

GENDER EQUALITY IN THEORY AND PRACTICE

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Abstract

Gender segregation is still a relevant subject in social life, as well as politics. We can label it a basic right of a democratic society. The goal of the paper is to identify the theoretical background of the topic and analyze the approaches and measures of the EU for the elimination of gender inequalities. The first section of the paper is focused on analyzing the characteristic of the types of discrimination, basic theories and principles. In the second section, we analyze the basic documents and measures on the part of the EU and EC for the period of the next five years, with the goal of achieving the greatest and fastest progress in the enforcement of gender equality throughout the EU. We have used the theoretical analysis and abstraction method to process the first section of the paper. The empirical section was processed using the primary analysis and logical procedures like synthesis and abstraction.

Keywords

Gender Equality, Discrimination, Human Rights Principle, Strategy of Gender Equality.

I. Introduction

Gender segregation is a long-lasting phenomenon, society has been dealing with for decades. Despite this, gender inequality is a visible problem in different areas of public and private life. In all countries we encounter favouritism of some individuals and disadvantaging of other individuals. These differences may be manifested due to different nationality, gender, age, religion or sexual orientation. In Slovakia, most of the legislative changes in this area were adopted during the primary process, when Slovakia was joining the European Union. On a larger scale, gender equality, meaning same treatment of people of different sex, also means treatment, which is different, but equal in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and possibilities. In general, the goal of gender equality is to create a respectable space for every woman and every man, so they can develop their full potential based on their desires and skills, and so they would not be limited by gender stereotypes, which means putting the social position of men and women on equal footing. The gender segregation is still a relevant topic in social life, as well as politics. We can label it a basic right of a democratic society. Over the past couple of decades, developed countries, different institutions, non-profit organizations and research institutes have been dealing with this question. They are attempting to create a suitable environment for the promotion of gender equality by introducing new measures and legislative changes. The basic measure for the promotion of gender equality or the removal of gender inequality is the introduction of changes in acts and policies, which lay down basic conditions for systematic measures implemented at the institutional level. Slovakia applies gender equality through the so-called dual approach, which takes into consideration the possible occurrence of gender differences and integrates measures for their compensation. At the same time, this principle oversees specific support of men and women in areas where certain groups are clearly disadvantaged. The EU has set out the key measures in the European Strategy of Gender Equality for the next 5 years, 2020-2025. This paper is focused on identifying the theoretical

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background of the topic and analyzing approaches and measures of the EU for the elimination of gender inequalities.

II. Theoretical Background

The Anti-discrimination Act § 2³ distinguishes the following types of discrimination:

- **Direct discrimination** is the “action or omission, in which the person is treated less favourably than how a different person in a similar situation is treated or would be treated”.
- **Indirect (hidden) discrimination** is an “outwards neutral regulation, decision, instruction or practice, which disadvantages or could disadvantage a person compared to another person; if this regulation, decision, instruction or practice is objectively justified by pursuing a legitimate interest or it is adequate and necessary to achieve this interest, it is not indirect discrimination”.
- **Harassment** is a “treatment of a person, which this person may justifiably consider unpleasant, inappropriate or insulting, and the purpose or consequence of which is or may be to reduce dignity of this person or the establishment of a hostile, degrading or intimidating environment, or the endurance of which may be considered a condition for the decision or the exercising of rights and obligations arising from legal relations”.
- **Instruction for discrimination** is an “action, which consists of the abuse of a subordinate person for the discrimination of a third person”.
- **Encouragement of discrimination** is the “persuasion, affirmation or incitement of a person to discriminate a third person”.

