



Women's labour rights and employment perspectives in Europe



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Published by | Institute for Cultural Relations Policy

Executive Publisher | Csilla Morauszki

Institute for Cultural Relations Policy

1131 Budapest, Gyöngyösi u. 45.

<http://culturalrelations.org>

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HU ISSN 2064-2202

© Institute for Cultural Relations Policy – Kulturális Kapcsolatokért Alapítvány, 2018


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WOMEN'S LABOUR RIGHTS AND EMPLOYMENT PERSPECTIVES IN EUROPE

Contemporary debates and public discourses about women's rights increasingly impacted political discussions in the past years across the globe, however, addressing an issue which persisted long before the discussion started. Whereas the economic, legal, political, and social living contexts for women vary strongly across countries, the inequality between women and men remains a reality supposedly everywhere. The present volume of the Human Rights Issues Series imbeds this discussion into a comparative framework, analysing the state of gender equality in the employment sector in selected, European countries. An unequal access to the labour market and the divergent validation of the female workforce affects women and men likewise and opens possibilities for discrimination and restrictions for both genders.

Different case studies in this issue examine chosen countries' labour integration of their female population, the representation of women in leadership positions, the potential issues of unequal payment, forms of discriminative treatment regarding the availability of jobs for women, as well as regulations of maternity and paternity leaves. Although the Women's Right Issue cannot cover every European region, it seeks to present as many various models and developments as possible. The following case studies include Sweden, Russia, Georgia, Turkey, and Greece.

Each case study gives an overview about the women's rights situation and realities in the employment sectors of the selected countries, while seeking to elaborate the underlying reasons for the different opportunities given to men and women. Depending on the case,

the articles examine the historical and traditional patterns of each country's cultural background, which facilitate and reproduce the social habits of inequality between the genders. Furthermore, a contemporary lack of political representation of women in parliaments, governments, or local municipalities likewise potentially inhibits an equal access to the decision-making procedures within a society for women. With a lack of political representation in political bodies, the female parts of a population tend to be unheard and unaddressed regarding their personal and systemic struggles. Other underlying reasons for employment inequalities might be found within the disparities of educational access and legal representation.



In addition to the case studies, an interview with Silvia Crocitta, CEO of EuroDemos Youth Mobility and founder of the EuroFCR, was conducted to gain an insider's perspective on the working mechanisms of NGOs that seek to facilitate and assist younger generations with their integration into the labour market. Moreover, Crocitta also gave the ICRP her

stance on the elaboration of the Italian society's perception of gender inequality, and its progress within the political and social discourse of the issue.

The current volume of the Human Rights Issues Series is furtherly complemented with the paper "Empowering Refugee and Stateless Women through Targeted Measures of Labour Market Integration: NGO efforts in Hungary" by Katalin Berényi, addressing the gender-related obstacles and economic deprivation of female refugees and stateless persons, with a

closer focus on the Hungarian situation. In a conclusion, the submitted case studies are summarised and the prospects of the ongoing development of gender equality in the European area are evaluated. But before introducing the first country case, the following chapter gives an introductory overview of the legal frameworks and provisions on the European-, more specifically EU-level, to clarify the obligations and official agendas of the EU Member States regarding gender equality in the employment sector.



THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK OF WOMEN'S LABOUR RIGHTS IN EUROPE

The inclusion of gender equality on the European level, its promotion and enhancement, is primarily embedded into the European Union's strategic frameworks and advisory guidelines for its Member States.¹ However, the EU has only limited influence on the labour regulations of its Member States, as these usually fall under national jurisdiction. Nevertheless, the European Union created a framework to implement some of its core principles of gender equality into an overarching, strategic umbrella for EU Member States, which is to be understood as a non-binding, non-enforceable, recommendatory reference framework.²

Ever since the Treaty of the **European Economic Community** in 1957, first attempts of creating a European "gender equality law"³ have been initiated and furtherly developed. With the EEC Treaty, the provision against gender discrimination in terms of equal payment has been implemented for the first time, followed by many more EEC Directives over decades, addressing the equal treatment of men and women in areas of employment, social security, self-employment, Parental Leave provisions, and the equal access to goods and services.⁴

With the **Treaty of Lisbon** in 2009, the abovementioned provisions remained integrated into the basic values⁵ and the legal framework of the European Union. Especially with the included obligation of *gender mainstreaming*, the EU and its Member States are required to incorporate "the objective of equality between men and women when formulating and implementing laws, regulations, administrative provisions, policies and activities".⁶ Although such provisions on the EU-level are not enforceable, they provide

a basis for legal interpretations, such as in case of the consultation of the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU).⁷

Although the presented Women's Right Issue focusses on employment, the EU's basic regulations and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU include a broader framework of gender equality in various fields, prohibiting any form of discrimination based on gender, with an emphasize of "positive action" by each Member State.⁸ Hereby, *Positive Action* refers to policies that actively promote gender equality by "eliminating or counteracting the detrimental effects of stereotypes concerning the traditional division of roles in society between men and women".⁹ However, positive action measures are barely executed or prioritised by most of the EU Member States on a legislative level, according to Timmer and Senden (2015).¹⁰

One of the most important, gender-related frameworks is the current "**Strategic Engagement for Gender Equality 2016–2019**", published by the European Commission in 2015. The publication issues the forthcoming goals and instruments for implementing gender equality for the period 2016–2019, and for fortifying the measures already taken in previous strategic engagement frameworks.¹¹ The framework was developed in cooperation with EU Member States, the European Parliament, the European External Action Service, as well as social partners, civil society organisations, EU agencies, and other subject-related stakeholders.¹² The EU provides EUR 6.17 billion to support the Member States in the development of gender equality programmes, initiatives, and to assist them with the required implementation as well as monitoring activities.¹³

The Strategic Engagement framework identifies five **priority areas** to be targeted by the Member States in their national strategies to enhance gender equality in mainly political and economic fields:

- (1) “equal economic independence for women and men;
- (2) equal pay for work of equal value;
- (3) equality in decision-making;
- (4) dignity, integrity and ending gender-based violence; and
- (5) promoting gender equality beyond the EU”¹⁴

These priorities are mostly executed within policies regarding labour markets, educational access, training programmes, gender stereotypes, and work-family-balance.¹⁵ Furthermore, the report by the European Commission informs about the already made progresses across the EU, with stating the enhancement of female participation in companies’ leading positions (from 12% in 2010 to 21% in 2015) as well as in political national bodies with an increase of 8% between 2010 to 2015 (27% share of women in governments; 29% in parliaments in 2015).¹⁶ Additionally, the employment rate of men and women develops to be increasingly more harmonised, with an average male participation of 75% and a female participation of 64% in 2014.¹⁷

The **instruments** to achieve the given, strategic objectives include the “enforcement of equal treatment legislation(s)”, a broad data collection mechanism,¹⁸ strengthened cooperation initiatives between Member States (e.g. good practices, “peer-learning”), as well as annual reviews in connection with annual progress reports to determine the achieved objects and needed adjustments.¹⁹ The Member States are hereby constantly assisted,

consulted, and monitored in regard to the implementation and development of the given priority areas and strategic goals, such as increasing the female participation in the national labour markets.²⁰



Besides the support on the state-level, the EU Commission additionally offers companies their support to achieve an expanded share of female representation and participation. The framework hereby also provides for the promotion of female entrepreneurship through the launching of various platforms and networks for women, as well as the promotion of “institutional change in research organisations”.²¹ Apart from such actively encouraging action plans, the EU Commissions furtherly includes sanctions for payment inequalities as a deterrent instrument in the strategic framework, while seeking to address its root causes.²²

However, although the given numbers and objectives indicate a steady alignment of men’s and women’s economic and political participation, the situations vary strongly across the 28 Member States of the EU. Moreover, the report does not include the non-EU, yet European states, that struggle with the achievement of gender equality. The following articles seek to shed light on the various stages of gender equality within Europe and the European Union.

Notes

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RUSSIA: THE SOVIET HERITAGE AND “PUTINISM”

“One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” -- Simone de Beauvoir

The role of a woman in the society has varied greatly throughout the history, accordingly to the political conditions and the discourse. As the famous quotation by Simone de Beauvoir accurately catches the essence, the womanhood is a social construct, which is primarily determined by historical circumstances and those who are in power. Contemporary Russia is hardly an exception to this general tendency. The role of women has changed dramatically throughout Russia's history and it still has the legacy of the Soviet Union, which respected the equal rights between men and women. It is remarkable to remember that Russia was the first major European country to grant women suffrage in 1917. Also, the first female ambassador in 1923 was from Russia, as well as, the first woman in space. Women in the Soviet Russia became a vital part of the mobilization into the work force and this opening of women into sectors that were previously unattainable, allowed opportunities for education, personal development, and training. Drawing from these inspiring historical examples, it can be said that there existed a cult of strong women for a while. However, in the contemporary Russia, the position of women in political, economic, and social spheres became paradoxical. On the one hand, during the transition period the role of women has changed together with the new emerging institutions, policies, and perceptions. In the changing system, women became more visible and involved in all spheres of everyday life. However, on the other hand, the Soviet

legacies heavily persist further in the society and the newly established post-Soviet Russian system.

Even though, the situation of women in contemporary Russia has many problematic aspects, this paper primarily focuses on the economic sphere and explores the gender (in)equality between Russian men and women in employment and income, as well as, researching the reasons behind the current situation.

Gender (in)equality in employment

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the law that obliged every adult citizen to work, ceased to exist. However, the Russian women still benefit from the legacy of the Soviet principle of gender equality, which is now provided by the 1993 Russian Federation Constitution. According to the Article 19: *“Everyone is equal before the law and court, regardless of any differences like sex, race, nationality or religion”*.¹ Human rights reflect the universal standards of equality and women's rights concept is secured under the Russian Federation Constitution, which also ensures civil, political, economic rights, and freedoms for women. In the economic sphere, it means that both men and women are free to choose their jobs and earn their living.

Russia is recognized as a global leader in gender equality in the workplace,² having one of the smallest gender gaps in employment in the world, according to the study by Grant Thornton, the global professional services firm. Such findings are also supported by the international assessment of recent labour

market trends. The *OECD Employment Outlook 2016* states that the gender gap in labour force participation in Russia is low: 10.5 percentage points, compared to the OECD average of 16.9 percentage points.^{3,4}

The employment rate had been increasing at a faster rate since 2009 in the Russian Federation than on average in the OECD area. Despite the recession, the employment rate in Russia remains higher than the OECD average: 65.7% vs. 60.0% in 2015.⁵ In turn, women constitute 46.9% of the employed population in Russia and the greatest proportion of them are working in public health service (85%), education (81%), credit, and finance (78%), information and accounting services (75%), while the lowest share of women is in the construction industry (22%).⁶ The low gender gap in labour force participation between men and women is acknowledged as being a part of the legacy of the Soviet era, when the principle of equality was not applying to a class, but to all groups of society, including men and women. However, the principle of gender equality of rights provided in the current Russian Constitution does not prevent from the inequality and discrimination in the real life. Despite the positive trends in employment and high participation of women in labour force mentioned above, the situation in Russia has its problematic aspects.

