

GENDER DIFFERENCES IN CONTEMPORARY EUROPE - IS THE POSITION OF FEMALES REALLY EQUAL IN EUROPE?

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Abstract

The article is rising up from the Gender stereotypes connected to the top positions of the women involved in the labour market internationally. Four factors that have the main impact on the gender differences were analysed (education, employment, poverty, pay gap and representation in leading positions) through the quantitative analysis for the selected countries of EU in 2016. Although women have in the EU average higher education levels than men, the average gender pay gap is up to 16.1% and more females than males are at risk of poverty or social exclusion in all of the examined countries.

Keywords: woman, leading position, European Union, gender gap

JEL classification: J11, J16, J31, J71

1 Introduction

The European Commission's (2016) report on equality between women and men states that differences in gender have narrowed in recent years, but there are still "wide differences between Member States". The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (2017) adds that the employment rate for women has so far reached the highest value (64.5%) in 2015, but still lags significantly behind the male employment rate (75.6%). It is regrettable that the probability of recruiting and staying longer, often involuntary, is four times higher for women than for

men, as many young people in particular in Greece, Spain, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Portugal and Slovakia they remain in poverty even though they have a job. In the EU, we can talk about the ongoing feminisation of poverty. According to Eurofound (2016): these differences stand for the EU at around € 370 billion per year, representing 2.8% of the Union's GDP. However, the inclusion of women in the labour process alone does not address the issue of gender equality. According to the European Commission (2016), three quarters of the homework and two thirds of parental care are performed by women, who in the vast majority of cases carry a double burden of duty (as women generally have an incomparably greater responsibility for parental care and home care). However, in this context, the European Parliament (2017) notes that equality between women and men is a fundamental right enshrined in the Treaty on European Union and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the objective of the European Union in this area is to ensure equal opportunities and treatment for men and women and to combat any discrimination based on sex. The share of women in the national / federal parliaments of the EU countries has increased by only 6% over the last decade, reaching 29% in 2015. In the same year, only 6.5% of women were among the largest listed companies among the presidents and CEOs. Around 71% of the members of the Governing Council are men, only one of the three boards is chaired by a woman, and only 6 women (Eurofound, 2015) are from the EU's 42 Directors-General. Both horizontal and vertical gender segregation is a continuing phenomenon even in the conditions of modern European Union society.

2 Data and Methods

Article is based on the Gender analysis in the selected European countries. The main task of this analysis was to describe current situation through quantitative analysis and to identify the trends in development as well as the factors that have had the greatest impact on the differences between man and woman. These differences were evaluated in relation to education, to employment and in the relation to the share of gender represented in the management positions.

The relation to the education was evaluated through the indicators as the share of population with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education in selected countries by sex and the share of population with tertiary education in selected countries by sex. For the relation to employment indicators as the percentage of employed adult population (16-64) by sex and the share of adult population at risk of poverty or social exclusion by sex were used. The relation to the differences between man and woman in management was assessed through the indicator of the Gender pay gap in unadjusted form by selected NACE Rev. 2

activity and the share of woman as a board members. Regarding to the number of indicators and countries included in the analysis, only 2016 was selected for the reference period. Analysis includes selected EU 27 countries.