In theory and in practice, we encounter so-called horizontal and vertical gender segregation. Horizontal segregation is the concentration of men and women in individual sectors compared to the overall labour market. It can also be referred to as occupational gender segregation or segregation of occupations based on gender. On the other hand, vertical segregation represents a division of men and women based on hierarchical job positions. A higher concentration of men is registered at higher professional levels compared to women. Based on the EU Council Regulation No. 1303/2013, Art. 7, the member states and the European Commission are obliged to ensure support of gender equality and for gender equality to be incorporated. To achieve these goals, the Slovak Republic applies horizontal principles of non-discrimination and equality of men and women, which have been co-financed in the projects by European Structural and Investment Funds. To manage the EU Structural and Investment Funds assistance (ESIF), the European Commission approved the basic strategic document on June 6, 2014 - Partnership Agreement of the Slovak Republic for the years 2014-2020, where these principles were defined. The main goal of the horizontal principle for the European Social Fund programmes (ESF) was to ensure the equality of men and women in the labour market and in training for it, and the goal of other ESIF programmes is the reduction of horizontal and vertical gender segregation in sectors of the economy.

Gender segregations of occupations are the most common. They are examined by the following theories:

1. Neo-classical model theories/human capital model theories;
2. Institutional theories and labour market segmentation theories;
3. Non-economic and feminist theories.

³ Act No. 365/2004 Coll. §2

Neo-Classical Model Theories/Human Capital Model Theories

The human capital theory was developed by Gary Becker. “The analysis of human capital is based on the assumption that individuals decide on their education, work training, healthcare and other additional knowledge and health by comparing of costs and revenues. The revenues include, in addition to improved income from employment, also cultural and other profits, while the costs usually depend on the missing value of time spent by acquiring these investments”⁴. According to this theory, the lower income of women is the result of their choice, which is conditioned by the priorities of men and women in the selection of employment⁵. Women usually invest in areas, which bring them satisfaction, but which are not characterized by return on investment, they have invested in these areas. According to Becker, the main interest of women is to focus their attention on their family and household care and therefore women choose less demanding occupations. These theories are based on the assumption that the employers and the employees behave rationally and effective market operation is also assumed. The employees strive to find a better paid position, while they consider their personal skills, limitations and preferences. On the other hand, the employers strive to maximize their profits and maximize work productivity with as little costs as possible⁶.

Institutional Theories and Labour Market Segmentation Theories

These theories explain why men’s and women’s occupations are segmented or divided between the primary and the secondary sector. The primary sector includes occupations, which are characterized by higher salaries, better opportunities for advancement and they also provide job security. The companies in this sector prefer men to women, because they consider them to be more educated and more experienced. Women in this sector are represented less, as their careers are interrupted due to pregnancy and motherhood. The secondary sector consists of occupations, which we could label as “female occupations.” These occupations are characterized by, for example, lower salaries, limited chances of advancement and also worse working conditions. This sector faces tougher competition⁷.

Non-Economic and Feminist Theories

The feminist theories consider the disadvantaged position of women in the labour market a reflection of patriarchal approaches and of the subordinate position of the women in the family and in the society⁸. In all societies, household work and childcare are considered the woman’s responsibility. On the other hand, it is the task of men to secure the family; men are referred to as the “breadwinners of families.” This division of labour determines which knowledge and skills men and women should have, given their roles in the family. This division contributes to the fact that before entering the labour market, women have a lower tendency of accumulating human capital when compared to men. This is a reason why women are less educated. Women are also less likely to continue in certain areas of education, such as technical sciences⁹.

⁴ Becker, G. S. (1997). *Theory of Preferences*. Praha: Grada Publishing. ISBN 807-1694630

⁵ Přívara, A. (2019a). Citizenship-for-sale schemes in Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Malta. *Migration Letters*, 16, 245-254. 10.33182/ml.v16i2.735.

⁶ Přívara, A. (2019c). Food Consumption Habits and Food Security Challenges among Immigrants. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 7, issue 1, p. 59-72.

⁷ Přívara, A., Rievajová, E. (2019). Destination Marketing and Policies Attracting High-Skilled Individuals in Germany and Singapore. *Transnational Marketing Journal*, 7, 229-244. 10.33182/tmj.v7i2.799. Přívara, A., Přívarová, M. (2019). Nexus between Climate Change, Displacement and Conflict: Afghanistan Case. *Sustainability, MDPI, Open Access Journal*, vol. 11(20), pages 1-19, October.

