socialism,⁹⁷ although their numbers had increased since the postwar period, and the state and party authorities constantly promised to provide even more. Trade unionists also used the occasion of the IWY to work for the long-standing goal of the WFTU's top leadership of mobilizing working women into trade unionism and 'strengthen[ing] the unity of action from below' (chapter 2).⁹⁸

Eastern European women trade unionists organized and took part in numerous cross-regional and international seminars, meetings and study visits to learn from and share manifold practical experience related to challenges faced by working mothers and development and implementation of the related politics in support of working women. For instance, in 1975 this included the international meeting 'Role of Trade Unions in Solving the Social Issues of Working Women in Socialist Countries' in Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria, a symposium 'Participation of Working Women in Economic and Social Life' in Bucharest, the capital of Romania, and study visits by Romanian women's delegations to the GDR (for a more exhaustive picture, see Table 9). Here, they discussed the full array of measures to ease the double burden for working mothers, including institutional childcare, extended childcare leave, various social services provided for women and the reduction of working hours.⁹⁹

One of the more well-known meetings was the 1978 seminar 'The Place of Working Women in Europe', organized in Budapest by the National Council of Hungarian Women (Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, MNOT) with the support of the WIDF and the WFTU. In her welcoming speech Edit Erdei (1923–86; known as Mrs László Erdei in Hungary) (Table 9), the long-term president of the MNOT, underlined the importance of labour law to protect women 'not only as workers but also as mothers'. Erdei highlighted the role of the trade unions in helping women and especially working mothers to overcome the burden of the double day but also emphasized that, in view of changing roles of men and women in the family, policy developments on childcare facilities, for instance, were linked now 'not exclusively to women: instead, we see them [childcare facilities] as an aid to families in child-rearing'.¹⁰⁰ Sharing experience about the practical solutions to the problem of the double burden, she emphasized the introduction of extended childcare

leave in Hungary, stating that 80 per cent of women opted for it so that they could take care of their own children.¹⁰¹

In the 1970s, Eastern European women activists, functionaries and professionals concerned with matters of women's work increasingly relied on sophisticated knowledge production as a repertoire of activism that sustained their demands and agendas. In state socialist countries, trade unions and women's organizations provided ample opportunity to compile and analyse complex and detailed data on women's work and working women's attitudes, which helped them rethink, fine-tune and justify their policy agendas. In 1977, at the international seminar 'Women and Socialism' taking place in Moscow (Soviet Union, today Russia), Maria Dinkova from the department of research and development at the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени, KBZh) gave an account of the 'flexible system of maternity leave' existing in Bulgaria. Dinkova presented the results of an investigation carried out in Bulgaria, in which she was involved, on the practical implementation of the extended childcare leave scheme. The report discussed, among other things, women's choices regarding the length of the maternity and childcare leaves they were taking. She stated that '[f]amilies want longer maternity leaves. They want to use it for as long as possible.' Therefore, if the state decided to extend paid parental leave, more women would be willing to take it, 'as there are financial reasons for women to refuse unpaid maternity leave'. Dinkova concluded that, regardless of the length of the paid leave, there would always be women who returned to work at an earlier stage. As a result, 'the obligatory period of leave should not be prolonged unduly because there are important considerations and reasons for women who want to come back to work sooner'.¹⁰²

Drahomíra Hanzalová, Secretary of the Central Council of the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí), in her 1974 report during the international symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood' in Budapest (Table 9), discussed the challenges women in Czechoslovakia continued to face when balancing wage employment and childcare. Reflecting on Czechoslovakia, she admitted that, despite all the measures implemented, the results of analyses and studies showed that 'the demands placed on us [women] by the household, childcare and child-rearing are extraordinarily high'.¹⁰³ The persistently unequal distribution of household responsibilities caused obstacles and shortcomings in women's professional activity. Hanzalová underlined that the foundational measures such as institutional childcare and communal services alleviating women's burden caused by domestic

work were not enough to overcome these problems. Men needed to be involved in family life as much as women and, more generally, a shift was needed in society as a whole towards partnership-based relationships between women and men, rather than relationships characterized by (male) dominance.¹⁰⁴

Advancing family policy in support of working mothers

In the 1970s, the demand for equality in family responsibilities between men and women took a prominent place in the debates in international organizations and among women activists from both sides of the Cold War divide involved in the politics of working mothers. In 1978, an international survey conducted by the ILO on the employment of women with family responsibilities highlighted Scandinavian countries as exemplary in their efforts to challenge traditional views on women's caregiving duties at home.¹⁰⁵ Women activists and politicians, such as Sigrid Ekendahl (1904–96) from Sweden, had advocated the more active involvement of men in household responsibilities already in the 1960s.¹⁰⁶ Women activists from Eastern Europe presented and discussed similar proposals. By the 1970s they engaged in lively and pronounced debates advocating changes in family policy and in the mindsets of people, to be achieved primarily through education and propaganda, which would reflect a more equal share of household responsibilities between men and women.

The 1974 statement of trade unionist Hanzalová just quoted was just one example signalling this trend. In 1973, in close collaboration with various trade union institutions and in preparation for 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood' mentioned above, Hungarian trade union women activists organized a national 'theoretical'¹⁰⁷ conference titled 'Timely Questions of the Reconciliation of Employment and Maternal Vocation'. During the second day of the conference, Erzsébet Kósa, who on the first day had given one of the main speeches, opened the debate of the related conference section. Session chair Mrs Tibor Tóth, Secretary General of the Trade Union of Workers in the Clothing Industry (Ruházatipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete), emphasized that 'a much more differentiated and consistent' approach to the questions related to family problems was necessary, and that action was needed to reach from the 'local' (meaning enterprise) level to the ongoing preparations for the upcoming Five-Year Plan.¹⁰⁸ Kósa – highlighting the significant gap between the two approaches to household work, one which considered that 'family members [should] help the mother when doing household work', while

the other was based on the understanding that ‘everyone naturally takes part’ in this work – concluded: ‘We are very far from the latter.’ Purposefully addressing many ‘very practical questions’, Kósa, in tandem with other speakers, emphasized the education of the next generation as key to making change happen. Mrs János Jobban, who represented the Kaposvár (a city in southern Hungary) Food Products Retail Enterprise (Kaposvári Élelmiszer Kiskereskedelmi Vállalat), similarly focused on persistent inequality in the division of domestic labour, and pointed to the importance of the change of mindsets: ‘When the man does not bring his own commitment to equality in shouldering the family burdens, party decisions and government measures hardly help.’¹⁰⁹

The issue of men’s greater involvement in reproductive work found its way also into the World Congress held in (East) Berlin in 1975. The discussions on the policies in support of working mothers were conducted in Commission II dedicated to the topic ‘Women and Work in Industry and Agriculture’ and in Commission IV addressing the topic ‘Family and Society’. The preparatory materials of Commission II outlined the social and political measures necessary to ease the tension between women’s employment and household responsibilities, including the organization of childcare and education, the development of social services ‘with a focus on reducing time and energy spent on household chores’, and the provision of adequate labour conditions for working mothers. The material also highlighted that to the (then) present day, the traditional division of labour within the household, ‘which binds women more to the home than men’, constituted an obstacle to the equality of rights and to women’s equality in employment. To overcome this obstacle, alongside transformations in society and new legislation, it was necessary to change how both women and men approached women’s work inside and outside the home, in order to promote ‘the ideological process to overcome traditional gender role concepts’.¹¹⁰ The working paper of the commission that addressed family and society issues at the 1975 World Congress in (East) Berlin suggested that ‘partners should be expected to structure their lives in a way that enables women to increasingly balance their family responsibilities with their professional development and social activities’.¹¹¹

The shift towards an emphasis on larger and more inclusive policy scripts, which also addressed the need to change the gender division of family responsibilities and care work, which in turn was preconditioned on fundamental changes in the mindsets of both men and women, found its reflection in WFTU politics. In 1979, at the Fourth Conference on the Problems of Working Women taking place in Nicosia (Cyprus) (Table 9),

the WFTU adopted a revised version of its Charter of the Economic, Social, Cultural and Trade Union Rights of Working Women. The Charter stated that, alongside the struggle for a social system that supported working mothers, 'the trade unions are working to introduce a real family policy based on full equality between men and women, on their shared responsibility for education of children and for all questions of the life of the married couple and the family'.¹¹²

The debates on the issue of women's and men's equal share of childcare and child-rearing responsibilities and a new type of family policy became an important topic in state internationalism too. In 1975 the International Labour Conference adopted a resolution asking the Governing Body to include 'the question of workers with family responsibilities' on the agenda of the next International Labour Conference 'with a view to the adoption of a new instrument' that would replace the ILO's Recommendation R123 (1965).¹¹³ The Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations survey on employment of working mothers, published in 1978, indicated that a number of countries, including Austria, considered Recommendation R123 outdated:

[T]he Recommendation is no longer in line with present-day views on the role of women in society: it is based on the belief that women have a greater responsibility [than men] towards their families and that special measures are therefore needed to assist women in meeting these responsibilities as well as those arising out of their work.¹¹⁴

A new instrument was supposed both to reflect the changing view on women's and men's roles and responsibilities within the family, namely shared care work and household duties, and to be applicable to men and women alike. In this context, the survey suggested considering measures such as 'special leave to enable male or female workers to take care of a child or other member of the family who is sick' and educational programmes to promote equality within the family.¹¹⁵

The conclusions of the survey laid the groundwork for debates that eventually led to accepting the idea of parental leave, understood as an extended childcare leave that could be taken by either parent. The ILO's Workers with Family Responsibilities Recommendation R165, adopted in 1981, defined extended parental leave as a 'period immediately following maternity leave'. Providing examples, the International Labour Office cited the global survey on issues of working mothers published

in 1984, which showed that in some (state) socialist countries, including Yugoslavia and Poland, men already had an opportunity to take childcare leave.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

Throughout the decades, women trade unionists from Eastern Europe shared with many labour feminists of social democratic leaning a vision of women's full-scale involvement in paid employment as a key means of liberation and emancipation. Similarly, and again in tune with many of their colleagues in the western industrialized countries, they acknowledged and persevered in addressing the conflicts and inequalities arising from expectations of state and society regarding women's productive and reproductive roles. In the realm of the overarching theme of the politics of the working mother, women trade unionists from state socialist Europe pursued a consistent set of agendas both internationally and within the Eastern European countries. These agendas combined a core vision and core concerns that remained unchanged during the decades covered in this chapter, albeit with a shifting emphasis over time. Alongside this evolution, the emphases regarding both the relevance of different scales of action, such as local, national and international, and the appropriate measures necessary to achieve this overarching vision and the repertoires of women's labour activism changed.

On the global stage, Eastern European women trade unionists encountered a set of obstacles which resulted from the geopolitics informing both WFTU action and dominant interests shaping state internationalism. On the world stage, the WFTU prioritized shared minimum agendas and themes in women's politics that it considered globally relevant over the regional problems arising from the state socialist politics of the working mother. These regional problems, stemming from the fact that the process of including women with small children in full-time employment advanced rapidly in state socialist Eastern Europe, early on formed a key concern of women trade unionists from the region. At the same time, the WFTU leadership aimed to showcase, in a manner that was (as far as possible) uncontroversial, the advanced political self-positioning of communist-aligned trade unionism within the larger field of the politics of women's work. To reach the top of the WFTU's agenda, demands related to women's work had to be recognized by the large majority of trade unionists of both sexes as relevant for improving the position of the working class as a whole. In contrast to Eastern European

women trade unionists' far-reaching demands regarding the politics of the working mother, equal pay, for instance, met these criteria easily.

Over time, within the state internationalism that was dominant, communist-aligned trade unionism was no longer entirely marginalized, but began to move to some level of acknowledgement and coexistence. The vision(s) of the politics of the working mother, including the more strategic varieties prioritized by the WFTU leadership and the concerns raised by women trade unionists from state socialist Eastern Europe, fared unevenly in this shifting geopolitical context.

In the early period of 'building socialism' in state socialist Europe, policy measures related to the institutional support of working mothers, including the difficulties of implementation, were at the core of the agenda of Eastern European women trade unionists, while on the international stage they were much less prominent. These women trade unionists shared an advocacy for institutional childcare as a measure in support of working mothers with labour feminists across the political divide. In western countries, this measure was debated but left doubts among women activists as to the state's ability to raise children and the psychological consequences of mother-child separation, informed by theories developed after 1945. Nevertheless, the political conjuncture of the international politics of the working mother in the mid-1950s was characterized on the global stage of state internationalism by a scaling-down of the positive engagement with institutional care for small children and an enhanced engagement with alternatives, such as part-time work. The identification of the state socialist politics of women's work with the provision of mass-scale institutional care for young children contributed to bringing about this shift. It added one more political motivation for inherited hesitation or reluctance to accept institutional care for young children. The other arguments for rejecting these measures included a belief in the value of maternal care for child development, adherence to the male breadwinner model and the eschewing of the high costs associated with such institutions. Neither the Eastern European women trade unionists' regional concern with the task of making the state socialist measures of support for the working mother work nor their global advocacy of institutional care for young children attracted strong support on the ILO stage. The same was true in the arena of communist-aligned trade union internationalism as pursued by the WFTU leadership. Here, bringing about 'unity' in women's trade unionism in the capitalist and colonial countries, and the emblematic demand that the ILO Equal Remuneration Convention C100 (1951) be promoted and applied in these world regions, enjoyed priority.

During the 1960s, women trade unionists contributed to a broadening debate on working women's choice, while on the larger international stage the global relevance of the evolving policy patterns in state socialist Europe was simultaneously acknowledged and marginalized. The agendas and initiatives of Eastern European women trade unionists who were engaged with the politics of women's work gained ground both on the global stage of state internationalism and within the global networks of WFTU-aligned trade unionism. Within the WFTU, classical trade unionist anxiety regarding alternatives to full-time work and the desired equality of the conditions of men and women workers clashed with the search for feasible solutions for the problems of working mothers. While within the WFTU these problems were not resolved during the decade, trade unionists and labour force planners in state socialist Europe searched for effective policy measures that would help reduce unregulated absenteeism and the ensuing chaos in the industrial sector, ease the burdens of working mothers with young children and address other 'social problems' correlated with the full-time employment of many women. This joint search produced a variety of experiments and visions within Eastern Europe, out of which extended childcare leave emerged as one key solution. Support for this measure was not restricted to state socialist Europe, although it was introduced early here and in a pronounced manner. At the ILO, the focus on extended childcare leave in the middle of the 1960s signalled both that western industrial countries had begun to 'catch up' with Eastern Europe regarding the problems related to working mothers and that the new policy instrument was less controversial among international key actors than, for example, part-time work. This was so in particular as no material benefit was attached to leave in the ILO's new international instrument. The role of Eastern European women trade unionists in promoting the new measure was somewhat prominent at the ILO during the years when it was devising and adopting Recommendation R123, yet their advocacy of choice for working mothers remained merely a whisper on this stage of state internationalism.

In the 1970s, the activism of Eastern European women trade unionists regarding the politics of the working mother did not lose momentum. Rather, additional elements gained importance, and women trade unionists engaged in detail with the complex questions arising in the course of building a system of support for working mothers which combined many different elements. Eastern European activists and functionaries also continued to walk the stony path of advocating their increasingly complex politics of the working mother on the global scale. All of this taken together became their 'travail of the plains', the persistent

work, exchange of opinions and experiences within multiscale networks and institutions dedicated to developing the politics of women's work. The resolution of the conflict between women's reproductive labour and paid employment required multifocal political investment in family and labour law, in welfare and social policy measures and in changing the mindsets of both men and women. The latter drew particular attention among Eastern European women trade unionists in the 1970s; they believed that, without fundamental changes, political investment into the two other sides of the triangle would be ineffective. This was the form which the idea to – somewhat – revolutionize the family (see also [chapter 3](#)) took in Eastern European women trade unionists' circles in the 1970s. These women labour activists operated within the orbit of the state socialist regimes and under the conditions of material scarcity ([introductory chapter](#)) that prevailed in their countries as compared to Western European industrial nations.

Throughout the period covered by this chapter, Eastern European women trade unionists, functionaries and professionals concerned with the politics of the working mother offered different facets of a gendered critique of the real-life conditions of working mothers in state socialist countries. While over time they added new elements to this critique, they remained aligned, like so many of their social democratic 'sisters' in the West, with the political and economic system which co-produced the problems they addressed.

Notes

- 1 Donert, 'Whose Utopia?'
- 2 'Arbeitspapier für Kommission II des Weltkongresses im Internationalen Jahr der Frau', 1975, DY 34/11723, SAPMOBArch.
- 3 'Women in the Labour Force', 260, 262.
- 4 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Forty-Eighth Session 1964*, 466; World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 32.
- 5 Contained in the WFTU's foundational Charter on the Economic and Social Rights of Working Women adopted by the Second International Conference of Women Workers called by the WFTU in 1964. See World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 108.
- 6 Bock and Thane, 'Editors' Introduction', 14–15.
- 7 Cobble, *For the Many*, 325.
- 8 As quoted in an internal ILO report by Elizabeth Johnstone, 'Note on Conversation with Mrs Teodorescu', 18 April 1962, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA; Cobble, *For the Many*, 325.
- 9 In German, Bertolt Brecht's 'Mühen der Ebene' have become proverbial: Brecht, *The Collected Poems*, 415–16.
- 10 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action'.
- 11 World Federation of Trade Unions, 'Report on the Activity of the WFTU Concerning the Principles of Equality of Wages for Equal Work between Male and Female Labour. Submitted to the Executive Bureau and Committee of the WFTU', 2 May 1948, ARCH01666, box 79–82,

- folder 79, IISH. Signs of a rift between pro- and anti-communist forces within the WFTU date back to late 1947. The anti-communist ICFTU was founded in December 1949.
- 12 'General Resolution. Draft. Adopted by the Commission. 1st World Conference of Women Workers (Budapest, June 14–17, 1956)', collection 5595, box 3, folder 20, KCLMDA.
 - 13 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action', 348, incl. original quote.
 - 14 Germaine Guillé, 'World Conference of Women Workers (Budapest, June 14–17, 1956). 1st Item on the Agenda. The united struggle of women workers and trade unions for increased wages, for the application of the principle "equal pay for equal work", against all forms of discrimination, for the improvement of their living conditions, then winning of their rights and for peace', 1956, collection 5595, box 3, folder 20, KCLMDA.
 - 15 'Dokumente der ersten Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen. Budapest, 14. bis 17. Juni 1956: Allgemeine Resolution', *Internationale Vereinigung der Gewerkschaften der Werktätigen des Öffentlichen Dienstes und verwandter Berufe. Berufsabteilung im Weltgewerkschaftsbund: Anhang zum Informationsbulletin*, no. 4 [1956]: 16–17, ARCH01666, box 155–160, folder 157, IISH.
 - 16 'Hauptreferat. Entwurf für den Bericht zum ersten Punkt der Tagesordnung der Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen für das Vorbereitungskomitee am 10., 11. und 12. Mai 1956', 1956, DY 34/18783, SAPMOBArch.
 - 17 Guillé, 'World Conference of Women Workers. 1st Item'.
 - 18 'Feljegyzés', 29 May 1956, (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1954–1960, box 1, folder 2, PIL.
 - 19 *Népszava*, 'A nemzetközi szakszervezeti központok'.
 - 20 'Drága Barátnőink! Kedves Elvtársak!', [1956], (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1954–1960, box 1, folder 2, PIL. The fact that the highly critical speech, which we quote here from an unpublished document that does not indicate the author, was indeed given at the conference is confirmed by a second document which provides a detailed summary of (likely) all speakers' contributions and also refers to the critical character of the speech: 'Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen in Budapest vom 14.–17. Juni 1956', [1956], DY 34/18782, SAPMOBArch. We cannot claim that the manuscript of the speech quoted here and the words spoken from the rostrum in Budapest in June 1956 were identical, but the summary given in the latter document fits the content of the full manuscript of the speech.
 - 21 'Drága Barátnőink!'
 - 22 'Dokumente der ersten Weltkonferenz'.
 - 23 Saillant, 'WFTU. 29ème session du Bureau Exécutif. Note d'introduction à la discussion sur le Point de l'Ordre du Jour', 4–6 March 1956, DY 34/22606, SAPMOBArch.
 - 24 Cobble, *For the Many*, 319–23.
 - 25 ICFTU, 'Women! It's Your Fight, Too!', 1956, collection 5582, box 31, folder 8, KCLMDA.
 - 26 ICFTU, 'Women! It's Your Fight, Too!'
 - 27 Cobble, *For the Many*, 354–64.
 - 28 'Child Care Facilities'; Natan, *Грижите на Отечествения фронт*; Uhrová, 'Národní fronta žen'; Bicskei, "'Our Greatest Treasure, the Child'"; Ghiț, 'Mobilizing Gender for Modernity'; Grama, *Laboring Along*.
 - 29 International Labour Office, *Meeting of Experts on Women's Work 1951. Report IV*.
 - 30 International Labour Office, *Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment 1956. First Item on the Agenda*.
 - 31 Boris, *Making the Woman Worker*.
 - 32 International Labour Organization, 'Meeting of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers. Geneva, October 1959. Working Paper on Item No. 4: Future Programme as Regards Women Workers. Appendix', 1959, WN 2-1003-1-400 (A) (jacket 1), ILOA.
 - 33 International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 130th Session of the Governing Body*, 121.
 - 34 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: 38th Session*, 692–93.
 - 35 Employment of older women, vocational education and technical assistance for "under-developed" countries constituted the rest of the agenda items: International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 130th Session of the Governing Body*, 121.
 - 36 Ukraine was one of the founding member states of the UN, as in 1945 it was agreed between the UK, the United States and the Soviet Union that two of the Soviet republics (the Ukrainian and Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republics) would be invited to sign the founding declaration. In 1954 Ukraine became a member of the ILO.

- 37 International Labour Office, ed., *International Labour Conference: 38th Session*, 179–81.
- 38 International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 130th Session of the Governing Body*, 167.
- 39 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Director-General with a Delegation from the [WFTU], Saturday, 21 January 1956, 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 3.30 p.m., to 6 p.m.', 1956, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 1), ILOA.
- 40 In the 1940s and 1950s, the ILO's extremely large interwar Correspondence Committee on Women's Work continued to exist. During its existence, members of this committee met only once in person, in 1946 in Montreal, when no expert from Eastern Europe attended. The names of the members from the region of focus of the Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (which still exists) in the period are given in ZARAH DB, 'Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (ILO). Special Record (Organisation)'. Membership of the committee was not identical with the invitations to participate in the in-person expert meetings held in 1946, 1951 and 1956. In 1946 and 1951 the Czechoslovak expert invited was prevented from attending. See Dr Edita Kornfeldova, 'Cable to International Labour Office', 1 June 1946, WN 1001/04 (jacket 2), ILOA; International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 118th Session of the Governing Body*, 90.
- 41 International Labour Office, Governing Body, '133rd Session. Fourteenth Item on the Agenda. Report of the Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment (Geneva, 5–10 November 1956)', [1956], GB 133/100/14, ILOA, published in ZARAH DB, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/97>.
- 42 Helfert, 'Part-Time Work', 367, discusses ICFTU women trade unionists' critique of part-time work in the 1950s.
- 43 International Labour Office, *Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment 1956. First Item on the Agenda*.
- 44 International Labour Office, *Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment 1956. First Item on the Agenda*; International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 134th Session*; International Labour Office, Governing Body, '133rd Session. Geneva, 20–24 November 1956'.
- 45 International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 134th Session*, 27–30.
- 46 See n. 40.
- 47 International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 134th Session*, 82.
- 48 Williams, *Equality Will Be Won*, 28–31.
- 49 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action'.
- 50 'Dokumente der ersten Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen. Budapest, 14. bis 17. Juni 1956. Memorandum der Weltkonferenz der werktätigen Frauen an den Generaldirektor der [ILO]', *Internationale Vereinigung der Gewerkschaften der Werktätigen des Öffentlichen Dienstes und verwandter Berufe. Berufsabteilung im Weltgewerkschaftsbund. Anhang zum Informationsbulletin*, no. 4 [1956]: 19–20, ARCH01666, box 155–160, folder 157, IISH.
- 51 Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*
- 52 The argument presented in this section was first developed in Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'; the section constitutes a condensed and restructured version of this earlier publication.
- 53 Information on the Panel of Consultants, its meetings and membership from the region of focus can be found in ZARAH DB, 'Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers (ILO). Special Record (Organisation)'.
- 54 International Labour Office, Governing Body, '143rd Session. Seventh Item on the Agenda. Report of the Meeting of the Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers (Geneva, 12–16 October 1959)', 1959, GB 143-100-7, ILOA.
- 55 International Labour Organization, 'Meeting of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers. Geneva, October 1959. Working Paper on Item No. 1: Recent Trends in Women Workers' Opportunities and Needs', 1959, WN 2-1003-1-400 (A) (jacket 1), ILOA.
- 56 International Labour Office, Governing Body, '143rd Session'.
- 57 'Beschluss über die Einberufung der 2. Internationalen Gewerkschaftskonferenz zu Problemen der werktätigen Frauen', 15 December 1961, DY 34/8253, SAPMOBArch.
- 58 'Record of Interview between Representatives of the [WFTU] and the Director-General', 18 April 1962, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA.
- 59 Johnstone, 'Note on Conversation'.

- 60 Cobble, *For the Many*, 354–59.
- 61 International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 152nd Session of the Governing Body*, 14–19, 72–73.
- 62 A. P., 'Szilánkok egy kongresszusról'. The quotes paraphrase Barinkai's speech.
- 63 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 85.
- 64 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*.
- 65 Abteilung Gewerkschaften und Sozialpolitik [of the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund], 'Information über die 2. Internationale Konferenz des WGB zu den Problemen der werktätigen Frauen. Vertraulich', 26 May 1964, DY 34/9173, SAPMOBArch; 'Die 2. Internationale Konferenz des WGB zu den Problemen der werktätigen Frauen tagte in Bukarest vom 11. bis 16. Mai 1964', [1964], DY 34/9173, SAPMOBArch; 'Entwurf. Zu einigen Ergebnissen und Lehren der 2. Internationalen Gewerkschaftskonferenz zu den Problemen der werktätigen Frauen', n.d., DY 34/9173, SAPMOBArch.
- 66 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 8.
- 67 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 20, 99.
- 68 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*.
- 69 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 28, 99, 107–8; 'Weltgewerkschaftsbund. 44. Tagung des Exekutivbüros (Prag, 15. –17. Jan. 1964)', 15–17 January 1964, DY 34/8253, SAPMOBArch. The reference to the draft Charter is an English translation of the German edition.
- 70 World Federation of Trade Unions, *Working Women Shape Their Future*, 112–13. The published original version of the Memorandum talked in general terms about an instrument on working women in a changing world – the title of the agenda item discussed by the 1964 session of the International Labour Conference – whereas later on reference was made to the instrument on working women with family obligations pre-prepared by the International Labour Office.
- 71 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: 48th Session 1964; Sixth Item Report VI (2)*. Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*, do not mention relevant measures for Poland or Romania at the time.
- 72 International Labour Conference, '48th Session. Geneva. Committee on Women Workers. C.W./D.12', [1964], ILC 48-506-1 (jacket 1), ILOA.
- 73 International Labour Conference, '48th Session. Geneva. Committee on Women Workers. Fourth Sitting', 23 June 1964, ILC 48-506-2 (jacket 1), ILOA.
- 74 International Labour Conference, '48th Session. Geneva. Committee on Women Workers. Fourth Sitting'.
- 75 Cobble, *For the Many*, 359–63; Helfert, 'Part-Time Work', 370–71.
- 76 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Forty-Eighth Session 1964*, 739–54, 822; International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference. 48th Session 1964. Sixth Item Report VI (2)*.
- 77 Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'.
- 78 'Jelentés a szakszervezetek a nők körében végzett munkájáról, a dolgozó nők helyzetéről', 28 March 1964, M-KS 288 f. 22 MDP-MSZMP 1964, folder 10, MNL OL.
- 79 'A SZOT elnökségének állásfoglalása, a dolgozó nők családellátásának és munkakörülményeinek javításával kapcsolatos távlati megoldására', 3 July 1964, M-KS 288 f. 22 MDP-MSZMP 1964, folder 10, MNL OL.
- 80 Mrs Ernő Déri, 'Feljegyzés munkássasszonyokkal folytatott beszélgetésről', 4 September 1965, (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1965–1966, box 1, folder 2, PIL.
- 81 Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*, for example, 56.
- 82 Mrs Ernő Déri, 'Gyermeknevelési segély és hitel bevezetésének javaslata. Feljegyzés', 26 August 1965, (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1965–1966, box 1, folder 2, PIL.
- 83 Déri, 'Feljegyzés munkássasszonyokkal folytatott beszélgetésről'.
- 84 International Labour Organization, *Women Workers in a Changing World*, 6–7, 38.
- 85 Inglot, Szikra, and Raț, *Mothers, Families or Children?*, 157; Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'.
- 86 Maria Dinkowa, 'Die Verbindung der beruflichen Pflichten der Frau mit der Mutterschaft', 1977, DY 34/12196, SAPMOBArch.
- 87 Bock and Thane, 'Editors' Introduction'.

- 88 Cobble, *For the Many*, 388; Popa, 'Translating Equality', 59–62; De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation'.
- 89 Ladislav Abraham, 'Diskussionsbeitrag Nr. 13. 25. Tagung des Generalrats des WBG', n.d., DY 34/11638, SAPMOBArch.
- 90 Cobble, *For the Many*, 388.
- 91 'List of Participants'.
- 92 De Haan, 'The Women's International Democratic Federation'; Donert, 'Whose Utopia?'
- 93 Women's International Democratic Federation, '7th WIDF Congress', 5.
- 94 Abraham, 'Diskussionsbeitrag Nr. 13.'
- 95 See for instance: 'Сводные показатели Всесоюзного общественного смотра условий труда, быта и отдыха трудящихся женщин на предприятиях и в организациях', 1975, f. 2605, op. 8, spr. 9784, TsDAVO; 'Справка о проведении общественного смотра условий труда, быта и отдыха трудящихся женщин на предприятиях Запорожского обкома профсоюза рабочих автомобильного, тракторного и сельскохозяйственного машиностроения', 1978, f. 2605, op. 9, spr. 49, TsDAVO; Vera Ivanovna Sivolob, 'О ходе Всесоюзного общественного смотра условий труда, быта и отдыха трудящихся женщин на предприятиях и в организациях народного хозяйства Украинской ССР', 1978, f. 2605, op. 9, spr. 49, ark. 7, TsDAVO.
- 96 Inna Samarina, interview, ZARAH DB; ZARAH DB, 'Samarina, Inna. Special Record (Person)'.
- 97 For instance, see 'Сводные показатели'.
- 98 Abraham, 'Diskussionsbeitrag Nr. 13.'
- 99 'Aufstellung der Delegationen, die an der Durchführung des Internationalen Treffens des Erfahrungsaustausches zum Thema: "Die Rolle der Gewerkschaften bei der Lösung sozialer Probleme werktätiger Frauen" teilgenommen haben', 2–5 June 1975, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch; 'Letter, Larisa Munteanu, Schreiben des Allgemeinen Gewerkschaftsverbandes Rumäniens', 10 January 1975, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch; Kolkowski, 'Bericht über die Studiendelegation aus der VR Rumänien, die vom 17.3.–22.3.75 in der DDR weilte', 26 March 1975, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch.
- 100 Edit Erdei, 'Beitrag von Frau Edith Erdei, Vorsitzende des Nationalrats der ungarischen Frauen. Seminar über die Probleme der arbeitenden Frauen in Europa', 1978, DY 34/12197, SAPMOBArch.
- 101 Erdei, 'Beitrag von Frau Edith Erdei'.
- 102 Dinkowa, 'Die Verbindung'.
- 103 Drahomíra Hanzalová, 'Vortrag für das Seminar in Budapest', 1974, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch.
- 104 Hanzalová, 'Vortrag für das Seminar in Budapest'.
- 105 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: 64th Session 1978; Employment of Women*, 41.
- 106 Cobble, *For the Many*, 363.
- 107 'Letter, Mrs Somoskői to the Central Women's Committee of SZOT', 15 August 1973, (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1973, box 1, folder 5, PIL.
- 108 '1973. szeptember 18–19.-én tartott "A munkavállalás és az anyai hivatás egyztetésének időszerű kérdései" c. konferencia II. sz. szekciójának vitájáról', minutes, n.d. [18–19 September 1973], (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT, archival unit 19, 1973, box 1, folder 5, PIL.
- 109 '1973. szeptember 18–19.-én tartott'.
- 110 'Arbeitspapier für Kommission II', 12–13.
- 111 'Arbeitspapier für Kommission IV des Weltkongresses im Internationalen Jahr der Frau', 1975, DY 34/11723, SAPMOBArch.
- 112 'Charta der ökonomischen, sozialen, kulturellen und gewerkschaftlichen Rechte der werktätigen Frauen [WFTU]', 1979, DY 34/12639, SAPMOBArch.
- 113 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Sixty-Fourth Session 1978*, 1/12–1/13.
- 114 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: 64th Session 1978; Employment of Women*, 53.
- 115 International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: 64th Session 1978; Employment of Women*, 54.
- 116 'At the Workplace', 55–56.

Towards new global histories of gendered labour activism: a concluding essay

Gendering global historiographies of labour activism

In writing this book, we set for ourselves the task of excavating and connecting the century-long history of many clusters and types of women's labour activism in our region of focus. This concluding essay surveys the findings of this volume and links them to the overarching questions that have guided our research. In light of our study of women's labour activism in a long-term and inclusive perspective, we reflect on women's contribution to gendered labour politics in the region and internationally and present some further lines of inquiry emerging from the research process. In dialogue with the evolving scholarship (including studies published by individual co-authors of this collaborative monograph and our ongoing research), we consider why and indeed how this collaborative monograph moves beyond established concepts, categories, frameworks and narratives in global labour and gender history.

