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# The Issues Facing Partners and Spouses of European Diplomats: A Gender Perspective

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern European diplomacy developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Its gender roles reflected the social norms of that time - with the male performing the official diplomat role and his wife supporting him in his career and taking care of the family (see also Enloe, 2014). Since then, diplomacy, gender social roles and family have changed significantly in Europe. States have gradually lifted the ban on women in diplomacy (Aggestam and Towns, 2018a), dual-career or dual-income families have become the norm, and family has become a wider social concept accommodating traditional heterosexual families alongside single parents and same sex couples.

Foreign services - and the practices and frameworks under which they operate - have, however, only adjusted to the above changes to a limited extent. Thus, while diplomats' family members may enjoy diplomatic immunity under the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations (1961), this framework may also result in structural limitations to their ability to access their social and economic rights.

Furthermore, they may frequently find themselves in a position where their social and economic rights are materially dependent on the diplomat – jobholder. These gendered inequalities, highly detrimental for diplomatic family members, also have a considerably negative impact on the foreign ministries' capacities to achieve their foreign policy goals. Foreign services continuing to base their approach on the traditional single-income family model, thus exacerbating the vulnerability and economic dependency of diplomatic spouses and partners, risk high staff turnover, loss of expertise and institutional knowledge, and a waste of talent (see Van Erp et al., 2014, Takeuchi et al., 2002). Consequently, they may struggle to effectively represent state's interests in the contemporary global arena.

Even though many European foreign services now strive to achieve a more gender-balanced representation, it remains the case that diplomatic spouses and partners are still mostly women (Aggestam and Towns, 2018). The over-representation of men in executive diplomatic positions and of women in a dependency position runs counter to the gender equality principle; a principle considered one of the European Union's core values and embedded in its Treaty of Lisbon and Charter of the Fundamental Rights.

To shed more light on the nexus between foreign services' internal policies and the quality of their external policy, this study focuses on the principal issues European diplomatic partners and spouses face in their engagement with Foreign Services. In doing so, the study analyses unique empirical data on how several European countries' Foreign Service policies affect the lived experience of diplomatic spouses. Rather than defining diplomatic spouses and partners by their relationship to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) officer, this report approaches this community as a heterogeneous group



of EU-tied migrants possessing a diplomatic status, and analyzes their situation from a gender equality perspective.

The main findings clearly show that maintaining paid employment is the main concern for the majority of spouses and partners accompanying European diplomats on postings abroad. Significant periods of undesired unemployment have a negative impact on their mental health and relationship satisfaction, significantly increasing the pressure on diplomats to leave the Foreign Service and the mobile lifestyle it requires.

The study has five main sections. The first section situates this research in the context of the existing literature on gender in diplomacy and diplomatic officers' spouses and partners. The second section suggests a new discourse and perspective, conceptualizing diplomatic spouses and partners as EU-tied migrants. The third section introduces the study's research methodology and data. The fourth section elaborates on the principal issues facing European diplomats' spouses and partners, namely their employment, retirement pension, work-life balance, mental health and relationship satisfaction. The study's fifth and last section targets policy makers and practitioners analyzing diplomacy, presenting a non-exhaustive list of policy recommendations for European MFAs.

The policy recommendations have one principal objective: to reduce the level of vulnerability and forced dependency of MFA officers' spouses and partners, for whom postings are a contractual obligation. They suggest measures or policies aiming to help spouses and partners maintain their own income, ensuring that they remain covered by social security and healthcare systems, while increasing the level of information and support available to them. A comprehensive and efficient support system for EU tied migrants will help to improve and promote gender equality within Foreign Services and beyond, both on the individual and institutional levels. It might also have a positive impact on retaining European MFA's skilled and experienced staff, and therefore the quality of European diplomacy in general.

## Literature on Gender Equality in Diplomacy and Diplomatic Spouses and Partners

Although the issues diplomatic spouses and partners face have existed for decades and across the globe, there is very little academic research addressing this community and their concerns as its central focus. There are three main groups of academic literature that are directly or indirectly relevant to them. The first is literature focusing on diplomatic spouses, through social science lenses such as history, sociology or



psychology. The second is a relatively new research field – gender and diplomacy. However, its main focus is the official side of diplomacy. The issues experienced by diplomats' spouses and family members are addressed to a certain extent, primarily because they have an impact on the representation and behavior of women professionals working in diplomacy. Third, and probably the richest academic research category, is research on intercultural mobility and adjustment from the perspective of private sector expatriates' vocational behaviours.

This research's underlying question is how to motivate corporate staff to take on international assignments. Diplomats' spouses and partners and their support structures are therefore, rather incidental.

The issues faced by diplomatic spouses do not enjoy a prominent position in academic research, nor do they feature on anyone's political agenda. One contributing factor to this might be the lack of insights into the issues they confront and any relevant information connected to their challenges. It is often hard to understand the urgency and importance of these issues unless one lives the reality oneself. It is telling that a number of authors focusing on diplomatic spouses are either members of this community or have close relations<sup>1</sup> to those within it.

Jewel Fenzi, one of the authors of *Married to the Foreign Service* (1994), is a diplomatic spouse. So too is journalist Bridgid Keenan, the author of *Diplomatic baggage, The Adventures of a Trailing Spouse* (2006) and *Packing up, Further Adventures of a Trailing Spouse* (2015), both of which reflect her own experiences as a diplomatic spouse. Katie Hickman, who wrote *Daughters of Britannia* (2002), focusing on the lives of Foreign Commonwealth Office (FCO) spouses in the 18th century, is a diplomat's child. Katherine Hughes, the author of *The Accidental Diplomat, Dilemmas of the Trailing Spouse* (1999) is also the daughter of a diplomat.

Possibly the most comprehensive account of the lived experiences of diplomats from their own perspective is provided by oral historians Jewell Fenzi and Carl L. Nelson in their book *Married to the Foreign Service, An oral history of the American Diplomatic Spouse* (1994). The book, based on 170 interviews with spouses of American diplomats, documents nine decades of diplomatic history and introduces a narrative well-known in

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<sup>1</sup> This trend seems to extend to policy making as well. In 2019, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen introduced a bill on Foreign Service Families helping provide more employment opportunities for Foreign Service spouses and "ensure that we can continue to attract and retain the best and the brightest to serve in our diplomatic corps". He explained that he had introduced the bill due to his first-hand experience growing up in a Foreign Service family, noting his mother was provided few opportunities when traveling to posts with her husband. ('Bipartisan Bill Would Expand Federal Job Opportunities for Foreign Service Spouses', In: Government Executive, 6.5.2019).



the European context: until the 1970s, the spouses of U.S. diplomats sent abroad, virtually all of them female, were traditionally regarded as unpaid employees, expected to perform social and other duties without recognition of their contribution to the service. With the women's movement's second wave, they managed to improve their status significantly. The authors elaborate on how spouses mobilised and lobbied, with mixed success, to be recognised and compensated.

The issue of limited access to paid jobs due to repeated relocations occurred with the rise of dual-income and dual-career families in the second half of the 20th century (see Groeneveld, 2008).

Diplomatic spouse's desire for economic independence is apparent in a sociological study of the principal issues encountered by spouses of American diplomats. Hughes (1999) observes the generational change of "traditional spouses" who see their role as a diplomatic spouse as an occupation by itself, and a new generation of spouses striving to have careers and income of their own. In Europe, the Swedish MFA was criticized for not doing enough to secure the professional development and pensions of partners accompanying officers abroad as early as the 1970s (Berggren 2008, quoted in: Aggestam and Towns, 2018: 75) and was pushed to take steps to mitigate the negative effects on spouses' professional careers and pensions (Biltekin 2016a, quoted in: Aggestam, Towns, 2018: 76). It is probably not a coincidence that one of the first European countries responding to these issues was Sweden, a leader in the area of gender equality.

Davoine et al. (2013) researched the variety of role expectations concerning the spouses of Swiss diplomats, identifying three main areas: the repertoire of the diplomat's supporting partner (partner representation, psychological or professional support), the repertoire of Switzerland's representation (collection and transmission of information, representation of Switzerland at events, developing links with and within the Swiss local expatriate community), and the repertoire of resource manager (administrative support, supervision of local staff, and service house supervision). The authors also point out that given the gendered nature of these roles and the strong assumption that the spouse would be female, male spouses might face constraints in performing some of the representation activities, especially in host countries where the traditional "male breadwinner" model is stronger.

In a quantitative study of more than 250 spouses and partners of European diplomats, Gudmundsdottir, Gudlaugsson and Adalsteinsson (2019) found a positive relationship between emotional support, instrumental support and the spouses' satisfaction with life. Although the authors don't write from the perspective of gender equality, concentrating more on socio-emotional and instrumental rather than employment



support, they make a clear connection between the levels of support diplomatic spouses on posting receive, and the success or longevity of the international assignment itself.

Repeated relocations bring disruptions to social support networks, career, income, role and self-esteem (Gudmundsdottir, Gudlaugsson and Adalsteinsson, 2019, see also Lazarova, McNulty and Semeniuk, 2015). Some researchers argue (for example Bauer and Taylor, 2001) that expatriate spouses and partners accompanying diplomats on international assignment are exposed to more frequent interactions with local culture than the jobholder, and it is therefore more difficult for them to adjust. Hughes (1999) highlights other aspects of mental health, examining the challenges to identity when spouses are defined as "the wife of".

Nicole Nasr offers a psychological perspective on the matter in her book with the pertinent title *Real Housewives of Diplomacy: A Psychological Study* (2019). Based on in-depth interviews with female diplomatic spouses, Nasr analyses the impact of multiple relocations and undesired unemployment on their identities.

Spouses struggle to manage their sense of self in foreign countries and new situations, such as, the absence of paid work or a career, and the consequent reduction of their identity to a housewife. Nasr based her research on feminist theories, highlighting the clash between the desire for personal success and their own agency, and the pressure to become a homemaker.