⁸ Barošová, M. (2006) *Monitoring of Gender Segregation in the Labour Market – Analysis of the Impact of Transformation Changes*. Labour and Family Research Institute., Přívara, A. (2019b). Explaining emigration patterns in Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Slovakia. *Geographical Journal* 71, 2, 161-180. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31577/geogrcas.2019.71.2.09>

⁹ Přívara, A., Rievajová, E., Yüceşahin, M. (2019). Labour Market Disadvantages Faced by Migrant Workers from Czech Republic, Hungary, and Slovakia in Britain. *Migration Letters, Transnational Press London, UK*, vol. 16(4), pages 585-594, October.

The most commonly used method of measuring gender differences is the **Gender Equality Index**, which was introduced in 2013 by the European Institute for Gender Equality. It is of great value also in political discussions, and it increases awareness about gender equality at the EU level, as well as the intra-state level. It is a comprehensive tool to assess the state and to monitor progress in the field of gender equality. It is based on the conceptual framework, which include various theoretical approaches to gender equality and integrates key questions of gender equality in the political framework of the EU. The shares of power, time, education, health, money and work are the six main areas, on which the index is based. Every area is rated. The value of the index is in the 1 to 100 points range. The maximum level of points represents total gender equality, however, this state is unreal.

III. Basic Documents and Directives of the European Union

The EU places great emphasis on the equality of men and women, as it has anchored it in many documents which have entered into force, and which govern the equal position of men and women in the society. We consider the most important documents to be:

The Treaty of Rome

For more than half of a century, the European Union has pursued the goal related to equal treatment of men and women. The Treaty of the European Community (the so-called Treaty of Rome), which was signed in Rome in 1957 by the six founding countries of the European Economic Community (EEC), contains the right to equal reward for men and women for the same work.

The Treaty of Rome (1957) on the establishment of the European Community anchored in Article 119 (now Article 141) the principle of equal pay of men and women for the same work and work of equal value. Article 119 says: “During the first stage, each member state shall ensure the application and observation of the principle of equal reward for men and women for the same work. Pursuant to this Article, “reward” means the usual basic or minimum salary or wage and all other fulfillments, whether in financial or non-financial form, which the employer pays directly or indirectly to an employed worker. The equal pay principle means that reward for the same work in task salary is calculated based on the same rate, and that reward for work in time salary is the same for the same work.”

Until 1976, this principle was considered an economic goal (and not a social or human rights goal). Its purpose was to avoid differences in the costs for work by employing a female workforce paid less for the same work than a male workforce. In 1976, the European Court of Justice refused this principle, declaring that Article 19 has a double goal: prevent competitive preference of some member states, while it also belongs among social goals of the Community, which is more than just an economic union.

The principle of equal pay was transformed in 1975 into the Equal Pay Directive and the member states compulsorily applied it into their legislature. Since then, there have been many justice court rulings on its application in practice, including the European Court of Justice’s ruling and it has committed all member states to ensure the equal principle of rewarding men and women for the same work or for work of equal value¹⁰.

The Treaty of Amsterdam

It is one of the fundamental treaties between the states comprising the European Union. It was signed on October 2, 1997, and it entered into force on May 1, 1999. Its changes are re-numbered in the EU Treaty and the ES Treaty. Article 6, Section 1 declares that the “Union is

¹⁰ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia: Treaty of Rome. Retrieved April 25, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/europska-komisia/zmluvy-eu-o-rovnosti/>

established on the principles of freedom, democracy, observation of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the legal state, which are common for all member states.” According to Article 2, gender equality is becoming one of the goals of the EU. In all activities listed in Article 1, the Community focuses on limiting inequality and support of equality between men and women. Article 3, Section 2 anchors the obligation of member states to focus all activities on limiting inequality and support of equality between men and women.

Article 13 establishes a fight against every form of discrimination, including discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation; article 137 establishes equality between men and women in the field of opportunities in the labour market and Article 141 establishes the application of the principle of equal salary for men and women¹¹.

Article 2, 13 and 141 support the legal basis for a wide framework of activities on the EU level and the enforcement of equality between men and women, and they were adopted for the new, consolidated text, known as the Treaty of Lisbon.