Women's labour activist agendas, repertoires and organizational forms have been at the core of our research. We studied them against the backdrop of the region's specific socioeconomic and political developments between the late nineteenth and the late twentieth centuries. The politics of scale, from the local to international levels, was a key preoccupation. We aimed to understand how women's labour activism in our region of focus was part of and apart from activism in other parts of the world over this century-long period. The Vocabulary of concepts and terminology we built, provided at the beginning of this book, helped us to address and overcome male and western biases when conducting our research.

During his visit to Bulgaria in 1930, Albert Thomas, Director of the International Labour Office, a highest-level expert who commanded respect everywhere for his considered and diplomatic attitude, spoke about Eastern Europe as ‘Europe B’.¹ Historically, dominant regionalizing discourses placed our region of focus outside the “western world”, and the region was also marginalized within European historiography, which foregrounded the Western European experience. Combining two elements of innovation, this collaborative monograph contributes to overcoming the epistemic effects of long-term geopolitical inequalities. Construing a region of focus larger than Eastern Europe and studying this region from a transnational and indeed global perspective, the volume breaks with the tendency to look at Eastern Europe in isolation and consider it something ‘special’. Moving to centre stage the gendered history of the “other” Europe, or ‘Europe B’, in European and global history, the volume contributes to developing conceptual tools of studying labour activism that replace unspoken priorities with a balanced and inclusive view.

In what follows, we first lay out overarching key findings of this book and discuss how the accumulated knowledge sustaining these findings contributes to the global historiographies of labour activism and women’s movements. We then provide a chronological overview of how the politics of women’s work, the agendas of labour and social movements, and women’s related activism evolved and diversified throughout the twentieth century in the region of focus and internationally. Highlighting key trends, we point to the cycles and major tendencies characterizing women’s labour activism and to its agendas, repertoires and organizational settings. As the volume sets the stage for new histories of women’s labour activism, by way of concluding we reflect on potential directions for future research, encouraging further investigation on some emerging themes.

A century of women’s labour activism: overarching key findings

Across the period researched, women labour activists who were vocal in promoting the improvement of women’s position in the economy and society had precise understandings of the gendered and complex character of labour issues, in the specific economic and social circumstances in which they operated. Although often transnationally linked, Eastern European women labour activists were not mere receivers of knowledge

produced by better-known activists in the western world, nor were they simply the “pawns” of globally dominant actors or organizations or of (usually more feted) men activists around them. Women labour activists from the region of focus pursued agendas that were in line with the demands of women workers elsewhere and engaged with region-specific concerns and complexities. Neither of these preoccupations has been very visible so far in global labour history. In this section, we first discuss the remarkable continuity of certain agendas of women’s labour activism across decades, varied organizational structures and shifting political contexts. Then, we address from a multiscalar perspective women’s engagement in both formal and informal networks across local, national and international scales, as well as their work within trade unions, political parties and co-operative movements, highlighting their activism’s persistence across borders and organizational structures. Finally, we discuss how power relations and institutionalized power shaped women’s labour activism, arguing that a focus on power on micro and macro levels helps conceptualize labour activism in global perspective.

Persisting struggles and agendas in women’s labour activism

Many demands and kinds of struggle persisted over decades in women’s labour activism even as the actors involved were not always, or not fully, aware of the continuities across different cycles of activism. In the region, women organized in trade unions, women’s organizations and other social movements of various political leanings. Everywhere, the women activists stood out as skilled, strategic definers of women’s labour-related demands. They often had long-term outlooks and just as long-lasting yet only partially successful – and sometimes unsuccessful – struggles. Regarded in retrospect, the consistency of some of their agendas, in a region seemingly defined by strong historical shifts, constitutes one of the volume’s key findings. Five women’s labour themes emerge as politically tenacious: the struggle for wage justice (discussed in long-term perspective in [chapter 2](#), and thus omitted here), the equal right to work, the tension between unpaid care work and paid work, the pursuit of labour-related demands beyond the workplace (in the realm of the everyday, in relation to welfare and consumption), and knowledge production aimed at raising demands and policymaking. Our findings about these durable issues are highly relevant for the broader fields of global labour and gender history.

Access to paid employment outside the home was one of the consistently thematized issues in women’s labour activism. In the early decades

covered in this book, activists fought against legal frameworks that forbade women from entering certain professions or made it especially hard for them to access vocational training (chapter 4, chapter 5). In the interwar period, in times of economic depression and under right-wing authoritarian and fascist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the paid employment of some groups of women, most often the public sector employment of married women, came under pressure (chapter 2, chapter 4). It is at this point that a terminology closely related to what was recognized as the ‘right to work’ in the post-World War II international system² emerged among women labour activists. From the 1970s onwards, in capitalist countries especially, women labour activists struggled against precarious jobs, (disadvantageous forms of) part-time employment and the adverse effects of new technologies (chapter 2, chapter 5). In light of such findings, we can see how the currently established notion of women’s equal right to work is the result of a long-term demand and vision about women’s capacity to support themselves and their families and communities, and their desire to engage in meaningful, gainful employment, in good conditions. Women labour activists from this region were among the key actors in the construction of this notion globally.

A second persistent theme running through labour women’s writings, rallying and policymaking was the question of how to reconcile working women’s multiple roles in different life realms, rooted in the tension between paid and unpaid labour many women experienced. From at least the late nineteenth century, activists in the region identified work in the household – what we call today unpaid reproductive labour – as one major reason for women’s disadvantaged position in the world of paid work. Distinctions between paid and unpaid work and family responsibilities were inscribed in legal frameworks and institutionalized with a distinct gender bias. The model of standard full-time, long-term employment relations was built on the assumption that workers were free to dedicate a fixed period of time exclusively to the employer, unencumbered by housework and care work that was to be carried out elsewhere and by somebody else.³ This tension between paid and unpaid labour reflected the structural issue of the gendered division of labour in all realms of society and remained a fundamental challenge throughout the period covered in this book.

In western feminist historiography, the full-scale problematization, or “politicization”, of this tension is often attributed to post-1968 movements such as the Italian autonomist ‘Wages for Housework’ campaign (chapter 3). Complementing research addressing the absence

of women's activism that focused on working-class women's labour issues from the history of American and global feminism,⁴ we show that women labour activists in the region in the 1920s at the latest had a precise language and specific demands for easing this tension. Using terms such as the 'double burden', the 'third shift' and the 'triple workload' (chapter 4, chapter 5, Figure 16, Figure 23), which reflected women's simultaneous engagement in wage labour, unpaid household work and social activism, women labour activists from the interwar period onwards took the lead in grasping and challenging the multifaceted exploitation of working women.

One notable finding of our research is that this large issue was present in expected, somewhat unexpected and completely surprising sub-areas of labour activism. As expected, the interrelation between paid and unpaid labour was brought up in the making of policies around maternity and childcare (chapter 10). Less expectedly, it emerged in relation to discussions and demands focused on wage justice, access to education and participation in trade unions (chapter 2, chapter 5). Surprisingly, it profoundly shaped the organization of strike movements (chapter 8). Indeed, managing the tension between paid and unpaid labour and easing the women-specific burdens that emerged therefrom formed a central theme for women engaged in different kinds of labour activism, including those that were present in (state) socialist countries. Women in the co-operative movement successfully overcame the binary understanding of paid and unpaid labour by focusing on the role of the housewife in the family and society. Despite their often-overlooked contribution, co-operative women of different ideological backgrounds acknowledged unpaid labour as a key agenda and addressed it in relation to paid labour through discussing policies on family allowances, extended childcare leave and paid holidays (chapter 1). Overall, the gendered tension between paid and unpaid labour linked the discussions around women's problems at work to those at home and in social movements, resulting in the panoply of activisms we have revealed in this volume. Women activists pushed for a variety of solutions to ease this tension, such as the socialization of housework, the expansion of public childcare facilities, and the invention and development of historically new women-friendly welfare and social protection measures, as well as advocating for increasing men's involvement in household work and child-rearing and ensuring access to abortion and contraception.

In the long view, the interrelation and tension between paid and unpaid work must be reconstructed as one central driving force of women's labour activism. It must be seen as co-shaping the history of

women's labour far beyond the engagement with issues of motherhood and household labour. Inclusive histories of labour activism must move activism addressing this interrelation to centre stage not only because it was central for women as a specific large group of workers, but also because unpaid household and community work was an essential ingredient of the wellbeing of all working people. As long as histories of labour activism do not grant a central role to activism around the tension of paid and unpaid work, they tend to reproduce the still-existing disregard for and denigration of unpaid work and neglect its significant contribution to the practical and intellectual evolution of labour activism and labour movements.

In recent years, global labour historians have not just discovered that marketization and monetization have shaped work in a much more decisive, long-term and all-embracing manner than previously thought. They have also found that these processes 'by no means dominate all human labour relations'.⁵ While many 'alternative ways of organizing work ... have proved to be less successful', there is 'one exception: non-monetary reciprocity of goods and services within the household, kin groups, and similar small-scale social entities. This organizational type has always coexisted in a most intimate way with distribution via markets and it continues to do so.' In a next step, this insight about labour relations should translate, as Jan Lucassen has put it, into the recognition that we also need to enlarge our understanding of working peoples' collective action as rooted in and addressing 'a much wider field of evidence'. This book provides both conceptual tools for translating the insight about the perseverant and ubiquitous presence of non-monetary labour into concrete historical research and ample evidence of novel findings about the history of labour activism that emerge during this process. The women labour activists studied in this book developed a strong focus on issues related to unpaid labour not simply because it was there, but because they were confronted with the perseverance of non-monetary forms of labour and their close connection with monetized work, in a deeply gendered manner.

Taking seriously this newly articulated research direction for global history will foster systematic engagement with the relationship between labour activism and all the varieties of coercion in the history of labour relations in the modern world. This is because non-monetary household, care and community labour has been attached to and intimately connected with all types of monetized and commodified labour and thus with the varieties of coercion attached to them. Placing unpaid labour, in its interaction with all types of monetized labour, at the centre of global

labour and social movement history also helps us to critically revisit core notions of these fields, including ‘proletarianization’ and ‘wage labour’. In our region of focus, with the enduring predominance of agricultural production, material scarcity and experience with rapid catch-up industrialization and statist political systems, the interrelation and tension between gendered unpaid and monetized work may have been more to the forefront of activism and politics as compared to some “developed” western regions, including scarcity management skills that certainly travelled with activists beyond the ruptures between different political systems.

Thirdly, women labour activists from our region have continuously made demands related to their wellbeing beyond the workplace. Of course, the astonishing range of women’s labour activisms – from “classical” actions such as strikes, issue-based campaigns and policymaking to very ‘unusual’ ones – has to do with their emergence at the intersection of paid and unpaid labour, as discussed above. It is one of the most remarkable findings of this book that, over the course of the century, activisms beyond the workplace, such as those pertaining to consumption-related or welfare agendas or community-based and everyday-focused repertoires, have been as frequent as “classical” labour action in the lives of many women (Figure 7, Figure 9). By using the term ‘everyday activism’ we accentuate this range of activisms, which draw from women’s roles in societies and address the issues connected with taking care of themselves, their families and communities (chapter 8).

Finally, a fourth theme of persistent engagement for women labour activists was knowledge production aimed at policymaking carried out by women as researchers, inspectors, and other state and trade union functionaries (chapter 5, chapter 8, chapter 9, chapter 10). Since the end of the nineteenth century, and increasingly in the second half of the twentieth century, the collection of data on the everyday lives of women workers – often using social science methods that allowed the knowledge-producing activists to voice their expertise – was an important component of labour activism, because knowledge on women’s concrete living and working substantiated activists’ labour-related demands. In statist regimes and in the international arena, as the latter expanded and became more important for the global shaping of the politics of women’s work from the interwar period onwards, women turned to systematic and complex knowledge production as an important element of their repertoires of action, using these data to ground their demands for policy change. Such policymaking addressed a wide range of topics,

including women's access to vocational training and education, the protection of women workers in different professions and with different citizenship and civil statuses, welfare provision for working mothers, and the standardization of working hours and wage groups in collective agreements, to name but a few.

Taken together, our overarching key findings on persisting agendas and repertoires of women's labour activism challenge the inherited paradigm in the global history of labour activism that women were less committed to or interested in labour struggles than men. This problematizes larger arguments around workers' interest in and commitment to joining labour struggles, especially when they belonged to socially disadvantaged groups or were embedded in economically disadvantaged world regions. We show that the main obstacles to working-class women's labour activism were not a lack of interest but issues such as limited time and financial resources, restricted (formal) access to decision-making power, lack of support from men and the marginalization of Eastern Europe in the international labour movement. All these factors connected to each other ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 4](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 6](#)). At the same time, each chapter of this book demonstrates that these obstacles, which restricted women's participation in "classical" forms of labour organizing, did not hinder them from engaging, in a perseverant manner and en masse, with the overarching themes of women's labour activism just discussed as well as with others – just that they often did so in a specifically gendered manner. This finding links back to our earlier point about the centrality of women's labour activism for and the cruciality of its full integration in a global labour history that addresses men and women workers' lives simultaneously and on an equal footing. We return to this issue in the concluding section about ways forward and open ends for research.

The diversity and constant recurrence of the agendas and struggles reported in this book and addressed above indicate that, despite waves of improvement and achievement across the region, we are not dealing here with stories of success. This volume shows that main causes of women's labour activism, many of them of a decidedly gendered character, have not been won, and that fundamental problems regarding women's work and the politics of women's work remain unresolved. The permanence of struggles thus points in the first place to the perseverance with which countless women dedicated themselves to labour activism, against all odds and repeatedly acquiescing with or (at best) cautiously negotiating existing power relations.⁶

Re-grounding the transnational: settings, scales and repertoires in a shared history

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, globally and in our region, women labour activists could not find an ideal organizational or political structure for their claims. This led them to inhabit, often uneasily, and more or less lastingly, many kinds of 'political homes'. The decision to bring the history of women's activist choices within the same analytical framework has enabled us to investigate the complexity and consequences of these choices. Women's labour activism unfolded within and beyond the workplace, within the state apparatus and in social movement organizations, in trade unions, political parties and the co-operative movement, in formal as well as informal networks, and across imperial and national borders. Importantly, it took place in both women-only and mixed-gender organizations. We have highlighted in this book women's historically specific reasons to choose or alternate between, or simultaneously adopt, both organizational strategies. Often, these two options were in any case neither clearly separable nor exclusive. An example of such simultaneous engagement is the Austrian social democrat Gabriele Proft (1879–1971) ([chapter 6](#)), whose lifelong political career, regardless of the ruptures caused by austrofascism and National Socialism, combined a leading position in her party with repeated attempts to organize women (workers) separately. She served as a treasurer of a union for home-based women workers – mainly seamstresses and laundresses – and domestic servants (Association of Home-Based and Domestic Workers/Verein der Heim- und Hausarbeiterinnen). Proft was also a key networker of socialist women at the international level.⁷ Similarly, the activist trajectory of Stojanka-Canka Dragneva Jovanović (1873–1905) shows that, as she participated in the founding of the Serbian Social Democratic Party (Srpska socijaldemokratska stranka/Српска социјалдемократска странка, SSDS) in 1903, she simultaneously initiated the first women-only socialist organization in Serbia, the Women Workers' Society 'Consciousness' (Žensko radničko društvo 'Svest'/Женско радничко друштво 'Свест') ([chapter 4](#)).⁸

Women labour activists developed historically specific strategies to overcome their multifaceted marginalization, oftentimes tapping into formal and informal ways of organizing that coexisted and co-constituted each other. The 'hidden part of activist work' ([chapter 8](#)) constituted a major element of women's activism and provided a key contribution to the success of formal activisms (strikes, agitation work). From the late nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth, working(-class)

women were excluded from or marginalized in formal politics in much of the region. They could not elect or be elected as easily as men, and labour movements were often not, or not consistently, interested in women's political contributions. Tensions and conflicts that surrounded women's efforts within these movements are typically obscured in the mainstream and official movement histories and are often addressed only in the narratives authored by women themselves, such as in the cases of Hanna Sturm's (1891–1984) ([chapter 7](#)) and Zehra Kosova's (1910–2001) ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 3](#)) memoirs. At the same time, many working(-class) women saw their class and gender identities as co-defined by the work of providing for families and ensuring communities' wellbeing – a kind of labour that was often construed by societal norms as natural and even joyful for women yet was unenjoyable, strenuous and exploitative as often as paid work was. These factors contributed to orienting women towards less formalized, more locally grounded forms of activism. Nevertheless, such local, hidden activism was by no means far from the centre of events: families in Bucharest looked after the children of striking workers in Romania in 1919, dozens of Bulgarian women collected and distributed financial aid in a 1929 strike in Plovdiv, and communist women in interwar Czechoslovakia were arrested for distributing leaflets clandestinely ([chapter 8](#)).

While women frequently switched between mixed-gender and women-only organizing, many activists also held multiple affiliations in trade union, party and co-operative organizations ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 2](#), [chapter 3](#), [chapter 4](#)). These multiple affiliations fostered networks within and outside labour organizations and reflected the possibilities and limits of cross-class partnership between women. Women who functioned within the state apparatus as researchers, inspectors or policymakers – across political systems – were frequently either part of or closely collaborated with these movement networks ([chapter 3](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 9](#), [chapter 10](#)). Organizations served as vehicles that facilitated the travel of agendas and repertoires within and across different scales, in both figurative and literal senses. This was a case of communist and social democratic efforts to ease women's care duties at the grassroots level finding their way into the forums of Cold War transnational labour politics ([chapter 10](#)).

A key contribution of our multiscalar study of women's labour activism to global (gendered) labour history consists in highlighting both the cross-scale co-construction and the lack of mutual influence of activist agendas, forms of organizing and repertoires. Throughout the period discussed in this book, women's labour activism was simultaneously

present on local, national, regional and international scales and at the shopfloor level across the region, and all agendas were addressed at more than a single scale. Activists pushed for cultural, legal and institutional change on issues such as education, maternity benefits, wage justice, and labour and social protection of migrant workers via state and international structures, as well as trade unions, women's organizations and other social movement organizations ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 6](#), [chapter 10](#)).

The complexity of the relationship between different levels of activism calls for the careful empirical study of each case. Sometimes activists launched concerted action across scales and successfully contributed to promoting long-term demands such as equal pay ([chapter 2](#)). Yet often we also find a disconnect or dissonance between the scales. For example, in the 1950s, the (re-)entry of women with family responsibilities into the labour market and the demand for vocational (re)training for older women became agenda items for both the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the Women's Committee of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) – communist-aligned and social democratic (respectively) international federations competing politically on the international scale. The WFTU advocated for education during working hours, which reflected both its strong workerist stance (that is, its politics of emphasizing the importance of the working class and its interests) and its attention to the fact that many young women globally, including in Eastern Europe and in left-oriented developing countries, started their lives as workers straight after compulsory education. The WFTU supported this model even as trade unions in Eastern Europe affiliated with the organization were reporting that many women, if they wanted additional training, had to attend evening and weekend courses, and on-the-job training remained a desired rather than achieved goal.⁹ By contrast, the ICFTU Women's Committee found evening and weekend courses useful for women workers to acquire new skills and came to include paid educational leave in its agenda only in the 1980s, when the International Labour Organization (ILO) started discussing the matter seriously.¹⁰ Still, in some national contexts the demands for paid educational leave were voiced in the early 1970s. This was the case in Austria, where the women's department of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund) was closely involved with the work of ICFTU women activists.

The vast and quickly growing research on the history of internationalism in the twentieth century has yet to fully move women's

labour internationalism from the margins to the centre. This is true both in general¹¹ and regarding the region studied in this book. The scant discussion of women's international networks that have focused on labour-related agendas continues to reproduce, within the historiography, the marginalization of working(-class) women's actions and agendas in the respective historical international movements. Now, as the somewhat naive early enchantment with the transnational turn is gone, historians call for and engage in a re-grounding of transnational histories 'in local, national, regional or otherwise bounded contexts'.¹² This book demonstrates that it is within these bounded transnational contexts (see [introductory chapter](#)) that women labour activists and their shared history become visible.

In their transnational labour activism, women from the region undoubtedly encountered massive (gendered) international inequalities¹³ in terms of intra-European socioeconomic and political difference and with respect to the geopolitics that characterized the organizations and political networks to which they belonged. They experienced language and material barriers and ignorance about and lack of interest in the conditions under which they acted in their home countries before but also during¹⁴ the Cold War period. Global communist-aligned organizations were subject to adverse geopolitics, including the anti-communism of western-dominated social democratic movement internationalisms as well as dominant state internationalisms ([chapter 3](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 10](#)). Re-grounding the international and transnational history of labour activism with a focus on the European periphery and semi-periphery and other non-core regions is an indispensable move for making global labour history more inclusive. This book has demonstrated the centrality of international inequality and its gendered consequences for labour activism. This finding calls for turning global inequality into a key concern of the history of transnational labour movements and politics.

Women labour activists in the region responded creatively to the geopolitics that disadvantaged them within and beyond their own international organizational and movement contexts. For instance, interwar Eastern European women social democrats emphasized the value of international committees and networks for their success in domestic politics. At the same time, they were often very explicit about the limited resources at their disposal for activism ([chapter 4](#), [Figure 13](#)). International developments helped women from the region to legitimize local struggles, but women activists also encountered many barriers when it came to adopting these international advancements into national legal frameworks and implementing them on the ground. Cross-regional

activism was important when formulating region-specific demands from the 1920s onwards, creating transnational links that sometimes persisted beyond the Cold War divide. The exchanges between Austrian and Hungarian trade unionists from the 1980s onwards, highlighted at the beginning of this book (see also [chapter 5](#)), are examples of such continuing links.

Across the region of focus, activists remained dedicated – whether or not they experienced geopolitically disadvantageous transnational and international constellations – to tangible action on the ground, including the translation of larger agendas into concrete policies that we refer to as the ‘politics of practice’ ([chapter 10](#)). Women diligently worked in local contexts, often over decades of their activist lives, and elaborated highly specific, locally bounded repertoires of action and organizing. These efforts have repeatedly been belittled or described (sometimes rightly) as ‘powerless’ engagement with fellow workers and members of their communities.¹⁵ Yet this politics of practice was more than women’s dedication to taking “small” issues seriously.

The grassroots politics of practice included engagement with the (apparently) individual needs of others, development of individualized solutions for the concrete problems women workers faced on the shopfloor, and addressing the needs of the most downtrodden retired colleagues, men and women alike, but also the meticulous study of innovations in childcare policies implemented on the ground and persistent attention to the unresolved problems working mothers faced. This gendered type of activism fulfilled an important role in improving the condition of working women and men even when it was not aimed at fundamentally challenging the existing power relations. As Éva Laczkó (1942–), the managing secretary of one enterprise-level trade union committee in eastern Hungary in the 1970s, explained, ‘these were almost natural tasks for women ... one reason why women worked more in these kinds of areas was that it was not physical but rather mental work’. Laczkó described visiting sick men and women colleagues as ‘a very womanlike thing’ and concluded that as ‘a woman holding the position of the managing secretary’ of the trade union committee, she accomplished many things that ‘a man could not have done’.¹⁶

Such continuous grassroots work was crucial for turning formal commitments to women’s labour rights into a lived reality. These efforts preceded and followed many landmark legal innovations, such as the introduction of obligatory childcare facilities in Polish factories in 1924. Despite their essential role in improving women’s situation, they have been under-researched. Legal change and pivotal events such as the

United Nations International Women's Year in 1975 have attracted more attention in the scholarship compared to the tedious but indispensable work of activists that ensured the implementation and adjustment of new regulations or the creation of local frameworks for the improvement of women's working and living conditions throughout the entire period under study here. We have foregrounded these practical efforts across this book.

Women activists confronting and claiming power in movements and institutions

Labour activism is an interaction with power. It challenges material, political and institutional arrangements and claims more power and representation for working people and their interests. Women's labour activism counters the power of employers, more directly or less so, and engages with the power of institutions and the state writ large to improve the life and labour conditions of working women. In a similar way, in pressing its demands, labour activism challenges and re-adjusts hierarchies among specific activists and within broad social movements. Importantly, women's labour activism has historically meant taking on men's power and men-centric conceptions of worth and merit in the world of work, within social movements and in public policymaking. Likewise, in this region, labour activism often entailed dealing with forms of ethnicity-based discrimination and oppression (Figure 14, Figure 22). For a good part of the twentieth century in much of the region, the (state) socialist state was both the main employer and the main arbiter of power relations in the world of work and, to an extent, the world of unpaid work. We argue that understanding how women labour activists acted within a web of power relations in which state institutions and state-related actors had a prominent role is a key task for making sense of the historical experience of the region on which this volume focuses. Consequently, we consider tackling this task an indispensable ingredient for truly global histories of labour activism.

The salience of both gender- and class-related inequalities in working women's lives meant that in this region, as in others, specific labour activists developed in their politics a deft engagement with both classed and gendered disadvantage. Interactions with middle- and upper-class women (including in and through cross-class activism), with men colleagues (in mixed-gender class-based activism) and with community members (in community-based activism) were shaped by these strategic engagements. In developing and presenting agendas and

pursuing activist repertoires, women activists frequently foregrounded either gender or class in rhetoric, even as, most often, they were actually aiming to achieve both goals simultaneously. For instance, in the interwar period, when women trade unionists from the region demanded wage justice they were addressing classed inequalities, because they aimed to raise both women's and men's wages, but also tackling gender inequalities, especially because they exposed the unequal remuneration of women and men. In their turn, radical women who organized in New Left movements in the 1970s and 1980s in the region and elsewhere, argued that understanding women's gender-based oppression enabled a deeper understanding of class oppression ([chapter 3](#)). Fighting for better wages was a core agenda of the labour movement across ideological divides. Women activists across class divides struggled for equal pay ([chapter 2](#)). In this volume, we show how women labour activists sought to and could find more or less stable allies for their wage justice struggles both in the male-dominated labour movement and in the middle class-dominated feminist movement.

'Interlocking' forms of social inequality mattered in women's labour activism,¹⁷ even as activists often sought to transcend perceived differences and represent everyone. Thus, while trade union women of different political and ideological affiliations worked towards organizing women working in all types of occupations in great numbers ([chapter 2](#)), migrant and minoritized women in our region struggled to be recognized as equal members of some of these trade unions ([Figure 26](#)). In fact, in the face of the double marginalization of migrant and minoritized women workers in the trade union movement, participation in the labour movement itself must be considered an important and long-standing agenda of women's labour activism ([chapter 6](#), [chapter 7](#)). At the same time, ethnicity-based discrimination meant dealing with labour-related power imbalances beyond labour movements. For instance, Jewish activist Puah Rakovsky (1865–1955) aimed to improve girls' and women's access to paid work and elevate women's position in the civic life of Jewish communities and improve their life opportunities. Rakovsky developed a focus on educational work also because entering certain professions allowed women to escape the antisemitic policies of the Russian Empire ([chapter 7](#)).

Very often, and increasingly across the twentieth century, doing women's labour activism meant engaging with state institutions and tackling complex configurations of state power. Across political regimes, women labour activists confronted the resistance and carelessness of those in power towards working women's labour interests. To capture

historical similarities and differences in the fate and fortune of women's labour activism under different political regimes, in this volume we employed a research strategy that denaturalized and critically interrogated the relationship between labour activism and all types of states, including the state socialist and other statist regimes and the liberal capitalist states ([introductory chapter](#)).

Labour historians have shown that the labour movement's interactions with state power are not limited to openly confronting, reforming, taking over or attempting to abolish such power. This is because, we claim, both the character and the function of state power are malleable and changing. Evidently, this variety and change in the character of the state were of crucial influence in shaping labour activists' engagement with state power. Based on our findings in this volume, we suggest that, in the long historical view, the expansion of state functions increased the costs and negative side effects for the 'daily life' of the working population of a revolutionary politics of overthrowing an existing social system.¹⁸ The extent to which the state genuinely adopted a workerist agenda also had an impact on how activists approached the state.¹⁹

That the configuration of state power systematically informed activist repertoires is also evidenced by the significance of knowledge production in women's labour activism, discussed above. In the region, from the interwar to the state socialist period, women labour experts worked within the state apparatus. Such activism 'within the state apparatus' was thus present across various political systems and regimes. In interwar Poland, women labour inspectors not only performed factory visits that were part and parcel of their professional duties, but also conducted research and surveys among women workers to shed light on the hurdles women faced in access to professional education and better labour conditions.²⁰

Women trade unionists' engagement with state power was complex and context-dependent. The inclusive perspective on groups of workers and types of states adopted in this volume allowed us to see that the record of women's trade unionist activism was a mixed one, in all systems and regimes. In (state) socialist contexts, women trade union functionaries enforced the burdensome, gendered contribution of women workers to the economic catch-up project to which they subscribed politically. Still, they also critically addressed gendered imbalances and discrimination in state labour politics. The relationships between women activists and (state) socialist self-defined workers' states are examined in detail in this book. Individual women activists in (state)

socialist contexts had divergent visions of how their agenda and their struggles aimed to transform or overcome the workers' state. Their views and critiques, some of which were explicit while others more implicit, also changed over time. The record of labour movement-based women trade unionists in post-World War II Austria was also mixed. They represented the concerns, for instance, of women labour migrants vis-à-vis the state in a manner that was hesitant at best and hostile at worst. They often supported the politics of the labour movement and various governments aimed at 'protecting' native-born workers, which made migrants hyper-vulnerable in the world of labour.²¹

When we approach these evolving and diverse relationships between women labour activists and institutions as well as social movements critically, we can analyse together the desired or lived autonomy of women activists vis-à-vis, and their silent or explicit political alignments with, each of the political regimes studied, including the (state) socialist workers' state, the Austrian corporatist and at times social democratic state, the Turkish Kemalist state, western liberal democracies and other political regimes.

The approach driving this volume helps us to reconsider the relationship between women's activism and power in other ways too. In present-day scholarship on the history of women's politics, the period following de-Stalinization has been discussed in terms of a gender 'backlash', brought about by a definite shift away from the radicalism to be found in communist-aligned women's mass organizations and the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in the early period, to the 1950s.²² By contrast, several chapters in this volume discuss how politics and activism on behalf of working women in (state) socialist contexts could continue to flourish in mixed-gender trade unions as much as in women-only mass organizations ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 10](#)). This is because women's activism was confronted with both power and powerlessness, within (state) socialist women-only mass organizations and mixed-gender communist-aligned trade unions alike. The WIDF certainly saw itself as a promoter of working women's interests (and of housewives, in the case of affiliated organizations including those of Austria and Turkey; see [chapter 3](#)). Yet in (state) socialist countries, women's mass organizations affiliated with the WIDF were aligned, just like mixed-gender trade unions, with the self-defined workers' state which claimed to prioritize class-based interests of the majority populations.

In addition, however differently gender historians may judge the reality of (state) socialist claims to fully express workers' interests, they

will certainly agree that such states were masculinist ones, and powerfully so, privileging men workers over women workers. In addition, the self-defined workers' states were interested to a limited degree at best (some would certainly use stronger terms) in challenging male prerogative in the private sphere and the unequal gendered division of unpaid work. Both women's mass organizations and the trade unions were confronted with limits regarding the degree to which specific policies and agendas related to working women's labour interests could be pursued successfully against state and men's power.

Considering our findings in this volume, we believe that a full analysis of the representation of working women's interests in (state) socialist countries must take into account three frequent, strongly related types of challenges women labour activists faced in these contexts. First, women labour activists' political room for manoeuvre was limited in both women-only mass organizations and mixed-gender trade unions. This meant they could not always successfully pursue working women's interests (as they construed them). Secondly, the mixed-gender composition of (state) socialist trade unions meant that agendas linked to women's labour could be prioritized within these institutions only with difficulty and could not always be pushed into the realm of government-level policymaking. Thirdly, as mentioned above, in pursuing these interests, women activists were confronted with the power of masculinist interests shaping the politics of trade unions, institutions and the experience of everyday life for women. This repeatedly translated into party, state and trade union leaderships' lack of commitment to and direct obstruction of women labour activists' agendas and demands. Political carelessness regarding, and obstruction of the work of those who aimed to represent, working women's labour interests took many forms: the belittling and recurrent ignorance of women activists' and functionaries' agendas, abrupt switches of responsibilities between trade unions and women's mass organizations, and top level-induced changes of direction which could disrupt promising avenues of activism.

Drawing on our findings here, we propose that the global history of labour activism must leave behind narrow conceptions of the "classical" labour or social movement positioned vis-à-vis or in opposition to the state as the bearer of labour activism aimed at improving the position of the working population. Instead, it must include all forms of activist engagement with, within and against the state – carefully contextualizing the activist agency of the historical actors studied in each case. Furthermore, we propose that an analysis and evaluation of the successes

and failures of women labour activists must therefore carefully consider how labour activist demands were articulated in relation to trade unions, women's mass organizations and other institutions of the (state) socialist state as well as in relation to the overarching tendency – shared with liberal states, it must be emphasized – of prioritizing men's gender interests.

Major developments since the late nineteenth century

During the century-long period examined in this book, our region of focus underwent profound and disruptive political changes. These included the dissolution of empires, two world wars and other regional military conflicts, the emergence and re-constitution of several nation-states, and the rise and fall of liberal, right-wing and single-party authoritarian, fascist and National Socialist, (state) socialist and other statist regimes. The long view on women's labour activism in the region, from pre-World War I struggles in agrarian-dominated regions to struggles evolving around rapid industrialization in the Cold War era, brings to the fore the variety of activist repertoires, agendas and strategies women adopted under these cross-regional turbulent changes in different periods.