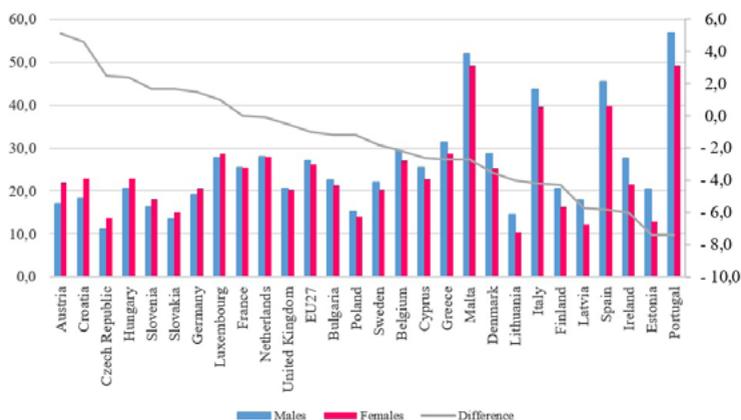
3 Results and Discussion

Gender stereotypes (GECCoF, 2015) are preconceived ideas whereby females and males are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their gender. Stereotypes about women both result from, and are the cause of, deeply engrained attitudes, values, norms and prejudices against women. The notion of gender is according to Šnýdrová, (2006) related to the gender of the individual. Attributed to gender are various characteristic features as the way of life and behavior, i.e. those which were not given with the birth, but formed as a result of roles played by men and women in the history of mankind, their socialization as well. Taylor (2003) adds that many masculine and feminine characteristics are not biological at all, they are learned or acquired. Gender schema theory suggests that youngsters develop a sense of femaleness and maleness based on gender stereotypes and organize their behaviour around these (Egerová, et al., 2013). Even if societies have gone through substantial changes and recorded certain progress in this field, an imbalance between men and women is enduring. It can be proven e.g. by the inequalities in wages, poor representation of women in top management positions (Mihalčová, et al., 2015). Gender differences are mostly visible in the inequalities of education, employment, poverty and pay gap (Eger, et al., 2012).

3.1 Education

In countries that do provide social benefits, for women the financial need to find a job might on average be less pronounced. Such policies might then take away a push onto the labor market especially among women for whom financial needs are a core motivation to seek employment, lower educated women, as they are more likely to be condemned to low-quality work (Besamusca et al., 2015). In contrast, higher educated women can obtain higher quality jobs, which makes that their labor market entry is less likely to be discouraged by governments providing social security benefits. In sum, social security benefits in a country increase differences between higher and lower educated women in employment (Bussemakers, 2017).

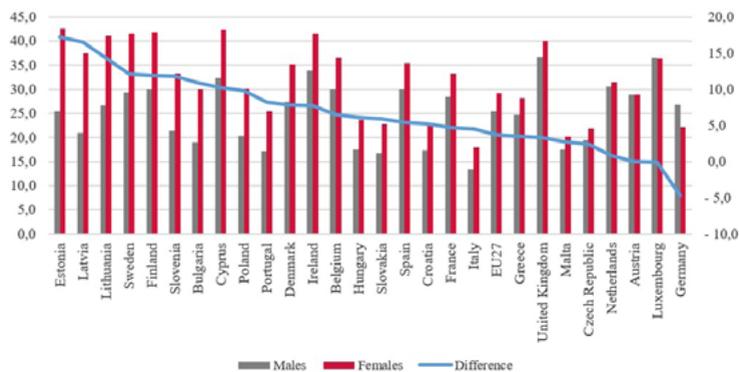
Figure 1 Population with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education in selected countries by gender in % (2016)



Source: Own processing based on Eurostat, 2017.

By looking at the gaps between the gender with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education there are 8 countries where the females outweigh the males with the highest percentage gap of 5,1 % in Austria. France has equal percentage of this education for both genders. On the other side there are more males with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education than females in 15 countries with the biggest difference of 7,4% in Portugal and Estonia.

Figure 2 Population with tertiary education in selected countries by gender in % (2016)



Source: Own processing based on Eurostat, 2017.

The percentage of males with less than primary, primary and lower secondary education is in the average of EU 27 states 27,1% and females 1% less, from which can be assumed that females obtain on average higher education than males. This is also visible in the graph 2 where the percentage of females with tertiary education is higher by 3,7 % in the average of EU 27. Females with tertiary education has obtained higher percentage than males in the most EU 27 countries with the highest gap in Estonia (17,2%). Lower number females obtained just in the Luxembourg and Germany with the highest gap of 4,7 %.