One of the most important issues concerned with equal rights for women in employment is the discrimination by sex. Women are discriminated, according to the concept of “gender appropriate jobs”. Such a “division of labour” is even enshrined in legal regulations. In 2000, the Russian Government passed the resolution that prohibits women from 38 industries and lists 456 jobs to be “dangerous” or “arduous” or “harmful” to women’s health, in particular, to their reproductive health.⁷ Adopted during President Vladimir Putin’s first year in office, such a legislation with multiple restrictions to female employment in

certain occupations is perceived as the latest “incarnation” of the Soviet-era regulations. The “prohibited” list was originally adopted in the Soviet Union in 1974 that sought to keep women in what the Communist Party once called their “traditional” role of bearing children for the greater good of society.⁸ The restrictions have changed over the years and some occupations have been removed, while others were added, however the general approach has remained the same. To this day, the ban covers various professions, including miner, carpenter, firefighter, train driver, blacksmith, diver and driver of buses with more than 14 seats.⁹

Discrimination by sex in employment:

Svetlana Medvedeva’s case

The most recent example of such a discrimination that gained significant attention in international arena is the *Svetlana Medvedeva’s case*.¹⁰ She has had an ambition to earn a better wage as the captain of a boat and with the degree she gained from Samara River College, she qualified for such a position. However, the company she applied for in 2012, refused to employ her as a ship’s captain, because of the “prohibition list”. Svetlana Medvedeva began campaigning for permission to bypass the ban, writing letters to the Kremlin, Labour Ministry and Health Ministry. However, all the institutions referred her back to the above-mentioned resolution. She even challenged the rejection of her job application in court, but her appeal was rejected. Finally, in 2013 she registered a complaint before the United Nations’ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (UN CEDAW), alleging that her rights had been violated. Svetlana Medvedeva claimed in her complaint that she had been denied employment by the company, because of her

sex. The UN CEDAW Committee found in favour of Svetlana Medvedeva and pronounced her a victim of discrimination in 2016. The experts of the UN CEDAW Committee have declared in their statement, that *“no evidence has been provided that inclusion of the position of helperson-motorist [sic] in the list of prohibited jobs is based on any scientific evidence that it may be harmful to women’s reproductive health”*.¹¹

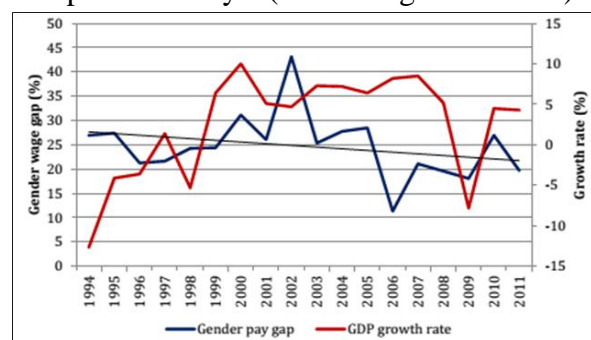
Russia’s authorities were urged to grant her appropriate compensation and to facilitate the access to jobs for which she is qualified. Moreover, UN CEDAW Committee called on Russia to amend its Labour Code and reduce the number of jobs that are banned to women under the government resolution. In July 2017, Russia’s Supreme Court came to a decision to re-open the *Svetlana Medvedeva’s case*. The Court sent a case involving a claim by Svetlana Medvedeva against Samara River Passenger Company (SRPP) for a new trial. This case gained considerable attention in the international arena and, according to the Amnesty International, “represents the landmark challenge to Russia’s sexist and outdated labour regulations”.¹² It is quite a paradoxical situation that, even though, Russia is regarded as having the smallest gender gap in employment in the world, it is “the country with the most job-related barriers”,¹³ according to the World Bank report on gender equality.

Gender (in)equality in income

Another significant issue concerned with women’s rights in employment in Russia is the high gender gap in pay. The latest Global Wage Report by International Labour Organization (ILO) shows that men are paid more than women in all of the 38 countries examined.¹⁴ The problem of the gender pay gap is firmly entrenched around the world and

Russia is not an exception. These findings are also supported by OECD Employment Outlook 2016 in which it is shown that the pay gap in Russia is twice as high as in OECD countries (15%).^{15, 16}

During the last 20 years, the gender wage gap in Russia has remained constant in spite of the huge changes in the transition from a closed to an open economy¹⁷ (See the figure below¹⁸).



The World Economic Forum 2013–2014 annual report gave Russia 75th place on the list of 142 countries, included in the Gender Gap Index.¹⁹ This place is somewhere between Montenegro and Vietnam. There is a general negative trend in Russia for gender equality: Russia has dropped from 43rd place in 2011 to 61st in 2013 and is even lower now. Even though, the principle of “equal pay for equal work” is established in the Russia’s Constitution and, despite the fact that women in Russia are better educated, more experienced, and more productive than their male counterparts on average, women are still paid significantly less. As it can be observed from multiple reports of various international organizations, women earn 32.8% less than men in Russia, but the observable factors, measured by ILO, should entitle them to 11.1% more.²⁰

Reasons behind the problematic women’s situation in Russia

There are multiple aspects why gender inequality is widespread in post-Soviet Russia. One of the reasons that was briefly mentioned

earlier is the state's legislation, which defines "gender appropriate jobs" and allows discrimination by sex. Such a regulation, as it was shown, is the legacy of the Soviet Union. In addition, discriminative patterns originate from state's policies that primarily promote women's role of motherhood and emphasize their domestic responsibilities. During the last two decades, the post-Soviet Russia has been facing very low birth rates²¹ and this context of negative demographic trends partly explains the increasing restrictions for women on access to their reproductive rights and legal discrimination in choosing "appropriate" jobs. This political narrative and societal construction of womanhood has strongly persisted throughout Russia's history and now is further consolidated by the authoritarian regime.

Despite the remarkable historical examples of changes in women's status in Russia, that were mentioned earlier in the introduction, it can be argued that the proclaimed gender equality was never actually realized. During the period of the Soviet Union, scholars claim, that women were mobilized by the state as a labour force mainly for the establishment and continuation of the Communist system, however, women were not truly emancipated.²² The Communist state required women as workers, thus, enabled them access to education and a career, encouraged them to complete their studies, and professional training. This was a significant achievement, compared with many Western societies at that time. However, despite the fact that women were allowed and encouraged to work, their jobs were actually low-skilled and low-paid. In addition, the role of motherhood was strongly emphasized as the primary responsibility of women to the society. Women were supposed to give birth and raise children as a new generation of Soviet citizens. This burden of the dual role of women is accurately and quite sarcastically addressed by H. Smith, who compares women's position in


the capitalist and socialist systems: *"Under capitalism, women are not liberated, because they have no opportunity to work. They have to stay at home, go shopping, do the cooking, keep the house and take care of the children. But under the socialism, women are liberated. They have the opportunity to work all day and then go home, go shopping, do the cooking, keep the house and take care of the children".*²³

It can be said that gender "equality" during the Soviet period meant not liberation and emancipation, but never-ending work inside the domestic sphere and outside of it.

After the demise of the Soviet Union and significant transformations in the state's system, gender relations and women's position have not changed. Women are still expected to work as labourer, that is required for the economy, and also to balance the obligations to the family. Liberal hopes of democracy in a new emerging state have soon vanished. Significant transformations in Russia have led to the tremendous national and class inequality, at the same time fostering a patriarchal and neo-traditional conception of gender relations. Political discourses reconstructed the primary role of women as child-bearers, belonging to the domestic sphere. These post-Soviet trends have continued and deepened under Putin's regime. Vladimir Putin has successfully strengthened the pre-existing paternalistic structures of the Russian society. Scholars even coined the term "Putinism" in order to address the contemporary developments of gender relations in Russia.²⁴ This term is used to emphasize the image of Putin being strong, vital, and the caring father of the Russian nation. Under such paternalistic leadership that celebrates masculinity, women are perceived as being the "weaker sex" that needs protection.²⁵ These political narratives are further successfully transferred into various policies and legal acts, legitimizing the

discrimination of women. Moreover, the conception of “natural” or “innate” difference between men and women and consequent Putin’s pro-nationalistic policies (such as: increasing benefits like generous maternity leave, available “maternity capital” for women who have a second or third child to help finance mortgages, children’s education and subsidizing pensions)²⁶ are also strongly supported by the Christian Orthodox Church²⁷ and conservative religious arguments.

Finally, it is important to mention the problematic situation of feminism in contemporary Russia. There exists a general distrust of the term “feminism”, which historically has had a negative connotation in Russia. Because of the Soviet socialist, ideological claim that winning the class struggle was the means to achieve gender equality, feminism was rejected as a bourgeois concern and diversion from the roots of oppression.²⁸ Therefore, there was no feminist discourse or phenomenon similar to American feminist movements in the Soviet Union. Feminism was linked with ugliness, hatred of men, and lesbianism²⁹ and such connotations strongly persist till today. The negative perception of feminism is further strengthened by the national political and patriarchal narratives, which frame feminism as being a “threat to the family” and, as a result, destabilizing the nation.³⁰ For all these reasons, Russia lacks a strong and influential movement lobbying for women’s rights.



Conclusion

This paper has focused on women’s situation in Russia, particularly concentrating on gender (in)equality in employment and income, as well as, researching the reasons behind such a situation. The role of women in society has continuously changed throughout Russia’s history, however, despite significant transformations and developments in the state, the traditional, conservative, and patriarchal perception of gender roles strongly persist till today. In post-Soviet Russia, under the authoritarian and paternalistic Putin’s regime, the perception of male gender roles has not been transformed, but rather elevated to an even higher status than before, whereas women continue to face an institutionalized gender bias. Even though, the principle of equality is enshrined in the Russian Constitution, women are legally discriminated for their sex. Multiple sources and various statistical data reveal the continuity of a significant gender gap in income, with Russian women being paid considerably less on average than men. In addition, due to the deeply rooted conception of “natural” differences between the two genders and women’s biological ability to have children, women in Russia are primarily seen as potential mothers and, therefore, have restrictions on their possible choices for professional occupations. Gender inequality is still a worldwide problem with Russia not being an exception, and the women’s situation requiring significant changes.

