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Gender equality – factor supporting social inclusion in Slovakia

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Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

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1. Aims of the paper

The aim of the article is to present the factors gained through research in the Slovak Republic in the realm of gender equality, or inequality, at the level of European Union, which can be one of the indicators of social exclusion as well as lowering of quality of life.

2. Gender equality in the European Community

Equality of men and women is one of the fundamental principles, which Slovak society understands as a natural one, similar to EU, which perceives this principle as a natural one since the Treaty of Rome of 1957, which stipulates in article 119 the principle of equal reward for men and women.

Later, in the Treaty of Amsterdam of 1999, the issue of gender equality was made a key principle both at the European and Slovak level. The most important articles of European treaty, dealing with the issues of equality of men and women, are the following:

2 Article 2: in which the equality of men and women is defined as one of the key roles of the community.

5 Article 5: which deals with elimination of inequality in all community activities and also with the support of equality of men and women (gender integration),

6 Article 13: dealing with the new possible measures for the fight against discrimination based on sex,

7 Article 137: supports equality of opportunities for equal treatment of men and women on the job market,

8 Article 141: embeds the principle of equal reward for the same work and supports meeting of positive measures in the realm of compensation of handicaps in professional career, which are based on sex.

3. Contribution of gender equality

Gender equality is important for both individuals and for the society, for it is a new realisation of democracy, which is the fundamental value of the said community in all realms of life, namely:

- 1 in the economy
- 2 in the decision-making process
- 5 in social, cultural and civic life.

Particularly, it means that e.g. equal participation of women in job market (increasing of female employment) is of enormous economic value, which is not to be squandered.

Framework strategies of community for gender equality are oriented in the following sectors:

- a) support of gender equality in the economy
- b) support of equal participation in the representation of men and women
- c) support of equal access to the social rights of women and men
- d) support of gender equality in civic life
- e) support of the change of roles and stereotypes.

As for the particular strategies:

As for a) Support of gender equality in economy. Gender segregation in occupation.

It is important to talk about gender segregation, for gender segregation is believed to be one of the sources of gender inequality. Its results are differences in income of men and women, which contribute to e.g. different pensions of men and women, feminisation of poverty, and also to differences in possibilities of professional development of men and women in the segregated professions.

Gender segregation has serious economic implications:

- 4 it negatively influences utilization of human resources (exclusion of a large number of men and women from certain types of professions),
- 5 it contributes to rigidity of job market
- 6 it limits equality of opportunities and freedom in the choice of men and women on the job market,
- 8 it contributes to the stereotypical attitude toward education and preparation for professional life of boys and girls,
- 9 it boosts stereotypes in requalification.

This issue is not discussed enough in Slovakia. Selective findings in human resources supports the well-known fact that as it is the case in other EU nations, also in Slovakia, men dominate the sector of industry and agriculture and women dominate services (according to: Kvapilová 2006).

4. Job market and economic independence of women and men

In 2007, in the age group 15 – 64, 68.4% men and 53% women were working, which is an increase by 6,2 percentage points in men and 1.5 percentage points in women, compare to 2000. The gender difference in the employment of women and men between 2004–2007 was increasing and reached 15,4 percentage points in 2007 in disadvantage of women.

In the first decade of the new century the unemployment rate was disadvantageous for men (19,5% of men and 17,6% of women). Since 2004, the development has been turning in favor of unemployed women than men. In 2007, the unemployment rate of men reached 6,9% and of women 9,3%, i.e. the gender difference in unemployment reached 2,4 points in disfavor of women (*Summary report...*, 4–6).

The issue of discrimination in hiring and firing process was subject of representative research of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, undertaken in November 2005. From its findings it follows that from the point of view of gender equality, hiring and firing process face the following troublesome issues:

- a) employer asked about the age during job interview (such experience included 15% men and 25,2% women),
- b) employer preferred male over a female candidate despite the fact that the female candidate met more requirements (such experienced was included by 1,8% of men and 5,0% of women),
- c) being fired after completion of maternity leave (such experience included 1,8% of men and 5,0% of women).

As for b) Support of equal participation and representation of men and women. Gender equality in political decision making.