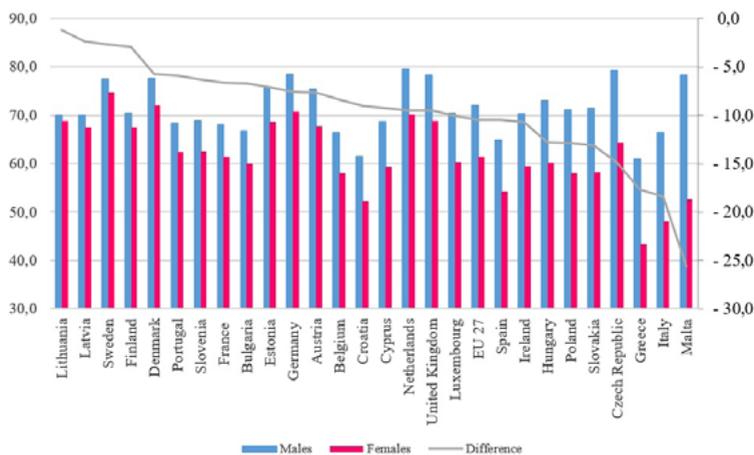
Higher education tends to place emphasis on autonomy, self-enhancement, and a critical attitude toward authority. Therefore, women who attained higher education are more likely to regard employment as an important part of a fulfilling life than lower education women are on average. Also, they are expected to feel somewhat less pressured to act in accordance with patriarchal social norms. (Chau, 2016; Kabeer, 2017; Pradhan et al., 2015)

3.2 Employment

According to ŠÚSR (2016), women in Slovakia have a long-term lower employment rate than men (in the last ten years, on average, 13-16%). On the other hand, the female employment rate was less prone to cyclical or seasonal fluctuations, such as the economic crisis since 2008.

The difference between genders is clearly visible in employment of adults in all the selected countries where the males outweighs the females. In the average of EU 27 countries there is higher employment of adult males than females by 10, 5%. 18 countries are below this average with Lithuania as a country with the lowest gap of 1,2%. On the other side Malta had the highest percentage gap of 25.6%. Employment of females is in average of EU 27 countries 61, 5 % and 72 % of males.

Figure 3 **Employment (percentage of total population) of adult population (16-64) by gender in selected countries (2016)**



Source: Own processing based on Eurostat, 2017.

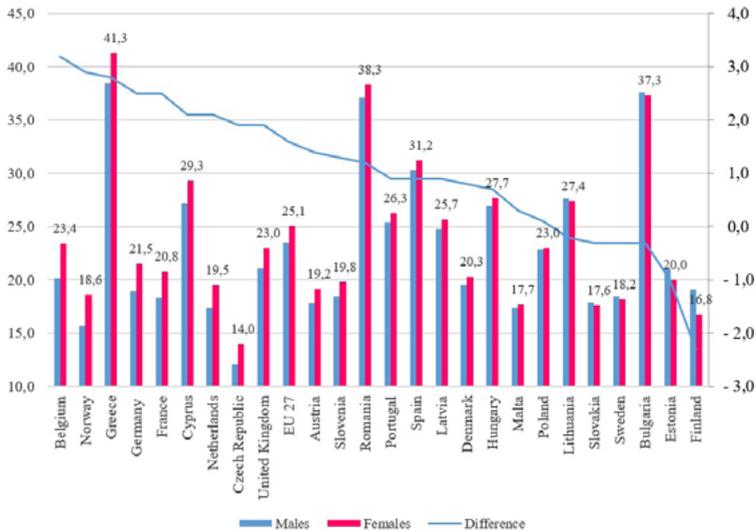
Sweden is the country with the highest employment of females with the number of 74,8%. The lowest employment can be seen in Greece in both genders, with the number of 43,3% for females and 61% for males. This situation is surprising according to the education of females, who are higher educated in the most of the EU countries. Their higher qualification should be connected with the higher employment rate, but the opposite state can be seen. It is caused by their position in the society as a mothers and other gender stereotypes.

3.3 Poverty

The World Bank (2009) defined poverty as helplessness and insufficient freedom for functioning. Poverty is comprehended as an inability to come up to minimum standards of living. The United Nations (2017) has defined poverty much more broadly than simply a lack of income. It argues that its “human rights” definition of poverty leads to “more adequate responses to the many facets of poverty.” It gives due attention to the critical vulnerability and subjective assaults on human dignity that accompany poverty.

High unemployment and poverty rate is one of the sorest social and economic problems which interfere relevant application of advantages provided for women by economics (Liaišoėnė, 2015)

Figure 4 **People (adult population) at risk of poverty or social exclusion by gender in 2016 (%)**



Source: Own processing based on Eurostat, 2017.

The highest number of adults at risk of poverty or social exclusion can be seen in Greece with 41,3% for females and Romania and Bulgaria following. Adult females at risk of poverty or social exclusion is on average of EU 27 countries 25,1 %, which is higher by 1,6% than males. Lithuania, Slovakia, Sweden, Bulgaria, Estonia and Finland were the only countries where males outweighs females.