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FAMILY TRADITIONS AND THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE GREEK CASE

After Greece joined the European Union in 1981, it started to take legislative and political reforms to promote gender equality in order to meet the legislative requirements by the EU. Since that, the presence of women in the labour market has been steadily growing. However, the employment rate of women in the Greek labour market (45.1%) still remains considerably below the EU's average (58.5%),¹ being one of the highest unemployment rates in the whole EU. Women's employment rate in the labour market is 45.1%, whereas the number in men is 65.9%.

This is one of the highest differences between male and female employment rate within the EU². Council Recommendation 96/694/EC on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process recommends Member States to *“adopt a comprehensive, integrated strategy designed to promote balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process and develop or introduce the appropriate measures to achieve this, such as, where necessary, legislative and/or regulatory measures and/or incentives”*.³

The Greek Act 2839/2000 was introduced to meet these recommendations. It states that 1/3 of all employees in the public sector, local authorities, and related institutions and enterprises had to be women. Despite of the law, female representation at the top positions in politics and business still remains low⁴. Women are usually rather employed in jobs involving little power or responsibility. The total number of female MPs in the current Greek parliament is 56 out of 300, and still

only one cabinet member out of 21 in the current cabinet is a woman.⁵

The economic crisis has had a considerable impact on the employment sector. For instance, in 2011 a large number of full-time contracts were converted into flexible contract types, which led to over 50% pay reductions.⁶ Recession has led to growing unemployment, which has affected both men and women, however, even harder on women. In 2008, male and female unemployment rates were 5.1% and 11.4% respectively, while the EU's average being 6.6% and 7.6%.⁷ The impact of the economic crisis will be examined in more detail in chapter four.

General participation of women in the labour market

Part-time segregation

The rate of female employees working part-time is to a large extent below EU's average. 10.0% of Greek women work part-time whereas the EU average is 31.6%. Overall, part-time employment in Greece is substantially less common compared to the EU's average, especially women are working less in part-time positions than on the EU's average.⁸ Care has always been considered as women's work in the Greek society. Thus, if a mother is working full-time, the child needs the care from external sources. The predominantly established childcare fits into this pattern, since full-time work for mothers is often not possible without the help of other family members.⁹ This topic will be covered in more detail in chapter three.

Sectoral segregation

Traditional “female occupations” in Greece include “Health & Social Work”, “Education” and “Accommodation and food service activities” sectors. However, two of the five most popular female industries, namely “Wholesale & Retail” and “Agriculture, forestry, fishing” are also among the top five male industries. 31.2% of Greek women and 29.4% of men work in either of these sectors.¹⁰ The sectoral distribution is mainly dominated by low-skilled jobs, partly reflecting the economic and educational situation of the country, but also strong gender stereotypes.

Occupational segregation

The occupational segregation is one of the most distant factors when it comes to gender equality. Political decision-making had been predominantly male until the first actions aimed at increasing women’s representation in the period 1991–95 following the Council Recommendation 96/694/EC.¹¹ The actions included campaigns, studies, and European conferences. The first visible results were the increased representation of women in the European Commission and the European Parliament in that period.¹² However, in Greece, the number of women in top-positions is only 7.4%.

Gender pay gap

The equal pay irrespective of sex should be guaranteed by the Constitution. According to Article 22 of the 1975 Greek Constitution: “All workers, irrespective of sex or other distinction are entitled to equal pay for work of equal value”.¹³ In contrast to the EU-trend, the unadjusted gender pay gap in Greece has increased to 22.0% in 2008 and remarkably exceeds the EU’s average (17.4%).¹⁴ In Greece, the average female employee in 2008

earned 22.0% less than the average male employee, an increase of 2 percentage points compared to 2006.¹⁵ In 2010, the pay gap between women and men in Greece was still 22% (compared to the decreased EU’s average 16.4%).¹⁶

Traditional family concept

Traditional institutions of family, marriage and religion play a crucial role in the Greek society. Traditional social norms still are in contrast to the “Western” conception of individual rights and freedoms. Care for children and elderly people has always been considered as women’s work in the Greek society, provided mainly in the domestic sphere informally as one of the main functions of the family. A landmark in the evolution of gender equality legislation was the Family Law reform of 1983.

The traditionally patriarchal Greek family sees education as an important issue, especially for its male members. Later, reasons for the increased participation of women in the education system were the modernisation of ways of thinking, state education policies, and socioeconomic advancement.¹⁷ The increasing participation of Greek women in the labour market after World War II can be attributed to *“economic development, the need for more labour force, demographic trends like later marriages and birth control, increasing education levels and consumption needs, differentiation in the structure of the labour market with rise in services, provision of child care facilities and evolution of attitudes and norms”*.¹⁸

Discrimination against women

According to data provided by the Greek Ombudsman, there have been cases of discrimination against women, particularly

regarding conditions of pregnancy and motherhood needs.¹⁹ Exclusively linked to gender, pregnancy and maternity continue to have a detrimental effect on the working lives of women. An extreme form of this distinction is the termination of employment of women who are on maternity protection (which extends from the first day of gestation up to 18 months after the date of birth).²⁰

Young women are often asked not to start a family if they are to get a job in the private sector. In other cases, maternity leave intervals were not taken into consideration as periods of service in cases of promotion in the education sector. Discrimination has been also manifested through the reduction in pay and benefits during periods of maternity leave or sick leave in the light of oncoming pregnancy, although legislation is supposed to prevent discrimination of this sort in the public sector.²¹

The impact of the financial crisis

The economic crisis has had a considerable impact on employment relations and work conditions, which have affected women more than men. The crisis has drastically had impact on the position of women and the progress in gender equality through severe austerity policies such as dramatic cuts, massive layoffs and restriction of access to benefits and services.²²

The economic crisis has also aggravated gender-based violence, a term which is taken to include domestic violence, rape, human trafficking and sexual harassment.²³ The legislation should apply to all forms of violence against women, including but not limited to the family and the working community.²⁴

The introduction of a “single payment grade system” for the entire public sector in 2011 also “imposed significant cuts in public sector

salaries (reducing gross salaries by at least 25%), while layoffs of 150,000 public sector employees by the end of 2015 is underway, something which will affect predominantly women.”²⁵ In the private sector, by 2011, cuts in earnings of 15% were introduced.

In 2010, significant changes in the pension system were introduced, including waiving favourable pre-existing regulations for the early retirement of women with underage children in the public sector: their retirement age was gradually raised from 50 years (2010) to 65 years (2013) for qualification of full benefit, without any counter measure for supporting motherhood.²⁶

Future

The recently designed National Programme for Substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013 has four strategic goals: to defend the rights of all women through promotion of gender equality and interventions targeting in particular women facing multiple discrimination; to prevent and fight all forms of violence against women; to support employment and economic independence of women; and to make use of cultural creativity for the purpose of promotion of gender equality.²⁷

The Greek Law 3896/2010 modifies the previous law 3488/2006 and prohibits gender discrimination in employment. Specifically, it covers issues such as equal pay, equal treatment by social security and equal access to employment and opportunities for professional development between men and women. Recently, Law 4097/2012 was passed, which targets the application of equal treatment of women and men in self-employment in harmonisation with the 2010/41/EU Directive.²⁸

More gender equality within the business sector and a reduction of the gender pay gap can only be sustainably realised if “companies

follow a comprehensive approach including corporate strategy, management, operational implementation by business units and HR work organisation and monitoring ('strategic pillars')."²⁹ Hereby, business units are responsible for operationalising strategic targets regarding gender equality by actually implementing measures which have been agreed upon in their daily work, e.g. by offering internships. They contribute to a sustainable attraction, retention, and development of employees.



HR, as central point of contact for human resource issues of business units, offers strategic advice on how to address gender equality sustainably and provides instruments and processes to attract, retain, and develop top talent, e.g. by designing regular evaluation processes. These "strategic pillars" include for instance raising awareness among high school graduates regarding the full spectrum of fields of education, attracting top talent irrespective of gender, strengthening the work-family balance, promoting career advancement of women and evaluating the remuneration system from a gender perspective.³⁰

Conclusion

The most severe recession which Greece has faced since the end of World War II has had its effects on the Greek society and labour market. In order to ensure that gender equality is taken seriously, companies must monitor gender equality targets with the same gravity as financial targets.³¹ The Greek state does not seem to be able to ensure gender equality in the current political and economic situation. The family law reform as well as measures taken in order to meet the EU standards have not been sufficient, female unemployment number still being one of the EU's highest.

Other severe problems are for instance the pay gap and discrimination between men and women. The unadjusted gender pay gap in Greece has increased and remarkably exceeds the EU's average. Women are usually employed in jobs involving little power or responsibility. There have also been cases of discrimination against women, particularly regarding conditions of pregnancy. The Greek Law 3896/2010 modifies the previous law and hereby prohibits gender discrimination in employment, such as equal pay, equal treatment by social security and equal access to employment and opportunities for professional development between men and women. The gender (in)equality is reflecting the economic and educational situation of the country as well as strong, traditional gender stereotypes.

Notes

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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN ITALY AND THE ITALIAN WORKPLACE

Interview with Silvia Crocitta, CEO of the EuroDemos Youth Mobility NGO and Founder of the EuroFRC

Where do you see the Italian society regarding the awareness of gender inequality? Is it an issue that is being addressed and reflected on?

Awareness in the topic of gender equality and human rights are very well known in Italy. As well, it is even wider the inequality understanding and combating. Currently, both civil society and the Government are taking more cases of both women and gender discrimination into consideration and creating new frameworks to make stronger and faster laws and consequent penalties. But, all in all, the process is truly difficult, long and it takes a lot of efforts to impact enough to stimulate the correct change for good. A lot of work is still onwards, I would say.

According to the World Bank, only 31% of the Italian parliament's seats are taken by women. What effect do you think does that have on the political landscape of the country, and what do you think are the reasons for this under-representation?

After the new Calderoli Law got adopted in 2005, which consists in a proportional system with majority bonus, the selection of candidates in each political party is highly centralised. This means that it is rather based, as a hypothesis, on the party's ideology, on new tendencies in the last 10 years of politics and on participation. Factors playing a role in this percentage are multiples and we cannot be certain on any direct reason behind. What we can see, in the fluctuations, is that women in the Italian Parliament seat are on the rise, including also LGBT activist (e.g. Wladimiro Guadagno, well known as Vladimir Luxuria) and minorities (e.g. Cécile Kyenge Kashetu). Young people are majorly inclusive and acting

for more incorporation of women in politics and defending the role of women in society, as well as some political parties are nowadays considering that women are of absolute importance in our country. But, again, a lot of work is in front of us to balance procedures, participation, inclusion and empowerment.