Exploring the formation of key trends in the politics of women's work within the region, transregionally and internationally, this book has shown that working women's long-term agendas and various interests that lasted throughout the twentieth century had already emerged before World War I. Meanwhile, the transition periods, such as from war to peace, and from empires to nation-states, were marked by gendered experiences that both enabled and limited women's activism in the region ([Map 1](#), [Map 2](#), [Map 3](#), [Map 4](#)). Regardless of its setbacks, the early interwar period truly transformed the politics of women's work and impacted on women labour activists' struggles in the following decades. The post-1945 transition and change of regimes in the countries of the region, the expansion of the international system and the growing political leverage of its actors opened or renewed spaces for women's labour activism.

Against all barriers: working women's organizing before World War I

In the period leading up to World War I, with the advancement of the second industrial revolution, the region of focus went through major economic transformations while remaining predominantly agrarian in

character. Peasants were liberated from serfdom, and land redistribution took place after the 1848–9 revolutions in Central Europe; with the ongoing transformation to capitalist agriculture across the region, the increasingly unequal distribution of land became a major source of social tension. In some lands a growing number of landless and smallholder peasant men and women entered wage labour as agrarian servants and day labourers; in others the tendency was more towards narrowly circumscribed modes of subsistence on dwarf properties or in communal settings. Agrarian women labour activists who engaged in socialist ([chapter 4](#)) and anarchist ([chapter 3](#), [Figure 2](#)) movements in the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian Empires, organizing from the late nineteenth century, were the earliest to highlight the poor remuneration and inhumane treatment of agrarian labourers as well as the specific position of agrarian women who performed both wage and reproductive labour and the ensuing problems, such as the lack of childcare while mothers were performing paid work.²³

Our region of focus was typically multiethnic and multicultural, which left a lasting impact on the evolution of workers' movements both nationally and internationally. Ethnic tensions and power politics increasingly spurred the German-led workers' movements to split into separatist national party organizations in the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, which impacted the ways in which activists pursued women's interests in mixed-gender movements. However, women labour activists often searched for ways to bridge the gap between ethnically divided workers' movements in terms of agendas and repertoires. While calls for cross-ethnic solidarity from the German-Austrian or Hungarian non-minoritized ethnic groups could go hand in hand with their continued dominance, the internationalist orientation of the social democratic movement motivated women activists to engage in organizing and action that aimed to bridge ethnic, racial and religious differences. Minoritized women expanded their labour-related agendas to include claims that went beyond class- and gender-based issues ([chapter 7](#)).

The socialist Second International (SI, also Socialist International) and its women's branch – the latter held separate women's conferences in 1907 and 1910 – struggled with how to incorporate the labour movements of Eastern Europe, segments of which were nationally separatist. Under the left-wing leadership of Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), the women's branch initially pursued a restrictive politics regarding the representational modalities of Eastern European stateless nations; Zetkin collaborated closely with Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), who opposed the more “nationalist” Polish-speaking socialist organizations.

Yet, in the run-up to the second international conference of socialist women in 1910, Polish-speaking women's organizations from Galicia ([Map 1](#)) and Austrian Silesia took the initiative of sending reports about their activities to the SI's women's leadership, with the result that representation for (certain) Polish women's organizations from Galicia was granted in the women's branch of the SI from 1910 onwards. Taken together, though, the leadership of the women's branch of the SI pursued a geopolitics that resulted in the standing of non-western lands, including Eastern Europe, as compared to the SI being reduced.²⁴

In the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy, women workers were excluded by law from political parties and political organizations, while professional associations and trade unions often excluded women from their ranks by choice. The ambivalent stance of men-only trade unions towards women slowly started to change when the number of women workers became too considerable to be ignored. In their early attempts to organize working-class women, women labour activists had to grapple with the fact that socialist organizations treated the 'woman question' and gender-related issues as secondary to class issues. Women workers developed special organizational strategies and women-specific platforms of action within, or closely allied with, the mixed-gender organizations first in their own national context and later transnationally to address class and gender agendas. They insisted, often against men comrades' lack of interest or overt opposition, that socialist politics had to recognize that women faced distinct challenges in the world of paid and unpaid work. They devoted particular attention to the issue of women's right to gainful employment and easing women's caring duties ([chapter 4](#)). They also demanded access to more systematic vocational training – an issue that remained on women activists' agendas in the twentieth century ([chapter 5](#)). In this early period, in some political parties and trade unions in the region, there was strong opposition to women's employment, especially when it concerned married women ([chapter 2](#)). In the field of unpaid work, women labour activists focused on motherhood and housework. They conceptualized mothering as undervalued work, and were invested in recognizing, valuing and easing women's care labour within families ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 4](#), [chapter 8](#)). Motherhood and household work served as two crucial points of reference in shaping the overall agenda of women's labour activism in this period.

Gendered protective labour legislation was initially linked to and legislated together with child labour legislation. Many women labour activists from the region supported various elements of gendered

protective labour legislation, some opposed many of these elements, and they were all united, across political divides, in demanding women's equal right to paid work (chapter 2). Middle-class women's associations and socialist women's groups competed over how to define and address the labour interests of specifically marginalized groups of women workers, including domestic servants and women with no (recognized) skills, and to create opportunities for them to engage in gainful employment. Working-class and middle-class women's groups both envisioned that domestic workers would strengthen their own self-awareness and personal development, but they differed significantly on what this "transformed" identity should entail (chapter 9, Figure 4).

In the world of wage work: women's activism between the world wars

As large numbers of women entered the waged labour force during World War I, their participation in trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe also surged. However, as conscripted men returned from the war, and as the wave of revolutions, upheavals and strikes at the end of the war and its aftermath subsided, the percentage of women among trade union membership shrank (chapter 2). Overall, in the interwar period, despite membership fluctuations, women workers' rank-and-file presence in trade unions increased both in absolute numbers and as a percentage of the total membership (Table 2); they became, to a degree, more visible as functionaries too. Communists, social democrats, moderates and conservatives alike sought to organize women as part of their competing efforts to win influence over the working class, yet they consistently failed to achieve this goal to the degree they desired (chapter 2, chapter 3, chapter 4). The gap between the discourses about the necessity to organize and unionize women, on the one hand, and enduring hurdles to organizing that were manifest in practice, on the other, persisted in the post-World War II period and narrowed only very gradually over time.

A more stable network of women labour internationalists – who were a rather circumscribed group – from the region took shape early in the interwar period (Table 6). The postwar aspirations to maintain peace through the promotion of social justice culminated in the creation of wider international co-operation fostered by the ILO with the goal of advancing the labour rights of women workers. Select women activists eagerly participated in international initiatives across the region and globally through mixed-gender and women-only structures (Table 5,

Figure 13). At the 1919 International Conference of Working Women in Washington, DC, activists from the region did not shy away from voicing their demands. Feliksa Konopska (1887–1975) from Poland, evoking the notorious example of multi-shift work in the textile industry – where workers had only minimal breaks between the shifts which left women with no time to perform housework obligations during the day – called for an extensive ban on women’s night work.²⁵ While some interwar labour activists soon became disenchanted with various strands of labour internationalism, others, such as Halina Krahelska (1886–1945) from Poland, co-operated with the ILO and provided information and analysis about women’s labour conditions locally, despite their disagreement with the organization’s political stance.²⁶

More generally, debates around women-specific labour protection as well as women trade unionists’ and feminists’ demand for equal pay gained traction after World War I, running as a red thread throughout women’s labour activism in the interwar period (chapter 2) and creating a roadmap for the developments after World War II when the ILO’s Equal Remuneration Convention C100 was adopted in 1951. Not least under the aegis of the ILO’s international policy templates for women-specific labour policies, maternity protection policies thrived in Central and Eastern Europe: in 1920, for example, Poland introduced paid maternity leave.²⁷ In Austria, in 1921, a general maternity protection regulation was introduced, which also applied to home workers and domestic servants from 1922, but not to women working in agriculture and forestry. The disadvantage of this regulation was that it depended on the consent of the employer.²⁸ Bulgaria implemented the requirements of the 1919 ILO Maternity Protection Convention (C003) into national legislation in 1924 with the Law on Public Insurance (Закон за обществените осигуровки). Falling behind the rest of the region in terms of women’s participation in (formalized) gainful employment and trade unions, Turkey included maternity protection in the 1930 Public Health Law (Umumi Hıfzıssıhha Kanunu) before a Labour Law (1936) was promulgated in the country.²⁹

Struggles to implement and expand labour protection that covered specific phases of women’s reproductive cycle, namely pregnancy and early motherhood, were at the heart of women’s labour activism in the period. While not going against the foundational ‘right to work’ demand, some co-operative activists promoted material benefits – paid directly to mothers – that would make extended childcare leave possible for those women who wanted it (chapter 1). Other social democrats including the Austrian Gertrud(e) Danneberg (1890–1969) demanded a ‘bachelor’s

tax' (Junggesellensteuer) to generate the material means to sustain childcare facilities for single mothers.³⁰ At the same time, 'conscious maternity' and the availability of contraceptives became a key part of many social democratic women's thinking about the needs of working mothers in the period – though not without eugenic undertones or leanings.³¹ The first attempts to guarantee labour protection for international labour migrants from and in the region, and the definition of women as a 'special category' of migrants, also stemmed from the 1920s (chapter 6).

Repertoires and settings of activism also changed during this time, responding to and influenced by the continuity and change in post-imperial nation- and state-building policies. The establishment of new nation-states offered women labour activists across the region possibilities to work within or close to the state apparatus, an opportunity that some managed to seize, advancing their labour-related agendas as researchers (chapter 8) or labour inspectors (chapter 9). In Austria, women were working in institutions close to the state such as the Chamber of Labour; they conducted research and contributed to the making of some important laws in the parliament as well as in regional and municipal administrations. The trend towards the increasing involvement of women in the politics of women's work hitherto carried out by public authorities was interrupted in Austria and internationally by the rise of right-wing authoritarianism and later the coming of World War II. Women's involvement in policymaking in large parts of the region would become much more pronounced in the post-World War II period, especially in (state) socialist countries, where they entered the (lower and mid-level) state apparatus en masse and strove to shape policy-making processes in their capacity as functionaries and experts.

In the interwar period, middle-class women continued to engage in cross-class activism, with education and the protection of women who were considered vulnerable as key areas of engagement, including within the framework of labour inspection or in servants politics (chapter 9). Ideological rivalries and competition between the communist, the social democratic and in some lands the Catholic elements of the labour movement defined the dynamics of organizing women into trade unions, prefiguring the cleavages of the Cold War. Political strife became stronger in the 1930s. After the initial post-revolutionary inclusion of women's rights in state projects and the expanded mobilization of women in social and labour movements, the region saw the rise of right-wing authoritarian regimes in most countries (with the exception of Czechoslovakia and Turkey, where strong

nationalism and Kemalist single-party authoritarianism respectively prevailed). For many activists, especially the radical ones ([chapter 3](#), [chapter 8](#)), this entailed repression and/or necessitated a shift towards more clandestine activist repertoires. The activism of women from minoritized ethnic groups ([chapter 7](#)) suffered particularly dramatic disruption. When looking at social democratic women's organizing, we see that the establishment of right-wing regimes hampered the potential achievements of women activists. The right of certain groups of women to paid employment outside the home, especially when married and employed in the public sector, was questioned by conservative, fascist and right-wing authoritarian regimes from the mid-1930s, prompting transnationally organized social democratic women to argue that antifascism and antimilitarism entailed left-wing movements' support for women's equal right to (meaningful) gainful employment ([chapter 4](#)). After Hitler came to power in Germany, the Austrian social democrat monthly *Woman (Die Frau)* warned that, although women would continue to have to work hard and underpaid in factories and farms under National Socialism, they would be deprived of their rights: 'Women will be held down economically and politically, remain mere subordinates of men and have no opportunity for advancement, for equal rights.'³² From 1934 onwards, through the Popular Front period, women's labour activists, in countries from which they had not already had to flee, went underground or become politically inactive. Faced with rising authoritarianism, some turned to co-operating with organizations with different ideological positions and supporting their worse-affected comrades. Very often, activists from our region had to focus on simply surviving to see the end of fascism and the return of peace.

The age of statist regimes and state internationalisms

During the transition period after World War II, all the countries in our region saw regime change and were confronted with rapid shifts in the international system and state internationalisms. In Austria and Turkey, change was about moving from, respectively, National Socialism and an authoritarian single-party regime towards capitalist democracy. In Eastern European countries, the transition was from wartime devastation to (state) socialism. Statism was the common denominator of Austrian, Turkish and Eastern European political regimes ([introductory chapter](#)), a background that contributed, notwithstanding the Cold War divide, to bringing about similarities regarding some patterns of women's labour

activism. The developmentalist and socially integrative policies that came with statism – and were pursued to varying degrees and with divergent timings in the countries of the region – opened up spaces of labour activism for women in state structures and state-steered social organizations and served as a background for expanding opportunities for women’s participation in policymaking processes. In some cases, this included women belonging to minoritized communities, too. As representatives of Roma in (state) socialist countries, Mária László (1909–89) in Hungary and Elena Lacková (1921–2003) in Czechoslovakia used the opportunities offered by the commitment of the new ‘people’s republics’ to anti-racism and class equality to negotiate, together with Romani men activists, improved employment and living conditions, self-representation and cultural rights for all Roma ([chapter 7](#), [Figure 22](#)). László and Lacková also drew attention to persistent racist practices that hindered employment opportunities for Romani men and women.³³

Whereas in Turkey and Austria (much) labour activism also took place in oppositional, radical left social movements and later in connection to the second wave feminist movement,³⁴ in Eastern Europe the nationwide networks of women in trade unions, women’s mass organizations and the state apparatus operated alongside each other, and women involved in these networks and organizations engaged with seeking gendered labour rights. Across the region, women’s participation and representation in trade unions increased, and their role in trade union education and the development of gender policies advocated by trade unions strengthened. The Cold War period saw a steep increase in women’s unionization and the early rise of a considerable number of them to leadership positions in (state) socialist countries. A similar trend of increasing membership numbers of women and the rise of some women trade unionists to leading positions can be observed for Austria, and to a lesser extent for Turkey, although sexism and androcentrism remained an ongoing issue.³⁵ Finally, in Austria and Turkey, the 1980s were marked by the beginning of the mainstreaming of gender politics in trade unions, in line with other (Western and Northern) European capitalist countries.³⁶ Women activists continually thought of ways to solve the problem of limited time that hindered working women’s participation in trade union work, social activism, education and professional training due to the multiple burdens that wage work and family responsibilities placed on them. Yet, proposals such as relocating union activities to the workplace, scheduling them during work hours and offering temporary childcare failed to yield long-lasting positive outcomes or remained impractical ([chapter 2](#), [chapter 5](#), [chapter 10](#)).

From the late 1940s onwards, the politics of women's work in our region and globally was influenced to different degrees by the western-dominated state internationalism of the UN and, most significantly, the ILO. Again and again, evolving Cold War competition – especially between the communist-aligned WFTU and the western-aligned ICFTU – proved conducive to moving forward women's labour agendas on the international plane. There were also contacts, transfer of knowledge and even collaboration between women aligned with western social democratic labour organizations and their peers identifying with the communist world view, as many of their more down-to-earth agendas around improving women's status in the world of work were not radically different from each other (Figure 24, Figure 30).

In terms of women's paid work, the main focus of women's labour activism in the region during the Cold War decades was on increasing women's inclusion in paid labour, improving their status in the world of work and challenging the pervasive inequalities between working women and men (chapter 2). This orientation meant, in turn, that much of women's activism evolved around the question of how to alleviate the tension between paid and unpaid labour, because women's unequal position in the family and community in general and their family responsibilities in particular constituted a core factor that contributed to their historically disadvantaged position in the labour market (Figure 23). In (state) socialist countries, women labour activists were actively engaged in what we call the 'politics of the working mother' (chapter 10). Public childcare facilities, family allowances, and extended maternity and childcare leave expanded greatly, although problems of capacity and implementation persisted.³⁷ In Austria, working women with small children were encouraged to stay at home thanks to family allowances and comparatively long maternity leave implemented in the 1960s, and there was also an option for some groups of women to stay home with the help of a special unemployment benefit for longer periods of time. The introduction of paid extended childcare leave in many (state) socialist countries from the late 1960s onwards was a sea change of transregional relevance in the politics of women's work. Women trade unionists played a visible role in bringing about and sustaining this change, including through their politics of practice. These activists and functionaries underlined time and again that the policy innovation must not translate into discrimination against women on the labour market (chapter 10).³⁸ Despite a relatively high share of women in the labour force, Austria did not offer state-managed childcare facilities comparable to those of the (state) socialist countries, especially in its rural regions.

In Turkey, alleviating the tension between women's paid and unpaid labour did not become a state agenda, with the exception of limited facilities for mothers and children in state enterprises available since the 1930s.³⁹ There, women's participation in formal employment remained consistently low and women labour activists' capacity to improve the lot of working women limited ([chapter 5](#), [Figure 28](#)).

Activists' engagement with the international politics of women's work reflected their self-positioning in their national contexts, as Central and Eastern European activists' decades-long lobbying for state-centred solutions for childcare and the Austrian trade unionists' opposition to the implementation of part-time work showcase.⁴⁰ Central and Eastern European women were active in international trade unions (the WFTU and the ICFTU, respectively) and platforms of state internationalism such as the ILO ([Table 9](#)). Turkish activists, on the other hand, have rarely participated in or contributed to the international politics of women's work. Delegating the task of reproductive labour solely to families had far-reaching consequences for women. In Turkey, where this politics prevailed, the involvement of women in paid work remained scant and irregular, resulting in low or no income, low or no pensions, and poverty in old age. By contrast, the politics of the 'working mother' implemented in the (state) socialist countries of our region and promoted globally by communist-aligned international organizations put the responsibility of care work more on state institutions ([chapter 8](#), [chapter 10](#)). Yet the masculinist politics of the mass worker⁴¹ as well as sexism and discrimination against women at work and in the family kept most women in (state) socialist countries concentrated in lower-income jobs – a state of things against which women trade unionists relentlessly raised their voices ([chapter 5](#)), as a rule without challenging the larger political and economic framings of the (state) socialist development project.

Starting in the mid- to late 1960s, the persistently unequal position of women in paid work has led women labour activists in the region and internationally to rethink the politics of women's work from a more holistic perspective and identify more systematically the dynamics that kept most women in lower-paid, lower-skilled jobs if not outside employment altogether. Developments at the UN that culminated in the 1975 International Women's Year and the ensuing Women's Decade (1976–85) were both a result of this rethinking and a trigger for governments, trade unions and women's organizations in the region to engage in a new wave of knowledge production, public debate and transnational exchange ([Figure 25](#)). In the late 1970s and the 1980s, national trade unions as well as the ICFTU and the WFTU responded

to these developments by adjusting their policies to facilitate women's struggle for empowerment in trade unions, organizing regional meetings of women labour activists, and collaborating more intensely with the ILO and international branch trade union federations. Collaboration that started in earnest in the 1980s between women trade unionists on the two sides of the Iron Curtain in our region can be considered a result of this period of enhanced and more holistic labour activism (chapter 5). The 1970s and 1980s were the time when more activists began to discuss unpaid labour in a more explicit manner as a labour relation *in itself*. The period also saw more widespread, explicit and sharp critique of men's lack of involvement in housework and care work in many lands in the region (chapter 3, chapter 10). Until then, most women labour activists had – at least in their public statements – emphasized that society should rebalance women's burdens resulting from their 'family responsibilities' (the term in use at the ILO) by replacing certain elements of women's unpaid reproductive work with public or state-supported services and institutions. Nonetheless, except for Austria, Yugoslavia and Turkey, feminist currents that engaged with radical system critique had a limited impact on women's labour activism. Such critiques entailed the vision of women's autonomy from the state and the party, structures which many activists from (state) socialist countries still considered the vanguard, or at least an indispensable precondition, of change that could bring about far-reaching improvements in conditions for working women.

Open ends and ways forward

The wealth of activism shown in the pages of this book cannot and should not conceal the persisting open questions and knowledge gaps, which, in some cases, became obvious to us only as our research progressed. Our excavation enterprise is far from being complete; it has raised numerous directions for further discussion and topics for further research. As a means of closure, we address some of these topics and directions here.

A first topic concerns women activists' dedicated engagement with the politics of practice and seemingly "small things", meaning action aimed at direct support for others in their immediate surroundings or resolving concrete, highly specific problems of a given group of women in an organized manner. When writing inclusive global histories of labour activism, it is necessary to address in a serious manner these elements of women's labour activism, which have often been belittled or ignored

by contemporaries and historians alike. This variety of women's labour activism deserves further study because of its strong long-term presence, the specific meanings women labour activists themselves ascribed to these activisms, their special role in relation to a more inclusive understanding of the politics of scale, and the need to re-ground transnational histories of labour activism ([introductory chapter](#)). Building on this insight, our related findings about women's everyday activisms ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 8](#)), and many other discoveries in this book as well as the by now established knowledge about the highly incomplete historical (and historiographic) record of women's labour activism ([introductory chapter](#)), raise new questions of key relevance for global labour history concerning women's engagement in labour activism. Perhaps the long-held misconception about women's lack of interest in labour action might be replaced with the revolutionary insight that more women than men engaged in a broader arena of activism?

Another question emerging from our excavation is about the exact impact of the scarcity of resources that characterized many lands in the region over long periods of time on women's labour activism in general and left-wing women's labour organizing and activism in particular. Several trends can be established. Women labour activists suffered the consequences of women workers' very low incomes in their countries ([chapter 4](#)). Low wages and their overall more precarious employment (compared even to men from the same social class) meant working women had a more limited capacity to pay membership dues, purchase subscriptions for movement journals, or rent facilities and publish pamphlets to get their organizing going. Restricted finances impeded transnational travel and activism, resulting in limited possibilities to participate in international conferences and meetings with comrades. Women activists, facing additional constraints on their cultural and material opportunities, were affected even more than their men counterparts.⁴²

Further research is needed to establish whether and how labour movements responded to these combined material and gender imbalances. There were certainly options to try to counterbalance women's specific disadvantages, even when resources were scarce, for instance by providing facilities for women's gatherings or other forms of support not directly tied to material resources. Sometimes, however, movement politics could aggravate these gender imbalances, for instance when making decisions about who would be the few comrades who could travel abroad. Fellow activists from larger and slightly better-funded organizations, usually from Central European countries, sought to assist – but they rarely had much to spare.

Before World War II, global inequality (including disadvantageous integration of much of the region in the capitalist world economy), therefore, profoundly impacted women's labour activism from the region. In the short term, it meant not all ambitions and connections could be pursued to further the interests of working women. In the long term, poorer international visibility due to smaller initial funds for international engagement also translated into historiographical invisibility for pre-World War II activists from the region. Significant resources for the material things (press, paid agitators, reimbursed travel) that made large-scale left-wing women's activism happen were available in the region in the interwar period only in a few lands in Central (Eastern) Europe. This changed considerably in the period after 1945 (with the exception of Turkey) – although here too there was significant variation and commitment. In further research, the gendered impacts of material scarcity on the labour activism of women from the region of focus should be investigated in greater detail, paying keen attention to change over time and intra-regional variety, and to the synchronous developments in women-related activism and policymaking beyond the region.

The large theme of how, in the history of women's labour activism in the region of focus, gender and class issues were intertwined with the question of minoritization offers many enticing research paths, few of which have received systematic attention so far. Kurdish women's labour activism in Turkey is a case in point.⁴³ Some scholars have argued that women activists belonging to or self-identifying with communities that were minoritized to various degrees and that had no or limited access to majority infrastructures and institutions tended to construe their activism as being in the service of their entire community in the first place.⁴⁴ How these women addressed, implicitly and explicitly, gendered labour issues within their communities, and what role labour issues played in their activism within and beyond their communities, are exciting topics for future research. As recent work also shows, this could – and should – include considerations of cross-class activist practices and agendas.⁴⁵

The gendered character of efforts aimed at cross-ethnic collaboration in women's labour activism – which could take on historically different meanings for minoritized and non-minoritized women – likewise deserves further study. An important point here is to distinguish between calls for cross-ethnic solidarity and co-operation that came from minoritized or non-minoritized women and organizations, and to explore the different meanings that such policies could have for minoritized and non-minoritized women. Existing scholarship on 'national indifference' suggests that women trade union members and other groups of women

disadvantaged by both their class and gender status could have found it easier to cross ethnic boundaries because, for a long time, they were less invested in the 'national question' as compared to those in leadership positions, including political parties and trade unions.⁴⁶ Other scholars have emphasized the significance of national government policies and party politics, in conjunction with local conditions, in creating or hindering possibilities for cross-ethnic co-operation or conflict. Structural and political forces may have had a more profound impact on the success or failure of bridging ethnic divisions than the individual efforts and agendas of women activists.⁴⁷ In state socialist Hungary, for instance, it was largely the development of the politics concerning Roma, from a shift towards the recognition of Roma as an ethnic minority in the 1950s to their categorization as a 'social stratum' by the end of the decade, that brought Mária László's career to an abrupt end in 1958 and the organization she headed to closure in 1961 (chapter 7). The calls by those scholars who have included ethnicity and race in the study of women's labour activism for a broader conception of feminist politics, one that includes anti-racist concerns and the issues of minoritized working-class women, fully fit the inclusive approach to women's labour activism pursued in this book.

Our book is a first step towards writing a new, inclusive history of women's labour activism in the region of focus and internationally, and the list of further research tasks which have only been touched upon or partially addressed in this volume is long. It includes, for example, investigating women's enduring commitment to activism from the perspective of subjectivities and emotions that have underpinned these efforts. In critical dialogue with the scholarly turn towards affect and emotion, future research can contribute to a more nuanced exploration of the gendered patterns of labour activists' engagement and disengagement.⁴⁸ Gender struggle within the working classes, in and especially beyond the workplace, also comes to the fore as an important topic when thinking in terms of the inclusive and critical perspective on the history of women's labour activism pursued in this book. So far, we know little about key dimensions of these struggles, including the response of working women to sexualized maltreatment and the widespread sexual harassment in the workplace⁴⁹ and at home,⁵⁰ men's denial of equal participation in family and community work, and the related question of gender-equitable relations in working-class communities.

The investigation of women's labour-related expertise constitutes a promising line for future inquiry, too. It would be worthwhile to examine continuities and ruptures between the emergence and activism

of the international experts on women's labour in the interwar period and the development of expertise under (state) socialism and in other statist regimes. Included in the further research tasks are also large portions of the cross-regional, transnational and long-term history of Catholic women's trade unionism and labour activism, large parts of the women's and gender history of the Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern), labour activism under right-wing authoritarian regimes, and the gendered, labour activist dimensions of internationalist collaborations between the region and the Global South, to name but a few. Several better-known topics, such as the history of strike movements, which have received a conspicuous amount of attention in older, labour movement historiography for large parts of the region, must be re-examined.⁵¹ We have not explored in this book the specific role wartime dynamics has played in the transformations and innovations observed in the interwar and the post-1945 period. Scholarship has made progress in addressing these topics from a gendered perspective for some lands of the region, with a focus on the immediate post-World War I years, and in discussing the embeddedness of wartime activism in the pre-war cycles of protest in countries such as Hungary, Austria, Italy and Slovenia.⁵² Although many of those who survived political and racially motivated persecution in the 1930s and 1940s, such as Emmy Freundlich (1878–1948) ([chapter 1](#)), continued their work after World War II, the legacies both of the interruption of networks, careers and political thought and of the loss of lives need further research and critical assessment ([chapter 1](#), [chapter 4](#)). In the long view, women's wartime labour activism, which took place under conditions of often extreme violence, discrimination, repression and occupation in the region of focus, remains understudied.

The many histories of labour activism addressed in this volume showcase the importance of women's 'age and life course phase' in shaping labour relations, engagement with paid labour and consequently women's labour activism itself.⁵³ This has to do with women workers' simultaneous involvement in unpaid work which had a strong gendered impact on their participation in paid work over their life course. A single tobacco worker, a married weaver or a white-collar employee with family responsibilities faced different sets of labour-related issues. This repeatedly translated into specific interests in different sets and sometimes in different directions of demands and, due to their life course-related position and opportunities, women also turned to specific sets of repertoires of labour activism. This insight opens up new avenues of research, building on systematic conceptualizations of the life

course and age as categories of analysis in gender and social movement studies. How did working(-class) women's demands and organizational capacities change based on the various moments in their life course? What were the advantages and disadvantages of being a young and single woman worker, or an older one no longer taking care of children, in terms of labour organizing? How did family responsibilities impact on the vocational and trade union training of women? What role did age play in the nexus of mobility, labour activism and gender?

Last but not least, to develop conceptualizations of labour activism that take into account both men and women, we need to know much more about household economies, how power relations within the household varied over time and place, how labour activists addressed both household economies and power relations, and how these impacted on labour activism. The older scholarship in women's history on the historical rise of separate spheres and on how housework became devalued and dependent on monetized work as industrialization proceeded is relevant here and is underutilized relative to the newer socialist feminist literature on care and reproduction. Thinking about the household as a little factory producing people is not sufficient. Instead of relying on concepts derived from analyses of the market economy and the realm of 'production' to understand the household economy, labour historians need new tools, and they can learn from sociological and other types of studies on inequalities and relationships within households.

Notes

- 1 Albert Thomas, 'Speech in the Royal Theater in Sofia', 25 February 1930, 16, CAT 1-30-1-3, ILOA.
- 2 United Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)', Article 23.
- 3 Conaghan, 'Work, Family, and the Discipline'.
- 4 Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement*.
- 5 Lucassen, 'Workers: New Developments', 45–46, for this and the following quotes.
- 6 Zimmermann, "'It Shall Not Be a Written Gift'".
- 7 Helfert, 'Gabriele Proft'.
- 8 Božinović, *Žensko pitanje u Srbiji*, 82–83.
- 9 Budzynski, 'People's Poland'.
- 10 ICFTU Women's Committee, '2nd Meeting', 14–16 April 1958, ARCH00622, folder 1528, IISH; ICFTU Women's Committee, '48th Meeting', 28–29 September 1983, ARCH00622, folder 1574, IISH.
- 11 For example, in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin's pathbreaking 2017 volume on internationalisms in the twentieth century, women's networks on the political left are mentioned in passing, even though the history of socialist internationalism and women's and feminist internationalisms are covered across three chapters. See Sluga and Clavin, *Internationalisms*.
- 12 Dietze and Naumann, 'Revisiting Transnational Actors', 416; Chamberlin et al., 'AHR History Lab'.

- 13 Ghit, 'Solidarity and Inequality'; Çağatay, 'Women Workers' Education at the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions'; Çağatay, 'Gender and International Labour Education in the 1960s'.
- 14 Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action'.
- 15 In her insightful study on the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik, GDR), Renate Hürtgen describes as mutually constitutive the dual processes of the feminization of the trade union shop steward (Vertrauensmann) on the one hand, and their disempowerment by reducing them to tasks such as generating a friendly working atmosphere on the other. See Hürtgen, *Zwischen Disziplinierung*, esp. 160–93 (quote on 163).
- 16 Laczkó, interview, ZARAH DB; ZARAH DB, 'Laczkó, Éva. Special Record (Person)'.
- 17 Nakano Glenn, 'From Servitude to Service Work'.
- 18 Van der Linden, *The World Wide Web of Work*, 299.
- 19 Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*, 681–87. For one useful, more recent discussion of the relationship between the – somewhat – workerist state socialist state and the working class, see Swain, 'Epilogue'.
- 20 Popova, 'Polish Women Labour Inspectors'.
- 21 Helfert, 'A "Special Category of Women"'.
- 22 Luleva, 'Женският въпрос'; Fidelis, *Women, Communism, and Industrialization*; Jarska, 'Female Breadwinners in State Socialism'.
- 23 Varsa, 'The Women of Viharsarok'; van Os, 'Bursa'da Kadın İşçilerin 1910 Grevi'; Varsa, "'Let Us All Stand'"; Varsa, "'The Rulers Are the Causes of the War'".
- 24 Zimmermann, *GrenzÜberschreitungen*, see chapter 5.2, and esp. 168–69.
- 25 International Congress of Working Women, 'First Convention of International Conference of Working Women', 37–38. Konopska was referred to as 'Kanopska' in the minutes.
- 26 Popova, 'Halina Krahelska'.
- 27 Szelewa, 'Invention–Institutionalization–Implementation'.
- 28 Bolognese-Leuchtenmüller, "'Der Zwang zur Freiwilligkeit'", 181.
- 29 Akgöz, 'Between State Feminism and Work Intensification', 110–11.
- 30 Danneberg, 'Was ist Gleichberechtigung'.
- 31 Lehner, *Verpönte Eingriffe*.
- 32 'Nationalsozialistische Lohnpolitik'. On Austrian social democrats, see also Duma, *Rosa Jochmann*.
- 33 Kóczé, 'Roma Civil Rights Movement'; Majtényi and Varsa, 'Mária László'; Donert, *The Rights of the Roma*. The extent to which Romani women activists engaged with specifically gendered (labour) issues differed across the region, yet research in this regard is in its early stages; see Marushiakova and Popov, 'Roma Women Activism'.
- 34 See also Helfert, 'Radical and Utopian'.
- 35 Blaschke, *Frauen in Gewerkschaften*; Kemperle, interview, ZARAH DB; Akdoğan, interview, ZARAH DB; Erel, interview, ZARAH DB.
- 36 Neunsinger, 'The Unobtainable Magic of Numbers'; Östberg, 'The Swedish Social Democracy'.
- 37 Wagnerová, 'Women as the Object'.
- 38 Zimmermann, 'The Changing Politics'.
- 39 Makal, 'Türkiye'de Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kadın Emeği'.
- 40 Helfert, 'Part-Time Work'.
- 41 Zimmermann, 'Dance around a "Sacred Cow"'.
- 42 See also Ghit, 'The Treacherous Trade Unionist'.
- 43 See Çağlayan, 'Kurdish Women in Turkey's Labor Movements'.
- 44 Kebalo, 'Exploring Continuities and Reconciling Ruptures'; Bohachevsky-Chomiak, *Feminists Despite Themselves*.
- 45 Nithammer and Richter, 'Polish Conductresses'.
- 46 Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries*; Zahra, 'Imagined Noncommunities'.
- 47 Beneš, *Workers and Nationalism*; Nemes and Unowsky, *Sites of European Antisemitism*; Marushiakova and Popov, 'Roma Women Activism'.
- 48 New research includes Zohar, 'Feeling Communists'; Parker, "'My Old Eyes Weep'". In this book, [chapter 6](#) briefly touches upon these questions, and [chapter 9](#) engages with issues of activist subjectivity.
- 49 Koenker, 'Men against Women'; Orleck, "'There Is Not a Factory Today'".
- 50 Andricioaei, "'Some Citizens'".