Volumes such as *Gender and diplomacy* (Cassidy, 2017) or *Gendering diplomacy and international negotiations* (Aggestam and Towns, 2018) fall into the second group of literature. They look at gender (or women) in diplomacy from the perspective of diplomats and institutions. Spouses are mentioned, but only as a factor that might contribute to the low representation of women diplomats. When analyzed through a gender equality lens, it becomes striking how diplomacy is severely underrepresented by women, especially women in more senior positions (Schiemichen, 2019). Men do not only dominate diplomacy in terms of representation, but even the ways diplomacy is practiced are gendered, with masculine characteristics prioritized and reinforced (Cassidy, 2017, also Aggestam and Towns, 2018).

Cynthia Enloe, one of the main specialists on gender and diplomacy, highlighted the importance of diplomatic spouses and the generally unequal role they are assigned. She argued that modern diplomacy relies on a certain kind of heterosexual marriage and "the diplomatic wife", who is expected to contribute to her husband's diplomatic mission without any pay, while giving up her own career. These expectations include hosting social functions and creating an environment in which male ambassadors and their counterparts can develop important relationships (Enloe, 2014).



The third type of literature focuses on the effects of relocation in the private sector. This parallel is important because in many ways, spouses, partners and family members of staff posted abroad belonging to international companies face similar challenges to diplomatic spouses. Research from this sector confirms that as the number of dual-career families grows, it is becoming increasingly difficult to fill staff positions in the international market (Harvey, 1995), and multinational organizations are experiencing difficulties in finding managers willing to accept international assignments (Van der Velde, Bossink, Jansen, 2005). A large survey<sup>2</sup> of corporations, mobile employees and their partners found that the most common reason (71%) for a failed assignment is an unhappy, un-integrated partner in the host location (NetExpat and EY, 2018).

While in diplomacy (the public sector), support to spouses in relocation is limited and sometimes non-existent, studies suggest that in the corporate sector, such assistance<sup>3</sup> is increasingly deemed necessary. The survey report finds that the percentage of employers offering some form of support has sharply increased over the last few years, with 90% of employers in 2017 offering some form of support to the relocating partner.<sup>4</sup> And the investment pays off. Sixty-two percent (62%) of employers confirmed that partner support benefits had a positive impact on their assignment acceptance (NetExpat and EY, 2018).

As with relocating diplomatic spouses and partners, partners of private sector relocating staff are increasingly reluctant to give up or threaten their career. Research in skilled labour migration found that highly skilled and highly educated women are more at risk of being underemployed, i.e. at risk of taking up employment requiring a lower level of education than they hold (IOM, 2012). The survey of corporations revealed that 82% of spouses have university degrees, 77% of them engaged in paid employment before the assignment, and 66% work or are looking for work while on posting (NetExpat and EY, 2018).

There seem to be significant gender differences in how men and women approach international postings and their roles. Men are more willing than women to accept an overseas assignment. Organizational commitment and career satisfaction are greater for men, while women attach more importance to the parental role than men (Van der

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<sup>2</sup> The survey involved 3,412 respondents from 121 host locations, 81 nationalities, 320 senior HR representatives from both corporations and international governmental organizations, 2,086 mobile employees, and 1,006 expat partners.

<sup>3</sup> For example, training programmes, educational support, introductions/recommendations to other companies in host countries, assistance with employment visas (Harvey, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> The overall average investment in partner support for the main categories are the following: \$3,150 USD for Acclimation support, \$4,990 USD for Career and Job Search, \$8,489 USD for Education allowance, \$3,218 USD for Language training and \$4,505 USD for work permit support.



Velde, Bossink and Jansen, 2005). According to Walsh (2011), male identity and masculinity manifest through paid employment, while there is a conflation of home and femininity.

Performing traditional gender roles in the context of relocation seems to benefit men more than women. Married women's economic status declines with migration (Cook, 2003), and married men with children and stay-at-home wives constitute the group experiencing the greatest career success, as measured by salary increases (Insh, McIntyre and Napier, 2008).

Relocating without a job has a negative effect on the migrant's economic status in general and the effect is more negative for women than for men (Cook, Speirs, 2005). This is because women work for fewer hours than men while having less time to seek a job because of family responsibilities (the so-called "second shift") (Cook, Speirs, 2005). Linehan and Scullion (2001) found that women's responsibilities for housework and childcare during posting increased their stress levels.

If women secure a paid job at all, female migrant professionals face additional barriers in the labour market in comparison to men. These include various types of discrimination and harassment such as sexual harassment, class discrimination, ethnic discrimination, or negative sentiments against western foreigners in general (Napier and Taylor, 2002).

To conclude, the existing research from both the public (foreign affairs) and private (corporate) spheres corresponds in finding that relocation negatively affects the economic status and consequently the mental health of the spouse/partner who follows, while the negative effects impact on women more than men. Maintaining paid employment is therefore a high priority for the accompanying spouse/partner, while the private sector recognizes the need for a support system to enable this much more than the public sector.

The post-2000 volume of academic research on European diplomatic spouses is very small. Using a gender equality perspective is rare and analyzing the principle issues of this community as a public policy problem is practically non-existent. There is an urgent need to collect data on and from this community, enabling comparisons within the EU and providing an evidence-based formulation of European MFA policies. This report is a first contribution to this discussion.

## Conceptualizing diplomatic spouses and partners as tied migrants





The language used to describe the community addressed in this report varies, depending on perspective and context. Many of the terms are not neutral and often carry connotations, preconceptions and assumptions about class, education and privilege. Even though this report and the surveys it cites accept the commonly used terminology and refer to the researched community as diplomatic spouses and partners, it is also important to make the point that classification matters, because such language can in some cases be used as a political tool. This report therefore aims to open a discussion about the discourse we use to label this community and to suggest a new perspective that puts the community at the discourse's centre. The objective is to circumvent defining its members through their relationship to the diplomat, but rather view them and their family members as individual EU citizens through the prism of social rights, as defined in the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Commission, n.d.).

Given that the common trait shared by this otherwise very diverse group of people is their relationship to a MFA employee, they are often defined through this relationship. The term "diplomatic spouses" is widely applied by the community itself, whether by diplomatic spouses' national associations or in the literature (see for example Fenzi and Nelson, 1994). A diplomatic spouse is the wife or husband of a diplomat. Traditional marriage as a type of relationship enjoys a privileged position. To make a distinction between married couples and couples in a registered partnership, or between married and non-married couples, the term "diplomatic partner" is also used.

This distinction is important because not all EU countries and their MFAs recognize same-sex couples, meaning diplomats' same-sex partners are not provided the same support by the sending state as heterosexual couples. Examples of this include not receiving a diplomatic passport or not being counted as eligible for allowances. The same applies to non-married couples. The adjective "diplomatic" might also carry connotations of privilege and luxury. More research is needed on the public perception of diplomacy, the lives of diplomats and their family members.

This community of diplomatic spouses can also be referred to as the diplomats' "dependants", both in MFA policy documents and also by host states. In the latter context, this term is particularly prevalent when determining the immigration status diplomats' family members. This terminology reflects spouses' dependency after posting on welfare state services such as social security, health care or access to the labour market. From this perspective, diplomats' spouses and partners find themselves in the same category as diplomats' children. The term "dependant" is also prominent in bilateral agreements between countries ensuring work permits for spouses (Working Dependant Agreements).

"Trailing" or "accompanying" spouses is an alternative terminology used by the diplomatic community (for example Hughes, 1999 or Keenan, 2006 and 2015). The term



"trailing spouse" was coined in 1981 by The Wall Street Journal's Mary Bralove to convey how wives sacrifice their career plans. The term is not limited to diplomats' spouses and partners. It is also used in research concerning multinational companies' posted employees, whose families face very similar relocation challenges. The process of relocation is captured in the term "trailing"; a term that also implies a perception that spouses passively follow their husbands/wives with no agenda of their own.

There is an ongoing discussion about the use of the terms expatriate – or expat - and immigrant – or migrant - and all the connotations related to these terms. At the international level, no universally accepted definition for "migrant" or "expat" exists. The United Nation's (UN's) International Organization for Migration (IOM) uses quite a broad and neutral definition of a migrant: "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons" (IOM, 2019). There is no doubt though, that within the current global context, including the "migration crisis" or the UK's Brexit debate, the term 'migrant' has become politically charged and carries negative connotations. On the other hand, the term 'expat' assumes high socioeconomic status and certain privileges. It is often used at multinational companies in the context of business and overseas assignments.

Diplomats' contractual obligations to repeatedly relocate, and its impact on relocating family members' lives is quite unique and unparalleled in the labour market. Gonzales-Laureiro (2015) suggests using the term propatriates for diplomats, defining propatriates as professional expats who relocate every few years. One community that is often compared to diplomats' spouses is the civilian spouses and family members of military personnel. In this context, Cooke and Speirs (2005) use the term tied migrant, illustrating that the reason for relocation is linked to the person (migrant) only indirectly, through their husband or wife (military personnel). As such, tied migrants are not defined through their relationship to another person (in the case of diplomatic spouses) but rather through an implication of forced mobility.

In rethinking the terminology, it is important to be aware of preconceptions and assumptions linked to each term. Connotations with privilege and sometimes even lavish lifestyle (as might be the case with expats or diplomats) are not only detached from the lived experience of most of this community's members, but are also unhelpful in attempts to put their concerns on the political agenda. This language might be used as a political tool against the community, putting emphasis on their assumed privileges and playing down their legitimate concerns.

One of the most striking results of the surveys cited in this report is that the main concern of diplomat's spouses and partners is to maintain their career or paid job, and their desire for independence. They should therefore be viewed independently from the



diplomat, and as EU migrant workers. The European Migration Network adopted the definition used by the UN: “A migrant worker is a person, who is to be engaged, is engaged or has been engaged in a remunerated activity in a state of which they are not nationals” (IOM, 2019). To reflect the fact that relocation is, to some extent, imposed, this report suggests framing this community as (EU) tied migrant workers, with diplomatic status<sup>5</sup> as a complicating factor.