According to your experiences and impressions, what are the reasons for employment inequalities between men and women in Italy?

At the moment, Italy owns one of most alarming percentages in terms of unemployment. According to Eurostat data in December 2017, you will see that we have the 32.2% of unemployment, which the 11.8% belongs to women 25 years old and over.

If we analyse more the situation and we consider the differences between North, Centre and South, we will see also differences: in the South problems of unemployment are more common. Inequality comes from very different aspects; some types of jobs are considered "only/more for men", women suffer firing easier (some cases of maternity firing got denounced too), contracts are more likely difficult to obtain, the constant wheel of internships with no stable job, discrimination on the basis of diversity factors, lack of competences, mismatching, etc.

How could companies be motivated to employ more women?

Difficult question and easy at the same time. I think that each human has own talent and history, and according to that, each company should rather consider how to incentivize and motivates those competences. The fact of

identifying the specific talent of each woman, then, stays in a great opportunity for each company and type of business to grow and create more opportunities, to analyse the job market better, to boost economy at all levels, etc.

A little mention goes for young women, the under 30 years old under the pressure of unemployment: I do believe that increasing the chances of work for women can only produce a positive impact on society and country's economy as this will allow them to form families and create more needs, more stability and a better future. In the end, I do reckon women and men are absolutely equal, and if we had men scientist in the history, so women too, as well authors, entrepreneurs, etc. – talent is the basis.

You are the CEO of the EuroDemos Youth Mobility NGO, a NGO encouraging young people to be active across borders in terms of civil society and education. Furthermore, you funded the Polish Foundation EuroFRC, that issues youth mobility and employability, and that cooperates with many other NGO's and associations. How can NGOs have a positive effect on the gender equality's situation of a country, especially Italy, in your experience?

NGOs are deeply working on social and civic matters, and gender equality is. A part of project and initiatives of all type and built on bases of concrete cases and circumstances, I do believe that NGOs can highly contribute at a policy level. The fact of having a dialogue with stakeholders and with local, regional and national realities should contribute in boosting competences and opportunities, and so to stabilize employment and entrepreneurship. Action and advocacy, awareness and impact are interlinked keys for bringing a change, especially if it counts on a collaborative and joint system.

Even more, if we analyse the mobility and the

international level, we will find that bringing a gender equality cause abroad will lead us to find similarities and differences, aspects binding us with other countries and creating a scenario of exchange and cooperation. Then, more actions can be undertaken together, at a wider level, and bring effects and benefits to our countries.

Did you experience any form of discrimination or obstacles, that you felt were related to your gender, when you founded the EuroFRC?

To be honest, not. It never happened to me, not in Italy at the time of founding EuroDemos Youth Mobility NGO in 2013, and neither in Poland for EuroFRC.

Do you see any differences between how men from younger generations and men from older generations perceive or treat women in top management positions?

Yes, I do. Younger generations are more inclusive, more opened and the intergenerational aspect is truly visible for me. The fact of having a woman in top management position creates less matters and issues or discrimination nowadays, and NGOs and youth work are contributing to this change, as well as more inclusion in politics, in working positions and wider opportunities.

Which advice would you give to women when they are in a situation of gender-inflicted, biased treatment, for example when they are being asked in a job interview if they plan to have children in the near future?

Raise your voices up, tell your story and ask for help. Do it for yourself and for being part of the change. When you speak up, more women get encouraged, more steps can be done to advocate in your favour and to help you: fighting together is better than fighting alone. Believe in yourself and do not allow anyone to break your human rights down.

THE CASE OF SWEDEN: EXEMPLARY, YET FAR FROM PERFECT

When any kind of discussion about women's rights emerge at any kind of platforms, Sweden is always put on pedestal as an exemplary state that successfully executed gender equality in practice. This assumption is confirmed by official reports, both created in the European Union and worldwide as well. Indeed, the Gender Equality Index of the EU created in 2015 indicates, that Sweden received the highest gender equality index among the member states in the period between 2005 and 2015 (Gender Equality Index, 2015). The World Economic Forum further endorses this prestigious position in its Global Gender Gap Report from November 2017, in which Sweden ranked 4th out of 144 countries (The Global Gender Gap Report, 2017). Although these statements could be regarded as proper, it is worth examining in depth to what extent these assertions are in compliance with reality and if there is any room for improvement in this regard for the Nordic country. This case study scrutinizes first the historical background of Sweden regarding women's rights, then discusses the employment and payment situation of females along with the measures taken for equality. Following these, it examines the question of parental leave in the Swedish society and also the violence against women. The piece concludes with the drawing of inferences.

Historical background

Tackling the gender issue in the Swedish society dates back to a long time. The first milestones can be detected in the 13th century when rape against women was prohibited,

followed by such steps as the school reform allowing girls to be educated in 1842, the right to vote for females in 1919, and the legalisation of birth control in 1938. These measures were further enhanced after the Second World War. The first female in the Swedish government, Karin Kock, appeared in 1947 opening the path for fellow women who wanted to be engaged in politics. In 1974, the so called parental leave replaced the previous maternity leave, encouraging men to take the responsibility of raising their children. Later, in the 1980s, gender discrimination was made illegal supported by the Equality Ombudsman introduced in 2009. The latest measure from 2016 was the extension of the reserved months for each parent from 2 to 3 months of the 480 day-parental leave. These efforts show the engagement of Sweden in gender equality and the practical steps it has made in order to bring the theory of non-discrimination into effect.

Employment and payment gap

Discussing women's rights and situation in the society, one should never neglect the access to jobs, employment, and payment of female workers. Although Sweden shows outstanding data and practice in this regard, it still faces some difficulties in certain sectors. In general, Swedish women's participation at the labour market is nearly the same as that of men's (European Commission, 2013). This means that discrimination during the accession period is not in order for Swedish employers, hence nearly equal chances are ensured at the beginning of a career. The same can be observed in regard to the employment rate of

women which was 65,1% compared to the 69% that of men in 2016 (Statista, 2016). Indeed, the gap between the ratio of employed women and men has significantly decreased in the last 7 years, reaching its peak last year (ibid.). It is interesting to notice that among the 5 most popular sectors among women and men separately, only 2 overlaps, meaning that there is a strong gender bias (European Commission, 2013).

Besides the general data, the employment of women must be examined separately in the public and private sector. As for the first one, Sweden has an outstanding record. The Swedish parliament is one of the top countries with the most female representatives worldwide. According to the World Bank in 2017, 44% of the 349 seats in the Swedish parliament were taken by women (World Bank, 2017). This ratio also concerns government agencies, where 82 women and 90 men were appointed as heads of such institutions in 2015 (Government of Sweden). However, as for the second one, the situation is less advantageous. In the private sector in 2014, there was only one woman in ten CEOs for the largest 1050 companies and two in executive positions (Government of Sweden). The same statistics show that 35% of mid-or high-level managers were females in all spheres combined (Government of Sweden). This shows a significant difference between the two sectors that has to be addressed.

In connection with the employment situation of women, their financial rewarding has to be discussed as well. Indeed, even in Sweden the financial gender gap does exist and remains an issue area. On average, the monthly salaries of Swedish women are around 87% of that of men (Government of Sweden). In the public sector, one would not assume that this phenomenon can be identified to the same extent as in the private sphere, however, it is suggestive that out of the 10 highest paid public positions, only 2 were occupied by women in 2015

(Government of Sweden). Furthermore, the biggest payment differences are in the county councils (Government of Sweden). The smallest contrast can be experienced among blue-collar workers, however, the percentage of women working in that field is also lower (Government of Sweden). A Swedish movement called *15:57-rörelsen* raises the attention of the public to the fact that the current payment gap in practice means that women work unpaid after 15:57, which is a rather stunning fact for those also who do not consider this issue to be important (Government of Sweden). This contrast can be explained by certain factors apart from gender. First of all, the differences among professions and sectors result in a payment gap, further enhanced by the position, the type of work, the professional experience and also by the age of the person. Anyhow, gender-based discrimination should also be taken into consideration as not all cases of the payment gap in Sweden can be explained by the factors above.

Measures for equality

The Swedish government has long been dealing with addressing gender inequality in the society. For this purpose, one of the most significant legal actions was the Discrimination Act of 2009. According to the act, all employers are required to pursue certain goals to facilitate the equality between male and female workers (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009). The law further prohibits any kind of discrimination and constrains employers to forego and investigate any harassment at the workplace (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009). In 2017, the law was extended to concern the prevention of all grounds of discrimination including gender, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, transgender identity or expression, and

disability. As an important part, it was also included that no unfair treatment can be practiced if an employee has taken or wishes to take parental leave, regardless of their gender (Government Offices of Sweden, 2009). Sweden has also integrated the so called “gender mainstreaming” concept of the United Nations into the work of its agencies. This means that the Swedish government is incorporating the gender equality perspective into the work of the state authority and its agencies everyday work. In fact, the concept of non-discrimination is taken into consideration when norms are created, or decisions are made as a basis for creating equality in practice. In reality, Sweden has created 41 government agencies within the Gender Mainstreaming in Government Agencies programme, which aims to work with gender mainstreaming in the period of 2014–2018 (Government of Sweden). This can be considered as a very important, but often neglected step in creating equality.



Parental leave

Parental leave is also a crucial point of gender equality as it is one of the most debated questions regarding discrimination. Women with young children often lack either the appropriate paid leave after giving birth or the equal opportunities as men have to re-join their career after the break. In the case of Sweden, the government is pursuing policies based on equality, so that women and men can equally reconcile their professional and personal lives.