In the field of gender equality in political decision making, EU Council defined and approved of the following factors in October 1999:

- 1 share of women in national parliaments,
- 2 share of women in regional parliaments,
- 3 share of women in local assemblies,
- 5 measures oriented towards boosting of equal participation in elections,
- 6 share of women in national councils and in European Commission,
- 8 number of women and men in ministerial and lower ministerial positions

according to the sphere of their activity (elementary and economic functions, infrastructure, socio-cultural functions),

9 share of women in state offices and two highest positions below ministerial position or chairman of parliament and also respective positions in European institutions,

10 gender make up of high state officials according to various spheres of activity,

11 share of women in top courts at European Court of Justice. Given slow, or no progress in this field, a **European network for the support of women in top leading political and economic positions**, for securing of synergy principle in this field²⁶ (*Summary report...*, pp. 25–30).

As for c) Support of equal access to full enjoyment of social rights by women and men.

Social protection in the Slovak Republic is realized in three fundamental ways – by social insurance, through state social help and through social help, which relates to people of both genders. Despite this fact, there exist certain gender differences in some sectors of social protection, which are related to or are the consequence of gender-related uneven construction of society.

Amongst the beneficiaries of pensions is more women than men, in the total number in 2007, 63% of all beneficiaries of pensions were women, 67% of all old-age pensions were women. This imbalance was caused by relatively sooner inclusion in the old-age pension system of women, as well as by a longer life expectation of women, hence longer period of living on old-age pension payments.

As to 31st December 2007, average monthly old-age pension payment was 330.8 Euro (9 968,-Sk) for men and 268.2 Euro (8081,- Sk) for women. Old-age pension payments of women were on average by 19% lower than of men, this ration was around 17% in 2005.

The issue of poverty is closely related to the issue of financial remuneration of the two genders as well as the sum of their old-age pension payments. In Slovakia, the risk of poverty is not greatly differentiated, when dealing with men and women. Since 2005, when this factor was firstly determined, a downward trend has been evident. In 2007, some 11% of women and 10% of men were endangered by poverty. Poverty rate of women and men has a downward tendency, which is more prominent about men (*Summary report...*, pp. 8–9).

²⁶ KOM (2008) 760 finaldraft: „Priebežná správa o plnení plánu uplatňovania rovnosti žien a mužov na (2006-2010)”, of 16th November 2008.

One of the criterion in equal enjoyment of social works is the intake of parental benefits, benefits for caring of family member older than six years of age, employment of men and women for short period and others, which are described further on. In the family care for members older than six years, more than 82% of women and around 18% of men were active.

One of the factors of Support of equal access and full enjoyment of social rights by women and men, is the employment for shorter period of time.

The most prominent model of traditional care for children in the West is the one, when women work part-time and men work full-time, which is rarely applied in Slovak environment (only 2% of people aged 20–49), mainly because of the need for two full incomes per family. In families with children up to 12 years, both parents are fully employed. Employment of Slovak women between 20–49 years with children until 12 years of age is around 80%, the EU average being 60%. The most frequent organization of working time in Slovakia are fixed working hours. Fixed working is the case of 82% of all employed women and 81,2% of all employed men in the age group 25–49 years. In families with children is the fixed working hour's model more prominent than with families without children until 12 years of age. At the same time, it is more prominent work form for single mothers than for single fathers. In single-parent household, where logistic is the key problem, fixed working hours and working in shifts is as frequent as in two-parent households. It is more prominent with single fathers than with single mothers (according to: *Summary report...*, pp. 19–21).

As for d) Support of gender equality in civic life. Violence on women

Violence on women is a multi-faceted social phenomenon and it is an instance of gender-unequality, gender-unjust and power-imbalanced social structure. In a society, of prevalence of men over women in governing positions, some situations are created through gender stereotypes (such as economic dependence of women in families), thus belonging to gender supports the idea of imbalance, ultimately leading to violence (Filadelfiová, 2005: 10).