- 51 Bagdi, 'Beyond Trade Unions', and other new, insightful studies referenced in the [introductory chapter](#) of this volume have begun to engage with this task.
- 52 Helfert, *Frauen, wacht auf!*; Stibbe et al., 'Socialist Women and the Great War'; Rolandi, 'Female Public Employees during a Post-Imperial Transition'; Varsa, "'The Rulers Are the Causes of the War'".
- 53 Ehmer and Lentz, *Life Course, Work, and Labour*, 1.

Tables

For each table, decisions about the content and organization of information were made according to data availability and relevance for our analysis. Some tables cover territories, periods and organizations somewhat unevenly since we have chosen to include (rather than omit) the information at our disposal even when incomplete. More details on some of the activists and organizations mentioned in the tables can be found in the Glossary of select organizations ([Appendix 1](#)), the Glossary of select protagonists ([Appendix 2](#)) and other sections of the book. Abbreviations used in the tables and not contained in the List of abbreviations can be found underneath each table.

Table 1 Connections of Central and Eastern European (and Soviet Union) branches with the ICWG, 1921–1962

ICWG's branch	Year of affiliation	Representatives in the Central Committee ¹	Additional connections and information
Austria	1921/1924	Interwar (probably Amalie) Seidl (member 1921–8) Agnes Kainacher (member 1928–30; 1930) Frau Domaschko (member 1930–7; 1934, 1936) Post-1945 Franziska Krämer (member 1951, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962) Lea Immervoll (probably observer 1951) Elly (also called Elli) Baumgartner (observer 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962)	The Austrian branch was one of the cofounders of the ICWG. Emmy Freundlich (Austrian, born in Bohemia, Cisleithania) was the president of the Preparatory Committee (or International Co-operative Women's Committee) from 1921 to 1924, which worked on establishing the ICWG. From 1924 to 1948, she was the president of the ICWG. From May 1938 the Austrian branch was no longer a member of the ICWG. It rejoined after World War II.
Czech organization in Czechoslovakia	1927	Interwar Marie Nečásková (member 1927–37; 1932, 1934, 1936) Post-1945 Marta Burešová (member 1949, 1951, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962) Božena Machačová (also called Machasová) (observer 1951, 1953, 1957) Mrs Rozničková (observer 1956) Mila Suková (observer 1958) Karla Matoušková (observer 1959) J. Langmajerová (observer 1961)	A women's organization was formed between 1924 and 1927 thanks to Nečásková's efforts. Czechoslovak delegates were present at the ICWG's conference in Ghent in 1924. Freundlich visited the branch in 1927. It had interruptions in affiliation during the interwar period and World War II. In the interwar period, two organizations from Czechoslovakia – one Czech and one German – were affiliated with the ICWG. After World War II, Czechoslovakia was reaffiliated as a single organization.
Soviet Union	1929	Interwar Helen Butuzova (member 1929, 1930, substitute 1934) Mrs Arenkina (member 1930–4) Mrs Vassilevskaya (member 1934–7)	The Soviet Union had a representative at the first co-operative women's conference in Basel in 1921 when the Preparatory Committee was formed. The Soviet Union had its delegates at the ICWG conference in Ghent in 1924. In 1925 and 1928, the ICWG's secretary, Alice Honora

German organization in Czechoslovakia	1930	Post-1945 M. Gorelovskaya (member 1949, 1953, 1954, 1956, 1957) Gorinova (interpreter 1953) E. Galakhova (observer 1957) V. Liarskaia (member 1958) V. Popkova (also called Papkova) (observer 1958, 1959, 1961) Valentina Zagulina (member 1959, 1961, 1962) Presnova (observer 1962)	Enfield, visited the Soviet Union. Helen Butuzova served on the ICWG Central Committee from 1926 as a co-opted member. In the summer of 1939, ICWG secretary Theo Nafel visited the Soviet Union.
		Interwar Emmy Riedl (member 1930–7; 1933, 1936), in the post-1945 period a representative of Germany Frau Günzl (substitute 1934)	Freundlich visited the German organization in Czechoslovakia in 1921–4. During that period, Goldschmidt-Carmak was a co-opted member of the International Co-operative Women's Committee, but she had to resign due to health issues. The branch was again recorded as a co-opted member from 1925 or 1926 when Goldschmidt-Carmak was back. From 1938, the branch was no longer a member. See above for more information on Czechoslovakia.
Bulgaria	1931	Interwar Stoianka (also called Stoiana) Ivanova (member 1931–7; 1932, 1933, 1934, 1936) Post-1945 Genoveva Manzelova (member 1958) Minka Draganova (member 1962)	The Bulgarian branch invested in translating and publishing materials about foreign and international co-operative movements. ICWG-related matters were discussed at the Bulgarian branch's congresses. It re-affiliated in 1957.
Ukrainian organization in Poland	1933	Interwar Ms Selezinka (member 1933–7; 1933)	The ICWG reported on the progress of forming the women's branch in the 1924–7 period.

Table 1 (continued)

ICWG's branch	Year of affiliation	Representatives in the Central Committee ¹	Additional connections and information
Poland	1936	Interwar Maria Orsetti (member 1936 –7; 1936) Post-1945 S. Dembinska (member 1949) I. Grosz (observer 1949) Krzemieniowa (member 1951) Barbara Róg-Świostek (observer 1951, 1956, 1957; member 1958, 1959, 1961, 1962) Irena Strzelecka (member 1953, 1956, 1957) Magdalena Treblińska (observer 1958) Zofia Staros (observer 1959, 1962) J. Wojciehowska (observer 1961)	ICWG secretary Alice Honora Enfield visited the Polish branch in 1928. The ICWG regularly reported on Polish branch activities before its full affiliation. In the summer of 1939, ICWG secretary Theo Nafstel visited Poland.
Yugoslavia	1951	Post-1945 Mara Rupena Osolnik (member 1951, 1953, 1961, 1962) Bosa Cvetić (present in 1951) K. Marinković (interpreter 1951) Javorina (observer 1953) Milka Kufrin (member 1954, 1956, 1957, 1959) Vilma Pirković (observer 1957; member 1958) Lojzka Stropnik (observer 1959) Ljubica Uzelac (observer 1961)	The ICWG was in contact with Yugoslav co-operative organizations in Slovenia in the interwar period. ICWG secretary Alice Honora Enfield visited the ZDŽD in Ljubljana in 1928. ICWG secretary Vera Semmens visited Slovenia between 1951 and 1954.

Note: Spelling of names is as given in the sources used, if not verified otherwise. The ICWG was officially formed in 1924, but the first international co-operative women's conference was held in 1921. At this conference, women formed the Preparatory Committee (International Co-operative Women's Committee) which was in charge of preparing the official establishment of the ICWG in 1924. In the archival collection giving the richest information about the history of the ICWG, 'U DCX – Records of the International Co-operative Women's Guild', HHC, there are no files on the meetings of the Central Committee from 1938 to 1949. Although the ICWG was officially dissolved in 1966, no information in the U DCX collection can be found after 1962. The table thus does not contain information beyond the year 1962.

¹ A single year after a name signifies the year of a specific Central Committee meeting in which a person participated or was mentioned as an absent representative. A range of years signifies the period in which a person was mentioned as a representative in the committee's reports; it is used for the interwar period because there are no data on Central Committee meetings before 1932, but also to signify the entire range when other data are missing.

Sources: ICWG, 'The Report of the International Co-operative Women's Committee, September, 1921–June, 1924', UDCX/3/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of the International Co-operative Women's Guild, March, 1925–March, 1926', UDCX/3/3, HHC; ICWG, 'The Report of the International Co-operative Women's Committee, September, 1924–April, 1927', UDCX/3/2, HHC; ICWG, 'The Report of the International Co-operative Women's Guild, April, 1927–March, 1928', UDCX/3/4, HHC; Enfield, 'Glimpses into the Co-operative Movement'; 'Central Committee of the International Co-operative Women's Guild, Vienna', 1930, F. 1456K, op. 1, a.e. 106. TsDA; ICWG, 'Bericht des Ausschusses der Internationalen Genossenschaftlichen Frauengilde, 1927–1930', 1930, UDCX/3/5, HHC; 'Nemzetközi szövetséget kongresszus'; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Committee Meeting, Freidorf, Basle, 13–14 March 1932', 14 March 1932, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Committee Meeting, Prince Arthur Road, London, 24–25 June 1933', 25 June 1933, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1930–1934', 1934, UDCX/3/6, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Committee Meeting, Central Hall, Westminster, London, 28–29 August 1934', 29 August 1934, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Committee Meeting, Freidorf, Basle, 22–24 February 1936', 24 February 1936, UDCX/1/1, HHC; GEC-Verband, *Die deutschen Konsumentenvereine* (1936), UDCX/3/7, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of Activities from the 1937 Conference to December 31st 1938', 1939, UDCX/3/8, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, 1937–1946' (ICWG, 1946), UDCX/3/9, HHC; ICWG, 'Internationale Genossenschaftliche Frauengilde. Bericht von Mai 1946 bis Mai 1948', 1948, UDCX/3/10, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of ICWG Committee, Stockholm, 26–27 September 1949', 27 September 1949, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report of the Committee, May, 1948, to December, 1950' (ICWG, 1951), UDCX/3/11, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Committee Meeting, Copenhagen, 17–18 September 1951', 18 September 1951, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Committee Meeting, 23 September 1951', 23 September 1951, UDCX/1/1, HHC; Vera Semmens, 'Report of the 8th International Congress of the International Co-operative Women's Guild, Copenhagen, September 19th to 21st 1951', *The International Woman Co-operator* 7, no. 6 (November 1951): 2–6, UDCX/4/18, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Meeting of Central Committee of the ICWG, Trade Union Hall, Brussels, 16–18 September 1953', 18 September 1953, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report 1951–1953' (ICWG, [1954?]), UDCX/3/12, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of the Meeting of Central Committee of the ICWG, Paris, 31 August–1 September 1954', 1 September 1954, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, Hamburg, 11–13 September 1956', 13 September 1956, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report 1954–1956' (ICWG, 1957), UDCX/3/13, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, Stockholm, 29–30 July 1957', 30 July 1957, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, London, 13–15 May 1958', 15 May 1958, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, Vienna, 5–7 October 1959', 7 October 1959, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG, 'Report 1957–1959' (ICWG, 1960), UDCX/3/14, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, Belgrade, 25–28 October 1961', 28 October 1961, UDCX/1/1, HHC; ICWG Central Committee, 'Minutes of Central Committee Meeting, Helsinki, 26–29 June 1962', 29 June 1962, UDCX/1/1, HHC; Simeonov, 'Съюз на жените кооператорки'.

Table 2 Women's unionization rates in select countries of the region, 1919–1945

Country	Trade union name	Trade union's level, type and affiliation	Year	Number of unionized women	Proportion of women among TU members (%)
Austria	Independent Trade Unions (Freie Gewerkschaften)	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1919	193,163	25
	Name of umbrella organization until 1928: (Imperial) Trade Union Commission ((Reichs-)Gewerkschaftskommission)		1920	215,175	24
	1928–34: Independent Trade Union Federation (Bund freier Gewerkschaften)		1921	261,540	24
			1922	232,712	22
			1923	203,924	23
			1924	190,984	23
			1925	185,922	23
			1926	167,919	22
			1927	175,091	23
			1928	167,469	22
			1931	128,482	22
	Christian Trade Unions (Christliche Gewerkschaften)	National trade union federation, Christian, IFCTU-affiliated	1919	14,360	47
	Name of umbrella organization: Central Commission of Christian Trade Unions (Zentralkommission der christlichen Gewerkschaften)		1920	31,797	49
			1921	32,044	41
			1922	31,383	40 ¹
			1924	30,295 ²	38
			1928	32,799 ²	33
	German National Trade Unions and Völkisch Trade Union Movement (Nationale Gewerkschaften/Völkische Gewerkschaftsbewegung)	German national (völkisch)	? (probably late 1920s)	9,743	20

Bulgaria	Free General Workers' Trade Union (Svoboden obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen suiuz)	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1921 1926 1927 1931	790 153 171 103	5 7 7 6
	until 1924: General Workers' Trade Union (Obsht rabotnicheski sindikalen suiuz) after 1925: Independent Workers' Trade Unions (Nezavisimi rabotnicheski profesionalni suiuzi)	National trade union federation, communist, RILU-affiliated	1919 1920 1921 1922 1927 1931 1933	5,463 5,094 4,598 7,412 390 1,473 1,238	18 16 16 21 6 17 14
	Bulgarian Workers' Union (Bulgarski rabotnicheski suiuz)	National trade union federation, corporatist, single legal trade union after 1936	1936 1937 1938 1939 1940 1941 1942	22,666 28,869 39,374 41,811 45,099 47,653 55,424	24 27 26 26 25 25 27
	Czechoslovak Trade Union Association (Odborové sdružení československé) ³	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1919 1920 1921 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927	193,413 183,150 94,770 70,950 55,146 61,378 65,654 63,253 114,369	27 22 15 18 17 18 18 18 21
				Czech: 59,826 German: 54,543	Czech: 18 German: 27

Table 2 (continued)

Country	Trade union name	Trade union's level, type and affiliation	Year	Number of unionized women	Proportion of women among TU members (%)
			1928	119,158	22
				Czech: 64,824	Czech: 18
			1929	German: 54,334	German: 27
				115,232	21
				Czech: 61,316	Czech: 17
			1930	German: 53,916	German: 27
				118,240	21
				Czech: 62,438	Czech: 17
			1931	German: 55,802	German: 27
				122,573	20
				Czech: 64,912	Czech: 17
			1932	German: 57,661	German: 26
				125,690	20
				Czech: 65,691	Czech: 16
			1933	German: 59,999	German: 27
				121,045	19
				Czech: 63,297	Czech: 15
			1934	German: 57,748	German: 27
			1935	120,033	20
				122,863	20
Central Trade Union Committee of the German Trade Union Federation in Czechoslovakia (Zentralgewerkschaftskommission des Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes in der Tschechoslowakei)	National trade union federation, social democratic		1922	79,797	27
			1927	54,804	27
			1935	50,677	23

International All-Trade Union League (Mezinárodní všeodborový svaz)	National trade union federation, communist, RILU-affiliated	1922 1923 1924 1927	1,230 42,187 41,456 36,036	1 28 26 20
National All-Trade Union Committee of Christian Social Workers (Říšská všeodborová komise křest.-soci. dělnictva)	National trade union federation, Christian	1922 1927	25,467 37,348	23 33
Association of Christian Trade Unions in Czechoslovakia (Verband der christlichen Gewerkschaften für das Gebiet des Tschechoslowakischen Staates)	National trade union federation, Christian, IFCTU-affiliated	1922 1927 1934	7,270 13,655 16,144	58 59 42
Czechoslovak Workers' Association (Československá obec dělnická)	National trade union federation, National Socialist	1922 1927	60,207 50,050	21 17
Trade Union Council of Hungary (Magyarországi Szakszervezeti Tanács)	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1919 1920 1921 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927 1928 1929 1930 1931 1932	30,415 20,387 24,245 21,263 22,383 17,112 15,746 17,547 18,752 19,906 16,635 13,888 13,167 15,803	14 13 16 10 13 13 14 15 16 15 16 15 14

Hungary

Table 2 (continued)

Country	Trade union name	Trade union's level, type and affiliation	Year	Number of unionized women	Proportion of women among TU members (%)
Poland	National Federation of Christian Socialist Trade Unions (Keresztényszocialista Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége)	National trade union federation, Christian, IFCTU-affiliated	1933	17,182	15
			1935	17,345	16
			1938	Approx. 16,000	14–15
			1942	Approx. 8,000–9,000	11–12
			1943	Approx. 10,000	10–11
			1921	17,449	?
Romania	Central Commission of Trade Unions (Komisja Centralna Związków Zawodowych)	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1921	25,466	7
			1922	42,903	10
			1924	35,547	12
			1928	28,716	11
			1931	23,490	11
			1934	30,602	13
			1935	28,418	10
Romania	Total for the country		1927	?	13
	Total for the country		1938	Approx. 15,000	Approx. 30

Yugoslavia	Main Workers' Union of Yugoslavia (Glavni radnički savez Jugoslavije)	National trade union federation, social democratic, IFTU-affiliated	1922	14,110	21
	from 1925: United Federation of Workers' Unions of Yugoslavia		1924	2,450	10
	(Ujedinjeni radnički sindikalni savez Jugoslavije)		1928	3,004	8
			1931	2,085 ⁴	7
			1932	2,639	9
			1933	2,923	10
			1934	2,500	8

Notes: The table was compiled using different sources that give the number of unionized women and men and/or the number of unionized women and total membership of the respective trade union federation. However, as even some of the sources warn, exact numbers of women's trade union membership in the interwar period are difficult to obtain, and these data should be taken with caution.

¹ The data are taken from Schmidt, *Die Christliche Arbeiterbewegung*, 32. However, Grete Daurer (Rehor) gives a share of 54 per cent; see Daurer, 'Frauenarbeit und christliche Gewerkschaften', 585.

² The information is taken from: Daurer, 'Frauenarbeit und christliche Gewerkschaften', 585. The source does not provide a total number of women members, only data on members in the branch trade unions, as well as their relative share in the overall Christian trade unions' membership. It is possible that information on branch trade union members is incomplete, and the total number of women is higher.

³ For some years, the numbers refer to Czech-language members only and for others to Czech- and German-language members. Whenever possible, we give separate numbers for Czech- and German-language membership. Data for 1919–33 are taken from *Hospodářské poměry*, 589. For some years IFTU yearbooks give different membership numbers.

⁴ Data are taken from *URSSJ 1931–33*, 46–47; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Seventh Year Book*, 33, gives the number 1,967 (6 per cent).

Sources: International Federation of Trade Unions, *First Year Book*; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Second Statistical Year Book*; Lozovski, *Мировое профессиональное движение*; Oberschall, *Odborové organizace zaměstnanecké*; 'Gewerkschaftliche und berufliche Frauenorganisationen'; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Fourth Year Book*; Daurer, 'Frauenarbeit und christliche Gewerkschaften'; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Sixth Year Book*; Moik, 'Die freien Gewerkschaften'; Zagorski, 'Die Frau in der nationalen Gewerkschaftsbewegung'; Oberschall, *Odborové organizace zaměstnanců; Hospodářské poměry*; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Seventh Year Book*; *URSSJ 1931–33*; 'Letter from Rumania'; International Federation of Trade Unions, *Eighth Yearbook*; *Седм години Български работнически съюз*; Mladenov, *Развитие и постижения*; Fonó, *A magyar munkások helyzete*; Gergely, 'Die internationalen Beziehungen'; Schmidt, *Die Christliche Arbeiterbewegung*; Verband christlicher Gewerkschaften für den tschechoslowakischen Staat, *Die christlichen Gewerkschaften*.

Table 3 Select key socialist/social democratic women activists from the region, 1890s–1970s

Activist	Years	Territory	Activities and stances
Sofia Nădejde	1856–1946	Romania	Socialist and feminist writer and journalist; founding member of PSDMR in Kingdom of Romania.
Vela Blagoeva (née Viktoria Zhivkova)	1858–1921	Bulgaria	Member of women's organization BZhS, which she eventually left because leadership placed women's emancipation above class issues; active in BRSDP's 'narrow' wing.
Jadwiga Budzińska-Tylicka	1867–1936	Polish lands (Poland)	Member of presidium of CWK PPS; representative of Polish women in IACW.
Adelheid Popp	1869–1939	Cisleithania (Austria)	Key politician in SDAP; representative of IACW on LSI Executive Committee.
Iordanka Bozvelieva (née Mustakova)	1872–1940	Bulgaria	Active in women's and socialist (later social democratic) movements; member of BZhS which she subsequently left in favour of the more radically feminist Union of Progressive Women (Suiuz na naprednichavite zhenti); in interwar period chair of the ZhSDS and also active in the co-operative movement.
Kina Konova (née Mutafova)	1872–1952	Bulgaria	Equal interest in socialism and feminism; member of socialist organization Friendly Society, Women's Branch (Priiatelska družinka, Zhenski klon) in Sevlievo, BZhS and ZhSDS.
Ecaterina Arbore	1873–1937	Romania	Radical; supported antimilitarism/neutrality during World War I; after 1917 a Bolshevik; member of Comintern (for a while, member of Comintern Executive Committee).
Zofia Moracewska	1873–1958	Polish lands (Poland)	Member of Women's Union for Citizenship Work (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet); socialist; supported Piłsudski after 1926 coup.
Zofia Praussowa (Prauss)	1878–1945	Polish lands (Poland)	Activist in early socialist movement; member of presidium of CWK PPS between 1923 and 1928; supported Piłsudski after 1926 coup; labour inspector; member of Lower House of the Sejm.

Alojzija Štebi	1883–1956	Cisleithania (Slovenia)	Key woman socialist in 1910s; member of Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (Jugoslavanska socialdemokratska stranka) in Ljubljana; editor of socialist women's magazine <i>Women's Paper</i> (<i>Ženski list</i>) in 1913; later switched to feminist movement and became one of most prominent Yugoslav feminists in interwar period.
Mariska Gárdos	1885–1973	Hungary, Austria	Social democratic woman labour activist; founding member of Budapest-based Women Workers' Circle (Budapesti Munkások Asztaltársasága); founding member of MME; first editor of <i>Woman Worker</i> (<i>Nőmunkás</i>).
Anna Kéthly	1889–1976	Hungary	Second woman MP and first socialist woman MP in Hungarian parliament (1922–48); head of MSZDP faction and Deputy Speaker of parliament (1945–8); member of MSZDP ONB; co-leader of Hungarian Association of Private Clerks (Magyarországi Magántisztviselők Országos Szövetsége); member of IACW; participated in LSI Women's Conferences (1925–31); co-operated with Hungarian Feminists' Association (Feministák Egyesülete); published in <i>Woman Worker</i> (<i>Nőmunkás</i>) and <i>People's Voice</i> (<i>Népszava</i>).
Milica Đurić-Topalović	1893–1972	Serbia, Yugoslavia	Socialist; secretary of Workers' Educational Center (Centrala za radničko vaspitanje) in Belgrade; in World War II joined Serbian nationalist Četnik movement.

Note: Activists in [Appendix 2](#) are not listed in this table.

Sources: Sekretariat der SAI, *Die Frauen in der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale: Fourth International Women's Conference*; Gárdos, *A nő a történelem sodrában*; Ioniță, *Ecaterina Arbore*; Kierpurska, 'Praussowa, Zofia'; Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*; De Haan, Daskalova, and Loutfi, *A Biographical Dictionary*; Ariadne, 'Popp, Adelheid'; Jorgić, 'Милица Ђурић Топаловић и женско питање'; Papp, 'Die Kraft der weiblichen Seele'; Grubački, 'Alojzija Štebi'; Grubački, 'Political Transformations of Interwar Feminisms'; Kádár, *Kéthly Anna*; Liotard-Vogt, 'The Most Important Thing'; Ghîț, 'About the Author' and 'Context' to 'Ecaterina Arbore'.

Table 4 Periodicals published by socialist/social democratic organizations with a focus on women's issues and/or significant involvement of women activists, 1890s–1940s

Name	Years and frequency	Territory	Scope
<i>Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung (Women Workers' Paper)</i> ; from 1924: <i>Die Frau (The Woman)</i> In 1917, the supplements <i>Für die Jugend (For the Youth)</i> and <i>Freie Stunden (Free Hours)</i>	1892–1924 (every two weeks) (1921–4 monthly)	Gisleithania (Austria), Bohemia	Information on the activism of organized social democratic women in Austria; information on social democracy and social democratic women internationally; political developments and social and political questions more generally with reference to the questions of class and gender.
<i>Ženský list (Women's Paper)</i>	1892–1922 (with interruptions)	Czech lands, Czechoslovakia	Czech-language paper of social democratic women labour activists in the Bohemian lands on the social, cultural and political educational problems of working-class women, published in Brno (1892–1900), then Prague (1901–22). Notable editors: Terezie Toužilová (1892–1900), Karla Máchová (1901–14), Marie Majerová (1920–2). Continued as <i>Woman Communist (Komunistka)</i> after 1922.
<i>Földmívelő (Agrarian Worker)</i>	1896–1905 (with interruptions)	Hungary	Paper of the (mixed-gender) independent social democratic movement (független szociáldemokrata mozgalom) and the FSZP, where agrarian women workers' contributions were published, edited by Mariska Várkonyi, among others. Although agrarian women labour activists wanted a women's paper, the hindrances, such as the substantial financial means required for starting a paper, did not make it possible to support their initiative.

<i>Ženski trud (Women's Labour)</i>	1904–5 (monthly)	Bulgaria	Magazine with socialist leanings, edited by Vela Blagoeva. Published articles on the 'woman question' and the situation of women workers, among other subjects; circulation 1,000.
<i>Ženské noviny (Women's Newspaper)</i>	1919–41 (with interruptions)	Czech lands (Czechoslovakia)	Newspaper of Czech social democratic women; in 1927, circulation 10,000. Betty Karpíšková was one of the editors between 1921 and 1931.
<i>Nőnunkás (Woman Worker)</i>	1905–49 (interruptions 1908–12, 1919, 1938–46)	Hungary	Information on the activism of organized social democratic women in Hungary and the activities of the MME and the MSZDP ONB; information on social democracy and social democratic women internationally; political developments and social and political questions more generally with reference to the questions of class and gender; literary pieces (poems, short stories). First editor Mariska Gárdos.
<i>Głos Kobiet (Women's Voice)</i>	1908–39	Polish lands (Poland)	Founded by Dorota Kłuszyńska.
<i>Jednakost: organ žena socijaldemokrata (Equality: The Social Democratic Women's Organ)</i>	1910–12 (1914 with interruptions)	Serbia	Journal of Social Democratic Women's Secretariat (Sekretarijat žena socijaldemokrata) in Serbia, 1910–14. In 1920, a communist women's journal.
<i>Ženski list: glasilo slovenskega socialističnega ženstva (Women's Paper: The Newsletter of Slovenian Socialist Women)</i>	1913 (monthly)	Cisleithania (Slovenia)	Socialist women's paper with a total of five issues (May–October 1913), edited by Alojzija Štebi.
<i>Die Sozialdemokratin (The Social Democratic Woman)</i>	1920–7 (weekly)	Czechoslovakia	Social democratic women's paper of the German Social Democratic Workers' Party (Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei, DSAP) in Czechoslovakia, edited by Anna Perthen.

Table 4 (continued)

Name	Years and frequency	Territory	Scope
<i>Blagodenstvie (Prosperity)</i>	1921–6 (officially twice a month)	Bulgaria	Paper published by the Bulgarian ZhSDS; circulation 3,000. Editors: Raina Khristova and Iurdana Sultanova.
<i>Die Unzufriedene (The Dissatisfied)</i>	1923–34 (weekly)	Austria	Print run of 150,000; declared itself 'independent' but had strong ties with the social democratic party. Continued from 1934 to 1944 as <i>Das kleine Frauenblatt: eine unabhängige Wochenschrift für alle Frauen (The Little Journal for Women: An Independent Weekly for All Women)</i> .
<i>Die Frau (Woman)</i>	1924–34 (monthly)	Austria	Social democratic women's paper. In 1927, circulation 160,000; subscription included in women's SDAP membership.
<i>Die Gleichheit (Equality)</i>	1927–38 (monthly)	Czechoslovakia	Paper of women in the DSAP, edited by Anna Perthen. In 1928, circulation 32,250.
<i>Nedovolnata (Dissatisfied Woman)</i>	1931–4 (monthly)	Bulgaria	Paper published by the Bulgarian ZhSDS; circulation 1,500.
<i>Buletinul 'Femeia muncitoare' ('Working Woman' Bulletin)</i>	1931–4	Romania	Paper edited by the UFM, appeared in trilingual edition.

Sources: Popp, *Gedenkbuch 20 Jahre österreichische Arbeiterinnenbewegung*; 'Czech Socialist Women's Group'; 'The Activities of Socialist Women in Austria'; 'Difficult Days'; 'Twenty Years of a Socialist Women's Paper in Poland'; Sekretariat der SAI, *Die Frauen in der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale, Fourth International Women's Conference*; Ivanchev, *Български периодичен печат*, vol. 1; Ivanchev, *Български периодичен печат*, vol. 2; Kürbisch and Klucaris, *Arbeiterinnen kämpfen um ihr Recht*; Meditz, 'Die "Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung" und die Frauenfrage'; Ioniță, 'Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare'; Magyar Nők Országos Tanácsa, *Gárdos Mariska*; Prošić-Dvornić, '“Женское”'; Farkas, *Ne legyen többé*; Zimmermann, *Die bessere Hälfte?*; Papp, *Die Kraft der weiblichen Seele*; Bahenská and Malinská, *Ženy a politika*; Národní knihovna České Republiky, Database of the National Library CR; Ariadne, 'Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung'; Ariadne, 'Die Frau'; Ariadne, 'Die Unzufriedene'; Dawidowicz, 'Problematyka polityki i polityków na łamach "Głosu Kobiet"'; Mitkova, 'Женският социалдемократически печат'; Bujaković, 'Reinvestigating Communist Women's Activism'; Grubački, 'Alojzija Štebi'; Mitkova, *Пол, периодичен печат и модернизация в България*.

Table 5 Members of the IACW of the LSI, 1928–1937

Year documented	Members of the five-person IACW Presidium (with country) ¹ (Members from the region of focus in bold)	Members of the IACW (with country) (Members from the region of focus in bold)
1928 Conference of (LSI-affiliated) socialist women (Brussels)	Marie Juchacz (Germany) Dorota Kłuszyńska (Poland) A. Susan Lawrence (Great Britain, Labour Party) Elisabeth Ribbibus Peletier (Netherlands) Adelheid Popp (Austria)	Mariette Adam (Belgium) Lily Becker (Luxembourg) Fanny Blatny (Germans in Czechoslovakia) Eva Broido (Russia, SDP) Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (Poland) Henriette Crone (Denmark) Agnes Dollan (Great Britain, Labour Party) Gertrud Duby (Switzerland) Athene Gaetanon Yannios (Greece) Gertrud Hanna (Germany) Rahel Janaith (Palestine) Dorothy Jewson (Great Britain, Independent Labour Party) Marie Juchacz (Germany) Klara Kalnin (Latvia) Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia) Dorota Kłuszyńska (Poland) A. Susan Lawrence (Great Britain, Labour Party) Alma Ostra-Oinas (Estonia) Elisabeth Ribbibus Peletier (Netherlands) Alice Pels (Belgium) Marion Phillips (Great Britain) Adelheid Popp (Austria) Gabriele Proft (Austria) Louise Saumoneau (France)

Table 5 (continued)

Year documented	Members of the five-person IACW Presidium (with country) ¹ (Members from the region of focus in bold)	Members of the IACW (with country) (Members from the region of focus in bold)
		Toni Sender (Germany) Hilda Seppälä (Finland) Nelly Thuring (Sweden) Signe Vessman (Sweden)
1930 IACW Committee meeting (Zurich)	Gertrud Hanna (Germany) [?] ² Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia) / Fanny Blatny (Germans in Czechoslovakia) Alice Pels (Belgium) Marion Phillips (Great Britain, Labour Party) [?] Gabriele Proft (Austria) [?]	Lucie Dejardin (Belgium) Sigrid Gillner-Ringenson (Sweden) Rose Gilomen-Hulliger (Switzerland) Gertrud Hanna (Germany) Dorothy Jewson (Great Britain, Independent Labour Party) Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia) Dorota Kluszyńska (Poland) Elisabeth Ribbius Peletier (Netherlands) Marion Phillips (Great Britain, Labour Party) Gabriele Proft (Austria) Tony Sender (Germany) Excused: Eva Broido (Russia), B. A. Gould (Great Britain), Marie Juchacz (Germany), Alice Pels (Belgium) and Adelheid Popp (Austria) could not attend.
1931 (Jan.) IACW Committee meeting (Prague)		Jennie L. Adamson (Great Britain) Fanny Blatny (Germans in Czechoslovakia) Henriette Crone (Denmark) Barbara Ayrton Gould (Great Britain) Gertrud Hanna (Germany)

1931 (Aug.) IACW Committee meeting (Vienna)	Jennie L. Adamson (Great Britain) Henriette Crone (Denmark) Marie Juchacz (Germany) Klara Kalnin (Latvia) Adelheid Popp (Austria)	Marie Juchacz (Germany) Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia) Dorota Kłuszyńska (Poland) Elisabeth Ribbius Peletier (Netherlands) Alice Pels (Belgium) Marion Phillips (Great Britain) Adelheid Popp (Austria) Tony Sender (Germany) Martha Tausk (Switzerland) Excused: Isabelle Blum (Belgium), Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (Poland) , Suzanne Buisson (France), Lydia Dan (Russia), Rosa Gilomen-Hulliger (Switzerland), Dorothy Jewson (Great Britain), Klara Kalnin (Latvia), Alma Ostra-Oinas (Estonia), Gabriele Proft (Austria) , Lilly Rădăceanu (Romania) and Athena Gaetanou Yannios (Greece) could not attend.
1931 Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI (Vienna)	Jennie L. Adamson (Great Britain) Fanny Blatny (Germans in Czechoslovakia) Marie Juchacz (Germany) Alice Pels (Belgium) Adelheid Popp (Austria)	Berger (United States of America) ³ Isabelle Blume (Belgium) Iordanka Bozvelieva (née Mustakova) Dr Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (Poland) Suzanne Buisson (France) Henriette Crone (Denmark) Lydia Dan (Russia) Athina Gaetanou-Yannios (Greece) Sigrid Gillner-Ringenson (Sweden)

Table 5 (continued)

Year documented	Members of the five-person IACW Presidium (with country) ¹ (Members from the region of focus in bold)	Members of the IACW (with country) (Members from the region of focus in bold)
		Rosa Gilomen-Hulliger (Switzerland)
		Barbara Ayrton Gould (Great Britain, Labour Party)
		Gertrud Hanna (Germany)
		Rahel Jannaith (Palestine)
		Dorothy Jewson (Great Britain, Independent Labour Party)
		Marie Juchacz (Germany)
		Anna Leonaite Kairys (Lithuania)
		Klara Kalnin (Latvia)
		Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia)
		Anna Kéthly (Hungary)
		Dorota Kluszyńska (Poland)
		Lily Krier-Becker (Luxemburg)
		Elisabeth Ribbicus Peletier (Netherlands)
		Alice Pels (Belgium)
		Adelheid Popp (Austria)
		Gabriele Proft (Austria)
		Tony Sender (Germany)
		Hilda Seppälä (Finland)
		Signe Vessman (Sweden)
		Jennie L. Adamson (Great Britain)
1936		Nina Andersen (Denmark)
IACW Circular		Isabelle Blume (Belgium)
		Dr Justyna Budzińska-Tylicka (Poland)
		Suzanne Buisson (France)

Sigrid Gillner-Ringenson (Sweden)
 Barbara Ayrton Gould (Great Britain)
Marie Gruber (Austria)
Betty Karpíšková (Czechs in Czechoslovakia)
Dorota Kłuszyńska (Poland)
 Gertrud Müller (Danzig)
 Elisabeth Ribblius Peletier (Netherlands)
 Alice Pels (Belgium)
 Miina Sillanpää (Finland)
 Signe Vessman (Sweden)

1937
 IACW Circular
 Jennie L. Adamson (Great Britain)
 Nina Andersen (Denmark)
 Suzanne Buisson (France)
 Elisabeth Ribblius Peletier (Netherlands)
 Alice Pels (Belgium)

Notes: Spelling of names is as given in the sources used, if not verified otherwise; spellings of the same name may vary from year to year.