Generally, the Swedish parental leave system is characterised by long duration, tax alleviation, equal share between the parents, and publicly subsidised childcare (Htun-Weldon, 2010.). The regulations grant 480 days of paid parental leave after birth or adoption, taken by month, week, day or even by hours. Indeed, for 390 days parents are entitled to around 80% of their salaries and for the other 90 days a flat rate of SEK 180 is provided regarding those as well who are unemployed (Government of Sweden). This leave is further extended with 10 extra days (or 20 days for twins) for one parent right after the birth. In Sweden, there is a unique phenomenon of three months allocated specifically for each parent. This means, that the government encourages not only women but men as well to take their part of parental leave, creating a gender balanced system. These three months cannot be transferred from one parent to another, meaning that if the parents wish to take care of their child at home instead of nurseries, they must divide the time allocated for them (Government of Sweden). Furthermore, those who share the transferable leave allowance receive a SEK 50 tax-free bonus for 270 days (Government of Sweden). This well-structured system gradually evolved from the 1980s until today, however, it is important to emphasise that the Swedish government introduced this dual-parental leave in the 1990s, hence, the state is traditionally a forefront of gender balanced parenting (Htun-Weldon, 2010). In practice, in 1995 when the first *pappamånad* – “fathers’ month” – was introduced, only 10% of the male parents took their share of the parental leave (Chronholm, A, 2007). Nevertheless, this proportion has increased and today around one-fourth of the Swedish fathers take advantage of this opportunity, or from another perspective, the number of these fathers rates above 70 cases per 100 live births (Government of Sweden; OECD Family

Database, 2016.). These facts show that Sweden rather heads the line of gender balanced parental leave ensuring a fair system with equal opportunities for both sexes.

Violence against women

Apart from the economic and legal policies based on gender equality, violence against women is another crucial element of discrimination. As it can be seen from the previous points, Sweden stands for a gender balanced society and takes measures to implement this concept. Nevertheless, gender-based violence is still a frequent problem in the country. In 2015, around 29,000 cases of violence against women were registered, more than one-third of that within a relationship (Government of Sweden). According to surveys in the period between 2005 and 2007, there were 47 cases of violence per 100,000 persons in Sweden, compared to 27 in Belgium and two in Greece and Hungary (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014.).

Although this number could be considered as relatively high, it is important to take into consideration that the majority of victims in all countries does not confess their harassment to official records. According to the 2015 Swedish Crime Survey, 1,8% of Swedish women claimed to have been sexually harassed in 2014, most of them belonging to the age brackets of 16 to 24 (European Institute for gender Equality, 2016). 64% of women who experienced a violent assault were 'acquainted with' or closely related to the perpetrator including employers and co-workers as well (European Institute for gender Equality, 2016). As for the legislative measures, in the 1980s Sweden prohibited for women to withdraw their allegations of violence once they made it, so as not to leave room for intimidation (Government of Sweden). The current law in

force regarding the topic is the Act on Violence against Women which came into force in 1998. Generally, legislation does not differentiate criminals by their gender, except for the offence of 'gross violation of a woman's integrity' which came into force in 1998. This regulation regards directly men who commit crimes against women on a massive scale (European Institute for gender Equality, 2016). For the gross violation of a woman's integrity, a maximum of six years imprisonment can be determined.

In 2017, a new 10-year-long national strategy came into force to prevent violence against women. The strategy consists of four parts dealing with the overarching issue of men's violence against females in detail (Government Offices of Sweden, 2017). In order to tackle the issue, Sweden operates around 200 local women's shelter around the country, which provide an emergency helpline for victims along with legal advice, help with the police report, and further consultation geared for everyone individually (National Organisation for Women's Shelters and Young Women's Shelters, 2017.). These shelters are mostly run by the two major national organisations dealing with the issue: the Swedish Association of Women's Shelter and the National Organization for Women's and Young Women's Shelter.

Conclusion

Examining the theoretical frameworks and practical implementation of gender equality in Sweden, one can identify a rather developed system with some room for improvement. On the positive side, Sweden has a relatively long history of gender balanced legal frameworks in a society that it is always eager to improve. As a result, gender equality at the workplace is higher than in most other countries. The same concerns the payment gap, which is closing up

in recent years. Another unique and successful measure of Sweden is the dual-earner parental leave, which not only enables men to take care of their children on a paid leave, but also makes this compulsory for a certain period. This is an innovation which really creates equal conditions for parents regardless of their gender. As for violence against women, legislation and practical help is also provided for the vulnerable.

On the negative side, it has to be recorded that the Swedish employment circumstances still need certain improvement to reach gender equality, mainly in the private sector. The

payment gap is also similar, as it has to continue the process of closing up salaries in the future to reach a complete balance. The situation of crimes against women also has to be addressed constantly, as, regardless of the measures and improving data, no effort can be considered completely successful as long as even one case of harassment occurs. In conclusion, Sweden is a rather progressive country from the aspect of gender equality, nevertheless, its work should be continued and presented for other countries lagging behind as a good practice.

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GEORGIA: TRADITIONAL HIERARCHIES VS. MODERN TRANSITION

Women's rights represent one of the most controversial topics of human rights in Georgia. The country's history, culture, and values have significantly influenced, on the one hand, resistance to change because of believing in gender-defined social roles and, on the other hand, women's rights development, and their participation in leadership positions, at work places, and family. The society, in which Georgian women live, has rapidly been changing after decades of the Soviet regime, from the 1990s onwards, in accordance with the culture seeing rapid social changes and new emerging Western values.

It is essential to consider how throughout its long history, Georgian women have been able to take challenges, and to carry heavy shoes of acquiring various positions in the military. For instance, being among the few professional fighters and helicopter pilots of the country's air force as well as later on taking leading positions in the field of law enforcement and the government. The statue of Mother of Georgia (*Kartlis Deda*, or "Mother of Kartli") that stands at a monument in the hills above the capital Tbilisi perhaps best symbolizes such national character: in her left hand, she holds a bowl of wine with which she greets her friends and in her right is a sword drawn against her enemies.

The Constitution of Georgia states at Article 14 that: "Everyone is free by birth and is equal before law regardless of race, colour, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions, national, ethnic and social belonging, origin, property and title, place of residence" (The constitution of Georgia, 1995, p.4). In practice, society as a whole continues

to live in a stereotypical environment, where women represent a minority in decision-making, and violence against them in the family is, if not accepted, not resisted either. It also directly affects the field of employment, where there is no explicit division of labour by gender, but certain positions are believed not be trusted enough to be given to women. Hence, top-level political and business jobs are less accessible for them, and only a few are in the government (GeoStat, 2015, p.64). One of the reasons could be the national culture placing women in both the role of breadwinner and housewife. However, with many young educated girls getting better-paid jobs than their fathers or husbands, traditional stereotypes of gender-defined social roles are changing.

Historical overview of women's rights in Georgia

The development of women's rights in Georgia is rich with historical facts leading to the country's current success as well as failure in the area of women's rights. One of the first major steps made indeed was the accession of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) without reservations in 1994. It encouraged following initiatives carried out in 1998–2000, such as the actions considered under the national plan "for Improving Women's Conditions". In 1999, the State Commission on Elaboration of State Policy on the Advancement of Women was established, consisting of 27 high-level members, including ministers, deputy ministers, and

representatives from local and international NGOs and the media. Under the auspices of this Commission, the President issued the following policy documents, which were strongly influenced by CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action. That year was noteworthy not only for the facts mentioned above, but also for the decree N 511 about the Measures on Strengthening the Protection of Human Rights of Women in Georgia.

A significant progress has been made by the Government of Georgia with ensuring a proactive implementation of the gender equality commitments laid out by CEDAW, BPFA, MDGs, and the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. In particular, firstly, designing national legislation and policy frameworks to guarantee women's human rights (GeoStat, 2015, p.5). Secondly, prevention and response to violence against women. Furthermore, addressing women's issues in conflict, the Georgian government made some attempts to put measures for increasing the number of women in power and decision-making in place. During the 2000–2005 period, the national plan has been enriched by the actions to combat violence against women, for improving women's conditions in addition with combatting trafficking. What made 2004 so special in the context of the nationalization of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), were the promotion of gender equality, and the empowerment of women. These steps have been adjusted to the Georgian context through two key targets: first, ensuring gender equality in employment and second, ensuring equal access to activities in the political domain and at all levels of management.

What makes the case of Georgia so special is the tireless efforts of continuing the work and handling the challenges along the way. The most successful resistant actions were carried out through the introduction of new measures,

such as the law of Georgia on the Elimination of Domestic Violence, Protection and Assistance to the Victims of Domestic Violence adopted in 2006. Gender equality became a hot topic especially in 2007–2009, when the national plan “for Implementation of the Gender Equality Policy in Georgia” was implemented, followed by the law of Georgia on Gender Equality adopted in 2010. The introduction of international measures as well as growing interest coming from the society encouraged deeper and more feasible steps, which was granted to be worked on under the Prime Minister Irakli Gharibashvili's Assistant on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues in 2013. Major results of tireless efforts were explicitly seen in 2015, which the President Giorgi Margvelashvili declared the Year of Women.

The employment of women and the wage gap

The employment of women and the wage gap being of central importance while discussing women's rights in Georgia, I would like to address this subtopic in greater detail. According to GeoStat (2015, p.39), the employment rate by gender has not majorly changed during the 2006–2016 period. In 2006, 47.4 percent of women were employed in contrast to 61.2 percent of men. Throughout years, the rate for both genders has increased and in 2016, 52.9 percent of Georgian women are employed in contrast to 67.1 percent of Georgian men. Accordingly, the unemployment rate has been decreasing, while economic activity rate by gender has explicitly grown. For instance, considering the same time period, economic activities have increased from 53.6 to 58 percent for women, and for men from 72.2 percent to 78.2.

As we can see, the abovementioned regulations in addition to the effort put, has

resulted in explicit improvements. However, according to the provided statistical data, men do earn more than women in Georgia and have a greater presence in the business sector. Latest quarterly figures from GeoStat showed that men earned about 400 GEL more per month than women. In the second quarter (Q2) of 2016, female workers in Georgia earned an average salary of 746.2 GEL (about \$323/€287*) per month, while male workers earned 1,172.9 GEL (about \$507/€451*). In general, the average monthly salary in Georgia was 973.7 GEL (about \$421/€375*) in Q2 of 2016. Meanwhile figures showed about 601,000 people were employed in Georgia's business sector in Q2, signifying a 5.7 percent increase year-on-year (y/y). Of this, 59.4 percent were male employees while 40.6 percent were female. Meanwhile, the average monthly salary for women in the business sector was 727.5 GEL; 37.4 GEL more compared to the same time last year (Agenda, 2016).

The United National Development Programme (UNDP) for gender equality

I would like to reflect on a very important research commissioned by The United Nations Development Programme under the UN Joint Programme “To Enhance Gender Equality in Georgia”. The UN joint programme is implemented by three UN agencies: The United Nations Development Programme, UN Women, and The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) with the financial assistance of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA). The programme has three main goals: Political and economic empowerment of women, eliminating violence against women, especially domestic violence, and realization of sexual and reproductive rights of the population (MPTF Office, 2014, p.4). Both, qualitative and quantitative

research methodologies, were used in the study. The study clearly shows that traditional views on gender roles are still strong: a woman's main function is considered to raise children and take care of the household, while a man's function is to support the family financially. If finances allow, it is better for women to stay at home or, if necessary, take an easier job, a “more appropriate work for a woman”. For instance, since a woman can deliver and raise children, she is perceived to be better suited to the profession of a teacher, bringing up children both inside and outside the home.