At the end of 2002, first representative survey took of domestic violence perpetrated on women took place (Bodnárová and Filadelfiová) Results of this survey proved the following:

1. Domestic violence affects relations in the family, but especially the partner relationship (especially marriage),
2. Women are more frequent victims of domestic violence,
3. Domestic violence pertains not only to troublesome families, but also to economically deprived ones,
4. In Slovakia, we acknowledge all forms of domestic violence, be if physical, sexual, psychological and economic,

5. It has been shown that women are not victims of one instance of violence only. Physical violence is perceived by psychological or social violence. Sexual violence is accompanied by psychological and social violence. Economic violence is accompanied by psychological violence, etc.,
6. Domestic violence on women is by definition a long-term one,
7. There is no such thing as one or primary impulse for the creation of domestic violence on women.

Analysis of data on violence on women in Slovakia proved that this problem is not taken seriously by the society. Domestic violence is believed to be a significant problem by 87% of adult Slovak population. Up to 80% of people believe there an outside intervention is important, remaining 20% think the domestic violence is an inter-family matter (Kvapilová, E. In: Slovensko na ceste k rodovej rovnosti, 2006).

As for e) Support of changed gender roles and stereotypes

The issue of gender roles and stereotypes pertains numerous spheres of life of the individual. It transgresses a number of spheres and themes, which deal with gender integration, gender balance and gender justice. It is also the case of gender segregation of jobs as well as for the political participation of women, combination of job and family and also the case of domestic violence on women. Therefore, our paper will deal with only one of the aspects of gender stereotypes, i.e. the realm of education, science and research.

5. Education and vocational training

Regarding the overall structure of Slovak Republic population, with slight prevalence of boys in younger generations, we can assume that **nursery and primary** schools copy the overall structure of population, i.e. slight prevalence of boys in the overall numbers of students. In the case of **middle level** students – secondary grammar schools and other types of secondary schools and vocational schools, the gender structure is more balanced. At **universities**, women and girls prevail in both full-time and part-time form, despite the fact that in the age group of 15–25 years of age prevail boys and men in the overall population. The trend to continue in education is higher amongst girls than amongst boys.

Table 1. Number of students at particular school levels according to sex and form of study (school year 2008/2009)

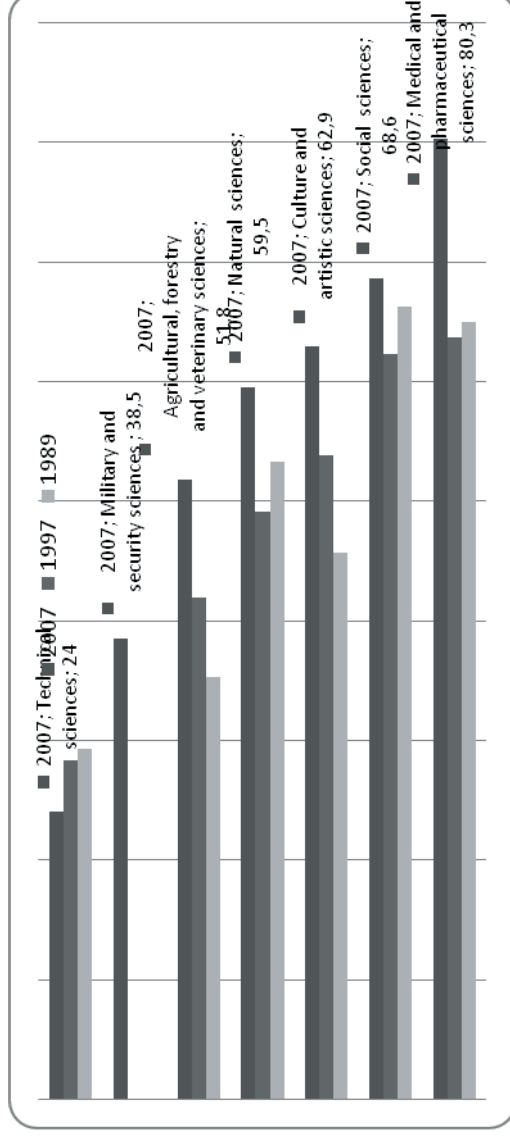
	Nursery schools	Primary schools	Secondary schools		Universities	
			Full-time	Part-time	Full-time	Part-time
Girls	66555	224999	148869	7249	81460	57640
Boys	71631	236716	48657	3949	63191	28228

Source: UIPŠ, Štatistickáročenka.