¹ The Presidium had five seats. Between 1928 and 1933, seats were permanently reserved for one representative each from Austria, Germany and Great Britain; two seats rotated on a regional basis – one seat was always occupied by a representative chosen from among Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland; the other seat was always occupied by a representative chosen from among Belgium, Denmark, France, the Netherlands and Sweden. After 1933, the allocation principles changed several times in reaction to major political developments in Europe.

² The names of the Presidium members occupying the three permanent seats during this meeting were not documented. However, Presidium members were likely drawn from the members present who represented countries entitled to Presidium mandates at the time, based on the rotation rules (see n. 1). Therefore, Proft, Hanna and Phillips are included here based on inference: they represented countries which had permanent Presidium mandates and were present at the meeting. They are marked with [?] because they are not specifically documented as Presidium members.

³ The full name of the American member of the IACW is not documented in the 1932 report of the 1931 Fourth International Women's Conference of the LSI; thus far it has not been established from other sources.

Sources: 'Conference of Women Organised'; Sekretariat der SAL, *Die Frauen in der Sozialistischen Arbeiter-Internationale*; 'Meeting of the International Women's Committee at Zurich'; 'Meeting of the International Women's Committee in Prague'; *Fourth International Women's Conference*; Alice Pels, Circular, 'To the Members of the International Women's Committee of the LSI', 29 January 1936, 22, ARCH01368, item 4360, IISH, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4360>; Alice Pels, Circular, 'To the Members of the International Women's Committee of the LSI', 25 September 1937, 79, ARCH01368, item 4360, IISH, <https://hdl.handle.net/10622/ARCH01368.4360>.

Table 6 Women from the region in select international trade union and labour meetings, committees and delegations (ICWW/FWW, IFCTU, IFTU, Profintern, ILO), 1919–1937

Meeting, committee	Women from the region (by name and/or country/branch affiliation)	Overall representation, other representatives	Remarks and additional information
ICWW (later IFWW), First International Congress of Working Women, Washington, DC, 28 October–6 November 1919	Delegates and members of voting delegations: Dr Hrbkova (CSK), Luisa Landová-Štychová (CSK, elected one of five vice presidents), Marie Majerová (CSK), Sophie Dobrzanska (PL), Feliksa Konopska (PL), Yadwiga Lukasuik (PL), Constancia Olschewska (PL) Others: Melina Bornstein (PL), Madame Slavko Grouitch (RS, speaking on behalf of delegates not arrived), Radmilla Lazarewitch (RS) Dr Klotz (PL, translator, gender unknown)	Formal delegations from 12 countries. Non-region: Argentina, BE, British Empire, Canada, FR, India, IT, NO, SE, USA Non-region visitors from nations other than the above: CH, Cuba, DK, ES, Japan, NL	The position of one of the five vice presidents was kept vacant (and in the end reserved for Austria)
ILC, 1st session, 29 October–29 November 1919	Louisa Landová-Štychová (CSK, WA), Marie Majerová (CSK, WA), Zofja Praussowa (PL, GA), Mabel Grouitch (YU, GA)		Only WR&WA and GR&GA indicated here
IFCTU Women's conference, Brussels, 12–13 September 1921	Delegates: Orator (AT, gender unclear), J. Gosztonyi (HU, male, replacing HU woman delegate who had fallen ill)	Delegates from 10 countries. Non-region: BE, CH, DE, ES, FR, IT, LU, NL	
ICWW Second International Congress, Geneva, 17–25 October 1921	Delegates: Božena Kubičková (CSK), Sophie Dobrzanska (PL) AT delegate announced but not present	Delegates from 11 countries. Non-region: BE, CH, Cuba, FR, GB, IT, NO, South Africa, USA Visitors and guests, incl. from China	Anna Boschek (AT) in various sources listed/named vice president before the congress. The congress did not appoint a vice president for either Germany or Austria The FE (HU) received the ICWW's regular information letters in 1920

IFCTU International conference of Christian women workers, Innsbruck, 20 June 1922	Delegate: Aloisia Schirmer (AT) Possibly other AT delegates	Delegates from 5 countries. Non-region: BE, DE, FR, NL	Greetings to the conference by Franz Spalowsky, Chairman of the Central Commission of the Christian Trade Unions of Austria
IFWW Congress, Vienna, 14–18 August 1923	HU (fraternal delegate), RO (fraternal delegate) AT (visitor(s)) (gender unknown)	Delegates from 6 countries. Non-region: BE, FR, GB, IT, SE, USA Fraternal delegates non-region: Argentina, Chile, Japan Visitor non-region: DE	
IFTU, International Conference of Women Trade Unionists, Vienna, 31 May 1924	Delegates who spoke: Anna Boschek (AT), Marie Strnadowa (CSK), Pauline Schtreber (PL), [YU (likely male)]	43 delegates representing 8 national affiliates. Non-region: BE, DE, FR, GB	Full delegates only (Many) men among the delegates
IFCTU, International Conference of Women Workers, Lucerne, 16 September 1925	Delegate: M. Stierand (German-CSK; gender uncertain)	14 delegates from 6 countries. Non-region: BE, CH, DE, FR, NL	
IFTU, International Committee of Trade Union Women, established 1924/5, meetings: Amsterdam, 3–4 November 1925; Amsterdam, 2–3 November 1926; Paris, July 1927; Amsterdam, 1–2 October 1929; Lausanne, 7 June 1931; Paris, 1 July 1933; London, 6 July 1936; Paris, 30–1 July 1937	Valerie Novotná (CSK), alternate member from 1933 at the latest, full member most likely from 1933/5	The committee consisted of 5 full members and (in the 1930s) 5 alternate members, representing (besides CSK): DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, NL, SE. CH did not accept nomination	

Table 6 (continued)

Meeting, committee	Women from the region (by name and/or country/branch affiliation)	Overall representation, other representatives	Remarks and additional information
ILC, 10th session, 25 May–16 June 1927	Augusta Rosenberg (HU, GA), Leontyna Frankowska (PL, GA, substitute member sickness insurance CC), Eugenia Waśniewska (PL, GA)		Only WR&WA and GR&GA indicated here First discussion of minimum wage. Sole discussion of sickness insurance
IFTU, International Trade Union Women's Conference, Paris, 29–30 July 1927	Delegates: Cäcilie Bilek (AT), Anna Boschek (AT), Hermine Churfürst (AT), Mathilde Eisler (AT), Käthe Leichter (AT), Martha Schimmerl (AT), Marie Schittrenhelm (AT), Marie Trojánková (CSK), Dorota Kłuszyńska (PL), Paulina Szwabeber (PL) Guests: Adelheid Popp (AT, LSI), Dorota Kłuszyńska (PL, LSI) [Franz Bolognato (AT), Karl Peyer (HU)]	13 delegations. Non-region: BE, DE, DK, ES, FR, GB, LT, NL, Palestine (Jewish), USA Women guests non-region: DE, GB, NL (representing: ICWG, International Labour Office, LSI, National Women's Trade Union League of America)	
IFCTU, Committee for Women's Work, established 1928, meetings: Berlin, 24 April 1930; Aachen, 9 January 1931; Königswinter, 14 December 1931	No members from the region of focus	The committee consisted of 3 members: BE, DE, FR	No documented meetings thereafter The three committee members were represented on the IFCTU executive committee, mandates confirmed in 1934
ITUCWWP, established April 1928, meetings: first plenary meeting (date ?);	BG, Karla Pfeiferová (CSK), Kalina (PL), RO, YU	14 countries (to be) represented. Non-region: China, DE, FR, GB, IT, Mexico, NO, USA, Soviet Union	Nomination of Pfeiferová documented for 1929

second plenary meeting following 8th plenary meeting (7–17 December 1931) of Profintern Central Council			
ILC, 11th session, 30 May–16 June 1928	Eugenia Waśniewska (PL, WA, substitute member minimum wages CC)		Second discussion of minimum wage
IFCTU Women's conference, Munich, 25 September 1928	Miss Neumeier (AT) [Mr. J. Renner (CZK)]	BE, CH, DE, FR, NL [Male representative of the International Labour Office]	Speakers mentioned and conference functionaries only
Profintern, first international women trade unionists' conference, in conjunction with 5th Profintern Congress (Moscow, 15–30 August 1930), 31 August 1930 (and perhaps later)	Iordanka Nikolova (later Chankova) (BG, given as Olga Khristova in the official proceedings), CSK, HU, PL, RO	'Africa', Canada, China, FR, GB, IT, Japan, Korea, South Africa, 'South America', USA, Soviet Union	Delegations invited to include men; likely many men among the participants. Women delegates to the Profintern congress were called to participate Incomplete knowledge on participants. Black participants mentioned
ILC, 15th session, 28 May–18 June 1931	Anna Boschek (AT, WR, substitute member minimum age CC, member night work CC), Marie Krausová (CSK, WA, member night work CC), Augusta Rosenberg (HU, GA, substitute member minimum age CC), Eugenia Waśniewska (PL, WA, member night work CC), Tatiana Grigorovici (RO, WA, substitute member minimum age CC, member night work CC), Hélène Romniciano (RO, GA, substitute member minimum age CC), Milena Atanatskovitch (YU, GA, member minimum age CC, substitute member night work CC)	The night work CC included women government representatives from 6 non-region countries (DK, ES, GB, FR, NL, SE) and women workers' representatives from 5 non-region countries (DE, ES, FR, GB, NL)	Only WR&WA and GR&GA indicated here Sole discussion of night work (women). First discussion of non-industrial minimum age

Table 6 (continued)

Meeting, committee	Women from the region (by name and/or country/branch affiliation)	Overall representation, other representatives	Remarks and additional information
Correspondence Committee on Women's Work, ILO, established April 1932	Anna Boschek (AT), Grete Daurer (later Rehor) (AT), Emmy Freundlich (AT), Isa Kosseldorfer (AT), Käthe Leichter (AT), Fanny Blatny (CSK), Betty Karpíšková (CSK), Marie Neumann (CSK), Valerie Novotná (CSK), Františka Plamínková (CSK), Anna Vetterová-Bečvářová (CSK), Anna Kéthly (HU), Mme Vajkai (HU), Zofia Garlicka (PL), Halina Krahelska (PL), Eugenia Waśniewska (PL), Calypso Botez (RO), Tatiana Grigorovici (RO), Milena Atanatskovič (YU)	106 members 29 countries/territories represented. 23 non-region: Australia, BE, Brazil, Canada, CH, China, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, GB, IE, India, IT, Japan, LV, NL, NO, Palestine (Jewish), SE, USA	Membership in the 1932–5 period as given in 1934 Advisory committee. Members appointed in individual capacity Trade unionists Neumann and Novotná nominated in second round 1932 by CSK trade union federation
IFCTU International women's conference, Antwerp, 21 June 1932	Grete Daurer (later Rehor) (AT) [Mr J. Hille (CSK), Mr J. Renner (CSK)]	6 countries represented. Non-region: BE, DE, FR, NL	Attendance list
IFTU, International Trade Union Women's Conference, Brussels, 28–9 July 1933	Delegates: Anna Boschek (AT), Mathilde Eisler (AT), Valerie Novotná (CSK), Marta Stolzová (CSK) [A male guest (BG)]	8 countries represented. Non-region: BE, DK, FR, GB, LU, NL Women guests: BE Female ILO representative	
ILC, 18th session, 4–23 June 1934	Marie Krausová (CSK, WA, member underground work CC and night work CC), Eugenia Waśniewska (PL, WA, member underground work CC and night work CC), Milena Atanatskovič (YU, GA, member underground work CC and night work CC)	One woman member from the 'special' countries in underground work CC: Mrs Subbarayan (India, GA)	Only WR&WA and GR&GA indicated here Sole discussion of night work (women). First discussion of underground work in mines (women) (focus on the (semi-) periphery and the 'special' countries)

ILC, 19th session, 4–25 June 1935	S. Skopová (CSK, WA, substitute member underground work CC), Eugenia Waśniewska (PL, WA, member underground work CC), Milena Atanatskovitch (YU, GA, member underground work CC)	One woman member from the 'special' countries in CC: Begum Shah Nawaz (India, GA)	Second discussion of underground work in mines (women)
IFTU, International Conference of Women Trade Unionists, London, 7 July 1936	Delegate: Valerie Novotná (CSK)	8 countries represented. Non-region: DK, ES, FR, GB, LU, NL, SE Women fraternal delegates and visitors: FI, GB, IE, SE, USA Female ILO representative	

Notes: The table as a rule does not document the presence of representatives of the leadership/secretariats (all men) of the mixed-gender organizations in the women's meetings, nor does it record women's participation in general trade union congresses (the women's conferences were often held in conjunction with these). Research about the communist and Catholic women trade unionists' internationals is still in progress. Spelling of names is as given in the sources used, if not verified otherwise.

Abbreviations: *Country code:* AT = Austria; BE = Belgium; BG = Bulgaria; CH = Switzerland; CSK = Czechoslovakia; DE = Germany; DK = Denmark; EE = Estonia; EL = Greece; ES = Spain; FI = Finland; FR = France; GB = Great Britain; IE = Ireland; IT = Italy; LT = Lithuania; LU = Luxembourg; LV = Latvia; NL = Netherlands; NO = Norway; PL = Poland; RO = Romania; RS = Serbia; SE = Sweden; YU = Yugoslavia.

Function ILC: CC = Conference Committee; GA = government adviser; GR = government representative; WA = workers' adviser; WR = workers' representative.

Sources: International Congress of Working Women, 'First Convention of International Conference of Working Women, National Museum, Washington, D.C. Proceedings', 1919, Mary van Kleeck Papers, 1883–1972, of Sophia Smith Collection, Women's History Archive (Northampton, MA), WASI; *League of Nations: International Labour Conference 1919*; information letters circulated between April and November 1920, kept in International Congress of Working Women, 1920, collection P (4) 999, folder 60, box 27, MNL OL; A nép kiküldött tudósítói [J. Gosztonyi], 'Félmillió munkásnő': Minutes of various sessions, kept in International Congress of Working Women, Second International Congress, Geneva, Switzerland, October 17th–25th 1921, TUC Library Collections, Margaret Bondfield Papers, folder H, London Metropolitan University; Internationaler Bund der Christlichen Gewerkschaften, *Bericht über den 2. Kongress*; International Federation of Working Women, *Working Women in Many Countries. Report of Congress Held at Vienna. August 1923*, International Federation of Trade Unions, TUC MSS.292/62.14, Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick; *The Activities of the International Federation of Trade Unions 1922–1924*; *Die Christliche Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1922–1925*; *Internationale Gewerkschaftliche Arbeiterinnenkonferenz 1927*; International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Eleventh Session 1928*; *Die Arbeit der Christlichen Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1925–1928*; Goetz, 'Die Erste Internationale Gewerkschaftskonferenz'; Tormassowa, 'Zur I. Internationalen Arbeiterinnenkonferenz'; International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Fifteenth Session 1931*; Tormassowa, 'Die Plenartagung des Internationalen Gewerkschaftskomitees'; *Die Arbeit der Christlichen Gewerkschaftsinternationale 1928–1932*; Congress Brussels 1933: *Report on Activities 1930–1932*; International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Eighteenth Session 1934*; International Labour Office, *Minutes of the 66th Session of the Governing Body*; International Labour Office, *International Labour Conference: Nineteenth Session 1935*; Congress London 1936: *The Activities 1933–1935*; Dochev, 'Юбилейна Хронология в СССР'; Müller, 'Zu den frauenpolitischen Aktivitäten'; Tosstorff, *The Red International*; Zimmermann, *Frauenpolitik und Männergewerkschaft*; Dyakonova, "'Approached as a Force for Labour'".

Table 7 Economically active women by age group in countries in the region of focus in European comparison, 1950–1990

Year Regions and countries	Estimated percentage involved in economic activity								
	Age group								
1950	15–19	20–4	25–9	30–4	35–9	40–4	45–9	50–4	55–9
Europe ¹	56	62	51	45	48	47	45	40	31
Eastern Europe ²	55	71	68	66	66	66	62	52	36
Western Europe ³	65	64	44	36	38	39	39	38	34
France	52	55	33	27	30	35	42	42	40
Portugal	35	31	23	20	19	19	19	19	18
Sweden	55	57	37	27	26	28	31	30	26
United Kingdom	81	65	40	27	29	29	30	28	25
Austria	77	76	55	45	47	46	45	43	37
Bulgaria	56	73	72	74	77	79	77	72	69
Czechia	70	60	40	42	47	49	52	46	35
Hungary	56	45	36	33	30	29	28	27	29
Poland	51	69	60	61	64	66	63	61	56
Romania	79	79	75	74	74	76	75	74	68
Serbia & Montenegro	48	61	45	39	36	33	30	24	21
Turkey	77	78	79	78	76	79	75	80	80
Ukraine	52	67	69	69	69	68	58	52	29
1960	15–19	20–4	25–9	30–4	35–9	40–4	45–9	50–4	55–9
Europe ¹	51	65	57	54	53	52	52	46	33
Eastern Europe ²	55	71	68	66	66	66	62	54	36
Western Europe ³	60	66	49	42	43	43	45	42	37
France	43	60	44	39	40	43	47	46	41
Portugal	28	27	20	17	16	15	14	14	14

	Age group								
	15-19	20-4	25-9	30-4	35-9	40-4	45-9	50-4	55-9
1970									
Europe ¹	43	68	65	66	64	66	62	55	35
Eastern Europe ²	50	74	76	73	74	72	68	58	28
Western Europe ³	50	66	54	49	49	50	50	45	38
France	34	64	55	51	50	51	51	49	43
Portugal	44	45	33	25	23	21	20	18	15
Sweden	46	64	55	52	53	54	53	51	45
United Kingdom	63	65	49	64	50	54	55	53	45
Austria	60	68	56	51	51	53	54	48	36
Bulgaria	32	73	85	88	90	89	83	71	31
Czechia	45	80	80	83	86	86	84	77	40
Hungary	53	66	65	69	71	69	64	57	29
Poland	37	70	75	77	79	79	79	75	68
Romania	45	74	80	80	81	79	76	71	56
Serbia & Montenegro	34	60	57	52	50	47	43	37	32
Turkey	58	57	54	55	54	57	57	57	52
Ukraine	39	81	94	92	90	92	81	74	29

Table 7 (continued)

Year Regions and countries	Estimated percentage involved in economic activity									
	Age group									
1980	15-19	20-4	25-9	30-4	35-9	40-4	45-9	50-4	55-9	
Europe ¹	36	72	74	72	71	73	68	63	37	
Eastern Europe ²	39	79	87	90	88	88	85	74	35	
Western Europe ³	39	70	66	60	61	59	55	50	40	
France	18	68	70	67	66	63	59	56	48	
Portugal	54	69	67	63	59	51	44	42	34	
Sweden	44	71	74	75	79	83	83	78	66	
United Kingdom	53	65	54	56	60	67	68	65	56	
Austria	54	74	66	61	62	60	57	54	32	
Bulgaria	33	78	88	91	92	91	85	75	31	
Czechia	40	84	91	93	94	94	91	83	43	
Hungary	47	60	60	81	85	83	78	67	18	
Poland	31	68	76	81	83	83	79	73	56	
Romania	32	75	82	83	83	81	77	65	63	
Serbia & Montenegro	25	61	67	67	59	54	50	41	35	
Turkey	50	50	45	46	46	49	50	50	46	
Ukraine	33	85	93	95	96	95	92	84	29	
1990	15-19>	20-4	25-9	30-4	35-9	40-4	45-9	50-4	55-9	
Europe ¹	29	71	78	79	80	78	73	66	35	
Eastern Europe ²	33	81	90	92	92	93	89	79	36	
Western Europe ³	26	69	75	70	71	71	67	59	39	
France	7	56	78	75	74	76	70	63	45	

Portugal	40	68	77	78	74	68	62	50	40
Sweden	40	80	87	90	92	94	93	89	79
United Kingdom	58	75	68	64	70	75	74	67	53
Austria	45	73	69	65	66	66	61	53	25
Bulgaria	32	85	95	97	95	95	91	84	32
Czechia	33	87	94	95	95	95	93	85	34
Hungary	42	61	64	79	87	88	84	68	5
Poland	24	64	69	71	78	86	82	72	49
Romania	33	72	79	82	82	82	79	73	33
Serbia & Montenegro	19	61	76	80	79	72	58	42	30
Turkey	48	48	43	43	43	44	44	45	44
Ukraine	26	78	89	93	94	94	92	84	28

Notes: The activity rates of girls aged 10–14 years, and women older than 59 years, which are given in the source publications, have been omitted here. Figures given are rounded to whole numbers. Gender scholars have demonstrated the under-reporting of less formalized women's work; in this sense, the figures also point to women moving into formal employment, accompanied by changing tactics and methods of juggling the 'double burden'.

¹ Southern, Northern, Eastern and Western Europe.

² Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Ukraine.

³ Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Switzerland.

Sources: International Labour Office, Bureau of Statistics, *Economically Active Population 1950–2010: Asia*; International Labour Office, Bureau of Statistics, *Economically Active Population 1950–2010: Northern America, Europe, Oceania*.

Table 8 Women's unionization rates in select countries of the region, 1945–1980s

Country	Trade union	Trade union's level, type and affiliation	Year	Number of unionized women	Proportion of women among trade union members (%)
Austria	Austrian Trade Union Federation (Österreichischer Gewerkschaftsbund, ÖGB)	National trade union federation	1950	334,616	25.9
			1960	421,329	28.1
			1970	418,662	27.5
			1980	498,772	30.0
			1985	n.d.	30.8
			1990	512,253	30.1
Bulgaria	1945–51: General Workers' Trade Union (Obsht rabotnicheski profesionalni suiuz / Общ работнически професионален съюз)	National trade union federation	1945	102,403	24.2
			1946	127,855	23.4
			1947	154,387	24.7
			1948	194,981	27.0
			1949	223,745	25.3
	1951–61: Central Council of Trade Unions in Bulgaria (Tsentrallen suvet na profesionalnite suiuzi v Bulgaria / Централен съвет на професионалните съюзи в България)	National trade union federation	1950	171,140	24.6
			1951	207,325	28.2
			1952	n.d.	n.d.
			1953	243,122	29.3
			1954	269,008	29.1
	1961–90: Bulgarian Trade Unions (Bulgarski profesionalni suiuzi / Български професионални съюзи, BPS)	National trade union federation	1955	273,746	28.3
			1956	301,205	29.4
			1957	322,679	29.9
			1958	351,542	30.6
			1959	428,476	32.5
			1960	479,476	32.6
			1961	495,006	32.4
			1962	544,299	33.3
			1963	611,379	34.7

Czechoslovakia	Revolutionary Trade Union Movement (Revoluční odborové hnutí, ROH)	National trade union centre	1964	682,458	36.5
			1965	749,725	37.3
			1966	856,114	38.9
			1967	908,048	39.3
			1968	967,306	40.0
			1969	1,014,646	40.8
			1970	1,063,954	41.1
			1971	1,148,346	41.9
			1972	1,204,020	42.4
			1973	1,356,670	44.0
Poland	Association of Trade Unions (Zrzeszenie Związków Zawodowych, ZZZ)	National trade union federation	1945	195,036	n.d.
			1946	435,355	n.d.
			1947	538,370	n.d.
			1948	733,988	n.d.
			1949	890,731	n.d.
			1950	1,012,608	n.d.
			1946	256,000	11.2
			1947	653,000	22.2
			1948	919,000	26.1
			1949	1,018,000	26.2
			1950	953,800	22.5
			1955	1,559,300	31.8
			1956	1,539,000	31.9
			1957	1,645,000	31.4
			1960	1,932,300	31.6
			1965	2,597,300	33.9
			1966	2,807,000	34.8
			1967	3,004,800	35.6
			1968	3,427,300	36.9

Table 8 (continued)

Country	Trade union	Trade union's level, type and affiliation	Year	Number of unionized women	Proportion of women among trade union members (%)
			1969	3,689,200	37.9
			1970	3,861,900	38.2
			1975	5,148,200	41.7
			1977	5,344,700	40.9
Turkey	Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, Türk-İş)	National trade union confederation	1974	102,000	17.0
			1977	136,000	17.0

Sources: *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1949*; Krzeczowska, *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1958*; Krzeczowska, *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1971*; Mladenov, *Pazumue u noomueenua*; '4000,6 Turkey – Turk-Is.', n.d., ARCH00622, box Ad1032, folder 1974–1977, IISH; '4000,6 Turkey – Turk-Is.', n.d., ARCH00622, box Ad1032, folder 1978–1981, IISH; Krzeczowska, *Mały rocznik statystyczny 1979*; Blaschke, *Frauen in Gewerkschaften*; Pánková, 'Ženy a odbory'.

Table 9 Select women trade unionists and experts in labour issues from the region involved in international activism, 1950s–1980s

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Women from Austria			
Wilhelmine Moik	1957–62/3	Titular member and chair of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). ÖGB.	
Natalie Bauer	1963	Associate member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). Delegate of IFFTU.	
Margarete Glöckner	1963	Associate member of the Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as the ICFTU Women's Committee). Delegate of IFFTU.	
Maria Windisch	1963–4	Associate member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). Delegate of IFFTU.	
Rosa Weber	1963–6	Titular member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). ÖGB.	
	1964–5	Vice chair of ILO Correspondence Committee on Women's Work. Chair of ILO Workers Group.	
	17 June–9 July 1964	Participated in International Labour Conference, 48th Session, Geneva, Switzerland. ÖGB.	
	2–23 June 1965	Participated in International Labour Conference, 49th Session, Geneva. ÖGB.	
Margarete Pechacek	1964–72	Associate member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). Delegate of PSI.	

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Maria Metzker	1969–74, 1977, 1981	Titular member the Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). ÖGB.	
	15 May 1974	Participated in ILO Meeting of Experts on Equality on Remuneration, Geneva.	
Lene Haider	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe', Budapest, Hungary.	Organizers: WIDF, WFTU, MNOT.
Berta (Emmi) Brichacek	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Organizers: WIDF, WFTU, MNOT.
Gisela Streiter	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women, Nicosia, Cyprus. Women's commission, ÖGB/GLB.	
	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU's roundtable discussion 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions', Budapest. Responsible for women workers, ÖGB/GLB.	
Edith Krebs	23 February–5 March 1980	UN GSW, ICFTU Representative. Chamber of Labour, Vienna, Austria.	
Gabrielle Traxler	23 February–5 March 1980	UN GSW, ICFTU Representative. ÖGB.	
	1980–7	First substitute, then titular member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). ÖGB.	
	23–6 April 1985	Participated in Fourth World Women's Conference of ICFTU, Madrid, Spain. Head of women's department, ÖGB.	One of several Austrian participants.

Hilde Seiler	1982–3	Associate member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). Delegate of ICEF, ÖGB.
Christine Haager	1988–9	Titular member of Joint ITS/ICFTU Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as ICFTU Women's Committee). ÖGB.
Traudel Gschwendt	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe', Vienna. ÖGB/GLB.
Maria Kranzl	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe', as WIDF representative.
Liselotte Lichtenegger	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. GPA, ÖGB/GLB.
Silvia Prendtner	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. ÖGB/GLB.
Susanne Sohn (Dr)	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. ÖGB.
Women from Bulgaria		
Kunka Apostolova Pencheva	14–17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers, Budapest, planned head of delegation.
Penka Dodunenkova	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood', Budapest. Secretary of TsS BPS.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women', Sofia, Bulgaria. Secretary of TsS BPS.
Dimitrina Spasova	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Head of women's department of newspaper <i>Labour (Trud)</i> .
		Included participants from Western European countries.

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Zdravka Kemileva (Prof.)	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Chair of Central Committee of Health Workers Trade Union.	
Elena Lagadinova	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Member of State Council of Bulgaria, chair of KBZh.	
Naida Mancheva	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Weaver at 8th of March Factory; twice Hero of Socialist Labour, member of Commission for the Problems of Working Women at TsS BPS, People's Representative.	
Marusja Todorova	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Chair of Central Committee of Light Industry Trade Union, Hero of Socialist Labour.	
Maria Taneva	21–2 April 1976	Participated in 14th Session of the WFTU Bureau, Tatranská Lomnica, Czechoslovakia (today Slovakia).	
	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. TsS BPS.	
	26–8 May 1980	Participated in 22nd Session of WFTU Bureau, Cotonou, Benin. International Department, TsS BPS.	

Maria Dinkova	28 June–1 July 1977	Participated in international seminar 'Women and Socialism', Moscow, Soviet Union (today Russia).	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
Rositsa Stoianova Gocheva	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Included participants from around the world.
Liliana Dimitrova Pencheva	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of TsS BPS.	
	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Secretary of TsS BPS.	
Svetla Ivanova	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Secretary of Women's Committee of TsS BPS.	Included participants from around the world.
Margaretha Marinova	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Secretary of TsS BPS, chair of Women's Commission, district Sofia.	Included participants from around the world.
Maria Vasileva	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Secretary of TsS BPS.	Included participants from around the world.
Stanka Alexandrova	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Head of Women's Committee at TsS BPS.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Secretary of Commission for the Problems of Working Women at TsS BPS.	
	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. TsS BPS.	
Katerina Altunova	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. TsS BPS.	

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Women from Czechoslovakia			
Marie (Maria) Radová	1955 and/or 1956	WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers international preparation committee member. National trade union confederation of employees in state-owned commerce.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	14-17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers, planned head of delegation.	
	4-15 December 1961	Participated in WFTU Fifth World Trade Union Congress, Moscow. President of Trade Unions International of Workers in Commerce.	
Marie Trojanová	1955 and/or 1956	WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers international preparation committee member. Secretary of ÚRO.	
Drahomíra Hanzalová	16-21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of ROH.	
	2-5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Secretary of ROH.	
	19 June-2 July 1975	Attended UN World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, Mexico, as WFTU's delegate (observer status).	
	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of WFTU.	

	26-8 May 1980		Participated in 22nd Session of WFTU. Secretary of WFTU. Secretary for women's and youth's work and social policies, Central Council of ROH.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Libuše Rochlenová	16-21 September 1974		Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. International Labour Relations Officer of ROH.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Marta Zemaníková	16-21 September 1974		Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Organization Department, ROH.	
Lidia Alonso	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau, Berlin (GDR, today Germany).	
Vlasla Dvořáková	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Alona Krupková	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Jana Sadilová	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Danica Schreibrova	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Bonita Sorrano	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Zina Vorotiaguina	28-30 January 1975		Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau.	
Zdenka Indruchová	23-4 April 1975		Participated in 12th session of WFTU Bureau, Baghdad, Iraq. Collaborator of International Department, ÚRO.	
Jarmila Kuchazanovaja	2-5 June 1975		Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Member of Commission for Women's Work, district committee of the trade union of the city of Ostrava.	
Jitka Štěpánková	2-5 June 1975		Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Member of Commission for Women's Work, trade union committee of the city of Prague.	

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Eva Dostalová	21–2 April 1976	Participated in 14th session of WFTU Bureau. Employee of International Department.	
Olga Škrabalová	21–2 April 1976	Participated in 14th session of WFTU Bureau. Employee of International Department.	
Marie Kubrželova	28 June–1 July 1977	Participated in international seminar 'Women and Socialism'.	
Daniela Kubátová	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe', as WFTU employee. Head of Department of Peace Issues and Working Women, WFTU.	
Mária Pappová	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'. Head of the Women's Department, ÚRO.	
Jolana Gažovičová	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Chair of trade union council of Bratislava.	
Dagmar Nebeská	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Employee of International Department, ÚRO.	
Ludmila Večerová	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. President of regional trade union of chemical industry.	
Jiřina Veselá	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of ÚRO.	