## Research Methodology and Data: survey design, turnout, and demography

There is a general lack of available quantitative data in the public domain on EU diplomatic spouses’ experiences. One of the main challenges for a researcher is accessing such a specific group. As an umbrella organization for national associations of diplomat’s family members, the European Union Foreign Affairs Spouses, Partners and Families Association (EUFASA) is the only network that brings together diplomatic spouses at a European level. However, each national membership’s level of professionalism and membership size varies considerably. Volunteers lead most EUFASA member associations, and national membership is voluntary. This means that the vast majority of national associations do not have automatic access to all MFA officer’s spouses and partners in their country, and MFAs themselves can only approach spouses via their officers. MFAs do not routinely collect data from their officers’ spouses and partners, and neither do most of the associations.

This background reflects a considerable number of unknowns confronting the research. One significant piece of missing information was the total size of the target group and its basic demographic characteristics. This had implications for the data collection methodology selected, as well the data’s interpretation. No respondents have been pre-selected and the potential turnout in each of the countries measured was also impossible to estimate. EUFASA served as a data collection platform, but the researcher had no control over the survey’s distribution. To maximize the potential for high turnout, an on-line, anonymous survey was designed, containing both closed-ended questions for simplicity as well as space for comments and additional information. The survey presented in this report has pioneered comparable data collection on EU diplomatic spouses from multiple EU countries. This section provides details of the data

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<sup>5</sup> Spouses and partners of diplomats (working dependants) often have to give up their diplomatic status on posting if they want to take on employment in the local labour market of the hosting country, creating an additional barrier and administrative burden.



collection methodology and data interpretation, survey turnout and respondents' basic demographic characteristics.

The report analyses the results of two separate surveys. The first was carried out under the EUFASA umbrella and addressed the main concerns and issues faced by EU MFA officers' spouses and partners, and the consequences for their relationships (EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019). Respondents from 18 members of EUFASA took part in the survey. Responses were also received from a number of other EU Member States.<sup>6</sup>

The second survey focused on the issues noted by Irish MFA officers' spouses and partners concerning retirement pensions and employment, known as the Irish Foreign Affairs Family Association (IFAFA) Pension and Employment Survey, 2019. Its results are pertinent to this report as both pensions and employment emerged as key themes in the EU-wide survey. The data from the Irish survey provide a deeper insight into these issues. The IFAFA survey results also serve as a case study of a country that does not currently provide a pensions solution for MFA officers' partners and spouses; nor does it provide active support for partners and spouses when seeking employment.

Two questionnaires have been used (see Annexes 1 and 2) to collect data. Both sets of questions were based on several structured focus group discussions as well as individual interviews with target group members. They were tested on more than ten target group members before the questionnaires' final distribution.

The EUFASA questionnaire consisted of 30 questions. Eight questions canvassed demographic (independent) variables, guiding the results' analyses. The remaining 22 questions focused on various issues or dependent variables related to repeated relocation, including relationship, employment, family, mental health or homophobia issues.

All questions were closed-ended, comprising a mixture of 24 multiple choice questions allowing for only one answer, and six checkbox questions, allowing for multiple answers. Respondents could add their own comments to 14 questions.

The Irish questionnaire on pension and employment comprised 25 questions. Nine questions were open-ended and 16 questions were closed-ended, of which 11 allowed for respondents' own comments. This reflected the survey's main aim, i.e., to establish

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<sup>6</sup> The survey was designed for current members of EUFASA: Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Estonia, EU institutions, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK. However, due to a strong interest, the survey also took in responses from the Netherlands, Hungary, Denmark, Romania and Sweden.



how, under the Irish MFA's past and current policies, accompanying spouses and partners manage to maintain a paid job/career in qualifying for a state contributory pension.

Both surveys were online and anonymous. The survey links were distributed via diplomatic spouses' associations (members of EUFASA) and, in some cases, MFAs. Data collection commenced in January 2019 and closed in April 2019. SurveyMonkey was used as the tool for collecting and processing the data, clearly stating that the data collection is compliant with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. Both surveys have been designed to ensure complete anonymity, avoiding the collection of respondents' IP addresses. Most of the data used are aggregated. Where respondents' own comments are cited, any specific information such as country, posting or age has been redacted, ensuring that quotations remain anonymous.

The total response number in the European survey disseminated by all EUFASA member associations was 1,235 responses, in all likelihood making it the largest EU-wide survey of this target group. Of the 1,235 responses in the European survey, 1,094 responses were full, i.e., no question in the questionnaire had been omitted. The turnout in each of the surveyed countries ranged from 1 to 397. Respondents to the Irish Pensions and Employment survey targeting Irish MFA officer spouses and partners totaled 191. The total turnout might have been affected by the fact that the surveys were conducted in English, potentially excluding respondents lacking a command of this language.

The EUFASA survey results are not statistically representative. However, with respect to the relatively high response number, the survey results provide significant empirical evidence reflecting European diplomatic spouses' experiences. With regard to the EUFASA survey, this report presents national results only, where the diplomatic spouses associations (EUFASA members) have granted their written consent for the use of the data and where there were at least 20 responses from respective countries.

While there is the possibility of respondent self-selection bias, the risks of the results being biased is relatively small, thanks to the cohort's overall size and because the survey results are not inconsistent with those emerging in existing research.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses of these data have been carried out. Closed-ended question responses are presented as aggregate data. Responses provided in the comments section have been coded and analyzed qualitatively. The data's independent variables comprise gender, age group and nationality. Descriptive statistics have been used for interpreting general and national results. The national results provided serve mostly as a starting point for further research, as in most countries, data from this field are scarce or non-existent.



The European (EUFASA) survey respondents had the following demographic characteristics:

Sex	Female		Male	
	74%		26%	
Age group	18-35	36-50	51-65	Over 65
	15%	50%	30%	5%
Number of children	0	1	2	More than 2
	20%	17%	39%	24%
Marital status	Married	Registered partnership	Not married (cohabiting)	
	90,4%	3,4%	6,2%	
Nationality by birth	Same as MFA officer	Foreign-born (EU)	Foreign-born (non-EU)	
	64%	18%	18%	
Relationship	Heterosexual		Same-sex	
	95%		5%	

**Table One: Survey respondents' demographic characteristics including sex, age, number of children, marital status, nationality by birth and relationship type. Source: European Union Foreign Affairs Spouses, Partners and Families Association (EUFASA) Survey.**

What stands out from Table One is the disparity in gender representation, where women comprise more than two thirds of survey respondents, corroborating previous findings that European diplomacy is still male dominated (Schiemichen, 2019). There is also a relatively higher percentage (36%) of spouses and partners who were born in a different country than the MFA officer, possibly a consequence of the significantly long periods MFA officers spend living abroad.

In the example of Ireland, we can see from Table Two below that the target group's demographic structure might, in some countries, be changing, with a gender disparity evident between different age groups.

While the youngest age group shows a slight majority of men, the older the age group, the more women participated.



Age group	18-35	36-50	51-65	Over 65
Female	48%	62%	71%	87%
Male	52%	38%	29%	13%

**Table Two: Irish Foreign Affairs Family Association (IFafa) survey respondents' sex by age group. Source: IFafa Pension and Employment Survey, 2019.**

This might reflect the historical fact that Ireland had a marriage bar<sup>7</sup> in place until 1973, resulting in women employed in the civil and public service having to resign upon getting married. Consequently, the Irish diplomatic service was comprised almost entirely of men. Another factor that might play a role in this disparity is the vertical gender segregation of ranks within the Irish MFA. If we look at the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (DFAT's) gender ratio, we can see that while the third and first secretaries' level reflects close to gender parity, with women even slightly prevailing, there is a sharp decrease in women's representation in more senior management roles (DFAT gender ratio, December 2017). This will be mirrored in the survey's spouses and partners' demographic structure.

Grade	Women	Men
Secretary General	30%	70%
Counsellor	33%	67%
First secretary	52%	48%
Third secretary	56%	44%

**Table Three: Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) positions by sex. Source: DFAT gender ratio, December 2017.**

With all its methodological limitations and with no previous quantitative data available, the European and Irish survey data sets provide a first glimpse into the population of EU diplomatic spouses, its demographic structure, the lived experiences, and the main concerns this community has.

<sup>7</sup> A marriage bar restricting the employment of married women is a common practice 20th century western countries such as the USA, Ireland, UK or the Netherlands.



## The Principal Issues

The principal issues diplomatic spouses face are directly linked to multiple relocations and can be summarized as follows: because of repeated relocations, it is very difficult to maintain their job/career and own income, leading to long-term economic dependency on the diplomat–job holder.

In times when almost every second marriage in the EU ends in divorce<sup>8</sup>, this puts the diplomat's spouse in a position of extreme vulnerability. The gaps in paid and insured employment have implications for the retirement pension entitlement and/or the pension's value, extending the spouse's economic dependency into retirement age. In addition, the absence of their own occupation has a negative impact on the spouse's sense of identity and mental health.

This section presents results of what is likely to be the largest survey on principal issues among European diplomatic spouses, involving over 1,200 respondents. Even though the quantified results are not statistically representative, the large data set provides a good basis for the study's conclusions and recommendations and underlines the urgency of these issues. The EU-wide results are supplemented by a survey from Ireland, addressing two main issues – employment and pensions.

Gender as an analytical category is key to identifying inequalities occurring in the diplomatic spouses' lives, the majority of whom are still women. In most EU countries, women are underemployed, face labour market gender discrimination, suffer from the gender pay gap, receive lower retirement pensions (European Commission, 2019) and perform much more unpaid work than men (EIGE, 2017). Each of these gender-based inequalities apply, and in fact multiply, in the context of diplomacy and multiple relocations.

In addition, the social roles performed in diplomacy are strongly gendered and are built on traditional and opposing stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity that are meant to complement each other. Men land in official, paid, and powerful (superior) positions, while women perform informal, supportive and unpaid (inferior) roles. Gender inequality is therefore central to how diplomacy is performed. Gender lenses enable us to see how these rigid roles clash with the lived reality of diplomatic spouses, both women and men.

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<sup>8</sup> The divorce marriage ratio in the EU in 2015 was 44,4% according to Eurostat.