3.4 Pay gap

According to European Commission (2017) gender pay gap reflects ongoing discrimination and inequalities in the labour market which, in practice, mainly affect women. Its causes are complex and interrelated.

Table 1 Gender pay gap (%) in unadjusted form by selected NACE Rev. 2 activity in selected countries 2016

Country	Industry, construction and services	Manufacturing	Accommodation and food service activities	Information and communication	Arts, entertainment and recreation	Human health and social work activities	Education	Financial and insurance activities	Information and communication
Czech Republic	22,5	27,3	7,6	32,5	14,2	27,8	25,3	40,9	32,5
Estonia	26,9	30,4	14	25,5	19,3	29,1	21,6	35,4	25,5
Slovakia	19,6	26,8	13,6	27,7	19,6	26,2	14,7	37,5	27,7
United Kingdom	20,8	19,1	11,2	16,8	37,5	26,6	20,2	37,2	16,8
Germany	22	25,5	9,2	25	31,9	21,6	12,5	28,8	25
Lithuania	14,2	26,2	13,9	29,5	12,5	34,3	2,5	38,5	29,5
Portugal	17,8	31,6	17,9	11,1	43,5	28,3	10,6	23,8	11,1
Cyprus	14,0	29,2	15,8	13,5	63,3	12,9	7	24,9	13,5
Austria	21,7	22,7	5,8	22,7	26,4	12,8	24,1	30,5	22,7
Bulgaria	15,4	26,2	11,8	19,2	7,9	31,7	15,5	22,5	19,2
Netherlands	16,1	19,3	12,7	18,4	21	21,8	11,3	29,1	18,4
Switzerland	17,7	17,9	8	22,3	13,1	19,8	8,5	31,5	22,3
Poland	7,7	20,9	11,9	25,5	9,7	17,4	5,1	36,7	25,5
Hungary	14,0	19,9	13,8	22	15,9	16	11,7	23,9	22
France	15,8	14,1	7,4	11,8	30,3	14,9	19,1	30,7	11,8
Finland	17,3	10,2	9,3	13,5	10,2	26	15,2	32,5	13,5
Italy	5,5	15	12,7	17,4	16,45	30,1	10,3	22	17,4
Latvia	17,0	18,9	14,1	10,9	17,8	22,1	1,2	29,4	10,9
Spain	14,9	19,1	12,1	13,7	17,2	22	7,9	18,1	13,7
Slovenia	8,1	14,3	8,3	16,2	15,7	20,9	13,6	22,9	16,2
Norway	14,9	11,5	9,7	15,4	10,5	11,2	8,2	29,5	15,4
Romania	5,8	17,9	5,2	19,1	14,2	6,8	2,2	24,2	19,1
Luxembourg	5,5	15,3	12,2	19	13,9	0,1	3,9	23,1	19
Denmark	15,1	10,9	3,7	17,3	9	8,9	5,7	20	17,3

Country	Industry, construction and services	Manufacturing	Accommodation and food service activities	Information and communication	Arts, entertainment and recreation	Human health and social work activities	Education	Financial and insurance activities	Information and communication
Sweden	14,0	5	6,1	10,6	7,4	12	10,1	26,3	10,6
Belgium	6,5	6,2	5,4	11,8	1,1	-0,6	3	20,2	11,8
EU 27	15,0	19,3	10,5	18,8	19,2	19,3	11,2	28,5	18,8

Source: Own processing based on Eurostat, 2017.