On the other hand, more boys than girls study at secondary schools and vocational schools (almost 71% in 2006), generally, at secondary schools is gender ratio almost identical (56,6% girls in 2006). Girls tend to choose secondary schools with school leaving examination. Far more girls study at secondary grammar schools than boys (58,3% girls in 2006), which gives the girls far greater chance to study at universities (Filadelfiová, Bútorová et al., 2008).

Vocational girls' schools are a particular matter, for their establishment in the year 1990 meant an obvious boost to gender-related stereotypes, with their intention to educate future housewives etc. Vocational girls' schools are primarily oriented to business and the development of entrepreneurial skills. Generally speaking, it is the case of preparation of middle administrative workers or sole proprietors. The very name "Girls' vocational school" is no proper, for its field of expertise is also good for boys.

Chart 1: Development of share of full-time female university students according to particular field (in %, years 2007, 1997, 1989)



Note 1: share of female students.

Note 2: rating of lowest share of female students, in %, for 2007, female students at military and security sciences in 1997 and 1989 provided no data.

Source: ŠÚ SR – Slovstat.

Greatly overfeminized university study fields are medical and pharmaceutical schools and also social sciences. Within the last 20 years, women studying at these schools reached up to 40%²⁷. Particular fields, where women have not been able to penetrate, and which have experienced radical decrease of female students recently, are technical study fields, which numbered only 24% female students in 2007.

A higher level of female students at universities has also contributed in a higher percentage of female university graduates, namely in 2006/2007, it was 54,7% out of all graduates, which meant more than 10% male graduates (*Summary report...*, 34–38).

6. Research and science

Besides education in the field of Support of the change of gender roles and stereotypes, gender problems are also studied in the field of research and science.

Discussion about inequality of male and female opportunities in scientific institutions (the question of remuneration, access and possibility of professional growth, filling up of leading positions, etc.) has not been opened by the EU only for abstract, humanistic, or human rights issues. The need to change the organization of science and research was initiated in the 1990s as a consequence of lagging behind in quality of European science compared to the one of USA and Japan.

Highly qualified women (DrSc.,CSc., PhD., Dr., prof., doc.) make up some 30% of all researchers with higher qualification. Despite the fact that over past ten years their share went up by 4 points, highly educated women are greatly misrepresented.

Despite the fact that in Slovakia, as it is in the majority of European states, women form a majority among university students, the more to the top of academic hierarchy one climbs, the fewer instances of top class female academics one tends to find (vertical segregation). The scissor diagram shows that men advance far faster than women in their careers (*Summary report...*, 40–45).

7. Conclusion

Slovakia, by being a part of international, economic and political structures, is a member of global evaluations and comparisons relating to the equality of men and women. Complex international indices and their parts serve for identification of weak links of particular states and for the formation of public policy composed of experienced nations more successful in the support of women and men.

²⁷ In 2007, professional female soldiers shared 9,4 % of all soldiers of Slovak Armed Forces (Ročenka MO SR, 2007, accessible on www.mo.sk).

Lasting gender differences in the access to sources and opportunities are perceived not only as an obstacle for increasing of the quality of life of half of world's population and as a factor of social exclusion, but also as an important risk for attaining of a long-term development and welfare of nations. Nations, which do not utilize the potential of half of their population to the fullest, can lose their competing strength.

Równość płci jako czynnik wspierający integrację społeczną na Słowacji

Streszczenie

Artykuł omawia wyniki badań dotyczące równości płci na Słowacji, w identyczny sposób, w jaki dokonuje się tego w Unii Europejskiej, ponieważ jest to jeden z podstawowych czynników inkluzji społecznej.

Słowa kluczowe: równość płci, nierówność płci, inkluzja społeczna, Unia Europejska, przemoc zależna od płci, jakość życia.

Summary

This paper discusses research data regarding gender equality in Slovakia, the same way as this is researched on the EU member states level, for it is one of the fundamental factors supporting social inclusion.

Keywords: gender equality, gender inequality, social inclusion, European Union, gender-related violence, quality of life

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