Men, by contrast, are more active and believed to have a fighting spirit, so they are better suited for political positions requiring leadership and decision-making skills. The fact that a majority of those surveyed consider that it is inconceivable and unacceptable for men to attend a child's birth is connected to a woman's function to deliver a baby. Moreover, while 60 percent of the surveyed agree with the notion that an employer must give maternity leave to a woman, only 40 percent think the same about men (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.4). Since the nature of a man does not correspond with raising children, especially new-borns, men's paternity leave is not required. A double moral standard is still strong in the society – what can be pardoned for a man cannot be pardoned for a woman. Moreover, women's behaviour is not only controlled by men, but by the whole society.

Political environment and representation of women in Georgia

The political environment and the representation of women in Georgia is another equally important subtopic. Georgia is in the process of advancing a gender equality agenda. A significant progress has been made by the Government of Georgia in ensuring the

implementation of the gender equality commitments laid out by the CEDAW as mentioned above. Despite the progress made in recent years, women are still underrepresented at decision-making levels and disempowered economically. According to the UNDP (2015), Georgia is placed 70 of the 137 countries surveyed. It has been extremely difficult for women to be elected to parliament, the supreme legislative body of Georgia. According to the Parliament of Georgia (2017) the number of female MPs approximates 16 percent, with 23 out of 150 parliament members being women. Despite some progress made through legislative initiatives, the number of women in local self-governance bodies has been decreasing with each successive election.

As of economic environment, “in many families, women have taken on the role of breadwinners” (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.7). This has given them a certain degree of empowerment through some measures of economic independence, but this new situation has done little to alter the traditional gender division of labour. Women remain the primary caregivers, responsible for the housework, feeding, and caring for the children. The majority of women, who remain employed in the formal sector work, are located in the low-paying fields of agriculture, education, healthcare, and light industry. The vertical and horizontal gender segregation in the labour market is obvious in the high concentration of women in lower-paid positions in the less profitable sectors of the economy.

Women’s role inside and outside the family

Continuing with some other essential aspects of women’s employment, such as their role inside and outside the family, I would like to provide a deeper comparative analysis. It is interesting to compare the women’s role in the

family with her business image and examine this comparison in society. It is also interesting to find out the difference between opinions of female and male respondents regarding this issue. Opinions related to the employment of women are mostly conditioned by public perceptions on women and men’s behaviour patterns in the family – beliefs about the role and function of a woman in the family and about the role and duties of a man (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.34).

As noted above, according to Georgian tradition, the man is the head of the family and has the responsibility to earn a living for his family while the woman is a housewife and mother and her duty is to obey her husband, take care of the family and children. It is interesting to analyse why society thinks that such organization is appropriate, i.e. to answer the question, why should society be organized like this.

Several arguments could be identified which form a basis for the patriarchal perceptions in Georgian society. The first argument, according to UNDP (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.34), is that family hierarchy corresponds with Georgian traditions. Traditions are not doubted, respectively, everyone needs to match his/her behaviour to these traditions. Another reason could be taking care of the family, which is a woman’s categorical duty. In other words, the woman is irreplaceable in the family. It is also considered that a woman will never be as successful in career as a man, because objective conditions may disturb her, e.g. due to housework, she may not be able to spend much time on a career. This opinion is backed by the stereotypical perception that doing housework is an obligatory prerogative for women. Respectively, if a woman wants to be as successful as a man in career, she should make a choice between career and family, while a man does not have to make such a choice. Moreover, it is also believed that a woman’s job must be simple and should not

require much time. A woman may have a job, but it should not prevent her from taking proper care of her family, husband, and children because that is her primary duty.

While defining respective professions for women, one of the criteria is the intensity of a woman's communication with men at work. It is worth mentioning that many respondents do not exclude the necessity of a woman's employment and believe that having a job is the best option for a woman to feel independent (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.35). However, women see a greater advantage to their employment in terms of independence than men, but in case a woman has to choose between career and family, family is her number one choice. I would like to mention some professions that are considered to be optimal and natural for women. For instance, the profession of a teacher is more appropriate for women than men, as women are "more enduring" and will get used to the school timetable (ACT Georgia, 2013, p.37). We can also presume that on the level of public perception, a female teacher raises future generations.



Respectively, at some point she transfers her role in the family to broader scales. Professions, such as pharmacist, doctor, journalist, bank operator, as well as in arts (designer, dress-maker, musician), in small business, in the non-governmental sector, and in the service sector are also considered to be appropriate for women. Considering the importance of the combination of professional activity with housework, the management of a small business is the most accepted in Georgian society, also indicated by one of the

latest developments of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), giving an increasing number of loans to female entrepreneurs (Europe for Georgia, 2016).

Conclusion

In summary, as proven above, gender roles in Georgia remain strong. However, an enormous amount of work has been done throughout the years resulting in outcomes such as the reduction of gender inequality, the increase of women's representation in politics, and a higher rate of employment in addition with a better understanding and combination of their role in family and the work place. Furthermore, the public believes that the above listed gender functions are a natural continuation of the essence of women and men. For instance, since a woman can deliver and raise children, she is believed to be better suited for a teaching role, busy bringing up children both inside and outside the home. Men, by contrast, are more active and are believed to have a fighting spirit, so they are better suited for political positions and other positions requiring leadership and decision-making skills. A double moral standard is still strong within the society – what can be pardoned for a man cannot be pardoned for a woman. Eventually, such an arrangement leads to stress and negative emotions, and as a strategy to deal with the situation, women choose to justify the positions, they are in and take pride in those. In regard to the situation of Georgian women in politics, they are less likely to be seen taking leading positions, moreover, with a large number of Georgian women seeing themselves more in business than in politics.



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WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN TURKEY – A SIMPLE SOLUTION TO A COMPLEX ISSUE?

Turkey has a rich social and cultural fabric, influenced over years by many civilizations varying from Alexander to Justinian, Suleiman the Magnificent, and Atatürk, among others.¹ The culture is often misunderstood by those who have largely been indifferent towards it, which has even lead to the development of fallacies about the rights of Muslim women. The enriched Turkish culture coupled with general misconceptions often brought about by the external observers, makes women's rights and the situation in Turkey an interesting aspect to look into.

We need to consider, that today there are differences among predominantly Islamic countries in how strictly they apply Islamic rules related to women. In some places, traditions are stronger, but in other places women are slowly being given more freedom. Universities are in the process of accepting women, and more and more countries are granting women the right to vote. Our aim with this essay is to present the women's situation, position, and rights in Turkey, and their roles in society. There are some stereotypical tendencies regarding the conception of Islamic law, including mainstream, non-Islamic feminist conceptions about women's rights in Islam.

Women's rights in the Republic

In Turkey, the rules for wearing chadors are much more lenient and the principle, according to which all women can freely decide to wear a veil or not, prevails. Furthermore, there is no reference to Islam in the Turkish constitution at all. However, in the Ottoman Empire, it was

different due to the caliphate and mud courts. In April 1924, a bill was passed abolishing the caliphate, and the members of the Ottoman domination house were expelled. Another law abolished the ministry of religious affairs.² On October 29, 1923, the Republic was proclaimed, and after this, a new chapter started in the life of Turkey and life of Turkish women as well.

The reforms of Atatürk brought enormous changes to the lives of women. Post reforms, women have got an opportunity to come to the fore in the world of work and we can witness a vigorous progress. Before the Republic, women were unable to shape their own destinies and had limited opportunities. However, the period of the democratic republic provided women with equal opportunities.

The first female judge in Turkey, Suat Berk (1901-2002), began her career at the age of 21. Later, when she became a judge, she expressed her surprise over the visiting crowd with the statement: "I thought people came to court to handle their affairs, but it turned out that they actually came to look at a female judge". These thoughts also reflect that, at that time it was a completely unique and unprecedented, astonishing phenomenon that a woman was serving as a judge in Turkey. However, thanks to the reforms of Atatürk, we can count on these many positive examples.³

Süreyya Agaoglu (1903-1989) was the first female Turkish lawyer who spoke in English and French. During her career, she represented Turkey in several international conferences. She was the first female student to apply as a lawyer, demonstrating that women could fill such positions. Since 1952, she was a member

of the International Women's Rights Association and assisted in the creation of important civil organizations. She also authored books, like "What I saw in London" and "One life has passed just like this", to name a few, which touch upon important legal issues.⁴

In Turkey, the first female criminal judge, Muazzez Halet Isikpinar, began her judicial activity in 1931. These famous Turkish women began their activities at the time of the Atatürk republic, gaining opportunities which they did not have during the Sultanate. Soon after, in 1934, women were given the right to vote.⁵ Thanks to the reforms of the Atatürk University, the women who had their ambitions restrained by traditions, could now imagine holding variety of roles in the society. And this change in expectations was not only for themselves, but for the greater female community. As a result, women could choose their own profession.⁶

Women's rights in modern Turkey

These days, the employment of women is considered an important economic need for many countries. One can witness discussions both in the non-Islamic and Islamic worlds regarding the appropriate model for women. However, these discussions tend to forget the importance of diversity of thought and belief. Though it is true that traditions in culture and society are an important part of the Islamic world, it does not mean that the non-Islamic way, especially European way of constant change is better. From the European perspective, there are plenty of rules in Muslim women's lives, which cannot be understood. And, thus, the European public at large feels that the rights of Muslim women are being violated. Therefore, we attempt to look into the rights of Turkish women in more detail.

Women's employment

In this section, we look into the positions women hold in the workforce, and the challenges which limit their greater participation. Earlier in May 2017, Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat) reported figures about women in the workforce of around 34.1 percent.⁷ Although still low, the numbers are encouraging and indicate improvement in the women's employment. The increase is not only limited to lower positions but is even seen in higher positions of the corporate and government. In corporations, women hold 15 percent of the CEO positions and 25 percent of the executive committee positions. The representation in executive committees is much higher than in Asia (8 percent), the USA (17 percent), and Europe (20 percent).⁸ It is important to note that this high representation extends to even male dominated sectors like construction, energy, and automotive.