## Employment

The vast majority of respondents want to work. Eighty-seven percent (87%) of all respondents prefer to have a job while on posting for reasons detailed in Table Four below.

Job-seeking motivations	Responses
Important part of identity	66%
Sense of independence	63%
Having own income	63%
Pursuing own career	55%
Earning towards pension	48%
Social status	26%

Table Four: EUFASA survey respondents' job-seeking motivations. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.

### **Table Four: EUFASA survey respondents' job-seeking motivations. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

However, respondents face multiple barriers in trying to secure a paid job. Some obstacles are related to labour market characteristics in general, such as gender or age discrimination. Some are related to diplomacy's mobile lifestyle, such as difficulties in securing a work permit, curriculum vitae (CV) gaps, status as a migrant, language barriers, unrecognized qualifications or those deemed irrelevant, administrative barriers for cross-border working, or no work history and professional network in the country of posting.

Furthermore, some are linked specifically to the diplomatic community, with 50% of all respondents noting their diplomatic status prevented them from getting a paid job. State or public employees are not granted (repeated) career breaks or are not allowed to work remotely. Some spouses reported that their social status as a diplomat's spouse was a barrier. Some felt that paid employment was not compatible with the obligations they have as a diplomatic spouse, or with the care work they provide to their family, including children and/or older family members. Almost 70% of respondents said they did not receive any support from the MFA in seeking a job while on posting, or when their MFA spouse or partner was working in the MFA's home office.



“It is not sustainable longer term. It has worked out for us so far because of my maternity leave but I would have to give up my career if we continue to do overseas postings.”

“We cannot afford to live on one salary – this is very stressful and I don’t know how we will cope when we go back after I have been out of the job market for more than 8 years.”

“When we married, I earned more than my spouse, now because of extended career breaks (language barrier and no work visa), I am no longer as competitive in the work place as I used to be. We cannot change direction easily, we are stuck on the MFA path for better or worse.”

“ I cannot afford to lose my job and career that I have worked long and hard for. Potentially separating our family is a very grim prospect and one we nearly had to do.”

“We spent years commuting to maintain two jobs.”

“Difficult to find a job when you say you are the ambassador’s wife.”

“Spouses’ career seems to be the last consideration of the MFA. The expectation is to have the officer around the world with little regards for the career development of the partner.”

**Box One: EUFASA survey respondents’ comments on challenges arising from their trailing spouse status. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

For women, the most common reason for not having a job is family requirements like childcare or caring for other family members (56%). For men, the most common reason for unemployment is that they were unsuccessful in procuring a job (45%), reflecting the more traditional gender roles that assume women adopt the role of principal carer while men are expected to take on the role of professionals and breadwinners. This set of socially determined gender roles affects how men and women perceive and describe themselves.

Men, more than women, reported compromising on their qualifications (47% men versus 30% women) and income (62% men versus 50% women), reflecting the likelihood that men tend to be more confident in the labour market, asking for a higher salary and aspiring to more senior positions. On the other hand, more women than men reported having to reinvent themselves to secure a paid job (62% women as opposed to 50% men). Women tend to be more flexible in adjusting to situations with existing research



suggesting that male spouses are much less willing to accompany female diplomats on postings because they don't want to sacrifice their careers (Magnusson 2010, as quoted in: Aggestam and Towns, 2018:76, Coles, 2008).

Employment opportunities on postings are a more important factor for men than for women when making decisions about embarking upon postings (97% men versus 72% women). In addition, a much higher proportion of men than women considered leaving a posting early when they could not secure a job (53% men versus 28% women).

The results of the Irish survey are in line with the European EUFASA partnership issues survey. The vast majority of respondents want to have a paid job. More than 95% of respondents said they prefer to have a job while on posting. In addition, spouses spent a significantly longer period in paid employment in Ireland than on posting. More than a half of the respondents said that, as a consequence of postings, they had to make compromises with regard to their professional and salary expectations.

Respondents with partners or spouses still in employment with the Irish MFA, spent on average nine years on posting and nine years in Ireland, holding a paid job for three years when on posting and for seven years when in Ireland.

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of respondents felt they had to reinvent themselves in finding paid employment by, for example, requalifying, or taking on a job in an area that did not match their qualifications. Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents said they had to compromise on their income, by for example, accepting a lower salary than what they would normally aspire to, while 36% said they had to compromise on their qualifications by, for example, accepting a job below their qualifications.

For 80% of respondents, professional opportunities are an important factor when making decision about their next posting.

Over 90% of respondents felt they lacked information about the impact on their career prospects and pension rights of accompanying their spouse/partner on a posting.

Respondents, whose Irish MFA officer spouses had retired, spent on average, 20 years on posting and 15 years in Ireland. On average, they held a paid job on posting for three years with more than half reporting that they had worked only one or zero years while on posting, and eight years while in Ireland. Periods of unemployment were mostly due to family circumstances such as caring for children or older family members, or not having a work permit.



“In [the seventies] on my first posting the Ambassador did not permit wives to work”.

“[I could not work, I was] supporting my husband while he was an Ambassador for [almost 20] years”.

“As a spouse of a diplomat, I was not permitted to work in [an European country] and worked in jobs lower than my qualifications in [another two European countries]”.

**Box Two: Irish survey respondents’ comments on their employability. Source: IFAFA Pension and Employment Survey, 2019.**

The Irish survey worked with three different categories of spouses and partner’s nationalities (defined as place of birth). These categories were: Irish, EU and non-EU, with implications for each of these groups stemming from the diplomat’s mobile lifestyle. The percentage of spouses and partners born outside Ireland, labelled as foreign born spouses (FBS) is significantly higher for lower age groups, as Table Five details below.

Age group	% of FBS (EU and non-EU)
18 – 35	45%
36 – 50	32%
51- 65	24%
Over 65	20%

**Table Five: Irish survey FBS respondents’ age groups (%). Source: IFAFA Pension and Employment Survey, 2019.**

The survey results show that in general, foreign born spouses born outside of the EU are the most vulnerable in terms of employability and pension rights.

In comparison to the other two groups, it seems to be easier for Irish born spouses to find employment in Ireland. They are also less concerned about their pension rights than FBS. A higher percentage (80%) of non-EU FBS had to compromise on their income in comparison to EU FBS (58%) and Irish-born spouses (48%).

Non-EU FBS are also less successful than the other two groups (28%) in finding employment, 56% reporting being unsuccessful in procuring a job.



At the same time, employment opportunities on posting are less important to non-EU FBS than they are to EU FBS or Irish born spouses when choosing a posting, with 67% reporting that work option availability on posting were an important factor, while higher proportions of EU FBS (76%) and Irish-born spouses (85%) prioritized this.

### **Retirement Pension**

The evolution of social and welfare systems in European states has also had a bearing on partners and spouses' experiences and the issues arising from their access to pensions. Individuals who do not make contributions to the social security system are penalized for not doing so. Only paid work is considered real work. Domestic work, including cooking, hosting, entertaining, caring for children or other family members, and managing the administrative burden of maintaining a family are often taken for granted, unpaid and therefore invisible.

The loss of pension/social security is a major stress factor, especially in countries that do not have any provisions in place for spouses' pensions. While on average, 49% of EUFASA survey respondents said the loss of pension was a stress factor, there are significant differences between countries, reflecting different policies regarding spouses and partner's retirement pensions. Much lower proportions of respondents from France (34%) were stressed by the lack of pension provisions for spouses than respondents from countries such as Spain or Ireland, where 70% and 64% of respondents respectively reported being stressed by the lack of pension provisions during postings.

Both men and women (45% and 50% respectively) were concerned about their pension, with greatest concern (51%) expressed by the 51-65 year age group, made up of spouses approaching or have just reached their retirement age.

In the Irish survey, 82% of respondents were concerned about their future entitlement to a state contributory pension. Less than 40% thought it likely or possible that they will qualify.

Men feel slightly less concerned about their future pension entitlement than women. While over 50% of women feel that they will most likely not, or certainly not qualify for state contributory pension, the corresponding figure for men was only 24%. Additionally, while only 31% of women think they most likely or possibly will qualify, 50% of men reported that they will most likely or possibly qualify for the state contributory pension.

From those who had socially insured employment with pension contributions to the state pension system, 65% paid pension contributions in Ireland (i.e., "pay related social



insurance” - PRSI), 10% paid Irish PRSI from abroad, and 24% made local contributions on posting.

Eighty-five percent (85%) of respondents never paid contributions on a voluntary basis, with some reporting that they were not even aware of such an option.

Only 20 respondents in the Irish survey were already retired. Even though 90% of them have at some point held a paid job with pension contributions in Ireland, more than half of them do not qualify for a contributory state pension. This finding suggests that under the current retirement pension policy, the typical posting pattern of a diplomat does not allow for the accompanying spouse to earn income for enough years to qualify for a state contributory pension.

Almost total consensus (95%) among respondents emerged concerning the right to compensation for the loss of pension on account of their status as a diplomatic spouse. Some of the concerns respondents expressed are noted in Box Three below.

“I feel very strongly that spouses should be compensated or have contributions made while abroad. We (my generation) were not aware that we would lose out so much and now find ourselves in a position where living on one pension is pretty basic.”

“I believe it is now time for DFAT/the Irish state to acknowledge the contribution of spouses/partners of officers serving abroad and pay as a minimum PRSI contributions while on postings as well as automatically provide updated information on tax/pension.”

“Ireland benefited hugely over the decades from getting ‘two for the price of one’. While on overseas postings spouses did their national duty without any recognition or support.”

**Box Three: Irish survey respondents’ comments on their rights compensation due to loss of pension. Source: Irish Pension and Employment Survey, 2019.**

There was also a strong feeling (over 90%) that not enough information was given to diplomats’ spouses and partners concerning the impact of postings on their pension entitlement.

“I feel strongly that no advice or warning was given by DFAT as to negative impact on promotion and pension. No advice or assistance as to how we might get the best outcome.”



“No input from DFAT to provide a preparation and information service to spouses. Thus in the inexperience of youth and public service ethos of officers and spouses, there was no warning given of the negative outcomes for career and especially pension.”