Karla Pítrová	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable discussion 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Head of Sector for Working Women, ÚRO.	Included participants from around the world.
Marie Frýbortová	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe' as WFTU secretary.	Included participants from around the world.
Marcella Vokrouhlicková	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Secretary of ÚRO.	
Women from Hungary			
Gizella Hegyi	14–17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU's First World Conference of Women Workers, Budapest, planned (and most likely actual) head of delegation. Secretary of 'Textile Workers' Trade Union.	
Gizella Pellek	14–17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU's First World Conference of Women Workers, planned head of delegation. Secretary of Metalworkers' Trade Union.	
Éva Baranyai (later Bíró)	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. General Secretary of 'Textile Workers' Trade Union.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Margit Cerván	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Chair of Women's Committee, SZOT.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Mária Duschek	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of SZOT.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Secretary of SZOT.	

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'. Secretary of SZOT.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of SZOT.	
Lajosné Farkas	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of Metalworkers' Trade Union.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Kálmánné Kovács	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of regional trade union council of Borsod district.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Anna Dusyak	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Employee of International Department, SZOT.	
Júlia Turgonyi (Dr)	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Sociologist, member of Commission for Women's Work, SZOT.	
Nidtrai Lajosné	28 August–1 September 1978	Study visit as member of Hungarian delegation to GDR.	
Mária Vágner	28 August–1 September 1978	Study visit as member of Hungarian delegation to GDR.	
Edit Erdel (also known as Mrs László Erdel)	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.

Zsuzsa Ferge	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
Irén Martos	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
Irén Németi	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
Júlia Nyitrai	14–17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'. Chair of the Women's Committee of SZOT.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT.
	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of Women's Committee, SZOT.	
	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Chair of Women's Committee, SZOT.	Included participants from around the world.
Eirzsébet Varga	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of Trade Union Council of Cotton Industry.	
Magdolna Veeég	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Hero of Socialist Labour.	
Ilona Vilmányi	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Member of Central Council of SZOT.	
Judit Csehák	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Secretary of SZOT.	Included participants from around the world.
Magda Kovács-Kósáné	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'.	Included participants from around the world.

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Women from Poland			
Irena Brzozowska	14–17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers, planned head of delegation.	
Maria Jakubowicz	5–10 November 1956	Participated in ILO Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment. Chief of Section, Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare.	
Irena Likowska	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of trade union council of Poznań.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Irena Stoczyńska	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Secretary of CRZZ.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Secretary of CRZZ, Deputy Chair of National Council of Women in Poland.	
	15–19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of CRZZ, representative of Polish Peace Committee.	
Krystyna Wrochno-Stanke	28–30 January 1975	Participated in extraordinary session of WFTU Bureau. Member of LK.	

Zofia Bazanowska	2-5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Secretary of Working Women's Commission at CRZZ.
Eugenia Kempara	28 June-1 July 1977	Participated in international seminar 'Women and Socialism'. Head of LK, member of Polish Council of State (Rada Państwa).
Leokadia Karmowska	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Secretary of Metalworkers' Trade Union.
Barbara Natorka	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Chair of Trade Union of Textile, Clothing and Leather Industry Workers.

Women from Romania		
Ileana Banu	1955 and/or 1956	WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers international preparation committee member. Member of CGS and Health Workers' Trade Union.
Liuba Chişinevschi	29 September-1 October 1955	Participated, as member of preparation committee, in meeting dedicated to WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers, Bucharest. Secretary of CGS.
	14-17 June 1956	Participated in WFTU First World Conference of Women Workers, planned head of delegation.
Elena Teodorescu	September 1956-March 1964	WFTU secretary and employee of WFTU secretariat. Member of Executive Committee of CGS.
	November 1956	Participated in meeting of WFTU delegation with ILO Director General. Secretary of WFTU.
	10 December 1958	Participated in meeting of WFTU delegation with ILO Director General. Secretary of WFTU.
	4-15 December 1961	Participated in WFTU Fifth World Trade Union Congress.
	14 November 1962	Participated in meeting of WFTU delegation with ILO Director General. Secretary of WFTU.

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Stana Dragoi	March 1964–[?]	Secretary and employee of WFTU Secretariat.	
Ana Drăgan	20–4 May 1974	Participated in ILO Meeting of Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers. Director of Manpower Division, Ministry of Labour.	
Elena Floareş	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Chair of trade union committee of the furniture textile combine.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Teodora Sersun	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Member of Presidium of UGSR.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Chair of Commission for Women's Work, UGSR.	
Fani Strujan	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Employee of International Department, UGSR.	Included participants from Western European countries.
	2–5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Employee of International Department, UGSR.	
Larisa Munteanu	15–17 October 1974	Participant in 25th session of WFTU General Council, Havana, Cuba. Secretary of UGSR.	
	23–4 April 1975	Participated in 12th session of WFTU Bureau.	

Maria Gligor	2-5 June 1975	Participated in international meeting for exchange of experiences on 'The Role of Trade Unions in Solving Social Problems of Working Women'. Deputy Chair of UGSR and Chair of Commission for Women's Work, UGSR of the City of Iași (Jassy).	Included participants from around the world.
Maria Duțescu	28 February-2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Member of Executive Committee of UGSR and chair of Association for Trade, Co-operation and Tourism.	
Ioana Lupeșcu	28 February-2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Employee, International Department, UGSR.	Included participants from around the world.
Valeria Dimitriu	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Employee of International Department, UGSR.	
Lidia Orădean	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Member of Executive Committee of UGSR, President of Union of Health Unions.	
Virginia Pripitu	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Member of Executive Committee, UGSR.	

Women from Turkey			
Muhaddere Taşcıoğlu	5-10 November 1956	Participated in ILO Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment. Chief of Research Division at Ministry of Labour.	Organizers: WIDE, WFTU, MNOT
Okşan Yardımcı	14-17 November 1978	Participated in regional seminar 'Place of Working Women in Europe'. Legal adviser at DİSK.	
Ayşe Coşkun	15-19 October 1979	Participated in WFTU Fourth World Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women. Maden-İş, chief accountant.	
Rahime Akdoğan	23-6 April 1985	Participated in ICFTU Fourth World Women's Conference. Head of Women Workers' Bureau, Türk-İş.	

Table 9 (continued)

Name	Date	Participation, function/position in international organization (WFTU, ICFTU, UN, ILO) and regional events. Function/position in national and additional contexts	Remarks
Women from Yugoslavia			
Ljubica Andrejevska	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Member of Presidium of SSJ.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Zorica Antonijević	16–21 September 1974	Participated in symposium 'Woman and Work, Work and Motherhood'. Adviser at SSJ.	Included participants from Western European countries.
Jasna Majdak	19–20 November 1984	Participated in WFTU roundtable 'Urgent Problems of Working Women and the Tasks of Trade Unions'. Member of presidium of SSJ.	
Zofka Klemen-Krek	28 February–2 March 1989	Participated in roundtable 'Women and Europe'. Chair of Women's Council.	Included participants from around the world.

Notes: Spelling of the names and positions/functions as given in the sources used, if not verified otherwise. This table deviates from the general rule applied throughout the book for giving Hungarian married women's names.

Abbreviations: GLB = Trade Union Left Wing Group (Gewerkschaftlicher Linksblock) in ÖGB; GPA = Trade Union of Private Employees (Gewerkschaft der Privatangestellten); ICEF = International Federation of Chemical, Energy and General Workers' Unions; IFFTU = International Federation of Free Teachers' Unions; PSI = Public Service International; SSJ = Confederation of Trade Unions of Yugoslavia (Savez sindikata Jugoslavije); TsS BPS = Central Council of Bulgarian Trade Unions (Централен съвет на Българските професионални съюзи); ÜRO = Council of Trade Unions (Üstřední rada odborů), governing body of ROH.

Sources: 'Vorbereitendes Komitee der Internationalen Konferenz der werktätigen Frauen', 1955, DY 34/18783, SAPMOArch; 'A Dolgozó Nők Világkonferenciája Előkészítő Bizottságának tagjai', n.d. [1955 or 1956], (former) SZKL, fond 2 SZOT; archival unit 19, 1954–1960, box 1, folder 2, PII; International Labour Office, Governing Body, '133rd Session. Fourteenth Item on the Agenda. Report of the Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment (Geneva, 5–10 November 1956)', [1956], GB 133/100/14, ILOA published in ZARAH DB, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/97>; 'Minutes of a Meeting of the Director-General with a Delegation from the [WFTU], Saturday, 21 January 1956, 10.30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and 3.30 p.m., to 6 p.m.', 1956, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 1), ILOA; Mrs Lackó, 'Liste

des chefs de délégations', 14 June 1956, (former) SZKL., fond 2 SZOT; archival unit 19, 1954–1960, box 1, folder 2, PIL; 'Meeting in Director-General's Office 10 a.m., Wednesday, 10 December, 1958', 1958, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA; Weltgewerkschaftsbund, V. Weltgewerkschaftskongress; 'Record of Interview between Representatives of the [WFTU] and the Director-General', 18 April 1962, Z 1/1/1/22 (jacket 2), ILOA; International Labour Office, Governing Body, '163rd Session. Seventh Item on the Agenda. Report of the Panel of Consultants on Women Workers' Problems (Geneva, 20–28 September 1965)', 20–28 September 1965, GB 163/7/15, ILOA published in ZARAH DB, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/99>; International Labour Office, Governing Body, '193rd Session. Tenth Item on the Agenda. Report of the Panel of Consultants on the Problems of Women Workers (Geneva, 20–24 May 1974)', 20–24 May 1974, GB 193/10/30, ILOA published in ZARAH DB, <https://public.zarahdb.eu/document/100>; 'Symposium "Frau und Arbeit, Arbeit und Mutterschaft". Budapest. Teilnehmerliste', 16–21 September 1974, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch; 'Aufstellung der Delegationen, die an der Durchführung des Internationalen Treffens des Erfahrungsaustausches zum Thema: "Die Rolle der Gewerkschaften bei der Lösung sozialer Probleme werktätiger Frauen" teilgenommen haben', 2–5 June 1975, DY 34/10859, SAPMOBArch; Irena Sroczyńska, 'Die Frau in der Industrie und Landwirtschaft in VR Polen', 1975, DY 34/11723, SAPMOBArch; 'List of Participants', 'Anwesenheitsliste der außerordentlichen Bürotagung des WGB vom 28.–31.1.1975', 1975, DY 34/11632, SAPMOBArch; Maria Dinkowa, 'Die Verbindung der beruflichen Pflichten der Frau mit der Mutterschaft', 1977, DY 34/12196, SAPMOBArch; 'Namensliste Budapest', 1978, DY 34/12197, SAPMOBArch; 'IV. Weltgewerkschaftskonferenz über Probleme der werktätigen Frauen. Teilnehmerliste', 1979, DY 34/12639, SAPMOBArch; ICFTU Women's Committee, '41st Meeting', 17–18 April 1980, ARCH00624, folder 1567, IISH; WFTU, '22ème Session du Bureau de la FSM. Liste des participants', 26–28 May 1980, DY 34/2241, SAPMOBArch; WFTU, 'Rundtischgespräch über "Dringende Probleme der werktätigen Frauen und die Aufgaben der Gewerkschaften". Teilnehmerliste', 19–20 November 1984, DY 34/12638, SAPMOBArch; ICFTU, '4th World Women's Conference, Madrid', April 1985, ARCH00624, folder 294, IISH; Richards, 'Transnational Links and Constraints'; Lóránd, 'International Solidarity'; Zimmermann, 'Spurring Women to Action'; Çağatay, 'Women Workers' Education at the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions'.

Appendix 1: glossary of select organizations

Organized alphabetically, this glossary includes both lesser-known organizations that have been significant in the historical development of women's labour activism in the region and some well-known ones whose politics around women's work is highlighted in the book. The country in which a given organization was based appears in parentheses after its name.

A Drop of Milk/Kropla mleka (Poland). Established 1904, active into the 1930s. Founded by local physicians in Łódź (then Kingdom of Poland, Russian Empire) as a branch of the Warsaw Hygienic Association/Warszawskie Towarzystwo Higieniczne, it became an independent organization in 1917. It included women activists, such as Dr Zofia Garlicka, and provided assistance to infants of factory-employed mothers. It became a model for similar organizations in the Polish lands.

ÁFSZ: General Consumer Co-operative/Általános Fogyasztási Szövetkezet (Hungary). Established 1904, dissolved 1941. Aligned with the MSZDP, the ÁFSZ maintained a broad network of economic institutions (production co-operatives, retail stores, slaughterhouses, a savings bank and an insurance company) to improve the conditions of the working class. The first district Women's Guild/Nőgilde was established in 1929, and the number of district guilds grew quickly to more than 20. In 1930 a central administration was established. Women's Guilds aimed to recruit new members, increase co-operative turnover and educate co-operative members. To this end, they held lectures (related to hygiene or co-operatives, or for entertainment), organized cultural evenings (with children's choirs) and excursions, and hosted a summer ball. Guild members participated in ICWG conferences from 1930.

AFŽ: Women's Antifascist Front/Antifašistički front žena (Yugoslavia). Established 1942, dissolved 1953. Mass women's organization involved in care work, medical assistance, logistics at the front, and the organization of life in liberated areas during World War II. After the war, it shifted its focus to literacy courses and education for women, along with the socialization of reproductive labour. The organization existed at the federal, republic and local levels.

Association for the Protection of Woman and Child/Asociația pentru Protecția Femeii și Copilului (Romania). Also known as the Mother and Child/Mama și Copilul association. Established 1935, dissolved 1935. Founded in Bucharest by women activists, some of whom had ties to the illegal PCdR. With several dozen members, it sought to mobilize women to protest against political repression, against the high cost of living and poor working conditions in factories, and for the legalization of abortion. Activists provided free childcare, legal assistance, literacy courses for adults and tutoring for school-age children, and distributed milk that was safe to drink. It ran social centres in two city districts, visited by up to 100 women monthly. In autumn 1935, several of the women leaders of the

association were investigated as communist agitators and fined, some receiving one- to three-month prison sentences. Among the sentenced was Irma Rosenberg (also known as Irma Mico) who later moved to France, joined a communist women's resistance group during World War II and is now commemorated as a key figure of the French Resistance.

Association for Women Workers' Education/Arbeiterinnen-Bildungsverein (Austria). Established 1890. An organization of social democratic women in Vienna for discussing political agendas and offering courses for women workers' elementary and further education such as literacy, languages, healthcare and accounting. It invited women's rights activists such as Auguste Fickert to speak at its events and was linked with the SDAP. It became obsolete in 1893, as many of its renowned members such as Adelheid Popp and Anna Boschek founded an offshoot called the Reading and Discussion Club Libertas/Lese- und Diskutierclub Libertas. Earlier associations for educating women workers in the Habsburg Monarchy had existed in the 1870s in cities including Brno (Brünn, Moravia/Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia), Graz, Hainburg and Wiener Neustadt. These were founded because women were (often) not allowed in the workers' education associations; they served the dual purpose of organizing women and offering educational courses and providing resources (such as libraries).

Association of Social Democratic Women and Girls/Verein sozial-demokratischer Frauen und Mädchen (Austria). Established 1902, dissolved 1911. Founded in Vienna after several earlier attempts to organize a free and political women's organization during the Third Women's Conference of the SDAP; became a member organization of the SDAP at the 1909 Party Congress. Dissolved because of the ban on women organizing in political associations in the Cisleithanian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. As the Association for Women Workers' Education and the *Women Workers' Paper* (*Arbeiterinnen-Zeitung*, linked to the SDAP), the association was an attempt by women to self-organize following a similar decision by the Second Socialist International in Brussels in 1891 to organize women.

ATKF: Federation of Turkish Women in Europe/Avrupa Türkiye Kadınlar Federasyonu (Turkey, international). Established 1975. Founded with reference to the UN's International Women's Year in 1975 on the initiative of the TKP, it was an umbrella organization for initiatives addressing Turkish women workers' problems in European countries.

In 1976, it had six member initiatives in Belgium, Germany and the UK, which focused on increasing trade union membership and providing education on work-related rights as well as literacy training for women (workers) living in these countries. Published *Woman Labourer* (*Emekçi Kadın*), a bulletin which included news related to Turkish migrant women's working conditions in various European countries and their labour activism. One of its member initiatives, Women's Union in Ruhr-Gelsenkirchen/Gelsenkirchen Kadınlar Birliği, had its own publication called *Woman* (*Kadın*) and survived well into the 1980s through active collaboration with trade unions in Germany.

AUF: Independent Women Action/Aktion Unabhängiger Frauen (Austria). Established in 1972. One of the key groups of the Autonomous Women's Movement in Austria. Renamed Women's Centre Vienna/Frauenzentrum Wien in 1978 (dissolved in 1984). Published a magazine with the same name (*AUF*) and mobilized for numerous feminist causes in the 1970s and 1980s, such as the right to abortion. In their publications and campaigns around International Women's Day (8 March) and International Workers' Day (1 May), AUF women repeatedly drew attention to the unequal treatment of women's issues within the Austrian trade union movement. From 1980 to its discontinuation in 2011, the magazine *AUF* was published by the Association for the Promotion of Feminist Projects/Verein zur Förderung feministischer Projekte (founded 1980), which still exists at the time of writing and runs the feminist bookstore Chicklit in Vienna city centre.

BDFÖ: Federation of Democratic Women Austria/Bund Demokratischer Frauen Österreichs (Austria). Established in 1946, ongoing. Founded as a cross-party organization mainly by communist women, many of them returning from exile and/or imprisonment, probably on the model of the WIDF. The BDFÖ joined the WIDF in 1948, causing many non-communist women to leave the organization; its remaining social democratic members were expelled from their party. The BDFÖ's close links with the KPÖ remained until late in the twentieth century; the KPÖ's newspaper *Voice of Woman* (*Stimme der Frau*), founded in 1945, served as an important publication organ for the BDFÖ; BDFÖ presidents and secretaries, such as Anna Hornik-Strömer, were KPÖ members and at times served on the KPÖ's Central Committee. Topics touched upon by the BDFÖ included reform of marriage and family law, abortion, equal pay for equal work, peace and disarmament, and the compatibility of motherhood and paid work.

BKP: Bulgarian Communist Party/Bulgarska komunisticheska partiia/Българска комунистическа партия (Bulgaria). Established 1919, evolved into the Bulgarian Socialist Party/Bulgarska sotsialisticheska partiia/Българска социалистическа партия in 1990, ongoing. Founded by members of the former ‘narrow’ faction of the BRSDP, the BKP became illegal in 1924 but continued to operate underground, re-established in 1927 under the name Workers’ Party/Rabotnicheska partiia/Работническа партия, from 1938 to 1948 Bulgarian Workers’ Party (Communists)/Bulgarska rabotnicheska partiia (komunisti)/Българска работническа партия (комунисти), illegal from 1934 to 1944. Came to power in September 1944 as part of an Allies-aligned coalition after a coup; within a few years took total control of the government and established a state socialist regime. In the interwar period, its women’s sections did not have a stable institutional structure because of the turbulent political climate, persecution and the necessity of working underground. Communist women organized in these sections were vocal on issues of equal pay, maternity protection, socialized childcare, labour protection, social security and healthcare rights. In the state socialist period, frequent restructurings hindered a long-lasting women’s section; nevertheless, a special department for ‘work among women’ existed between 1951 and 1957 within the Central Committee of the BKP.

BNZhS: Bulgarian National Women’s Union/Bulgarski naroden zhenski suiuz/Български народен женски съюз (Bulgaria). Established 1944, dissolved 1950. Main women’s organization in early state socialist Bulgaria. Among other political and cultural activities, the BNZhS was concerned with alleviating the burden of peasant and working women’s unpaid labour, particularly through the establishment of public childcare facilities.

BRSDP: Bulgarian Workers’ Social Democratic Party/Bulgarska rabotnicheska sotsialdemokraticheska partiia/Българска работническа социалдемократическа партия (Bulgaria). Established in 1894, evolved into the BKP 1919 (‘narrow’ faction)/dissolved 1948 (‘broad’, later ‘united’ faction). Split into two separate factions in 1903: the ‘narrow’ socialists around Dimitur Blagoev evolved into the BKP in 1919; the ‘broad’ socialists around Ianko Sakuzov continued with the name BRSDP (o) (united/obedineni/обединени) until 1948, when it was dissolved by the state socialist regime. A women’s group in the BRSDP (‘narrow’) was founded in 1905 by Vela Blagoeva (Table 3). The group was institutionalized as the Central Women’s Commission/Tsentralna

zhenska komisiia/Централна женска комисия in 1913 with Tina Kirkova, Liuba Ivoshevich Dimitrova and Raina Kandeve as its leading members. In 1914 and 1915, the commission held conferences of women social democrats in Sofia.

BZhS: Bulgarian Women's Union/Bulgarski zhenski suiuz/Български женски съюз (Bulgaria). Established 1901, dissolved 1944. The main women's and feminist organization in the country; as an umbrella organization, united existing local, national and branch women's organizations. In 1903 a group of socialist women, headed by Vela Blagoeva and Kina Konova, left the BZhS to form a women's group in the BRSDP. The BZhS's agenda centred around charity work and furthering women's political, social and economic rights, including in the fields of work and education. It was successively chaired by Ekaterina Karavelova, Iulia Malinova and Dimitrana Ivanova. The organization was affiliated with the ICW and the International Women's Suffrage Alliance.

Co-operative Women's Sections/Sekcije žena zadrugarki (Yugoslavia). Established 1951, dissolved 1960s. Women's sections within the mixed-gender co-operative system were involved in organizing courses on agricultural production for women, advocating the socialization of reproductive labour and the inclusion of more women in decision-making positions within the co-operative movement, and encouraging more women to join co-operatives. Founded at federal, republic and local levels, the sections collaborated closely with other women's organizations in Yugoslavia (Figure 21). The Co-operative Women's Section of Yugoslavia became a member of the ICWG in 1951 (Table 1).

ČSŽ: Czechoslovak Women's Union/Československý svaz žen (Czechoslovakia). Established 1967, dissolved 1990. Nationwide women's organization in state socialist Czechoslovakia. Its official goal was to increase the representation of women in leading positions and in the public sphere. The position of working women, especially with regard to women's right to work, issues of paid work and unpaid care work as well as motherhood-related benefits and services, was a core interest for the ČSŽ. The organization successfully influenced state policies on women's issues. Its membership totalled 300,000 by 1968, and more than one million in 1980.

CWK PPS: Women's Central Committee of the PPS/Centralny Wydział Kobiety PPS (Poland). Established 1919, suspended 1922,

re-activated 1924, dissolved 1939. The CWK's creation within the PPS was met with strong resistance as it was considered a manifestation of intra-party separatism, leading to its marginalization and eventual suspension in 1922. Once re-activated, it sought to increase both women's membership in the PPS and the number of women in its executive organs. The women-focused publication of the PPS, *Women's Voice* (*Głos Kobiet*), predated the CWK, but was associated with it during its existence. In addition to its publications and agitation work, the CWK organized summer camps for children and vocational training courses for women. Throughout the interwar period, Dorota Kłuszyńska occupied leading positions in the CWK.

DA: Workers' Academy/Dělnická akademie (Czechoslovakia). Established 1896, dissolved 1948. The main educational institution and cultural centre of the ČSDSD. Its goal was to educate and raise the cultural level of workers and to train functionaries and propagandists for the party. By 1936, it had 78 branches in Czechoslovakia (including 16 in Slovakia and 7 in Subcarpathian Rus); it offered mixed-gender seminars, training courses, lectures, and cultural and sport activities, but also women-only courses. It organized a summer school and training courses for unemployed workers. It reached more than three and a half million people via its activities in 1935 alone and became the most important institution to provide women workers with the opportunity for adult and party education.

DİSK: Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey/Türkiye Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Turkey). Established 1967, dissolved after the 1980 *coup d'état*, reopened 1992, ongoing. Having emerged as an alternative to Türk-İş, DİSK was one of the main actors in workers' left-wing mobilization in the late 1960s and 1970s. Before 1980, DİSK did not have a gender-specific structure but collaborated in the second half of the 1970s with the İKD in addressing women workers' problems. The DİSK Women's Bureau/DİSK Kadın Dairesi was established in 1995.

DSAP: German Social Democratic Workers' Party in the Czechoslovak Republic/Deutsche sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei in der Tschechoslowakischen Republik (Czechoslovakia). Established 1919, dissolved 1939. Women's sections existed within local party organizations in addition to women's committees/Frauenkomitees on each organizational level of the party. The purpose of these structures was agitation work among women, training of functionaries and education of

party members. They advocated equal pay for equal work, free and legal abortion, protection of pregnancy and motherhood in social legislation, expansion of trade inspectorates, and legal equality for married women. Women in the DSAP had their own journals, *Die Sozialdemokratin* (*The Social Democratic Woman*) (1920–7) and *Die Gleichheit* (*Equality*) (1927–38). Key activists included Fanny Blatny and Irene Kirpal, who served as members of the Chamber of Deputies.

Friends of the Children Austria/Österreichische Kinderfreunde (Austria). Established 1908, dissolved 1934, re-established in 1945, ongoing. Founded as the non-partisan workers' association Kinderfreunde in Graz, it soon took hold in other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy, and local groups were formed that organized slide shows, hikes and holiday camps. In 1917, a national association (Reichsverein Kinderfreunde) was founded, with Emmy Freundlich as its secretary. In 1921, it was incorporated into the SDAP and united with the Free School/Freie Schule association, whose aim was to reduce the influence of Catholicism in the school system. Forced to dissolve with the establishment of the austrofascist Ständestaat in 1934, Kinderfreunde was re-established after the end of World War II.

FSZP: Independent Socialist Party/Független Szocialista Párt (Hungary). Established 1897, dissolved 1906. Headed by István Várkonyi, the party grew out of the independent social democratic movement (független szociáldemokrata mozgalom), an agrarian socialist movement that started in the second half of the 1890s and involved poor peasants especially in central, southern and eastern Hungary. It encouraged peasants to establish local trade union-like organizations to fight for better wages and working conditions and explicitly encouraged women's organizing. In 1897 several women-only groups were established in the local mixed-gender party organizations, and peasant women were regular contributors to the movement's paper *Agrarian Worker* (*Földművelő*) (Table 4), supported by Mariska Várkonyi (Figure 2), editor of the paper in 1897–8. *Földművelő* was banned by authorities in 1898, but peasants restarted and edited it at Hód-Mező-Vásárhely (Hódmezővásárhely) and women continued to publish in it, between 1899 and 1904. Following the imprisonment of István Várkonyi in 1898, the FSZP's activities shrank until the party revived in 1905 as the Independent Socialist Alliance/Független Szocialista Szövetség; it fused with another party in 1906 to become the Independent Socialist Peasant Alliance/Független Szocialista Parasztszövetség.

Help/Ajutorul (Romania). Established 1893. Using the capital of the earlier women's mutualist society the Saviour/Salvatorul, it provided funds for dowries, burial insurance and burial services to women members; it had more than 800 contributing members and around 100 active members. It was affiliated to the PSDMR, represented by three delegates at the 1894 congress of the party and headquartered in the Bucharest workers' club linked to the PSDMR. After 1896, most of Help's members parted ways with the PSDMR and the workers' club. Thereafter, the organization became a philanthropic rather than mutual aid and burial insurance society. From 1893 to 1896, Ana Niculescu was its president.

ICFTU: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. Established 1949, dissolved 2006 to merge with the IFCTU and form the new International Trade Union Confederation. Western-dominated organization in Cold War rivalry with the communist-aligned WFTU; its gender politics was shaped through collaboration with the ILO and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, alongside other UN agencies. In 1957, the Joint International Trade Secretariats/International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ITS/ICFTU) Consultative Committee for Women Workers (also known as the ICFTU Women's Committee) was established. Women trade unionists from Austria, such as Wilhelmine Moik (chair, 1957–62/3) and Rosa Weber (titular member, 1963–6), and Turkey, such as Gül Neşe Erel (corresponding committee member, 1967–72), Nilüfer Gököz (titular member, 1989–91) and Seyhan Erdoğan (titular member, 1993–6), participated in this body. After the Cold War, the ICFTU Women's Committee offered educational activities in former state socialist countries such as Poland, Romania and Hungary.

ICWG: International Co-operative Women's Guild. Established 1921, unofficially at the first international co-operative women's conference, officially 1924, dissolved officially 1966, no data on activities beyond 1962. International organization of women in the co-operative movement involved in peace activism, the economy and co-operatives, reproductive labour, women's civil and political rights and women's position in the co-operative movement. Unique for bringing together social democratic and communist women activists, the organization elected the Austrian social democrat Emmy Freundlich as a first and long-term president until 1948 and had Central and Eastern European countries (initially only partially) affiliated to it ([Table 1](#), [Figure 8](#), [Figure 12](#)).

ICWW/IFWW: International Congress of Working Women/International Federation of Working Women. Established as ICWW in 1919, renamed IFWW in 1921, succeeded by the Women's Committee of the IFTU from 1924 (a course of action not supported by important protagonists). International working women's organization founded during the ICWW in Washington, DC. Its American initiators from the National Women's Trade Union League and some other protagonists envisioned it as an autonomous organization of trade union-affiliated wage-working women including those aligned with the social democratic and Catholic political camps. However, it did not have the support of several leading German and Austrian trade union women, while its British initiators imagined the federation as an organization that included non-waged working women. Its priorities included support for ILO-initiated labour laws (including some gendered labour protection laws), women labour activists' better representation in bodies dealing with labour law, combating unemployment, discussing the viability of and various formulas for family allowances, developing women's international co-operation as a precondition for avoiding war, and immigrants' labour rights. Its three congresses (1919, 1921, 1923) were attended by delegates from Central and Eastern Europe ([Table 6](#)).

IFCTU: International Federation of Christian Trade Unions/Confédération internationale des syndicats chrétiens (CISC). Established 1920, renamed World Confederation of Labour/Confédération mondiale du travail in 1968, dissolved in 2006 to merge with the ICFTU and form the new International Trade Union Confederation. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria were members of the IFCTU from its foundation; other countries joined later. The topic of women's work was part of the IFCTU's agenda from the beginning: a Committee for Women's Work/Commission pour le travail féminin was established in 1928 and resumed after 1945 under varying names (International Council of Women Workers, later World Women's Committee). International conferences on women's work were held before and after World War II. While the IFCTU was vocal on policies concerning equal pay and protecting working women's rights, acknowledging the 'natural vocation' of women was part of the agenda, resulting in promoting the protection of motherhood and a chequered record on married women's right to work. Among the members active in the committees on women's work in the IFCTU was the Austrian Grete Rehor. Very few women from the region of focus participated in the IFCTU women's conferences during the interwar period ([Table 6](#)).

IFTU: International Federation of Trade Unions. Established 1919, dissolved 1945. International organization of social democratic-affiliated or -leaning trade unions. The IFTU Women's Committee was established in 1924 following the dissolution of the IFWW. The committee pursued a wide-ranging agenda with regard to women's work, including the promotion of women workers' unionization, improved (gendered) labour protection, healthcare, welfare and social security rights, raising women's wages, and defending women's right to work. Women from the region of focus participated in the organization (Table 6).

İKD: Association of Progressive Women/İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (Turkey). Established 1975, formally shut down 1979, active into the 1980s. Mass socialist women's organization with a focus on women workers' problems. Founded with reference to the UN's International Women's Year in 1975 by the initiative of women members of the TKP, the İKD comprised women from various left-socialist parties, groups and trade unions, as well as industrial workers, students, teachers, housewives and state employees. Its activities took place in neighbourhoods, trade unions and workplaces as well as homes, and covered a wide range of topics from literacy and home economics to political and trade union education (Figure 28, Figure 29). It also collaborated with DİSK to mobilize women workers to organize around their demands – for example, through the joint educational publication *Handbook of the Woman Worker as Mother and Labourer* (*Ana ve Emekçi Olarak İşçi Kadının El Kitabı*, 1976). Although not a formal affiliate of the WIDF, the İKD had ties with it and its affiliates in the region, such as in Hungary and Bulgaria. It was forced to dissolve by the government in 1979 and, after the 1980 military coup, most of its leaders went into exile, continuing their activism in various Western European countries.

International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern. Established 1920, reorganized as the Women's Section of the ECCI in 1925, dissolved 1935. Founded during the First Conference of Communist Women held in Moscow, the secretariat/section was vocal on the issues of childcare and maternity, equal pay for equal work, discriminatory layoffs, abortion rights and women's suffrage. It had a strong representation of Eastern European women (from countries both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus) who worked as functionaries (usually during political exile in the Soviet Union) or as attendees at communist women's conferences. It also maintained strong ties with the women's sections of the communist parties from the region.

IWW: Industrial Workers of the World. Members also known as the Wobblies. Established 1905, ongoing. As a radical trade union in the United States, the IWW was highly critical of the main US trade union organization, the American Federation of Labor. The IWW's constitution conceived of labour struggle as class war and demanded the abolition of the wage system. Many members of the IWW opposed World War I, even if the IWW itself took no formal stance on the matter. At its peak, in the 1910s, the IWW had more than 100,000 members; its membership declined after 1917. The US government considered it a subversive organization. The IWW's women labour activists were involved in radical strikes in the textile industry in Paterson, New Jersey, and Lawrence, Massachusetts. One of its activists was the Romanian-born labour and women's rights activist Ernestine Hara Kettler.

KBZh: Committee of Bulgarian Women/Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени (Bulgaria). Established 1958, renamed KDBZh in 1979, dissolved 1990. The KBZh evolved from the Committee of Democratic Bulgarian Women/Komitet na demokraticnite bulgarski zheni/Комитет на демократичните български жени (from 1950 to 1958) which was part of the Fatherland Front/Otechestven front/Отечествен фронт. As the main women's organization in state socialist Bulgaria in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the KBZh was involved in the drafting of the Politburo's 1973 decision on 'enhancing the role of women in the building of a developed socialist society', which signalled a turn in the state socialist regime's gender policy that involved extended maternity leave and increased funding for childcare facilities. The KBZh, and from 1979 the KDBZh, were active in promoting equal pay and furthering women's education and employment opportunities, as well as measures to alleviate women's unpaid labour in the household.