As far as women's involvement in the government is concerned, the numbers indicate a positive trend. The women's share in the parliament has shown a steady increase over the years, yet it is comparatively very low. In November 2015's general elections, women got elected to 82 of the total 550 parliament seats, accounting to a share of 14.9 percent,⁹ while in 2010, women's share in the parliament stood at mere 9.10 percent. However, despite the improvement, it still falls short of the OECD average of 28.68 percent. In addition, women's workforce in the public service has increased, as it accounted to 37.1 percent in 2016, while the number stood at 10.4 percent for senior managerial positions. These numbers have generally increased over the years.¹⁰ As of 2014, women comprised 34 percent of the total of professional judges. Though in same year, women accounted to just 6 percent of total public prosecutors, which is much lower than that of Germany at 43 percent and Sweden at 59 percent.¹¹

Undoubtedly, there has been progress in women's employment over the years. However, women still face hardships in continuing their jobs. One of the key hurdle faced by women is the continuous battling of their job with maternal responsibilities. Millions of Turkish women have left jobs to look after their children. The issue is attributed to the underdeveloped child care infrastructure which is limited, regulated, and highly expensive.¹² The role played by the abysmal child care system in women's continued employment can be ascertained by fact, that around 80 percent of Turkish women with children who left workforce cited high child care costs as the decisive factor.

In addition, a study by the Bernard van Leer Foundation indicated that 40 percent of Turkish families lack access to nearby preschools, while two-third of the families cannot afford them. The unaffordability of the child care centres or preschools could be explained by the low minimum wage which accounts to mere \$380. For example, Nese Gencturk, a successful sales representative, had to quit her job due to pregnancy. The concern being the inadequate maternity leave of 4 months, which brought the dilemma regarding child upbringing, i.e. whether to trust a child minder, which costs large sums of money, or to quit and do it herself.¹³

The role of Turkish traditions in the women's participation in the workforce

Though child care is one of the key issues, the state of women's participation in the workforce has a lot to do with women's traditional role of caregivers and house managers. Turkish men encourage women to work, but they also expect women to do household chores. This problem for married women to maintain a work-life-balance forces a good number of women to leave work post marriage, which is attributed to an increase in

time spent on unpaid care work. The increase is nearly 49 percent, while for men the time spent decreases by 38 percent. Data from TurkStat states that almost two-third of the Turkish women consider their household responsibilities as the limiting factor for them taking up work. In addition, reports indicate that only a third of women with children under 14 are employed which is way below Sweden's number of 83 percent.¹⁴

The two issues of traditions and child care coupled together explain the TurkStat report, which indicates that 89.6 percent of children are raised by their mothers, while only 2.4 percent of the children are in child care facilities. As a result, Turkish women's employment rate falls at the bottom of OECD countries at a low 36 percent, while the UK has 73 percent, and Sweden 86 percent. In addition, Professor İpek İlkkaracan, a prominent economist at Istanbul Technical University (ITU), demonstrated that 63 percent of the urban single, high school graduate females participate in the labour force. While the number is below 30 percent for the married counterparts, who are prone to the work-life-balance and child care issues.¹⁵

An answer to ensuring continued women employment lies in improving the access to the child care facilities and making them affordable and accessible to married women. Indeed, the solution is not new, and the country is in fact home to the corporate child care experiment, as part of which Yeşim Tekstil, a textile factory in Bursa, Turkey has been offering free child care to its employees since 1987. The preschool is located in the factory floor and has helped women to continue work by making child care available. Additionally, the proximity of the facility gives the mothers a sense of ease about their children's safety and enables mothers to pick up their children, which would not have been possible otherwise as the industrial part of the town does not have any preschools. The program is even free of

charge and has helped the factory to maintain a considerable number of women in their workforce, i.e. 3,000 women resp. 51 percent.¹⁶

Possible government role in improving female employment

Given the challenges limiting the continued employment of women, the Turkish government could do a lot to resolve the issues. To begin with, public financing directed towards improving access to childcare would help. That could, in fact, increase women's employment and the economy. In addition, the government could update the 13-year-old law, which requires companies with more than 150 female workers to have child care facilities on premises. Currently, companies take advantage of the limited penalties in the outdated law; paying a measly fine of \$365 to \$1000 a month or simply choose to keep female workforce less than 150.¹⁷

The World Bank supports the aid and argues in favour of cutting down on regulations like one requiring pre-schools to have access to garden, whose application is unrealistic in the congested urban areas or the regulation related to child care or preschools being allowed to serve children only within a specific age group, among others.¹⁸

What is encouraging is the recent announcement from the government to raise preschool enrolment among the 4 to 5-year-olds to 70 percent by the year 2019. It is important to note that Turkey's spending on preschools accounts for just 0.04 percent of its GDP, which is much less than the EU average of 0.52 percent. In addition, the Turkish government in its attempt to increase women's employment has extended the state subsidies to employers for hiring young, or female employees till December 2020. The subsidies offered are in terms of tax exemptions and social security contributions.¹⁹

However, more than anything, the government must ensure responsible statements in public, and must work towards the welfare of women and the protection of their rights. Statements, like the one from former health minister of the ruling AKP party, mentioning that women's sole career focus should be motherhood, raises questions over the government's approach. Even President Erdogan asked women to marry early and have at least 3 children, which he stressed upon as critical measure to resolve the ageing problem.

The government's policies are directed to paying women to take care of children or even refusing to enforce laws, which require corporates to provide on-site child care facilities, thereby limiting the number of women who can return to work post childbirth.²⁰ Having shared that, the government needs to be careful that it does not derail from the progressive attitude, it has shown in certain policies.

Women's safety

While there is a ray of hope in employment front, the safety of women is a big concern. The country is marred with various instances of rape, murder, and domestic violence. Aydeniz Alisbah Tuskan, a Turkish women lawyer, highlighted the dismal state of affairs in the country and acknowledged that Turkey indeed has many laws, which protect women. In addition, the country's foundation principles give women equal rights as men. However, at the same time, she raised concerns that the lawyers and judges do not apply them. The issue, she believes, can be resolved by training roughly 4000 lawyers in areas of violence against women.²¹

There is also a growing sentiment that the government is diluting the laws protecting women or taking the rights away. One such uproar among both men and women was over a bill, which would give men who married

underage women amnesty, only if the marriages were based out of love and not force. After huge protests, the bill was dropped. While the bill may have been dropped, the emergency environment and crackdown which followed the military coup has led to the closure of more than 11 women's associations and one children's rights association. More than 864 female judges and prosecutors have been dismissed, compromising the participation of women in judiciary and possibly their justice too.



The crackdown has also curtailed women's voice in the media, which can be understood from the detention of at least 34 women journalists with 16 of them being imprisoned. In addition, the all-female news agency, Jin News Agency (JINHA), was shut down by the Decree laws.²²

Conclusion

Over the years, Turkey has been promoting female employment and the role women play in the society. The country has the required set of laws which protect women as well. However, the women of the country are facing issues across a wide spectrum. In the job front, the participation of urban single, high school graduate females in the labour force is at 63 percent. However, the number sits below 30 percent for the married counterparts.²³ Concluding from the previous analysis, the lack of child care infrastructure, outdated laws

and regulations, and unaffordability are identified as the prime reasons limiting continued employment of women. Other reasons include traditions, which see women in traditional roles of caregivers and house managers. Even the government has sometimes highlighted importance of the traditional roles, which surprisingly is a deviation from the pro-women employment efforts.

In terms of rights and safety, the institutions safeguarding women's rights have been eroded. This state has resulted from the crackdown carried out by the government post the military coup, which has seen judges and journalists being dismissed and detained, while women's welfare associations were shut down. Unfortunately, the actions have created a vacuum with regards to knowledge of handling women's safety.

Having said that, the government can take actions to restore the system, which for starters could require training roughly 4000 lawyers in areas of violence against women. In addition, the government must ensure the laws to protect women are not diluted. In order to promote women's participation in the workforce, the government must maintain a progressive attitude and work towards solving problems associated with child care. Additionally, updating the 13-year-old law and public financing directed towards improving child care could contribute as well. The government, along with the NGOs, could run awareness programs highlighting the role of women in modern Turkey, in order to break the traditional outlook. Turkey has the right means, and a course correction would help in safeguarding women's rights.



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EMPOWERING REFUGEE AND STATELESS WOMEN THROUGH TARGETED MEASURES OF LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION: NGO EFFORTS IN HUNGARY

Today the world witnesses a global refugee crisis which has particularly acute implications on Europe, making the integration of refugee men and women, some of whom are also stateless,¹ very difficult due to the large volume of new arrivals mainly from countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan where deadly conflicts continue to persist. In the face of the ongoing crisis it must be recalled, nonetheless, that the ability to engage in decent work remains a basic human right of everyone. It is inherent to human dignity, crucial for self-esteem and forms a firm basis of self-reliance. The right to work is enshrined in Article 23(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as in Article 15 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which acknowledges “*the freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work*”. The right to work must therefore prevail also in the context of asylum. The 1951 Refugee Convention proclaims the socio-economic rights of refugees set out in four specific provisions relating to the access to the labour market and rights at work, including the *right to wage earning employment* (Article 17), *the right to self-employment* (Article 18), *the right to practice a liberal profession* (Article 19) and *the right to benefit from labour regulations* (Article 24).² In addition, asylum-seeking, refugee and stateless women’s right to work on an equal footing with men is protected under Article 11 (1) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In the European Union, according to Article 26(1) of the Qualification Directive,

beneficiaries of international protection (refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, stateless persons) shall be granted immediate access to employment and self-employment after they are granted protection status on equal terms to nationals, not foreigners (Eva-Maria Poptcheva and Andrej Stuchlik, 2015). On EU average, it takes between five and six years to integrate more than 50% of beneficiaries of international protection into the labour market (Konle-Seidl, Regina; Bolits, Georg, 2016). Refugees, especially women, are at high risk of being unemployed, and of working below their level of qualification. They are mostly employed in the ‘secondary labour market’ with low wages, limited career opportunities, and precarious working conditions (France Terre d’Asile, 2006).

It is important to highlight that many of the refugees who have arrived to Europe in recent years are also stateless, having no effective nationality.³ In accordance with Article 67(2) of the Lisbon Treaty, stateless persons shall be treated as third-country nationals in the European Union. Similarly to asylum seekers who are not identified as refugees and therefore are not granted protection status and residence permit, stateless persons also often lack recognition as stateless persons in the absence of determination procedures⁴ which would be key to their protection. Although Article 17 of the 1954 Convention acknowledges their right to wage-earning employment, in the absence of statelessness determination procedures, stateless persons can hardly be identified which would be a

prerequisite to be protected and be provided with a residence permit which is generally a key document to be legally employed. Their access to the job market is mostly granted under the same conditions as those which apply to third country nationals (EMN Inform 2016). In the lack of status determination, they are greatly excluded from the formal job market (similarly to unrecognized asylum-seekers) and tend to work under the table which make them vulnerable to exploitation and dangerous working conditions, especially female stateless persons.