“I never received any information from DFAT about anything related to spouses while on posting.”

“My tax situation has been one of the most stressful situations about this posting because it seems impossible to understand and I have no support.”

**Box Four: Irish survey respondents’ concerns about the lack of DFAT information on posting’s career and pension implications. Source: Irish Pension and Employment Survey, 2019.**

Most respondents were unaware of strategies aiming to maintain their pension contributions and income, except for renting property in Ireland or having a portable career.

### **Work-Life Balance**

Diplomatic officers’ long working hours and the lack of a healthy work-life balance were referred to by a large proportion of respondents (48%) as the most common challenge for their relationship. More research into the specific daily activities of how diplomacy is practiced and how these translate into diplomats’ working hours is needed.

The social events organized by MFA embassies or their international partners constitutes an important part of maintaining and strengthening international relations. Should these be held outside of the regular working hours, they might pose a significant demand on the diplomat’s time. The Czech Foreign Service Act (2017) even has a special clause for these situations, suggesting their occurrence might be frequent: “In case civil servants and employees whose regular service post or workplace is located abroad attend social events taking place outside the set working hours and away from the service post or workplace, the time spent at such events shall not be counted as overtime service or work (...), unless the civil servant or employee is ordered by the head of representative office to attend the event.” (Foreign Service Act of the Czech Republic, Section 49).

Organizational culture might also play a significant role in diplomats’ total working hours. De Souza Farias and do Carmo (2018) note that in the Brazilian MFA, there is an informal rule that diplomats have to wait until their superiors leave work (In: Aggestam and Towns, 2018). The willingness to accept the long hours is seen as a sign of independence, power and a metric to measure merit – all masculine attributes. Those



advocating for a better work-life balance are seen as weak, problematic, emotional and 'slacking' (Bruschini 2000 and Ribeiro and Marinho 2012, as quoted in: Aggestam and Towns, 2018: 112).

An international comparison of survey results shows significant differences between countries.

While long working hours and the lack of a healthy work-life balance are cited as challenging for the relationships of 71% respondents representing Ireland, the same is a problem for only 17% of respondents representing Belgium. It is likely that the lack of a healthy work-life balance is linked not only to MFA's institutional cultures, but also to the particular Government's national family policies in these countries.

When we take the examples of Ireland and Belgium, the two countries are located on opposite ends of the spectrum, with major differences in access to state-subsidized pre-school childcare and after-school care. Unlike Belgium, the pre-school facilities in Ireland are mostly private and expensive relative to the average salary. The only state-subsidized scheme available (the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme) caters only for children aged 3-5 years and covers only three hours per day (Early Childhood Ireland, n.d.), an incompatible arrangement with full-time employed second parents. The current policy of the Irish MFA is to cover pre-school childcare on posting to the same extent as is available in Ireland (i.e., three hours per day for 3-5 year olds). In some cases, the national family policy therefore extends to postings as well.

## **Mental Health**

Many aspects of repeated relocation can be challenging for the mental health of accompanying spouses and partners. Andreson and Stark (1988) observed that trailing spouses frequently exhibit depression, health problems, little community involvement and strong dependency on their spouse for emotional support, calling this a "mobility syndrome".

Table Six below shows the most common stress factors related to the diplomatic lifestyle and its repeated relocation, with the loss of paid employment and related loss of pension rights leading the responses. The percentages reflect the responses of over 1,200 respondents.





Stress factor	Percentage
Difficulty in maintaining my own job/career/income	78%
Loss of my financial independence	59%
Loss of my pension/social security	49%
Disconnection from family	40%
Disconnection from familiar environment, social network, friends	40%
Maintaining the well-being of my children	34%

**Table Six: EUFASA survey respondents' most frequent sources of posting-related stress. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

Nearly 30% of all respondents have sought, or have considered seeking, counselling services for reasons related to the MFA officer's job and the consequences it has for them. The fact that repeated relocation can pose a major challenge to the psychological well-being of both diplomats and their family members is already recognized and reflected in the policies of several European MFAs, that in turn, offer diplomats and their spouses/partners access to counselling services.

Multiple relocations also have an impact on the sense of identity of accompanying spouses and partners. As shown in Box Five below, the most commonly experienced problems arising from not having a paid job, aside from less income, are challenges to their sense of identity, independence and personal fulfillment. Without paid employment, these benefits are deficient from postings.

"Loss of personal identity and loneliness, always being seen as spouse of the (working) diplomat."

"Being perceived just as a spouse rather than a person in my own rights."

"I sense not having enough fulfillment in only being 'the spouse of'."

"Work is giving me self-purpose when at post and ability to make own circle of friends not necessarily linked to my husband."



**Box Five: EUFASA survey respondents' comments on the importance to their identities of paid work. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

Table Seven below confirms the feelings presented in Box Five on a much larger scale. It shows the most significant feelings experienced by more than 1,000 diplomat spouses and partners while on posting or dealing with a head office placement. It clearly notes the extent of negative feelings generated by either foreign or head office placements for diplomats' spouses or partners, flagging a serious issue with implications for MFAs' performance and warranting urgent action.

<b>Partner/spouse concerns</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Loss of independence	55%
Feeling of isolation	54%
Sense of not belonging	40%
Lack of support from the MFA	40%
Work in the family (raising children, house chores) not evenly distributed between the two partners	37%
Your work for the MFA is not sufficiently rewarded/recognized by the MFA	36%
You have to carry the burden of emotional trauma for the whole family	30%
Lack of support in general	23%
Lack of support from the MFA officer	14%
Your work for the MFA is not sufficiently appreciated by the MFA officer	10%

**Table Seven: EUFASA survey respondents' most significant feelings emanating from their experiences of diplomatic placements. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019**

"It is very isolating on the spouse who is at home with the children and largely excluded from events and functions, trips and experiences."

"I had to give up my career aspirations and play the role of diplomatic spouse and family and social support role."

**Box Six: EUFASA survey respondent's comments on the effect of the unsupported diplomatic spouse or partner's role. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

While 36% of women indicated that they felt they had to carry the burden of emotional trauma for the whole family, this was indicated by only 14% of men. Also, women felt strongly about the work in the family not being distributed evenly between the two



partners (41% of women as opposed to 25% of men). There was also gender difference in responses to the question on the work for the MFA not being sufficiently rewarded by the MFA, with 39% of women unimpressed with MFA reward provisions, as opposed to only 27% of men. This sentiment grows in importance in accordance with increasing age. Only 28% respondents from the 18-35 age range indicated this sentiment, while 56% of respondents from the 65+ age group disclosed they felt unrewarded by the MFA for their work.

The rigid gender roles upon which diplomacy is built are strongly heteronormative and might lead to exclusion of those who do not conform. Thirty-three percent (33%) of gay men and 12% of gay women said they felt excluded from events/functions in their capacity as a diplomatic spouse/partner, due to their sexual orientation. Thirty-nine percent (39%) of gay men and 25% of gay women experienced homophobic behavior in their capacity as a diplomatic spouse/partner. If confronted with homophobic attitudes while on posting, the strongest support received was reported from respondents representing Spain and France, while no support was provided to respondents representing countries that do not officially recognize same-sex couples. Respondents also reported exclusion from MFA events or processes due to gender (male spouses and partners), race and marital status (unmarried partners).

### **Relationship Satisfaction**

The obligation for officers to relocate often pushes accompanying spouses out of employment and social welfare, thus forcing them into economic and social dependency and increasing risks of poverty. This makes spouses and partners much more vulnerable, creating an imbalance of power in their relationship with the MFA officer.

Multiple relocations therefore affect the quality of relationships between MFA officers and their spouses/partners. Fifty percent (50%) of all respondents said that the consequences of the mobile MFA lifestyle put a strain on their relationship with the MFA officer. In fact, over 20% of all respondents considered separation or termination of their relationship. More than half of those who spent a period of time living separately in order not to interrupt their employment said it had a negative impact on their relationship with the MFA officer.

Table Eight below shows those aspects of the MFA officer's job that are the most challenging for the relationship, from the spouse or partner's perspective. The table reflects the responses of over 1,000 spouses and partners.



Issues affecting Relationships	Percentage
Long working hours (lack of work-life balance)	48%
Problems in the MFA officer's work (e.g. bullying, mobbing, harassment, inappropriate behavior, sexism, dealing with high levels of stress, PTSD)	21%
Obligations imposed on the spouse (to host events, to accompany officer to events, to participate in Embassy events)	17%
Frequent relocation	15%
Too much travelling	12%
Disagreement in choice (ranking) of posting	10%
Excessive exposure to alcohol	7%

**Table Eight: EUFASA survey respondent's identification of issues affecting spouse/partner relationships. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

Long working hours and the lack of a healthy work-life balance has already been discussed above. The second most frequently expressed issue in the MFA officer's work were issues such as bullying, mobbing or harassment; issues expressed as a challenge for the relationship by a considerably higher number of respondents in France (32%) and Austria (31%). More research is needed into how such workplace-related issues affect the officer's family.

Although obligations imposed on the spouse, such as hosting events or accompanying the MFA officer to functions, do not seem to pose a major problem in the overall results (17%), the figures double when we look at some specific countries.

Expectations placed on the spouse to perform a certain role while on posting is perceived as more of a burden in countries where there is no provision in place to compensate their loss of pension or to remunerate their contribution to the MFA's operation. Those countries where obligations imposed on the spouse were reported as the most problematic (Portugal: 37%, Ireland: 31% and Spain: 29%), also show the largest gender gap in unpaid work (OECD.Stat, n.d.), meaning that women in these countries spend considerably more time doing unpaid work than men.

In the cases of Ireland (31%) and Portugal (37%), the spouse/partner's role is not clearly defined and spouses therefore have to operate in a grey area, informed by conventions and practices observed from other spouses or transmitted through the MFA officer. Although unwritten and unofficial, there seems to be a pressure to meet certain expectations to support or even not to jeopardize the MFA officer's career.