KDAŽ: Conference for the Social Activity of Women/Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena (Yugoslavia). Established 1961, dissolved 1990. Mass women's organization that functioned within the framework of a self-managed socialist system at federal, republic and local levels. Successor organization of the AFŽ (1942–53) and the League of Women's Associations/Savez ženskih društava (1953–61).

KPJ: Communist Party of Yugoslavia/Komunistička partija Jugoslavije (Yugoslavia). Established 1919, dissolved 1990. Initially the Socialist Labour Party of Yugoslavia (Communists)/Socijalistička radnička partija Jugoslavije (komunista); name changed to the KPJ

in 1920. Illegal from the end of 1920 through the interwar period, it was in power from 1945, under the name the League of Communists of Yugoslavia/Savez komunista Jugoslavije from 1952. Its Central Women's Secretariat/Centralni sekretarijat žena was established as early as 1919, publishing the journal *Equality* (*Jednakost*) in 1920. The Central Women's Secretariat and secretariats at the local levels were involved in organizing various gatherings and conferences. The KPJ's more dedicated engagement with the politics of women's work began in the 1930s, culminating with the implementation of communist women's strategies from the Popular Front period, namely forming, joining and supporting various organizations to reach women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

KSČ: Communist Party of Czechoslovakia/Komunistická strana Československá (Czechoslovakia). Established 1921, dissolved 1992. A member of the Comintern, the KSČ took a Bolshevik turn from 1929 under the leadership of Klement Gottwald; banned in 1938. Members of the left wing of the ČSDSD, led by Anna Křenová and Marie Strnadová, organized a women's conference in 1921, attended by 180 delegates. Women's committees/komise žen were then established on the district level. In the interwar period, communist women in the KSČ focused on working women's issues, including unemployment, the persecution of strikers, high prices of food, low wages, wage equality and the protection of motherhood. The Czechoslovak communist women's journal was the *Woman Communist* (*Komunistka*) from 1922, transformed into *Rozsévачka* (*Dissemination*) in 1926. Women in the KSČ concentrated on government policies to enable women workers with family responsibilities to engage in paid work. Their demands included childcare in the workplace, daycare for children in separate nurseries and kindergartens, liberation from housework, and reproductive rights.

LK: Women's League/Liga Kobiet (Poland). Established 1945, named the Social and Civil Women's League/Społeczno-Obywatelska Liga Kobiet until 1949, dissolved 1989. Mass women's organization that advocated party policy among women, facilitated women's labour and political activism within the state socialist system, and addressed the reconciliation of women's roles as mothers and workers.

LKP: League of Polish Women/Liga Kobiet Polskich (Poland). Established 1918. Emerged as a result of a merger of the Polish Women's League for the War Emergency/Liga Kobiet Polskich Pogotowia

Wojennego (established in 1913 in the Kingdom of Poland) and the League of Women of Galicia and Silesia/Liga Kobiet Galicji i Śląska (established in 1915); united numerous prominent left-leaning women activists, including Dorota Kłuszyńska. In the interwar period, its members pursued activities aimed at improving the political standing of women and providing welfare support for women and children.

Márta Association/Márta-Egyesület (Hungary). Established 1893, renamed Márta Welfare and Non-Profit Association/Márta Közjótékonyági és Közhasznú Egyesület in 1912, active into the 1930s. Key non-denominational organization (including Protestant and assimilated Jewish members) in the arena of middle class-dominated cross-class activism for women servants, including placement services, and welfare and leisure activities. Over time, the association developed a focus on sociopolitical demands, including the promotion of the ‘impartial’ mediation between the interests of employers and servants. In its placement services, it collaborated with the Budapest municipality from the years before World War I. Beginning in this period, and increasingly in the 1920s, its activities directed at domestic workers competed with those of Catholic women’s organizations operating in connection with the National Catholic Women’s Protection Association/Országos Katholikus Nővédő-Egyesület.

MCKSZ: Cultural Association of Gypsies in Hungary/Magyarországi Cigányok Kulturális Szövetsége (Hungary). Established 1957, dissolved 1961. The first national organization for Roma in Hungary. Mária László (Figure 22), who had lobbied for the establishment of the organization since the early 1950s, was its secretary general until she was forced to step down in 1958. Under her leadership, the MCKSZ undertook significant efforts towards achieving self-representation for Roma, their inclusion in national employment and educational programmes, including support for the expansion of the system of Romani small co-operatives, a form of co-operative work that Romani nail smiths had started in the 1940s in Hungary, and the preservation of Romani cultural heritage and languages.

MME: Association of Women Workers of Hungary/Magyarországi Munkásnő Egyesület (Hungary). Established 1904, dissolved 1928. Women-only organization supported by the mixed-gender MSZDP. Grew out of the Budapest-based Women Workers’ Circle/Budapesti Munkásnők Asztaltársasága, established 1902. Mariska Gárdos (Table 3)

was a leading figure in the Women Workers' Circle and the MME, and the association's first president. Members of the MME were simultaneously MSZDP and/or trade union members and/or members of the NOE, as well as future members of the FE. In 1904 the Women Workers' Circle organized the first large meeting in Budapest. The MME held its first national women's congress in 1905; it fought for the improvement of the social situation and the protection of women industrial workers, with a focus on women working in the textile and tobacco industries and the organization of household servants. Its main agendas included improvement of wages, banning of women's night work, and establishment of a state-provided mother, infant and child protection system. It organized training courses and information and cultural events and published the *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*) (1905–49, with interruptions) (Table 4). From the 1910s the MME lost significance in comparison to the MSZDP ONB but remained an important actor in the organization of household employees in the interwar period.

MSZDP ONB: National Women's Organizing Committee of the MSZDP/MSZDP Országos Nőszervező Bizottsága (Hungary). Established 1905, dissolved 1948. Also known as National Women's Committee/Országos Nőbizottság. Included in the MSZDP organizational regulations from 1908, the MSZDP ONB was the only national women's organ of the party. Due to the revised 1912 party regulations, it lost much of its initial autonomy from the MSZDP. The MSZDP ONB was the highest organ of the women's organizing committees that worked at municipal district, municipal, county district and county levels. These committees focused on recruiting women workers as members, distributing *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*) (Table 4), organizing educational and cultural events for members, and monitoring how newly issued regulations affected women workers (Figure 11). MSZDP ONB representatives attended the yearly MSZDP meetings. The topic of the yearly MSZDP ONB women's congresses was approved by the MSZDP.

MSZDP OOB: National Educational Committee of the MSZDP/MSZDP Országos Oktatási Bizottsága (Hungary). Established 1922, dissolved 1948. The MSZDP OOB was a committee of four and later five members, created to centralize the political and trade union educational activities of the MSZDP. The MSZDP ONB organized women workers' education under the auspices of the OOB. After 1929, the ONB was responsible for appointing the fifth member of the OOB; in 1930, the

OOB developed a specific programme for boosting the inclusion of women into educational activities. From the late 1920s, the OOB focused on improving the quality of education; it developed and published syllabi for political education seminars, trained teachers and invested in better educational infrastructure. The educational activities of the OOB concentrated on informative presentations and practical training in hygiene, child-rearing and home economics, while the OOB organized political lectures, reading seminars and the first week-long women-only political seminar in 1933. Teachers included Mrs Péter Ágoston, Szeréna Ladányi, Anna Kéthly (Table 3) and Mariska Gárdos (Table 3).

National Catholic Women's Protection Association/Országos Katholikus Nővédő-Egyesület (Hungary). Established 1906, active into the 1940s. The forerunner of the association, the Protection Society of Catholic Women Workers/Katholikus Munkásnők Védőegyesülete, took the name Catholic Women's Protection Association in 1899. The National Catholic Women's Protection Association focused on cross-class women's protection work, including 'patronage' activities and institutions addressing women workers, children and adolescents considered at risk, and (former) women prisoners; it also supported middle-class working women. The National Federation of Catholic Housewives/Katholikus Háziasszonyok Országos Szövetsége, which became an organization formally independent from the association in 1907/8, was an important player in cross-class servants politics (see chapter 9) before World War I and in the interwar period, developing a stronger focus on training housewives. In the interwar period, when the association was a member of the Federation of Hungarian Catholic Women's Organization/Magyar Katholikus Nőegyesületek Szövetsége (founded in 1918), it greatly expanded its Women Workers' Home (Munkásnők Otthona), which had been established before World War I.

National Women's Trade Association/Országos Nőiparegylet (Hungary). Established 1872, dissolved 1892. Originally named Women's Trade Association of Pest-Buda/Pest-Budai Nőiparegylet. It played an important role in the promotion of women's and girls' work, as well as training in manual trades with a focus on the textile, clothing and adjacent industries. In 1881, it organized a large National Women's Trade Exhibition/Országos Nőiparkiallítás in Budapest. For a few years, it also operated a school for the training of women manual trades teachers. Another school successfully operated by the association for a longer period of time (and repeatedly reorganized), the manual trades school,

was handed over to public authorities at the beginning of the new school year in 1892/3. Bringing together prominent women and men members of the Budapest society, the association was women-led and remained so even when, in later years, selected men played an important role in it.

NOE: National Association of Women Office Workers/Nőtisztviselők Országos Egyesülete (Hungary). Established 1897, dissolved 1919. Women-only feminist association representing the professional and political interests of public and private office workers. The NOE established vocational and general courses (German, English, French, stenography, accounting, bill of exchange law), provided placement services, held lectures and offered entertainment programmes (concerts, tea evenings, readings, balls) to its members. It campaigned alongside the men-dominated Hungarian Association of Private Clerks/Magyarországi Magántisztviselők Országos Szövetsége for Sunday as a rest day and regulated working hours. The NOE functioned in close collaboration with the FE and jointly published the journal *Woman and Society (A Nő és a Társadalom)*; from 1915 the NOE published the *Journal of Women Office Workers (Nőtisztviselők Lapja)* under its own auspices. Rózsa Schwimmer and Janka Gergely played key roles in its organizational activities.

NSZZ: Independent Self-Governing Trade Union ‘Solidarity’/Niezależny Samorządny Związek Zawodowy ‘Solidarność’ (Poland). Established 1980, ongoing. An independent trade union fighting for workers’ rights that turned into a broad anti-governmental social movement and played a significant role in regime change in Poland. Women activists were among its founding members and were active in organizing strikes and promoting the demands of working women (in particular, paid maternity leave for three years, access to childcare facilities and a decrease in the retirement age), but were eventually marginalized in the movement and its memorialization after the collapse of state socialism in Poland.

PCdR: Communist Party of Romania/Partidul Comunist din România (Romania). Established 1921, Romanian Workers’ Party/Partidul Muncitoresc Român from 1948 until 1965, Romanian Communist Party/Partidul Comunist Român from 1965 to 1989, dissolved 1989. Illegal between 1924 and 1944, with suspected communists under heavy political police surveillance. Affiliated to the Third International from its founding. In 1921–3, the PCdR had several very active women’s

circles. Key interwar leaders such as Ecaterina Arbore (formerly in the PSDMR), Ana Pauker and Elena Filipovici travelled between Romania and the Soviet Union, especially in the early 1920s. A small party until 1945, the PCdR had numerous dedicated women members, many of whom participated in high-risk activism in Romania and abroad – including the Spanish Civil War and the French Resistance.

PSDMR: Social Democratic Workers' Party of Romania/Partidul Social Democrat al Muncitorilor din România (Romania). Established 1893, dissolved late 1940s. PSDMR members often used the simpler name Social Democratic Party/Partidul Social Democrat, which in 1910 became the name of the reconstituted party. The party became the Socialist Party/Partidul Socialist in 1918, returning to the name Social Democratic Party in the interwar period. In its early years, the PSDMR had several affiliated workers' societies, including Help (Ajutorul). Its programme included demands for political and civil equality between women and men, equal pay, and labour protection measures for women in industry. Socialist Women's Circles/Cercurile Femeilor Socialiste were established from 1911, under the influence of Ecaterina Arbore, one of the party's leaders; from 1914, the circles were fully integrated into the party structures. Thereafter, the party had women members and sought to attract more through the UFM, a federation of affiliated organizations.

RILU: Red International of Labour Unions (Profintern). Established 1921, dissolved 1937. Its programme regarding women workers featured an emphasis on equal pay, (gender-specific) protective legislation, maternity leave and socialized childcare. Established in 1928, the International Trade Union Committee of Women Workers of the Profintern (ITUCWWP) dissolved together with or before the end of the Profintern. Among the ITUCWWP's first members were trade unionists from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Yugoslavia. In 1930, a large international conference of women trade unionists was held in Moscow with the involvement of the ITUCWWP immediately after the Fifth Profintern Congress (sitting between 15 and 30 August 1930) ([Table 6](#)).

Romanian Workers' Aid/Ajutorul Muncitoresc Român (Romania). Colloquially known as Red Aid/Ajutorul Roșu. Established 1924, dissolved 1940. Red Aid offered prison support and social work organization linked to the communist, Comintern-tied International Red Aid.

The organization sought to provide material and moral support for imprisoned communist and other antifascist activists and their families (Figure 9). In Romania, it was animated by a core group of women activists, including Ofelia Manole, later a key member of the UFDR, and Elena Teodorescu, later a key WFTU representative (Table 9). Besides prison support, the organization sometimes supported striking women and was involved in poverty relief during periods of high unemployment.

SDAP: Social Democratic Workers' Party/Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei (Austria). Established 1888, dissolved 1934, re-established 1945 as Socialist Party of Austria/Sozialistische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ), renamed Social Democratic Party of Austria/Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ) in 1991, ongoing. After several different attempts to organize social democratic women (Association for Women Workers' Education, Association of Social Democratic Women and Girls), the Social Democratic Women's Committee/Frauenreichskomitee was formed in 1898 without consultation with the party or trade unions. After the admission of women to political parties in 1918, women's committees were established at all levels, and a Women's National Committee/Frauenreichskomitee, later Frauenzentralkomitee, was regularly elected at women's conferences. The most important demand until 1918 was women's suffrage; other issues during the First Austrian Republic were the rights to education and to work, equal pay, reproductive rights and inclusion of all wage-earning women in the social security system. After 1945, the Women's National Committee was set up again, renamed the Federal Women's Committee/Bundesfrauenkomitee from 1968. Social democratic trade union women were members of this committee.

SNZDS: Union of Civil Servants' Consumer Co-operatives/Savez nabavljačkih zadruga državnih službenika (Yugoslavia). Established 1921, dissolved 1941. Joined the ICA in the 1930s. Founded by the state (then Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), the organization came under communist influence from the second half of the 1930s. Communist women were active in it during the Popular Front period.

SSSK: Women's Social Self-Help Association/Stowarzyszenie Samopomoc Społeczna Kobiet (Poland). Established 1935, dissolved 1939. Organized on the initiative of social democratic activist Zofia Moraczewska, its grassroots activities were run by local circles, and its goals included the promotion of co-operative activity among women,

organization of vocational training and childcare, and support for women's civic initiatives. By spring 1939, the organization comprised around 2,700 members.

SZhKB: Bulgarian Women's Co-operative Union/Suiuz na zhenite kooperatoriki v Bulgariia/Съюз на жените кооператорки в България (Bulgaria). Established 1928, dissolved after joining the BNZhS in the late 1940s. It was involved in promoting women's inclusion in the co-operative movement, alleviating women's unpaid labour (with a focus on childcare), improving women's working and living conditions, and promoting peace. Its long-standing chair was Stoiana Ivanova (Table 1).

SZOT: National Council of Trade Unions/Szakszervezetek Országos Tanácsa (Hungary). Established 1948, superseded by the National Federation of Hungarian Trade Unions/Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége in 1990, ongoing. Communist-aligned umbrella trade union organization. SZOT operated a comparatively strong multiscale network (of changing size, outlook and influence over the decades) of trade union institutions and functionaries responsible for women-related issues and politics, from shopfloor to national leadership. Established in 1970, SZOT's Central Women's Committee/Központi Nőbizottság signalled a (renewed) emphasis in Hungarian women's politics on trade union work. The committee brought together leading women functionaries from all branch trade unions. From 1970 to 1977 Margit Czerván and from 1977 to 1987 Júlia Nyitrai served as its presidents.

Türk-İş: Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions/Türkiye İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Turkey). Established 1952, ongoing. Until the 2000s, it was the major trade union confederation in Turkey. Its gender politics was shaped through collaboration with the ICFTU, the US Agency for International Development and the ILO, alongside other international organizations. The Türk-İş Women Workers' Bureau/Türk-İş Kadın İşçiler Bürosu was formed in 1981. Throughout the 1980s, the main function of the bureau under the headship of Rahime Akdoğan (Table 9, Figure 30) was to collect information about women members in trade unions affiliated to Türk-İş and organize educational activities for women on women workers' rights, women's role in trade unions and trade union leadership, along with literacy, women's health and family planning.

UFDR: Union of Democratic Women of Romania/Uniunea Femeilor Democrate din România (Romania). Established 1947, dissolved 1953. Preceded by the Union of Antifascist Women of Romania/Uniunea Femeilor Antifasciste din România; replaced by the grassroots Delegates' Assemblies/Adunarea Delegatelor and women's commissions within municipal governments (1953–7), eventually by the National Council of Women/Consiliul Național al Femeilor (1958–89). Affiliated to the WIDF and closely aligned with its work. Led by 'veteran' women activists of the PCdR, the UFDR had local organizations in nearly all of the 40 counties of Romania, with activists visiting villages in their county regularly – especially during the first phase of the land collectivization process (1949–53). The UFDR aimed to mobilize women for reconstruction, in support of the new 'popular democracy' regime and the fight for peace, and to safeguard the rights women had acquired after 1945. It was especially active in combating women's illiteracy and sought to improve living standards for families, primarily for children. It published the magazine *Woman (Femeia)*, initially edited by Elena Teodorescu (Table 9); the magazine outlived the UFDR, appearing until 1989.

UFM: Union of Working Women of Romania/Uniunea Femeilor Muncitoare din România (Romania). Established 1931, dissolved late 1940s. Federation of women's organizations, linked to the PSDMR (at the time referred to as Social Democratic Party/Partidul Social Democrat) and the IACW of the LSI. A delegation of the UFM, including Eugenia Deleanu-Rădăceanu, participated in the 1931 Socialist Women's Conference in Vienna (Figure 13). At its founding congress, the UFM was specifically set up as a separate women's organization to attract women into the PSDMR; only party members could be part of the UFM leadership committees. At its peak in 1931–2, the UFM had around 1,500 members in 12 sections; by 1933 there were only 7 sections left. It published the 'Working Woman' Bulletin (*Buletinul 'Femeia muncitoare'*), a (technically) monthly publication with Romanian, Hungarian and German versions (Table 4). It introduced the celebration of International Women's Day, with slogans in 1931–3 mirroring priorities of the IACW (antimilitarism, antifascism) and making local demands (introduction of unemployment insurance, unification of insurance systems in Romania). From 1934 on, it focused on protesting harsher laws criminalizing abortion.

UN CSW: United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. Established 1946, ongoing. The UN's intergovernmental body operating

under ECOSOC and dedicated to issues of gender equality and empowerment of women. It became one of the major international forums for women activists from Eastern European countries (both belonging and not belonging to the region of focus) to elaborate on and contribute to the development of equal pay and social policies for working women. Eastern European activists participated in the UN CSW sessions as delegates of their home countries or, in the capacity of observers, of branch trade unions affiliated to the WFTU.

ÚSČD: Central Union of Czechoslovak Co-operatives/Ústřední svaz československých družstev (Czechoslovakia). Established 1908, dissolved 1939. The central union of social democratic co-operatives. Its women's committees and a Central Committee of Co-operative Women/Ústřední výbor družstevnic were established in 1926, the latter to co-ordinate the activities of women's committees on the district level and to take part in agitation and educational work. The Central Committee of Co-operative Women joined the ICWG in 1927; 50 women's committees were active in Czechoslovakia by 1934 (Table 1, Figure 8, Figure 12). The main task of women's committees was to organize women, increase membership and increase the sales of co-operatives. Committees also organized activities for children; held lectures and courses to prepare women's co-operative work and provide them with an understanding of the co-operative movement and knowledge of economic matters; published pamphlets and translated foreign works on co-operativism; and advocated for peace and disarmament in the 1930s.

ÚVSDŽ: Central Committee of Social Democratic Women/Ústřední výbor sociálně demokratických žen (Czechoslovakia). Established 1919, dissolved 1938. The organization of women within the ČSDSD. It oversaw the work of district and local agitation circles. In 1928, it reported 2,066 committee meetings. Its main tasks were agitation work among women workers (for example, through periodicals) (Table 4) and organization of educational activities for women (political education, practical courses, training of functionaries). The social democratic women's agenda included rationalization and reorganization of housework, equal formal institutional education for girls before entering the labour force, equal rights for illegitimate children and unmarried women, defence of the rights of (married) women to gainful employment, unconditional maternity insurance, the legal equality of women and protective legislation for working women.

VDW: Association of German Economic Co-operatives/Verband deutscher Wirtschaftsgenossenschaften (Czechoslovakia). Established 1922, dissolved 1939. The Women's Section/Frauensektion was organized under the auspices of the VDW, led by Margarete Goldschmied, and from 1931 by Emmy Riedl. It joined the ICWG in 1930 (Table 1). The Women's Section held its first conference in 1923, where it published pamphlets, held lectures and sent out schemes of work to women officials. It put a special emphasis on educational activities and the training of women functionaries and organized the first educational course in 1924 as a seven-day school in Hirschberg am See (Doksy, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia). It also carried out agitation work among children and organized children's social and cultural activities. The *Consumer Co-operative Family Paper* (*Konsumgenossenschaftliches Familienblatt*) was largely dedicated to co-operative women's interests.

WFTU: World Federation of Trade Unions. Established 1945, ongoing. Global organization of (from 1949 strictly communist-aligned) national trade union federations. From the late 1940s onwards, it pursued a proactive politics of addressing women's labour issues at the large interstate international organizations (UN bodies, the ILO). While its representation of Eastern European women and their issues was limited in the 1950s, the WFTU gradually expanded its scope of interest in women's politics, fostering active collaborations and the exchange of experience between Eastern European women and women activists from other countries regarding the improvement of working women's lives. The WFTU installed a woman as a full-time top-level secretary (Elena Teodorescu) as early as 1956 (Table 9).

WIDF: Women's International Democratic Federation. Established 1945, ongoing. The largest communist-aligned women's international organization of the Cold War era, the WIDF had affiliates and sympathizers throughout the region and beyond. It pursued an agenda on peace, women's rights, anticolonialism and anti-racism. Problems and issues of working women comprised an important part of this agenda. Women trade unionists from the WFTU and its affiliates collaborated with the WIDF, participated in its activities and helped shape its politics on women's work. Participating in the UN CSW and more broadly in ECOSOC, the WIDF contributed to the making of some major UN documents and events that shaped gender politics globally, such as the 1967 Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the 1975 International Women's Year and the 1976–85 UN Women's Decade.

Women's Charity Organization 'Constancy'/Zhensko blagotvornitelno druzhestvo 'Postoianstvo'/Женско благотворително дружество 'Постоянство' (Bulgaria). Established 1895. Women's charitable society in Plovdiv (Bulgaria); its main purpose was the management of and financial support for a girls' professional school with the same name. Starting with just 56 students and 2 one-year sewing courses in 1896, the school gradually lengthened and broadened its programme and increased the number of students. Apart from the girls' professional school, the society also supported other charitable institutions such as orphanages, crèches, old age homes and hospitals, as well as the Bulgarian war efforts during the Balkan wars and World War I. The exact year of dissolution is unclear, but Constancy's assets were nationalized, along with those of all other charitable organizations, in October 1946.

ZDŽD: Association of Working Women and Girls/Zveza delavskih žen in deklet (Slovenia, Yugoslavia). Established 1924, dissolved 1935. Founded with the idea of spreading consumer co-operativism among women; consisted of social democrats, communists and non-party members until 1926; after that, it became a social democratic organization. From 1929, there was a renewed presence of communists. It was active in co-operative matters and in supporting wage and strike movements. It was in touch with the ICWG as a potential Yugoslav candidate for membership during the interwar period (Table 1).

ZhSDS: Women's Social Democratic Union/Zhenski sotsialdemokratsheski suiuz/Женски социалдемократически съюз (Bulgaria). Established 1921, dissolved 1934. Federation of women's organizations linked to the BRSDP (o). Its most active periods were the early 1920s and the early 1930s, when it also published two periodicals: *Prosperity* (Благоденствие) (1921–4) and *Dissatisfied Woman* (Недоволната) (1931–4) (Table 4). Among its prominent activists were Iordanka (Iurdanka) Bozvelieva (a long-standing chair of the union), Nadezhda Bozhilova, Raina Khristova, Iulia Sultanova and Kina Konova.

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Appendix 2: glossary of select protagonists

Protagonists introduced in this glossary were selected to provide a sense of the types of activism, political affiliations and other significant forms of belonging that shaped women's labour activism, as well as with a view to representing activism from across the territories discussed in the volume. The entries highlight the labour-related elements of the protagonists' activism. We chose to not include particularly well-known activists about whom significant scholarly literature is available for an international audience, nor did we include activists whose biographies are discussed in some detail in the chapters.

Rahime Akdoğan (1950–)

Trade unionist and labour educator in Turkey and internationally. Akdoğan started her trade union career in the late 1960s as a workplace representative of Tez-Büro-İş. Between 1981 and 1989, she was head of the Türk-İş Women Workers' Bureau (Türk-İş Kadın İşçiler Bürosu). During her time in office, she worked closely with women workers from various sectors and developed educational programmes to raise the status of women in the trade union movement as well as in gainful work. She worked in collaboration with the Asian-American Free Labor Institute, a member institute of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations. She represented Türk-İş at the Fourth ICFTU World Women's Conference in Madrid in 1985 (Table 9). Her activism was pivotal for the development of gender politics at Türk-İş in the 1980s (Figure 30).

Éva Bíró (1930–)

Née Éva Kaló; also known as Mrs György Bíró and Mrs Tibor Baranyai. Trade unionist in state socialist Hungary. After serving as secretary of the Textile Workers' Trade Union (Textilipari Dolgozók Szakszervezete), she was secretary general and thus key manager of the same trade union (1971–80). She aimed to improve working women's social position, working environments and access to education. Described the struggle for 'making the three shifts easier' in the textile industry as the 'guiding thread' of her 30 years of trade union work; this entailed pursuing policies of early retirement (achieved) and the abolition or reduction of the night shift (failed). She also campaigned for higher wage levels across the textile industry. She was involved in a transnational network of textile workers and utilized information on foreign factories to demand similar improvements in Hungary. In 1970 she travelled to Egypt with a trade union leadership delegation, visiting large textile factories and trade union institutions.

Fanny Blatny (1873–1949)

Also known as Fanni Blatny. Social democratic politician, activist, educator, active in Czechoslovakia, especially in the German-speaking social democratic movement, and internationally. Member of the DSAP, of the Chamber of Deputies from 1920 to 1935 and of the Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) city council until 1938. Internationally, from 1926 she was a key organizer of women in the LSI; from 1927 until the mid-1930s, she was part of the five-person presidium of the IACW of the LSI (Table 5). Expert for the ILO Correspondence

Committee on Women's Work (Table 6). In 1939, she emigrated to the United Kingdom, dying in London 10 years later. She led educational activities in the DSAP, lecturing regularly to functionaries and party members and on women's courses. As a member of the Chamber of Deputies, she campaigned for equal pay and the legal equality of illegitimate children, and against the abortion ban. Internationally she was an articulate defender of women's right to work and equal social citizenship for women. Frequently collaborated with Irene Kirpal (1886–1977), social democratic member of the Chamber of Deputies.

Rajka Borojević (1913–73)

Née Šotra. Co-operative activist, teacher and women's educator active in Yugoslavia. In the 1950s, involved in educating peasant women on women's health, child rearing, nutrition, hygiene, housework, handicrafts and agriculture. She was an initiator of the women's weaving co-operative in the village of Donji Dubac in Serbia in 1952. This co-operative, after functioning as a Co-operative Women's Section for some time, grew into the Dragačevo Women's Co-operative (Dragačevska zadruža žena) in 1962.

Iordanka Chankova (1911–44)

Née Nikolova. Communist activist in the interwar period, active in Bulgaria and internationally. Born in the Ottoman Empire in the district of Eniköy (Stavroupoli, Krustopole) near Thessaloniki (Selanik, today Greece). Moved to Bulgaria with her family in 1919. She started working as a tobacco worker when she was very young and joined the communist Independent Tobacco Trade Union (Nezavisim tiutiunorabotniceski suiuz/Независим тютюноработнически съюз) at age 13. In 1929, she participated in the tobacco warehouse workers' strike and was elected member of one of the strike committees. In addition to the trade union movement, she was also a member of the communist youth organization in Bulgaria. In 1930, she participated in and spoke at the Fifth Profintern Congress (Table 6). In 1935, she was a delegate to the Sixth Communist Youth Congress and the Seventh Comintern Congress. She joined the underground armed resistance during World War II and was killed in 1944.

Eugenia Deleanu-Rădăceanu (1905–74)

Née Deleanu; also known as Jeni Rădăceanu. Social democratic organizer and publicist, active in Romania and internationally. From 1931 to 1948, general secretary of the social democratic UFM. Editor of the UFM's

'Working Woman' Bulletin (*Buletinul 'Femeia muncitoare'*). Participant in the 1931 Fourth Socialist Women's Conference of the LSI in Vienna. She was an activist for working women's suffrage, for their participation in the social democratic movement and against militarism, and an occasional critic of the local feminist movement. After 1946, she was a member of communist women's and antifascist organizations, with close ties to government leaders.

Gönül Dinçer (1942–)

Née Taylan. Trade unionist and labour activist in Turkey and internationally. A trade unionist since the late 1960s, Dinçer was one of the leaders of the İKD and worked in the education department of the left-wing trade union Maden-İş. Contributed to bringing about active engagement of the İKD with issues related to working women's lives such as childcare and wage equality. Thanks to her efforts, the *Maden-İş Journal* (*Maden-İş Dergisi*) started publishing a women's column. After the 1980 military coup in Turkey, Dinçer went into exile and continued her activism in Denmark and the Netherlands until moving back to Turkey in 1992. She was one of the co-organizers of the European Conference on Migrant Women from Turkey (Avrupa Türkiyeli Göçmen Kadınlar Konferansı) that took place in Amsterdam in 1985.

Maria Dinkova (1928–?)

Also known as Maria Dinkowa. Head of the department of research and development at the Committee of Bulgarian Women (Komitet na bulgarskite zheni/Комитет на българските жени) in state socialist Bulgaria, active nationally and internationally (Table 9). She took an active role in large-scale research preceding the landmark 1973 Politburo of the BKP decision on the role of women and authored numerous books including *A Social Portrait of Bulgarian Women* (*Социален портрет на българската жена*, 1980).

Stojanka-Canka Dragneva Jovanović (1873–1905)

Née Dragneva. Socialist activist, teacher and writer. Born in Bulgaria, she moved to Serbia and participated in founding the SSDS in 1903. Contributor to the social democratic newspaper *The Workers' Newspaper* (*Радничке новине*). She was the initiator of the first women's socialist organization in Serbia, the Women Workers' Society 'Consciousness' (*Žensko radničko društvo 'Svest'*/Женско радничко друштво 'Свест') (1903–5). She published the pamphlet *A Woman and the Struggle for Her Liberation* (*Жена и борба за њено ослобођење*) in 1902.

Gül Neşe Erel (1942–)

Née Kutlu. Researcher and trade union official, active in Turkey and in transnational networks. Joined the research department at the trade union confederation Türk-İş in 1963. From 1967/8 until her retirement in 1980, she served as head of the Türk-İş research department. Between 1967 and 1972, she represented Türk-İş as a corresponding committee member of the ICFTU Women's Committee. Within Türk-İş, she contributed to educating women workers and trade unionists, collaborating with women labour activists from the ICFTU such as Marcelle Dehareng and Elisabeth Ostermeier.

Auguste Fickert (1855–1910)

Austrian women's rights activist in the German-speaking women's movement and teacher. As a young teacher in Vienna, she joined the Association of Female Teachers and Educators (Verein der Lehrerinnen und Erzieherinnen) and campaigned against the poor treatment of women in the teaching profession and the exclusion of women from the right to vote. She was one of the founders of the General Austrian Women's Association (Allgemeiner Österreichischer Frauenverein) in 1893, transnationally well connected and interested in cross-class alliances for bettering women's lives. She was not only involved in the short-lived Association for Women Workers' Education (Arbeiterinnen-Bildungsverein), but also organized an *enquête* on women's work in 1896 together with Therese Schlesinger and others.

Emmy Freundlich (1878–1948)

Née Kögler. Social democratic politician, journalist and co-operative activist in Austria and internationally, in the ICWG and in the ILO's Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (Table 6). She became actively involved in the consumer co-operative movement in Austria in 1912. From 1927 to 1934 she was a contributor to the magazine *The Free Co-operator* (*Der freie Genossenschaftler*). Internationally, as one of the most influential women in the co-operative movement, she was a co-organizer of the first international co-operative women's conference in Basel in 1921, and from 1921 to 1924 a president of the Preparatory Committee that launched the foundation of the ICWG in 1924; she was the ICWG's president from 1924 to 1948 (Table 1). Member of the Executive Committee of the ICA from 1927 to 1934. Member of the Austrian parliament between 1919 and 1933/4. She dedicated herself to peace activism, the issues of women's economic education, the position of women in the co-operative movement, nutrition and the household economy (Figure 8, Figure 12).