Gender gap in labour market integration

Being active members of the workforce is considered to be one of the main tools to enhance refugee and stateless women's inclusion and integration in the host society (France Terre d'Asile, 2006). Nonetheless, they generally face harsher realities than refugee and stateless men when trying to access the labour market in many EU Member States despite of their recognition as beneficiaries of international protection (refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and stateless persons). There is a striking gap in labour market integration outcomes – in terms of employment and labour market participation – between male and female refugees. Nonetheless, the spotted gender gap in the migrant/refugee context comes on top of the already existing gender gap among the native-born population in employment rates (Barslund, Mikkel; Di Bartolomeo, Anna; Ludolph, Lars, 2017). As a result, female refugees have significantly worse labour market outcomes, especially in the short to medium run which might be partly explained by certain cultural particularities, such as the generally lower participation rates of women in their home countries (Konle-Seidl, Regina; Bolits, Georg, 2016).

Refugee, asylum-seeking, stateless, as well as economic and family migrant women are often employed in the domestic services sector, such as childcare, care for the elderly, and household cleaning (Sansonetti, 2016). The lack of a decent job often leaves female migrants with a sense of isolation, frustration, impeding them from developing a sense of belonging to the host country (Chung, Hong and Newbold, 2013). Female refugees and stateless women are also more vulnerable to human rights abuses and therefore must be encouraged and supported to engage in meaningful and decent work, in an attempt to avoid to be subjected to arbitrary decisions made by others about their life.

Labour market challenges of refugee and stateless women in Europe

The labour market participation rate is particularly low for refugee women, a fact which is often attributed to their lower education on average resulting in their lack of qualification and skills and to their home country traditions which impedes them from accessing the primary labour market. This is particularly relevant for young family migrant women who married at a young age soon after completing high school, gave birth and stayed at home as housewives in their home country, as well as in the host country. In such cases, the problem is not only the lack of qualifications and work experience but also the fact that their family obligations greatly absorb their time and energy and therefore enjoy little to no support in job seeking. Because of their lack of qualifications, they first have to follow basic courses before they could participate in vocational training, for instance, while keeping their family together.

In this process, a further challenge lies in the necessity of learning the language of the host country which shall be a key component of

their true integration. Migrant women with English fluency might be in an easier situation. Nonetheless, granting them the opportunity to benefit from free or cheap language courses has proven to be an asset in job seeking.

The cultural particularities, including the different work culture, approach towards time and punctuality, as well as the prejudices of employees and employers, the stereotypes also impede the employment process. In certain migrant/refugee families protection is enhanced when settling in a new culture; in this new context women may not be supported to carry out activities outside their home, including their endeavour to learn and work. Also, the excessive family care burden (children, elderly parents) may also compromise refugee women's ability to enter the work force. In addition, a further difficulty may arise in situations where migrant/refugee women have professions which are typically performed by men in the host country. In such working contexts, migrant women tend to find it harder to cope with male colleagues, despite of their expertise and knowledge of multiple foreign languages. Therefore, targeted support measures have proven to be urgently needed to promote migrant women's integration in the job market, as well as to encourage their participation in society. However, such tailored initiatives are still scarce in the EU (Barslund, Mikkel; Di Bartolomeo, Anna; Ludolph, Lars, 2017). Therefore, in the next chapter, two constructive projects shall be presented which were implemented in Hungary.

Labour market mentoring

In 2014, Jövőkerék Foundation launched a new project called ***“Labour market services for women from third countries”***. The project was implemented from the European Integration Fund (now Asylum, Migration and

Integration Fund), co-financed by the Ministry of Interior in 2014-2015. The *primary aim of the project was the promotion of social and labour market integration of job seeking third-country national (non-EU national) migrant women in Hungary*, including refugee women, in the framework of a complex service package composing of targeted support measures, such as labour market mentoring and continuous support of the approximately 70 participants in their job seeking efforts based on individual labour market integration plans. Throughout the sessions, participants were provided with interpretation and child care services to ensure their maximum focus on their development.

The *complex service package* consisted of several elements. Firstly, in the framework of the *mentoring support service*, the social mentor of the project sought to provide help relating to problems in housing, educational, social, family and child care counselling which greatly helped the successful integration process of participants. *Individual job searching counselling* helped participating migrant women to get familiar with the Hungarian labour market situation in order for them to eventually find their place in the labour market. The counselling touched upon the particularities of the Hungarian labour market, labour shortages, general requirements of writing a resume and cover letter generally preferred in Hungary, successful self-management, job searching strategies, preparing for a job interview and conflict management skills. Furthermore, *job seeking group sessions* helped the participants to collectively informed about the general and particular information about the Hungarian labour market, as well as successful job seeking and working strategies and working culture in Hungary which might differ from those in their home country. They practiced methods (through directed conversations and special situation exercises) which helped them to be able to represent their interests and co-

operate successfully in a working environment, as well as to solve conflictuous situations at work. These job search related support services were provided by two employment professionals. And most importantly, the *individualized job seeking mentoring* was a complex form of support service where the mentor together with the migrant client together assessed the client's competences and opportunities (through competency assessment) and identified the potential barriers of finding a suitable job for the client. Mentors continuously monitored and assessed the advancement of each client's job search. In addition, *open weekly job seeking sessions* were held where other migrant women who did not participate in the projects were also welcome to openly share their experiences relating to job search in Hungary in order to develop job seeking skills of the participants and to provide them mental support.



By means of assertive communication, *assertiveness trainings* greatly helped participants to develop their sense of assertiveness. These trainings allowed participants to understand and reflect on their gender-based discrimination in the labour market and in their daily life which raised their awareness of the crucial importance of promoting a deeper understanding of equal opportunities where gender equality is a key concept. This training helped participants to develop their advocacy, communication, conflict management and listening skills which are essential for them to communicate effectively in a working environment in Hungary. These trainings were implemented in

the various forms of drama, yoga and self-expression sessions, challenging participants on a deeper level. Providing participants *legal aid* to mitigate legal problems proved to be extremely useful in terms of their job searching process. This support service covered all bureaucratic issues, including help with administrative paperwork, counselling on how to start a business, as well as practicalities relating to net borrowing, social insurance, social and family issues.

The project meaningfully engaged 68 job seeking migrant women out of whom 15 were employed during the time of the project, 7 started their own business, 24 attended Hungarian language classes and 14 participants were actively attending job interviews at the time of the closing date of the project.

Encore: 'New Home' project

Further to the success of the aforementioned project, a new project was implemented by *Jövőkerék Foundation* in 2015–2016 with very similar objectives as the previous one, financed by Norway Grants, titled '*New Home*' project. This project also aimed to support the successful labour market integration of migrant, refugee and stateless women in Hungary. To this end, participants were supported by means of job search counselling, Hungarian language training, job seeking group sessions, other relevant community programmes and mentoring with a view to promoting their employability in Hungary. As a new element, HR experts and employers were also involved to better reflect on the needs of the job market and to inform them about the opportunities and advantages of employing migrant workers. As an important outcome of the project, more than 500 employers and HR professionals were engaged in the awareness-raising project. In addition, the project also involved the training of 30

professionals working to support the labour market integration of female migrant clients.⁶

Conclusion

The paper concludes that an enhanced gender approach should be integrated into labour market policies aiming to successfully engage refugee and stateless women in decent employment which requires measures tailored to their particular needs beyond the generally applied labour market policies. Specific support measures must therefore be put in place aiming to promote their integration into

the labour market and to enhance their social inclusion in the host country. The outcomes of the presented projects demonstrate the potential of individualized support services, mentoring, and groups sessions which may serve as best practices for other organisations in EUMS working with female migrant (including refugees and stateless) clients. Finally, the paper concludes that ensuring equal opportunities to refugee and stateless women on an equal footing as refugee and stateless men shall be key to advance their social integration and to further strengthen gender equality and women's rights in Europe, especially among migrant populations.

Notes

- 1: According to Article 1 of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, a stateless person is “not considered as a national by any State under the operation of its law.”
- 2: It must be noted that based on Article 17 solely lawfully staying refugees are granted the right to engage in employment under the same conditions as the most favoured foreigner.
- 3: Stateless refugees are covered by the Refugee Convention, while stateless persons are protected under the 1954 and 1961 statelessness conventions.
- 4: So far, only France, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Spain and the United Kingdom have put in place statelessness-specific protection regimes among EU Member States.
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CLOSING WORDS

After exploring each country's realities of gender inequality and female labour market participation, it appears clear that each case provides a different perspective on the issue, involving different root causes and forms of female in-or exclusion. Nevertheless, each case displays a certain pattern of sociocultural attitudes towards a woman's role in society and life at large. Such attitudes and its repercussions often perceive the female role as naturally located in domestic and childcare activities, while not considering the inclusion of women into the labour market as a priority or even necessary.



Such strong cultural patterns could especially be seen in the cases of Turkey, Georgia, or Greece, in which the social norms regarding the role of women advertise and reproduce certain gender stereotypes, which give different political, and economic meanings to the life of men and women. Besides such cultural factors, the political history of a country shapes the equality of women and men strongly in contemporary times as well, as it could be seen in the case of Russia. Hereby, the

former political system of the Soviet Union, and its ideological distinction of gender roles for the sake of the system's maintenance, had a long-lasting effect on the post-Soviet perceptions of a woman's role in society. In contrast to that, the case of Sweden displays an equalising effect due to early political efforts for gender equality, and the acknowledgement of problematic gender imbalances since the 1970s. However, also hereby, contemporary problems of inequality occur, as presented for the gender pay gap and employment opportunities for women in the private sector. No matter if the underlying reasons for gender inequality in the employment sector are mainly historical, religious, social, systemic, or an inter-correlation of these factors, the situation in each of these cases developed towards more balanced gender relations in recent decades, although being very divergent from case to case. As presented, state actors as well as civil society organisations have a significant impact on shaping and creating further progress in the addressed cases. With respect to the EU frameworks, each country's national progress, as well as the wide public debates about equal rights for women and men, the issue of gender equality in the employment sector is slowly on its way to a gender alignment in some of the presented cases. However, as for other cases, without addressing the social, political, and historical root causes for an unequal perception of male and female roles in society, gender equality might still have a long, strenuous way to go.

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