Men considered the obligations imposed on the spouse as problematic in slightly higher numbers than women (23% and 15% respectively). In terms of age, spousal obligations were most problematic for the oldest age-group (i.e., spouses/partners aged over 65 years). The possible explanation might be that at this age, it is likely that the MFA officer will serve at ambassadorial level, bringing more obligations for the spouse. Also, towards the end of their career, spouses might feel more critical about the unpaid and unrewarded work they have dedicated to the MFA over the years.

There are different approaches adopted across the EU member states represented in the EUFASA survey on recognizing the role spouses fulfill and remunerating spouses/partners for their MFA contributions. Some countries acknowledge the spouses' role and/or their vulnerable position created by repeated relocation, and have policies in place that secure the spouse's own income. In some cases, spouses are, for example, paid a moderate income, providing they accompany the MFA officer on posting and do not have any income of their own, while other MFAs offer spouses a work contract with a job description related to the maintenance of the official residence and managing social functions.

However, the most common approach is the absence of any official policy and financial recognition. In such cases, spouses are not officially expected to perform any specific duties and all the work they might do in supporting the MFA operation or the MFA officer's job is considered voluntary. This practice allows MFAs to avoid liability for any form of remuneration for the spouses' work.

Similar practices were adopted by the U.S. State Department several decades ago. Fenzi and Nelson (1994) note a landmark directive that was adopted by the U.S. State Department in 1972 in response to spouses' efforts to gain recognition and compensation for their work. It stated that "the wife of a Foreign Service employee" is a private individual, not a government employee, and the Foreign Service has therefore "no right to levy any duties upon her".

The authors also note that: "What the directive did not do was recognize that the traditional duties of diplomacy continued and that spouses, now unrecognized and, as always, uncompensated, would continue to perform them." (Fenzi and Nelson, 1994:180).

"Very negative is the fact of not being recognized at all by the MFA, the effort we make to represent our country together."

"The amount of time spent on getting up to speed (banking, doctors, telecommunications, transport, driving licenses, employment etc.) in a new country is very significant, frustrating and often underestimated."



“In order to avoid the stress of giving up my job, I have to disregard the role of a diplomatic spouse.”

“Not being valued by the spouse due to not working and being more dependent than I would normally be.”

“Being unable to say what I really think about some subjects.”

**Box Seven: EUFASA survey respondents’ comments on the absence of MFA recognition for their contributions and their lack of independence. Source: EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019.**

## Policy Recommendations

This section offers a list of general policy recommendations for European MFAs, addressing the main issues diplomatic spouses and partners face, taking into account the EUs’ fundamental values and its social and economic rights.

MFAs should pay attention to the concerns and needs of the family members of their officers for two main reasons.

Firstly, the spouses’ satisfaction has an impact on the operation of MFAs through their officers. MFAs should act as a good employer seeking to attract and retain the best employees. In line with private sector research, the EU-wide EUFASA survey shows that 40% of all respondents said the MFA officer would leave the job due to the impact their job has on his/her spouse/partner and family. Forty-five percent (45%) of all respondents said they have extended their posting, not joined their MFA officer spouse on posting, or have seriously considered doing so. Of those, the most common reasons for doing so were family (53%), not to lose their job (47%) and not to lose pension entitlement/social benefits (22%) (EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019).

From a gender equality perspective, more men (56%) than women (40%) reported that their spouse/partner (MFA officer) would be willing to leave the MFA in order to enable them (the non-MFA spouse) to maintain their job and pension rights (Irish Pension and Employment Survey, 2019). This suggests that maintaining paid employment is more important to men than to women, possibly presenting an obstacle to the MFAs implementing effective gender equality policies aiming to achieve more balanced gender representation, including, importantly, in more senior positions. In terms of



retaining staff, our data suggest that MFAs are more likely to lose female employees, as they are more likely to experience pressure from their spouse/partner to give up diplomacy's mobile lifestyle.

Secondly, as institutions of EU member states, MFAs should act as implementers of national and EU policies and promoters of fundamental values. They should lead by example in their commitment to EU values such as gender equality and in enforcing the rights of EU citizens, such as the social rights stipulated in the European Pillar of Social Rights (European Commission, n.d.).

Annex Three's Table One places EU countries in the international context, showing some of the most important survey results together with other indicators relevant for a gender equality analysis. Anecdotal evidence suggests that common gender inequalities in society such as the gender pay gap, the gender gap in unpaid work, women's higher unemployment and underemployment, and the gender gap in retirement pensions, seem to increase in magnitude for tied migrant workers, due in part to their repeated relocation.

The following recommendations are informed by this study's survey results and are therefore, not exhaustive<sup>9</sup>. They are focused on improving the situation of MFA officers' spouses and partners with one principal objective: to reduce the level of vulnerability and forced dependency of spouses and partners, for whom postings are a contractual obligation. They suggest measures or policies aimed at helping spouses and partners maintain their own income, ensuring that they remain covered by social security and healthcare systems, while increasing the level of information and support available to them.

The author acknowledges that while the examples and practices cited from various European countries are not always readily transferable to other contexts, they nevertheless provide important reference points for good practice.

## **I. Employment**

Unintended and undesired unemployment and limited or lost pension rights resulting from repeated relocation are clearly the main concern for the majority of diplomats' spouses. The following recommendations are designed to remedy this situation.

### **Employment Policy for Spouses**

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<sup>9</sup> For example, the survey has not covered the question of children of diplomats and their needs or rights.



For the officer's spouse or partner, employment is important for maintaining financial independence and contributing towards a retirement pension. It is also important because of the mental health and psychological wellbeing of the individual concerned. MFAs should acknowledge the importance of gainful employment for spouses and articulate their support for the principle of MFA officer's spouses and partners taking up employment while on posting.

*Example: the United Kingdom (UK)*

The FCO has a dedicated policy in place based on the following principle: "Spouse/partner employment is one of the key considerations for officers deciding which Posts to bid for. The FCO recognises that many UK families live in dual-career, dual-earner households. Therefore, the decision by the accompanying spouse/partner to put their career on hold is a difficult one, and at Post they may want to be able to work and retain some kind of financial independence. For these reasons the Diplomatic Service Families Association (DSFA) provides help and advice on this, and the UK has negotiated bilateral MOU/working arrangements with a number of countries to facilitate spouse employment when accompanying officers are on a posting" (FCO Spouse and Partner Employment Overseas).

### **Access to Work Permits**

Outside the EU, MFA officers' spouses and partners do not have automatic access to the local labour market. Many MFAs sign Working Dependent Agreements (WDA) with hosting countries to enable this access. MFAs should work actively to increase the number of WDAs. Where this is not possible, MFAs should offer assistance and cover related costs in cases where the spouse wishes to seek a work permit on an individual basis. The conditions for covering these costs should be clearly stated and the engagement of a professional agent or agency should not be excluded.

### **Measures for Civil or Public Servants**

MFAs should work with other Departments to ensure that MFA officers' spouses and partners employed in public service be granted leave of absence for the duration of posting(s) and that their reintegration will be guaranteed upon return. Where possible, flexible working arrangements should be encouraged to enable spouses to work remotely.

*Example: Lithuania*





The Lithuanian Law on Diplomatic Service (29 December 1998 No. VIII-1012), Article 28, states the following:

“1. The spouse of a diplomat, who left together with the diplomat for a Republic of Lithuania Diplomatic mission or consular institution, shall have a right to return to his former workplace in a state institution, enterprise or organisation and occupy a position with no less of a salary than of that which he occupied prior to departure to a foreign country.

2. The period which the spouse of a diplomat has spent abroad owing to the fact he resided together with the diplomat, who served at a Republic of Lithuania diplomatic mission or consular institution, shall be counted into the diplomat spouse’s period of state social insurance, provided the established social insurance of Lithuania contributions have been paid to cover that period.

3. The spouse of a diplomat serving at Republic of Lithuania diplomatic mission or consular service who resides with him, shall have the right to be employed in the foreign country where his spouse is serving, if that has been stipulated in the international agreements of the Republic of Lithuania or is permitted in accordance with that country’s laws. The diplomat’s spouse must inform the Minister of Foreign Affairs of his employment.”

### **Employment by Missions**

MFAs should support the employment of officers’ spouses and partners in Missions. Where there is more than one equally qualified candidate among the applicants for an open position, the MFA officer’s spouse/partner may be the preferred candidate.

*Example: the UK*

The FCO has a long-standing practice where all officers’ spouses/partners can apply for all vacancies at Post. According to the British Diplomatic Service Families Association’s (DSFA) 2018 figures, some 273 spouses of FCO officers were employed at FCO Missions in that year.

### **Other Assistance**

MFAs should offer language training and career training/coaching or other forms of assistance for spouses, both on posting and in home office assignments that might improve their labour market competitiveness.



### *Example: the UK*

The European EUFASA survey showed that the package of services offered to FCO officer spouses and partners is one of the most efficient and includes:

- A regular programme of career assistance workshops in London
- A tailored career coaching programme via an external provider (approximately 30 programmes per annum)
- Career and business coaching sessions via Skype
- A portable career training grant
- Access to career resources and employment reports through the DSFA website
- Access to a DSFA Careers and Professional Development Adviser
- Language training
- Partner Pension Compensation

### **Solution for the Loss of Second Income**

The loss of one's own income is the main cause of economic and social vulnerability for MFA officer spouses and partners. MFAs should investigate options to mitigate the impact and compensate for this loss. The loss of the second income in the family should also be taken into consideration as an important factor in any reviews of staff turnover and therefore office performance, posting allowances, and similar exercises.

### *Example: Estonia*

The MFA's accompanying spouse who does not work on posting is paid an allowance of double the minimum wage in Estonia directly to his/her account for the posting's duration. This is in addition to spouse allowance paid to the MFA officer.

### *Example: Poland*

The MFA offers an employment contract to spouses of ambassadors. The job description can vary across postings but is generally related to the management of the residence and representation activities. This income also enables ambassadors' spouses to make their own contributions towards their retirement pension.

## **II. Retirement Pension Rights**

Accompanying an MFA transferable officer on posting should not have a negative impact on the pension rights of the MFA officer's spouse/partner.