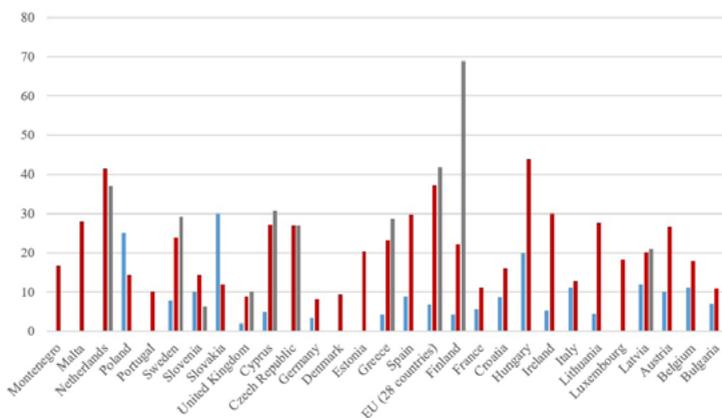
On average of EU 27 males earns more than females in the industry of Financial and insurance activities by 28,5 %. In most of the industries the pay gap varies around 19 %. From selected industries Education is the one with lowest pay gap (11,2 %) what can be expected according to the gender stereotypes where Education is considered as a typically feminine profession. Out of nine examined industries Czech Republic was the country with the biggest difference between salary of males and females in four industries (Information and communication, Education, Financial and insurance activities, Information and communication).

The position of females is the most equal in Sweden society where the difference is the lowest in three of the selected industries (Manufacturing, Information and communication, Information and communication). Overall the best results achieved Belgium, with even negative percentage of -0,6 in Human health and social work activities, which means that this was the only country and the only industry where females earns more than males.

3.5 Woman in leading positions

Gender stereotypes caused several problems in actual situation of woman in leading positions. According to Thebaud and Doering (2017) when men work in a managerial job that people associate with a man and male stereotypes, they are able to wield a substantial amount of authority over clients. But when the very same managerial job happens to be associated with a woman, men who work in that position are viewed as significantly less legitimate sources of authority. The main source of unequal representation of men and women in managerial positions is the problem of harmonization of labour and family requirements. (Mihalčová, et al., 2015)

Figure 5 **The share of women in largest listed companies: presidents, board members and employee representatives**



Source: Own processing based on EIGE, 2016.

The share of woman in employee representatives in largest listed companies' in-selected EU countries was the highest in Finland with the number of 69%. From EU 28, 19 countries had zero woman in this position, which means that only males occupied this position. Hungary was the country with the highest share of woman in the position of board member (44%). All the EU 28 countries reported woman on this position with the lowest share in Germany (8,2%) and UK following (8,8%). There is no woman on the position of president in 8 countries and the highest share was seen in Slovakia (30%) following by Poland (25%) and Hungary (20%).

According to Sheffield (2016) women in Eastern European nations fared better. Estonia, Latvia and Poland topped the diversity rankings with more than a third of senior roles in the region held by women. Researchers said this may be partly due to the legacy of communism, which expounded the virtues of equality.

4 Conclusion

“Gender Awareness-raising” or “Raising awareness of gender equality” or even “gender-sensitive behaviour” is based on the equality of men and women in normal activities or in ordinary communication. In practice, this approach should be reflected, for example, in securing the same number of invited men and women at major events, avoiding showing success through male visualization, or other targeted efforts to eliminate gender differences.

Factors as education, employment, poverty, pay gap and representation in leading positions were analysed to recognise the gender differences and position of woman in EU countries society. In the category of less than primary, primary and lower secondary education is representation of males and females more or less equal, with just one percent lower difference for females on average. On the other hand, in EU 27 more females obtain higher (tertiary) education by 3, 7 %. However the number of employed females is much lower than it would be expected, with the difference of 10, 5 %. It can be caused by the position of woman in society and gender stereotypes. In spite of the fact that there can be several reasons for unemployment of woman (maternity leave, housewife career, employers preferences, etc.) these can generally cause higher number of females threatened by poverty compared to males. This difference is not radical (1, 6 %) but it touches 19 out of EU 27 countries in which females outweigh males.

The next important indicator for gender differences is pay gap, which is visible in all of the EU 27 countries and all examined industries. Exact amount of pay gap between man and woman cannot be generalized, because it varies between the selected industries with the range of 11,2-28,5% in the average of EU 27. Out of the selected industries the biggest gap was seen in Cyprus in the arts, entertainment and recreation industry (63,3%) and the lowest in Belgium (-0,6%) in Human health and social work activities, which was the only country with the result of higher salary of females than males. In the most of the EU-28 there were more males working on the position of employee representatives in largest listed companies, but generally on all of the leading positions males outweigh females except of the position of employee representatives in Finland.

Acknowledgements

This paper was created within the project VEGA “Integrated talent management model and its impact on economic results of enterprises” from The Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. Project registration number VEGA 1/0543/17.

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