Prive Friedjung (1902–2005)

Née Schächter. Communist activist and language teacher, in Bukovina (Cisleithanian Austria, now Ukraine), later in Austria and the Soviet Union. Born into a traditional Jewish family in Bukovina, she became a refugee during World War I. She was a member of the Poale Zion and then of the KPÖ. As a communist, she was especially active in Vienna, despite being a foreign national (Romanian). She emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1934 due to the mounting pressure against communist activists. During World War II, she was evacuated to Siberia; she returned to Austria in 1947.

Zofia Garlicka (1874–1942)

Née Wojtkiewiczówna. Medical doctor, social activist, member of the Correspondence Committee on Women's Work of the ILO (established 1932) (Table 6), active especially in Poland. She was among the early members of the Łódź-based organization A Drop of Milk (Kropla mleka) that aimed to curtail infant mortality among children of factory-employed women. She continued to be involved with the health of workers and their children, working at various hospitals in Warsaw starting from 1918. In 1927, she authored the pamphlet *Day Nurseries for Infants of Working Mothers* (*Żłobki dzienne dla niemowląt matek pracujących*), which argued strongly in favour of creating more daycare centres for children of working mothers.

Anna Hornik-Strömer (1899–1966)

Née Strömer, also spelt Ströhmer. Austrian communist, journalist and member of the co-operative movement. Originally organized in the social democratic girls' organization, as a young worker she joined anti-war and revolutionary circles at the end of World War I and subsequently became a member of the newly founded KPÖ. Delegate of the party to Comintern Congresses and the International Conference of Communist Women in 1921, she continued her agitation work addressing women with the women's newspaper *Woman Worker* (*Die Arbeiterin*, 1924–31). Worked in the Austrian consumer co-operative movement in the 1930s (and continued to attend international conferences after 1945, including the ICA congress in 1948). During National Socialist rule, she and her husband were in exile in the United Kingdom, where she was put under surveillance. After her return to Austria, she resumed her work in the party and served as a president of the BDFÖ.

Marga Hubinek (1926–2016)

Austrian politician. The daughter of a civil servant, she studied literature and history and completed her doctorate in 1949 with a dissertation on the trade union movement. Involved in the Austrian Federation of Workers and Employees (Österreichischer Arbeiter- und Angestelltenbund), a sub-organization of the conservative Austrian People's Party (Österreichische Volkspartei), and the party's women's organization. Between 1970 and 1990, as a member of the Austrian parliament, she was committed to environmental and women's policies, including the issue of the compatibility of family and career for women. Among other things, she was one of the MPs who initiated the introduction of optional parental leave for men.

Betty Karpíšková (1881–1942)

Journalist, social democratic politician and social worker, active especially in the Czech-speaking social democratic movement in Czechoslovakia, and internationally. Editor of *Ženské noviny* (*Women's Newspaper*, 1919–38) (Table 4), president of the ÚVSDŽ, member of the Central Executive Committee and Board of Directors of the ČSDSD and vice chair of the party between 1927 and 1938. As a parliamentarian, she was a member of the Chamber of Deputies 1920–9 and member of the Senate 1929–39. Campaigned for the political education of women. She represented Czech social democracy in the IACW of the LSI, serving as member of five-person presidium from 1927 and as chair from 1936 to 1938 (Table 5). She was one of the experts contributing to the ILO Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (documented for the year 1934 but probably longer) (Table 6). Karpíšková was killed in the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp in 1942.

Tina Kirkova (1872–1947)

Also known as Tina Kirkowa. Activist in the socialist, communist and women's movements in Bulgaria and internationally. Member of the BRSDP from 1898. She was part of the party's 'narrow' wing which after World War I became the BKP. Between 1913 and 1923, she was a secretary of the Central Women's Commission of the BRSDP. Inaugural editor of the communist women's newspaper *Equality* (*Равенство*) (Figure 6), published between 1919 and 1923. In 1922 delegate to the Fourth Comintern Congress. After the 1923 *coup d'état* in Bulgaria, she was persecuted; in 1927 she emigrated to the Soviet Union, where she worked for the International Red Aid organization.

Dorota Kłuszyńska (1876–1952)

Née Pilcer. Politician, activist in the women's movement in Poland and internationally. She was active in the Polish Social Democratic Party of Galicia and Cieszyn Silesia (Polska Partia Socjalno-Demokratyczna Galicji i Śląska Cieszyńskiego) from 1900. Founder of the publication *Women's Voice* (*Głos Kobiet*) (Table 4). In the late 1920s, chair of the party's Central Women's Department (Centralny Wydział Kobiety). As a representative of the PPS, she served three terms in the lower house of the Polish parliament, the Sejm, between 1925 and 1935. Internationally, she was a member of the IACW of the LSI from 1927 (Table 5) and a delegation member at the 1927 IFTU Conference of Women Trade Unionists (Table 6). Unlike many other prominent interwar labour activists, she continued her political career in the post-World War II period. She joined the Polish United Workers' Party (Polska Zjednoczona Partia Robotnicza) in 1948.

Zehra Kosova (1910–2001)

Tobacco worker, communist activist and trade unionist, active in Turkey and in transnational networks. Born in Kavala (Kavála, Ottoman Empire, today Greece); moved to Turkey in 1924 through population exchange. She was active in the communist-leaning trade union movement in Turkey from the 1930s until the 1960s. In 1934, as a member of the TKP, she went to the Soviet Union and studied at KUTV in Moscow. Throughout her activist life, she struggled for wage equality, the right to social security, and better working conditions, alongside many other issues, often facing political repression and police brutality. Her 1996 autobiographical book *I Am a Worker* (*Ben İşçiyim*) is a unique source to understand the struggles and working conditions of (migrant) tobacco workers in early republican Turkey.

Halina Krahelska (1886–1945)

Née Śleszyńska; also known as Halina Grabianka. Polish writer, labour inspector, labour and political activist. Already active in the socialist movement before the 1917 Revolution in her native Odessa and then in Kiev (Odesa and Kyiv respectively, both Russian Empire, today Ukraine). As a labour inspector in independent Poland, she oversaw issues of women's labour between 1926 and 1931, leaving a mark on the installation of factory childcare facilities. A prolific writer, she authored numerous books and articles on the labour of women and adolescents, several published by the Institute for Social Economy (Instytut Gospodarstwa Społecznego), an influential institution championing research as a tool for social change. Between 1932 and at least 1936, a member of the ILO Correspondence

Committee on Women's Work (Table 6). During World War II, she was active in the Warsaw underground, leaving one of the early chronicles of the Holocaust by a non-Jewish author. She died in the Ravensbrück concentration camp shortly before its liberation.

Halyna Kuz'menko (1896–1978)

Also known as Agafiia Kuz'menko. Activist in the anarchist movement in Ukraine. In 1918, she moved to Huliaipole (Russian Empire, Soviet Ukraine, now Ukraine), at that time centre of the anarchist Makhno movement, after attending the University of St Volodymyr and working in the secretariat of the Central Council of Ukraine (Ukrains'ka Tsentral'na Rada/Українська Центральна Рада). Married Nestor Makhno, a leader of the anarchist movement in Ukraine in 1919, and held leading posts in the movement. She organized schooling, including Ukrainian-language classes and, possibly, contributed to the development of the ideological principles of the Makhno movement. She helped launch the periodical *The Road to Freedom* (*Шлях до волі*). Member of the cultural and educational society Enlightenment (Prosvita/Просвіта). In 1921, she emigrated with Makhno. In 1945, in Berlin, she and her daughter were arrested by the Soviet People's Commissariat for State Security (Narodnyi komissariat gosudarstvennoi bezopasnosti/Народный комиссариат государственной безопасности, known as the NKGB) and she was sentenced to imprisonment in the labour camps.

Szeréna Ladányi (1884–1940)

Née Lusztig; also known as Mrs Manó Buchinger. Teacher, activist and functionary in the social democratic women's movement in Hungary. Editor and regular contributor to *Woman Worker* (*Nőmunkás*). She regularly organized fundraisers for the journal and published books and articles on women workers. Played a key role in the creation of a national party education programme as a member of the MSZDP OOB. In 1933, she worked out the basic structure (form and content) of the women's party education programme. Contributing to these educational activities, she held lectures and wrote syllabi for and organized the first education seminar for women from the countryside. Her activism included demands for equal pay for equal work, the political equality of women and the transformation of housework.

Luisa Landová-Štychová (1885–1969)

Anarchist activist, later communist politician in Czechoslovakia. Involved in the organization of the general strike in October 1918.

In 1919, delegate to the ICWW, involved in the discussion on (gendered) protective labour legislation. Participated as workers' adviser in the first session of the ILC, in Washington, DC. Member of the Revolutionary National Assembly (Revoluční národní shromáždění) between 1918 and 1920 and member of the Chamber of Deputies 1920–3 and 1925–9. As part of the anarchist group around Bohuslav Vrbenský, she was expelled by the Czechoslovak Socialist Party (Československá strana socialistická) in 1923 and stripped of her mandate as an MP. Between 1923 and 1925 she was a member of the Independent Socialist Party (Neodvislá socialistická strana) (after 1924, known as the Independent Socialist Workers' Party (Neodvislá socialistická strana dělnická), which merged with the KSČ in 1925). She also maintained ties with the women's movement. In the 1920s she strongly advocated for the legalization of abortion as a member of the Chamber of Deputies.

Mária László (1909–89)

Secretary general of the MCKSZ, the first national organization for Roma in Hungary, between its establishment on 26 October 1957 and the end of 1958, when she was removed from her position. Her activist work from the 1930s to the 1950s was devoted to the betterment of the situation of Roma in Hungary and resistance against their persecution. In the 1950s, as head of the MCKSZ, she engaged intensively for the employment of Roma by mediating between authorities, employers and Roma and supporting those in precarious occupations, such as musicians, migratory artisans and the artisan workers' co-operatives of the nail smiths across the country. In 1937 she was charged with 'communist incitement', remaining under police surveillance for years. Worked in the Budapest section of the MSZDP after World War II, where she rose to the board of leadership, and was secretary of a local branch of the Hungarian Red Cross. A survivor of the Holocaust, she was the first person in postwar Hungary to officially raise the issue of the persecution of Roma during the Holocaust and work towards the compensation of Romani victims (Figure 22).

Karla Machová (1853–1920)

Politician and women's rights activist primarily in Czech-speaking organizations in Austria-Hungary. Worked for several years in the Czech women's movement in the United States. There, in 1893, she founded the journal *Women's Papers* (*Ženské listy*, published in Chicago) together with Josefa Humpálová-Zemanová. After returning to Bohemia, in 1895, she organized the women's section of the ČSDSD. She was also the

editor of *Women's Papers* (*Ženské listy*) between 1901 and 1914, and the editor of *Women's Interests* (*Zájmy žen*) from 1916 (Table 4). Advocate of universal suffrage, she was among the first women to run for election to the Bohemian Diet in 1908. On the pages of the Prague-based *Women's Papers*, she advocated the same wages for women and men and emphasized the necessity of women's gainful employment, women's right to education and professional training, and women's access to all professions. Promoted the abolition of the celibacy of women teachers.

Mitra Mitrović (1912–2001)

Communist activist and politician, especially in Yugoslavia. One of the founders of the Youth Section of the Women's Movement (Omladinska sekcija Ženskog pokreta) in Belgrade during the Popular Front period (1935–40). She also served as a member of the editorial board of the communist women's magazine *Woman Today* (*Жена данас*) from 1936 to 1940, a magazine that covered a wide spectrum of topics, including health and hygiene, reproductive labour and women's right to work. She was one of the most prominent antifascist organizers in Yugoslavia. In the initial postwar years, she held the position of education minister in the People's Republic of Serbia. She was later sidelined by the regime.

Marie Nečásková (1890–1971)

Co-operative functionary, educator, social democrat, active especially in Czechoslovakia. A functionary of the ÚSČD. She actively promoted consumer co-operatives in interwar Czechoslovakia and furthered the inclusion of women in the movement. Organized propaganda activities and educational initiatives for women within the ÚSČD. She attended several conferences of the ICWG and was a member of the ICWG Central Committee (Table 1, Figure 8).

Valerie Novotná (1893–?)

Activist in the women's, social democratic and trade union movements in Czechoslovakia and internationally. Elected a town councillor in 1918. Worked as a chief woman officer of the social democratic party in Plzeň (Pilsen, Czechoslovakia, today Czechia) from 1919; from 1927 she was chief woman officer nationally. Editor of the social democratic women's paper *Women's Newspaper* (*Ženské noviny*) from 1929 to 1931. From 1930, she served as chief woman officer in the OSČ affiliated with the IFTU; she is mentioned as secretary of a Prague servants' union. Described equal pay (and minimum wages) as foundational

prerequisite to achieving other goals. In the 1930s, she was an alternate and quickly a full member of the IFTU Women's Committee (Table 6), reaching the highest possible position in international social democratic women's trade union work in the interwar period. From 1932 she served on the ILO Correspondence Committee on Women's Work (Table 6, Figure 17).

Maria Nykyforova (1885?–1919)

Also known as Marusia Nykyforova; year of birth also appears as 1889 and 1890. Activist in the anarchist movement in Ukraine, led and took part in violent actions and expropriation campaigns. Arrested and jailed in 1904–5. In 1909, she escaped prison and fled to France. There, she attended anarchist and socialist congresses and established connections with Bolsheviks and anarchists. In 1917, she returned to Ukraine and joined the revolutionary events as an anarchist, giving speeches in demonstrations and organizing fighting battalions. In 1919 arrested by the Bolsheviks but quickly released. Subsequently she went to Huliaipole (Russian Empire, Soviet Ukraine, now Ukraine) to join the anarchist Makhno movement. She was appointed to manage educational activities but after a short period organized the terror group Black Guard (Chorna Hvardiia/Чорна Гвардія). Arrested by White Army counterintelligence and executed in August/September 1919.

Maria Orsetti (1880–1957)

Activist in the co-operative movement, cofounder of the League of Co-operative Women (Liga Kooperatystek) in Poland in 1935. From 1917 editor of the magazine *Together* (*Spółem*) of the Union of Consumer Co-operatives (Związek Spółdzielni Spożywców). In 1921, she took part in the congress of the ICA in Basel as the union's representative. She authored a considerable body of work on the co-operative movement and its activists. A member of the ICWG Central Committee (Table 1).

Suzana Pârvulescu (1898–1942)

Communist militant, active between 1920 and 1937 in Romania and in transnational networks. Radicalized in the 1920s, educated in the communist movement (including literacy) and did clandestine work for the communist party (relaying messages, maintaining safe houses). She was trained in Moscow for two years in the 1930s and subsequently helped instruct other members of the PCdR. Imprisoned from 1937 to 1939. Her biography is illustrative of women's political socialization in

the Romanian and international communist movement and gendered, low-power, high-risk illegal communist militancy.

Karla Pfeiferová (1886–1969)

Textile worker, activist and functionary in the communist trade union movement and in the KSČ. Participated in the KSČ's founding meeting in 1920; elected to the organizing committee. Active in the textile section of the communist trade union MVS. She participated in a six-month training course in trade union work in Moscow in 1929 and worked on the reorganization of the communist trade unions after their split in 1929. Leading functionary of the textile branch of the Headquarters of Red Unions (Ústředna rudých odborů) after 1929. Member of the ITUCWWP (Table 6). Elected to the Senate, then to the Chamber of Deputies of the Czechoslovak parliament in 1935 and 1948 respectively. She remained an influential figure after 1948, was elected to the Central Committee of the KSČ in 1949 and served as the secretary of the International Union of Fur and Leather Workers of the WFTU from 1949. She resigned from all her positions due to a political rift in 1951.

Elena Pop Hossu Longin (1862–1940)

Women's activist linked to the national emancipation movement of Romanians in Austria-Hungary. Between 1895 and 1919 president of the Reunion of Romanian Women in Hunedoara County (Reuniunea Femeilor Române din Comitatul Hunedoarei). The Reunions were networked women's associations with chapters in most cities in Transylvania, which focused on women's emancipation, especially girls' education, in the framework of the nationalist movement of Romanians in the Kingdom of Hungary – a movement the Reunions' members, mostly middle-class women, deeply shaped. Educated in Budapest, she used her contacts in Vienna to organize a household industry exhibition in 1897 in the city. After the exhibition, the Reunion she led opened a household industry workshop employing around ten peasant women, in the Hunedoara county town of Orăștie (Szászváros, Broos, Hungary, today Romania). In 1918, she publicly claimed more rights for women in an expanded Romanian state on account of women's long-time activism.

Gabriele Proft (1879–1971)

Née Jirsa. Austrian social democratic politician. The daughter of a shoemaker, she was born in Troppau (Opava, Cisleithania, later Czechoslovakia, today Czechia). One of the founding members of the social democratic trade union Association for Home-Based Women Workers

and Domestic Servants (Verein der Heim- und Hausarbeiterinnen) in 1902 in Vienna. A few years later, she became the secretary of the Women's Committee of the SDAP, rose to the position of vice chair of the party, and was a member of parliament during the First Austrian Republic and from 1945 to 1953. Repeatedly imprisoned during austrofascism and National Socialist rule. A driving force behind policy reforms for women at the national level, until her death she was also internationally active, in the IACW of the LSI in the 1930s (Table 5) and in the International Council of Social Democratic Women after World War II.

Grete Rehor (1910–87)

Née Daurer. Austrian Christian social trade union official and politician. Built a career in the Christian social trade unions. From 1927 she was an employee of the textile workers' union and served between 1928 and 1938 (i.e., also during austrofascism) as the first woman on the Youth Advisory Council of the Vienna Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer). Active internationally in the interwar period, including as a member of the ILO Corresponding Committee on Women's Work from 1932, and within the women's branch of the IFCTU (Table 6). She was active in the resistance movement against the Nazi regime. 'Secretary' of the newly founded Christian textile and clothing workers' union from 1945 and a leading Christian social trade unionist at the national and the international level. After World War II member of the committee on women's work of the IFCTU and of the Women's Department of the ÖGB and Austrian Minister of Social Affairs 1966–70. Among other things, she set up a labour market policy working group for women in her ministry.

Therese Schlesinger (1863–1940)

Née Eckstein. Born into a Jewish upper-class family and joined the German-speaking Austrian women's movement at a young age. Her activist engagement for women's education, labour protection and suffrage brought her in contact with socialist women, where she finally found her political home. As a founding member of the Association of Social Democratic Women and Girls (Verein sozialdemokratischer Frauen und Mädchen), she was one of the social democrats who campaigned for women's rights especially as a journalist and speaker, addressing women's multiple labour-related burdens. During World War I, she belonged to the left wing of the party and was one of the first seven women to enter the parliament of the First Austrian Republic, in 1919. In 1938, fled from the National Socialists to France, where she died.

Jelena Starc Jančić (1914–91)

Née Jančić. Communist, antifascist activist, agronomist, active in Yugoslavia. One of the cofounders of the Youth Section of the Women's Movement (Omladinska sekcija Ženskog pokreta) in Zagreb (Yugoslavia, today Croatia) in the Popular Front period (1934–7). Cofounder and an editor of the communist women's magazine *Women's World* (*Ženski svijet*) (1939–41). From the mid-1950s, she held positions in different co-operative organizations in the People's Republic of Croatia, including the Co-operative Women's Section (Sekcija žena zadrugarki) of one of the co-operative alliances at the republic level.

Hanna Sturm (1891–1984)

Born to a family of Burgenland Croats in Hungary, she was a labour activist and participated in strikes from an early age. Later active within the SDAP, and from 1925 in the KPÖ. Elected shop steward in a jute factory in the county of Burgenland (Austria) in 1922. In her KPÖ period, chair of a local committee of the unemployed in Eisenstadt (Kismarton, Željezno, Austria). Involved in communist women's internationalism in the interwar period. She became a prominent antifascist activist and between 1938 and 1945 was incarcerated in Nazi concentration camps, including Ravensbrück.

Savka Subotić (1834–1918)

Née Polit. Women's rights activist and philanthropist in Vojvodina (Hungary, later Yugoslavia, today Serbia). Member of the DZSN and other charitable co-operatives of Serbian women. President of Serbian women's organizations, such as the charitable association Circle of Serbian Sisters (Kolo srpskih sestara/Коло српских сестара) and the National Council of Women of Serbia (Srpski narodni ženski savez/Српски народни женски савез). Pushed for women's education and was active in advocating for the higher education of girls and establishing high schools for girls. Promoted and advanced Serbian women's handicrafts and embroidery production.

Muhaddere Taşcioğlu (?–?)

Née Gönenli. Chief of the Research Division at the Ministry of Labour (Çalışma Bakanlığı) in Turkey in the 1950s. While working at the ministry, she published on the working conditions of women and the trade union movement in Turkey. Taşcioğlu represented Turkey at the ILO Meeting of Experts on Women's Employment in 1956 (Table 9).

Elena Teodorescu (1908–?)

Née Spiridonescu; also known as Lenuș Teodorescu. High-ranking communist labour activist in Romania and internationally. Became a communist while a student in the 1930s in France. Active in Romanian Workers' Aid (Ajutorul Muncitoresc Român) in Bucharest 1935–40, member of Assembly of Deputies 1946–8, editor of *Woman (Femeia)* magazine 1948–50, member of Executive Committee of the CGS in the 1950s. Appointed as full-time salaried official within the executive leadership of the WFTU in 1956, she rose to a position in international trade unionism that was unrivalled by any other woman until the late 1960s (Table 9). Played an important role in the WFTU's international liaison activities, including by representing the WFTU at the UN CSW. In March 1964, a few weeks before the opening of the WFTU-sponsored Second International Trade Union Conference on the Problems of Working Women in Bucharest, she was replaced by Stana Dragoi, also from Romania.

Koika Tineva (1880–1964)

Activist in the socialist and labour movement in Bulgaria and internationally. Participated in the anti-war Third Zimmerwald Conference in Stockholm as a trade union representative in 1917. Between 1903 and 1919 she moved between various strands of the Bulgarian socialist and labour movement before finally joining the communists in 1919. In 1923 she emigrated to the Soviet Union where she worked in the International Women's Secretariat of the Comintern.

Vida Tomšič (1913–98)

Née Bernot. Communist politician, antifascist organizer and high-level civil servant in socialist Yugoslavia, active in Yugoslavia and internationally. Her engagement spanned several decades, during which she dedicated herself to gender issues at different scales (local, national, international) and in various organizations. Member of the KPJ from 1934 and one of the creators of its programme on work among women in 1940. She was active in armed resistance during World War II, after which she became a high-profile politician at the republic (Slovenia) and federal levels. Long-term member of the central committees of the communist parties of Slovenia and Yugoslavia 1940–82, and president of the AFŽ at the federal level 1948–52. Internationally, she was a member of several UN working groups, a Yugoslav representative to ECOSOC and a leader of the Yugoslav delegation at the UN World Conference of the International Women's Year in 1975.

Júlia Turgonyi (1928–2014)

Hungarian trade unionist and sociologist; from the 1960s onwards a sharp public critic of women's inferior position and their harmful treatment in the workplace and in the family. Involved with party issues from the 1940s, she graduated from the one-year course of the party college in 1951. Elected one of five secretaries of the Union of Working Youth (Dolgozó Ifjúság Szövetsége) in 1955, she advocated new inclusive policies of addressing girls and young women in a more practically oriented manner. After short spells in trade union and party positions in 1956–9, head of the cultural department of the national women's organization MNOT 1959–68. From 1969, senior researcher at the Social Science Institute of the Central Committee of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (Magyar Szocialista Munkáspárt Központi Bizottsága Társadalomtudományi Intézete), authoring landmark studies on the labour and living conditions of working women, including specific groups of non-industrial workers. As member of the SZOTNB, she contributed regularly to training activities for women trade unionists. She regarded the problems working women faced as triggered by the progress made in building socialism and aggravated by the retrograde attitudes espoused by many men in the world of work and the private sphere. She travelled to Cuba in 1962, participated in international women's meetings (Table 9) and in 1976 co-authored a 'background study' for UNESCO.

Mariska Várkonyi (1878–1924)

Writer and between 1897 and 1898 editor of *Agrarian Worker* (Földmívelő), the first paper addressing agrarian labourers in Hungary founded by her father, the agrarian socialist politician István Várkonyi (Table 4). Participated alongside her father in a variety of activist tasks for the agrarian socialist cause supporting the independent social democratic movement and the FSZP. Her contribution to *Agrarian Worker* and her essay series, titled 'Női szemmel' ('Through the Eyes of a Woman'), in one of the most popular national opposition papers, *Accordance* (Egyetértés), in the late 1890s, testify to her sensitivity to peasant women workers' problems. Among the first women in Hungary, at the turn of twentieth century, to consciously combine a gender and class egalitarian perspective in an effort to articulate and improve the situation of poor agrarian labourers. She quit activism following conflicts with her father in 1905 (Figure 2).

Eugenia Waśniewska (1881–1944)

Née Zawodzińska; also known as Eugenie Wasniewska. Trade union activist, politician, member of the Polish delegation at ILO International

Labour Conference 1927–37. Ardent promoter of connecting the minimum wage and the equal pay principle at the 1928 session of the ILC. Member of the Correspondence Committee on Women's Work of the ILO from 1932 (Table 6). Between 1932 and 1934, she orchestrated a forceful campaign aimed at strengthening the position of the Correspondence Committee within the ILO's structure. Served two terms as member of the Sejm, the lower house of the Polish parliament, in 1928–35. As a trade unionist, she focused on the conditions of women clerks and was a member of the Union of Intellectual Workers (Związek Zawodowy Pracowników Umysłowych). She was also active in the women's movement and among the most prominent activists of the Women's Union for Citizenship Work (Związek Pracy Obywatelskiej Kobiet) and the Political Club of Progressive Women (Klub Polityczny Kobiet Postępowych). In 1923, she took part in the International Congress of the Little Entente of Women in Bucharest.

Rosa Weber (1919–67)

Austrian trade union activist and social democratic politician. From the end of World War II, a committed member of the SPÖ, first in the youth and then in the women's organizations, as well as in the ÖGB. Secretary of the ÖGB women's department 1949–59; eventually succeeding Wilhelmine Moik (Table 9) as chair in 1963 until she died in an accident in 1967. In this role and as an MP from 1959 to 1967, she campaigned for reforms for working women: maternity leave, improvements in family benefits and access to early retirement. She served as a member of the ICFTU Women's Committee and the ILO Committees on Women Workers in 1964 and 1965 (as a vice chair) and was thus involved not only in the debates and decisions leading up to the ILO Recommendation R123, Employment (Women with Family Responsibilities) (1965), but also in the drafting committee of the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention C111 (1958) (Table 9).

Complementary bibliographical information

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Bibliography

Note on bibliography and references

The bibliography is divided into Section 1 ‘Archival and rare materials collections’, and Section 2 ‘Primary and secondary sources’. Section 1 lists all repositories for archival and rare materials. Section 2 lists all published materials, including primary sources and scholarly literature.

Archival and rare materials are referenced in full endnote style throughout this book and do not appear in Section 2 of the bibliography. Short online database entries appear under the name of the database in the notes, and the database appears in Section 2 of the bibliography. Published materials are referenced in short endnote style throughout the book. They appear in full in Section 2 (including all materials from ILO LD and KADOC). Where applicable, for publications we add the acronym of the repository where we found them. All URLs correct as of December 2024.

To our regret, due to length constraints we had to limit our references to secondary scholarship.

Section 1: archival and rare materials collections

Alfred Klahr Society (Alfred Klahr Gesellschaft) (Vienna, Austria)
ARBARK – Swedish Labour Movement’s Archives and Library (Arbetarrörelsens arkiv och bibliotek) (Huddinge, Sweden)
Archives of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (New York, NY, USA)
Ariadne – Ariadne. Frauen in Bewegung 1848–1938 (Austria). ÖNB online database and document repository, <https://fraueninbewegung.onb.ac.at>
BTM – Budapest History Museum, Kiscell Museum (Budapest Történeti Múzeum, Kiscelli Múzeum) (Budapest, Hungary)
CSU DA – California State University Digital Archives (Long Beach, CA, USA). Partial open access online archive, <https://archives.calstate.edu>
CUL – Cornell University Library (Ithaca, NY, USA)
DOMiD – Documentation Centre and Museum of Migration in Germany (Dokumentationszentrum und Museum über die Migration in Deutschland) (Cologne, Germany)
FESDL – Friedrich Ebert Foundation, Digital Library (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Digitale Bibliothek) (Bonn, Germany)
HDA – Croatian State Archives (Hrvatski državni arhiv) (Zagreb, Croatia)
HHC – Hull History Centre (Hull, UK)

IAB – Historical Archives of Belgrade (Istorijski arhiv Beograda/Историјски архив Београда) (Belgrade, Serbia)

IHSF – Institute for Historical Social Research (Institut für Historische Sozialforschung) (Vienna, Austria)

IISH – International Institute of Social History (Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis) (Amsterdam, Netherlands)

ILOA – International Labour Office Archives (Geneva, Switzerland)

Karl von Vogelsang Institute (Karl von Vogelsang-Institut) (Vienna, Austria)

KCLMDA – Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation & Archives (Ithaca, NY, USA)

London Metropolitan University, Trades Union Congress (TUC) Library Collections (London, UK)

MNL OL – National Archives of Hungary, Central Archives (Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár Országos Levéltára) (Budapest, Hungary)

NABIS – National Academic Library and Information System Foundation (Fondatsiia 'Natsionalna akademichna bibliotечно-informatsionna sistema'/Фондация 'Национална академична библиотечно-информационна система') (Sofia, Bulgaria)

NM – Museum of Ethnography (Néprajzi Múzeum, Budapest, Hungary)

ÖGB-Archiv – Archive of the Austrian Trade Union Federation (Archiv des Österreichischen Gewerkschaftsbundes) (Vienna, Austria)

ÖNB – Austrian National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) (Vienna, Austria), Picture Archives and Graphics Collection (Bildarchiv und Grafiksammlung)

ÖSTA, AdR – Austrian State Archives, Archive of the Republic (Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Archiv der Republik) (Vienna, Austria)

PIL – Institute of Political History, Archives (Politikatörténeti Intézet Levéltára) (Budapest, Hungary)

Rahime Akdoğan personal archive (Istanbul, Turkey)

SANIC* – Service of the National Central Historical Archives (Serviciul Arhivelor Naționale Istoric Centrale) (Bucharest, Romania)

SAPMOBArch – Foundation Archive of the Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR [Deutsche Demokratische Republik], Bundesarchiv) (Berlin, Germany)

Schlesinger Library – Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University (Cambridge, MA, USA)

SMBAN – Bucharest Municipal Service of the National Archives (Serviciul Municipal București al Arhivelor Naționale) (Bucharest, Romania)

State Archive – Ruse (Durzhaven arkhiv – Ruse/Държавен архив – Русе) (Ruse, Bulgaria)

Stichwort Archives of Women's and Lesbians' Movement (Stichwort – Archiv der Frauen- & Lesbenbewegung) (Vienna, Austria)

Town Museum of Gödöllő (Gödöllői Városi Múzeum) (Gödöllő, Hungary)

TsDA – Central State Archives (Tsentralen durzhaven arkhiv/Централен държавен архив) (Sofia, Bulgaria)

TsDAEA – Central State Audio-Visual and Electronic Archive of Ukraine (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi audiovisual'nyi ta elektronnyi arkhiv Ukrainy/Центральний державний аудіовізуальний та електронний архів України) (Kyiv, Ukraine)

TsDAVO – Central State Archive of Supreme Bodies of Power and Government of Ukraine (Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi arkhiv vyshchikh orhaniv vldy ta upravlinnia Ukrainy/Центральний державний архів вищих органів влади та управління України) (Kyiv, Ukraine)

TÜSTAV – Social History Research Foundation of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı) (Istanbul, Turkey)

UNDL – United Nations Digital Library (Switzerland)

University of Warwick, Modern Records Centre (Coventry, UK)

VGA – Austrian Labour History Society (Verein für Geschichte der ArbeiterInnenbewegung) (Vienna, Austria)

Vienna Museum (Wien Museum) (Vienna, Austria)

WASI – Women and Social Movements, International – 1840 to Present, <https://alexanderstreet.com/products/women-and-social-movements-international-1840-present>

* As of autumn 2024, SANIC is referred to as ANIC (Arhivele Naționale Istoric Centrale / National Central Historical Archives)

Section 2: primary and secondary sources

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'Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Beyond tackles the class biases of women's history as deftly as it does the gender blindnesses of labour history. It asks: on whose lives do we build our theories of collective action and social change? The unwaged become as significant as the waged; the informal, community and household spheres emerge from the shadows. We have been underestimating resistance because we have been ignoring the activism of the majority of workers.'

From the foreword by Dorothy Sue Cobble, Rutgers University, USA

This collaborative monograph presents a deeply researched, inclusive history of women's labour activism in Eastern Europe, Austria, Turkey and transnationally. It explores women's activism and organizing to improve the working conditions and living circumstances of lower-income and working-class women and their communities, in the region and internationally.

Moving beyond the celebratory or partisan perspectives of many classical and some feminist labour histories, *Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Beyond* provides a careful historicization of women's actions in a multiscalar perspective. The authors follow women aligned with a wide range of political persuasions, highlighting unexpected elements and continuities of women's labour activism. Women's activities are seen in the workplace, in the everyday, within and across social movements and organizations, and inside the state. They are presented through a framing that spotlights long-term developments and bridges the divide between the literatures on gendered labour politics and activism in state socialist and capitalist societies. The authors examine activism unfolding in the region and the role of activists from the region within international women's, labour and inter-state organizations. Moving women's labour activism from the margins of labour, gender and European history to the centre of historical study, the volume makes an innovative contribution to the new global histories of labour and gender.

The ten authors worked at Central European University (Vienna and Budapest) on the research project 'Women's Labour Activism in Eastern Europe and Transnationally, from the Age of Empires to the Late 20th Century' (2020 to 2026).

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