Examples from several European countries show that a number of MFAs already either fully or partially cover pension contributions for spouses for the posting's duration. Bearing in mind that social security systems vary considerably across Europe, countries that do not have any provision in place could work with other relevant Government departments to identify an optimal model, ensuring continuity in social security contributions and the spouse/partner or equivalent's protection while on posting.

*Example: Czechia*

The Czech MFA reimburses voluntary pension contributions for accompanying spouses for the posting's duration, providing the spouse has no income of his/her own.

*Example: Austria*

The Austrian MFA provides a pension benefit subsidy for spouses making voluntary contributions into the public pension system.

*Example: Switzerland*

Spouses are encouraged to open their own private pension account. The MFA makes contributions to these payments by way of reimbursement to the officer's bank account while on posting and in the MFA's home office.

*Example: Finland*

There is a special monthly compensation for a foreign service spouse once s/he turns 63 that is calculated from the number of months spent on posting and current wage index. The compensation is liable for taxation. If this is the only pension the spouse receives, the national pension is paid as well.

### **III. Work-Life Balance**

MFAs should initiate a review of their officers' actual working hours, taking into account the organizational culture and unofficial working practices. For example, officers might not be officially requested to attend certain work-related events, but they do it as a matter of common practice. MFAs should incorporate strengthening supports for a healthy work-life balance, particularly in the context of postings, in their internal Human Resource (HR) strategies.

The empirical data presented in this report confirm the demand for a healthier work-life balance, both on the part of the MFA officer and that of the officer's spouse/partner.



In the area of flexible working arrangements and family-related leave, as a minimum standard, MFAs should implement the EU proposal for Directive on work-life balance (European Commission, 2017).

From the perspective of parents, it is important to ensure access to pre-school facilities while on posting and enable spouses with pre-school children to engage in paid employment.

#### **IV. Mental Health**

The European EUFASA survey demonstrates demand for confidential, safe and inclusive access to counseling services that do not disadvantage foreign-born spouses and partners and can also offer expertise in expatriate child psychology. MFAs should respond to this demand and monitor the services they already provide on a regular basis, including user feedback from staff and family members, to ensure the service responds to their needs.

#### **V. Diversity**

In general, HR policies should reflect and recognize different types of relationships and families. They should not discriminate against spouses and partners of different nationalities, same-sex couples, or non-married partners.

The EU is committed to equality and diversity. With respect to their partners and spouses, MFAs should provide information about the risks of a homophobic environment in hosting countries that, for example, do not recognize same-sex spouses and partners and take them into consideration when posting officers overseas.

#### **VI. Access to Information**

Although the EUFASA survey results vary across countries, they suggest a high percentage of spouses and partners still experience a lack of information regarding the impact of postings on their career prospects and retirement pension entitlements.

MFAs should be transparent in their policies and provide regular and comprehensive information on all policies or provisions potentially affecting MFA officer spouses and families. If there are no policies in place on the role of the spouse and therefore no expectations to perform duties, MFAs should make this fact known as well.

Post reports could be an important source of information about a posting location and its potential work opportunities for the spouse. These reports should include a detailed section on the employment of spouses, including a step-by-step guide on what to do to apply for a job or set up a business, based on accurate information on local labour law, including, where applicable, work permits and any additional considerations arising from



diplomatic status or bilateral agreements in place. The information should reflect possible differences related to the nationality of the spouses. Post reports should also include information on the status of same sex couples and non-married couples, and should be easily available to spouses and partners.

Another tool assisting in transmitting important information to MFA officer spouses and partners should be pre-posting and post-posting briefings. These should include information on employment options for spouses and all support services available to them.

Many spouses face job-related difficulties when on posting due to differences in the taxation, social security or legal systems of the country concerned. Diplomatic status could be another complicating factor. MFAs should consider offering assistance in identifying relevant institutions or advisors providing reliable information.

## **VII. Data Collection and Spouses Mainstreaming**

This report provides empirical evidence of how public and HR policies impact on the lived experience of MFA diplomats' spouses and partners, highlighting the urgent requirement for data in this field. This points to a need for MFAs to systematically mainstream spouse's/partners' issues into the formulation and review of its HR policies.

The surveys that form the basis of this report's research represent an example of the type of feedback that should be collected from spouses and partners on a periodic basis. Such feedback should be used to measure the impact of the MFA's policies, as well as any implications for posted staff arising from changes to domestic social or health policies.

Spouses and partners of EU diplomats are affected not only by their MFAs' policies, but also by national public and social policies of respective host states and by their EU citizen status, or as a family member of an EU citizen. Thus, while the recommendations set out above are addressed to MFAs in the first instance, there is a strong case for these recommendations to be made at the wider Governmental and regional levels, including at the EU level. As tied migrants, the families of EU diplomats ultimately relocate because of, and in the interest of, the sending state. Their particular situation should therefore be reflected in policy making at a national level in all relevant areas, especially in social protection and health care policies.



At the EU level, follow-up action could range from an exchange of good practice among EU Member States to a more formal review by, for example, the European Commission, of where potential gaps or tensions might exist between MFA practices and policies vis a vis diplomats' family members and this cohort's individual rights as EU citizens, or family members of EU citizens.

More broadly, the EU should act as a guarantor that the EU's fundamental rights and values are made a reality. The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU states that the EU places the individual at the heart of its activities. It is through this lens that Member State MFAs should view their responsibilities to the spouses and partners of their diplomats.

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## Tables and boxes

Table One: Survey respondents' demographic characteristics including sex, age, number of children, marital status, nationality by birth and relationship type.

Table Two: Irish Foreign Affairs Family Association (IFAFSA) survey respondents' sex by age group.

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Box Five: EUFASA survey respondents' comments on the importance to their identities of paid work.

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Box Seven: EUFASA survey respondents' comments on the absence of MFA recognition for their contributions and their lack of independence.

## Annex 1

### **EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues – Questionnaire**

#### 1. Gender



- a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other
2. Age
- a. 18-35
  - b. 36-50
  - c. 51-65
  - d. Over 65
3. Number of children
- a. 0
  - b. 1
  - c. 2
  - d. More than 2
4. Marital status
- a. Married
  - b. Registered partnership
  - c. Not married (cohabiting)
5. Spouse/partner of an MFA officer representing the following country/EUFASA member
- a. Austria
  - b. Belgium
  - c. Czechia
  - d. Estonia
  - e. EU
  - f. Finland
  - g. France
  - h. Germany
  - i. Ireland
  - j. Italy
  - k. Latvia
  - l. Lithuania
  - m. Luxembourg
  - n. Poland
  - o. Portugal
  - p. Spain
  - q. Switzerland
  - r. UK
6. Nationality by birth
- a. Same as MFA officer
  - b. Foreign born (EU)
  - c. Foreign born (non-EU)
7. Number of postings (including the current one if on posting)



- a. 1-2
  - b. 3-5
  - c. 6-8
  - d. More than 8
8. Your relationship with MFA officer is
- a. Heterosexual
  - b. Same-sex
9. Do you feel that the consequences of the mobile style of living put a strain on your relationship with the MFA officer
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. Don't know
10. Which of the following aspects of the diplomatic lifestyle and repeated relocation do you find the most stressful? (you can choose more than one option)
- a. Difficulty to maintain my own job/income/career
  - b. Loss of my financial independence
  - c. Loss of my pension/social security
  - d. Disconnection from family
  - e. Disconnection from familiar environment, social network, friends
  - f. Maintaining the well-being of my children
  - g. Finding a suitable posting
  - h. The process of moving
  - i. Fulfilling the role of a diplomatic spouse
  - j. Financial discrepancy between being on posting and in HQ
  - k. Integration with local community on posting
  - l. None of the above
11. Which of the following aspects of the MFA officer's job are the most challenging for your relationship? (you can choose more than one option)
- a. Long working hours (lack of work life balance)
  - b. Problems in the MFA officer's work (e.g. bullying, mobbing, harassment, inappropriate behavior, sexism, dealing with high levels of stress, PTSD)
  - c. Excessive exposure to alcohol
  - d. Too much travelling
  - e. Obligations imposed on the spouse (to host events, to accompany officer to events, to participate in Embassy events)
  - f. Disagreement in choice (ranking) of postings<sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
  - g. Frequent relocation
  - h. None of the above
12. In general, do you prefer to have a job while on posting (if possible)?
- a. Yes
  - b. No



13. What are the most important aspects of having a job on posting (or in HQ) for you personally? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. Having own income
  - b. Earning towards pension
  - c. Sense of independence
  - d. Important part of identity
  - e. Pursuing own career
  - f. Social status
  - g. N/A
14. Did you receive any support from MFA in seeking a job on posting or in HQ?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
15. Has your diplomatic status on posting ever prevented you from any of the following? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. Getting a job/continuing own career
  - b. Benefiting from certain services such as healthcare or unemployment support
  - c. Getting driver's license
  - d. Education: local schools and university/professional training<sup>[1]</sup><sub>SEP</sub>
  - e. Integrating into the local community
  - f. No
16. Have you ever extended your posting or not joined the MFA officer on posting (or seriously considered doing so) for any of the following reasons? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. Yes – not to lose my job
  - b. Yes – not to lose my pension entitlement/social benefits
  - c. Yes – not to lose my health insurance
  - d. Yes – for family reasons
  - e. Yes – for other reasons
  - f. No
17. If you and the MFA officer have spent a period of time living separately in order not to interrupt your employment, did it have any effect on your relationship?
  - a. Yes – negative
  - b. Yes – positive
  - c. No
  - d. N/A
18. With your partner (the MFA officer), have you ever considered s/he might change her/his job (due to the consequences her/his job has for you and/or your family)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No



19. Have you ever considered separation or termination of your relationship with the MFA officer?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
20. Do hardship posts put a strain on your relationship more than others?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
21. Do you find it more stressful to raise children on posting?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
22. Did you ever feel the following while on posting (or in HQ)? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. Feeling of isolation
  - b. Sense of not belonging
  - c. Loss of independence
  - d. Lack of support from the MFA
  - e. Lack of support from the MFA officer
  - f. Lack of support in general
  - g. You have to carry the burden of emotional trauma for the whole family
  - h. Work in the family is not evenly distributed between the two partners
  - i. Your work for the MFA is not sufficiently rewarded/recognised by the MFA
  - j. Your work for the MFA is not sufficiently appreciated by the MFA officer
  - k. None of the above
23. Have you ever sought or considered seeking counseling services for reasons related to the MFA officer's job and the consequences it has for you (e.g. relocation, cultural shock, high levels of stress, isolation,...)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
24. Do you feel you had sufficient information about implications for your life and career before you took on the role of a diplomatic spouse?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
25. If your mother tongue is different from the MFA officer,, does it make you feel as a disadvantage?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
26. Do you feel it is difficult to represent the officer's country if you are not the same nationality by birth?





- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
27. Did you ever feel excluded from events/functions in your capacity as a diplomatic spouse/partner due to your sexual orientation?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
28. Have you ever experienced homophobic behavior in your capacity as a diplomatic spouse/partner?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
29. If confronted with homophobic attitudes while on posting, did you feel there was support from the MFA?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A
30. If you faced homophobic environment on posting, did it put a strain on your relationship?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
  - c. N/A

## Annex 2

### IFAF Survey on Pension and Employment – Questionnaire

1. Gender
  - a. Female
  - b. Male
  - c. Other
2. Nationality
  - a. Irish
  - b. EU
  - c. Non-EU
3. Age
  - a. 18-35
  - b. 36-50
  - c. 51-65



- d. Over 65
- 4. What was the year of your first posting?
- 5. How many years in total have you spent on posting so far?
- 6. How many years have you spent at HQ (Ireland)?
- 7. For how many years in total did you have a job while on posting?
- 8. For how many years in total did you have a job while in HQ?
- 9. How many of these years did you have self or other paid employment with pension contributions?
- 10. Where did you have self or other paid employment with pension contributions? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. While on posting paying local contributions
  - b. While on posting paying PRSI contributions in Ireland
  - c. While in HQ paying PRSI contributions in Ireland
  - d. While in HQ (Ireland) paying contributions to other country
  - e. N/A
- 11. Do you feel concerned about your future entitlement to state contributory pension?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 12. How likely you think it is that under current circumstances you will qualify for contributory state pension?
  - a. Most likely
  - b. Possibly
  - c. Not likely
  - d. Almost certainly not
  - e. Don't know
- 13. If you experienced a period when you did not have a job, what were the main reasons? (you can choose more than one option)
  - a. Did not want a job
  - b. Did not have work permit
  - c. Did not find a job
  - d. No qualified jobs available
  - e. Family circumstances
  - f. Language barrier
  - g. My qualifications not recognized
  - h. Did not want to lose diplomatic immunity
- 14. Have you at any point made voluntary PRSI contributions?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
- 15. In order to secure a paid job on posting or at home, did you ever find yourself in any of the following situations (you can choose more than one option):
  - a. You had to compromise on qualifications



- b. You had to compromise on your income
  - c. You had to reinvent yourself
  - d. None of the above
16. What strategies to maintain income/earn years towards your pension while on posting are you aware of? (e.g.: renting a property in Ireland, self-employment,...) Please, provide a brief description:
17. When making decisions about your next posting, are your working options an important factor in prioritizing postings (e.g. you prefer postings where it is more likely for you to secure a job)?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
18. Do you feel you were provided sufficient and accurate information (from the DFAT or other organization/person) about the implications of being posted abroad on your pension entitlement?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
19. Do you feel you were provided sufficient and accurate information (from the DFAT or other organization/person) about the implications of being posted abroad on your work options (taxation, work permits,...)? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- a. Yes
  - b. No
20. Do you feel there should be some kind of compensation for the loss of pension for spouses?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
21. Have you ever considered not joining the DFAT officer on posting, not returning to HQ with the DFAT officer or extending your posting in order to maintain your job? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- a. Yes
  - b. No
22. Have you ever considered leaving a posting early because you could not secure a job at the posting?
- a. Yes
  - b. No
23. With the DFAT officer, have you ever considered s/he might change her/his job to enable you to maintain your job/pensions entitlement? <sup>[1]</sup><sub>[SEP]</sub>
- a. Yes
  - b. No
24. Is there any service/provision that you feel might improve your employment opportunities, e.g. training or qualification, language training? (Please provide brief description)
25. Here, you can add any other comments regarding pensions and employment:



Additional questions for retired spouses and partners:

26. Do you qualify for contributory state pension?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
27. What year did your spouse (DFAT officer) retire?
28. What year did you retire?
29. What was your highest level of education when you first went on posting?
30. What is your highest level of education now?

## Annex 3

### Survey Results in Context

The tables below show the overall results of the EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, as well as a national breakdown, setting responses in relation to existing MFA policies within the context of several gender equality indicators. The indicators have been selected to correspond with those issues raised by diplomatic spouses as the most problematic. Extreme values (maximal results on one side of the spectrum) are highlighted in yellow for ease of reference. Missing figures either don't exist or were not available. The numerical survey results have been rounded up.



Indicator	EU	AT	BE	CZ	EE	FI	FR	IE	PT	ES	UK
<b>Gender Equality Index<sup>10</sup></b>	66,2	63,3	70,5	53,6	56,7	73	72,6	69,5	56	68,3	71,5
<b>Gender Pay Gap<sup>11</sup></b>	14%	-	4%	18%	24%	18%	14%	-	13%	15%	19%
<b>Divorce rate<sup>12</sup></b>	44%	35%	54%	50%	52%	56%	54%	15%	71%	57%	39%
<b>Gender Pension Gap<sup>13</sup></b>	38%	39%	31%	14%	5%	27%	36%	37%	31%	34%	40%
<b>Gender Gap in Unpaid Work<sup>14</sup></b>	128,4	133,9	93,1	-	89	78,3	89,1	166,9	231,9	143,2	108,5

**Table Nine: Selected Gender Equality Indicators and Divorce Rate – EU and Selected Member States**

<sup>10</sup> Gender Equality Index is an indicator created by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) that measures the complex concept of gender equality in EU countries in time. Figures in this table are from 2017. The higher the score, the greater gender equality in the respective country.

<sup>11</sup> These figures show the unadjusted gender pay gap (by how much women earn less than men) based on the Structure of Earnings Survey (EU-SES) for 2014, (European Commission, 2018)

<sup>12</sup> Divorce/marriage ratio in 2017 according to Eurostat

<sup>13</sup> Gender gap in pensions indicates by how much the retirement pensions of women are lower than the pensions of men (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2015)

<sup>14</sup> Gender gap in unpaid work is an indicator created by OECD.stat for OECD member states. The figures in this table indicate how many more minutes per week women in the respective country spend on unpaid activities such as housework or care for family (OECD, n.d.)



MFA Policies:	AT	BE	CZ	EE	FI	FR	IE	PT	ES	UK
<b>Number of diplomats<sup>15</sup></b>	Approx. 1200	680	850 <sup>16</sup>	Approx. 360	939	13500	Approx. 650	484	890	-
<b>Job seeking support from MFA<sup>17</sup></b>	NO	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES	NO	NO	YES	YES
<b>Retirement pension solution<sup>18</sup></b>	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	NO	NO	NO	YES
<b>Counselling services available<sup>19</sup></b>	Partially	NO	YES (no children)	NO	NO	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES
<b>Equal treatment of LGBT</b>	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

**Table Ten: Policies of Selected European MFAs**

<sup>15</sup> These figures aim to show the approximate size of the diplomatic service in respective countries. However, the classification of staff varies across European MFAs. For example, some MFAs have transferable officers (i.e. eligible for an overseas posting) who are not diplomats and are therefore not included in the statistics.

<sup>16</sup> 1095 transferable staff

<sup>17</sup> An indication of whether respective MFAs provide any form of support to spouses and partners of posted staff in seeking employment. This can range from an on-line job platform, commercial headhunting services to career training or employment policy at missions.

<sup>18</sup> An indication of whether MFAs or respective countries provides a solution for retirement pension of spouses and partners of diplomats. There are differences in what solutions are available, including MFAs fully covering or contributing to the state contributory pension system or private pension funds.

<sup>19</sup> An indication of whether MFAs provide for a counselling service available to spouses and partners. The quality and scope of services provided vary across countries.



Survey Results <sup>20</sup> :	Total	AT	BE	CZ	EE	FI	FR	IE	PT	ES	UK
<b>Number of responses:</b>		113	20	21	30	24	58	94	33	85	397
<b>Preference to have a job on posting (Q12):</b>	87%	84%	95%	95%	88%	91%	85%	86%	90%	88%	89%
<b>Difficulty to maintain job the most stressful factor (Q10):</b>	78%	72%	63%	90%	76%	78%	79%	85%	90%	85%	79%
<b>No support received from MFA in job seeking (Q14):</b>	68%	75%	68%	65%	80%	70%	57%	88%	74%	76%	68%
<b>Having a job is an important part of identity (Q13):</b>	66%	60%	79%	60%	68%	68%	70%	71%	65%	68%	68%
<b>Loss of retirement pension/social security as the</b>	49%	48%	63%	30%	24%	52%	34%	64%	58%	70%	43%

<sup>20</sup> For the full wording of survey questions and answer options see Annex 1.



most stressful  
factor (Q10):

Long working hours of MFA officer and lack of work life balance the most challenging for relationship (Q11)	48%	48%	17%	32%	64%	43%	51%	71%	57%	43%	47%
Experienced feelings of isolation (Q22):	54%	49%	79%	43%	48%	52%	43%	58%	42%	42%	64%
Experienced feelings of lost independence (Q22):	55%	52%	74%	48%	56%	43%	45%	60%	45%	55%	60%
Willingness of MFA officer to change job (Q18):	40%	34%	37%	55%	44%	31%	43%	52%	16%	32%	49%
Sufficient information have been provided about implications of diplomatic lifestyle for life and career (Q24):	41%	38%	26%	62%	56%	35%	43%	27%	35%	38%	45%

**Table Eleven: Overall and National Results of the EUFASA Survey on Partnership Issues, 2019 (Selected Questions)**