The Lisbon Treaty

The Lisbon Treaty was signed by 27 EU member states on December 13, 2007. It entered into force on December 1, 2009, when it was ratified by all EU countries pursuant to their intra-state procedures. The Treaty of Lisbon changes, amends and updates previous EU treaties and it recognizes the rights, freedoms and principles established by the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which, as its part, is also legally binding for the Slovak Republic. This means that the EU must observe fundamental human rights established by the Charter in the design and implementation of secondary EU legal acts, and the EU member states must also observe the Charter in their implementation of EU legal regulations. The rights everyone should use include the protection of personal data, right to asylum, equality before the law and non-discrimination, equality of men and women, rights of children and elderly people, and important social rights, such as protection against unfair termination and access to social security and social aid.

The Treaty also allows the accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights. This Convention and the European Court of Human Rights, which oversees it, represent the pillars of protection of human rights in Europe.

Specific provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon relevant for the area of gender equality¹²:

Article 2: “The Union is established on the values of respect of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, legal state and respect of human rights, including the rights of minorities. These values are common for all member states of the Union, which is dominated by pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality of men and women.”

Article 3: “The Union fights against social exclusion and discrimination and supports social justice and protection, equality of men and women, solidarity between generations and protection of the rights of the child.”

Article 8 (original Article 3 Sec. 2 TES)

“(1) In all of its activities, the Union focuses on the removal of inequalities and support of equality of men and women.”

Article 153 (original Article 137 TES)

“To achieve the goals set out in Article 151 (the goal of supporting employment of workers, improving living and working conditions to achieve their harmonization while preserving the

¹¹ National Council of the Slovak Republic (2020). Treaty of Amsterdam. Retrieved April 26, 2020, from <https://www.nrsr.sk/web/Static/sk-SK/EU/Doc/amsterdamska-zmluva.pdf>

¹² Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia: Treaty of Rome. Retrieved April 25, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/europska-komisia/zmluvy-eu-o-rovnosti/>

achieved level, adequate social protection, social dialogue, dialogue between social partners, development of human resources with an emphasis on permanently high employment and fight against exclusion from the labour market), the Union supports and amends activities of the member states in the area of equality of men and women in terms of equal opportunities in the labour market and equal treatment in work.”

Article 157 (original Article 141 TES)

1. Each member state shall ensure the application of the principle of equal pay for men and women for the same work or work of equal value.
2. For the purposes of this article, “reward” means the usual basic or minimum salary or wage and all allowances the employer pays directly or indirectly, in financial or non-financial form, to employed workers.

Equality of pay without discrimination based on gender means:

- a) reward for equal work in task salary is calculated using the same rate,
 - b) reward for work in time wage is the same for the same work.
3. The European Parliament and the European Council, pursuant to the due legislative process and after consulting the Economic and Social Committee, will adopt measures to ensure the application of the principle of equality of opportunity and equal treatment of men and women in employment and occupation affairs, including the principle of equal pay for the same work or for work of same value.
 4. Given the goal to fully ensure equal treatment of men and women in the practice of the work process, the principle of equal treatment does not prevent any member state from preserving or adopting measures allowing individual benefits to the less represented gender for easier application in the professional work, or as prevention or compensation for disadvantages in the professional career.”

The European Social Charter

It is an international treaty on social and economic rights, ratified by the member states of the European Council. Together with the European Treaty on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, it is one of the two fundamental pillars of the contractual system for the protection of human rights in the member states of the European Council, and it was of great importance for the development of social policy on the European level. This Treaty contributed significantly to the establishment of European standards of human rights in the social and economic field. The Charter was adopted in 1961 in Turin and entered into force in 1965. The Czech and Slovak Federative Republic signed the Charter in Strasbourg in 1992.

The European Social Charter guarantees women the right to the same reward for work of equal value and right to equal opportunity and equal treatment in employment and occupation without discrimination based on gender. The additional protocol to the European Social Charter adds the right of all workers to equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment (career) without discrimination based on gender. (PIETRUCHOVÁ, Oľga: Gender Audit in State Administration and Implementation of Generally Binding Legal Regulations in the Area of Gender Equality. Methodical Tool for Tasks 35 and 39 of the National Action Plan for Gender Equality¹³.

¹³ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia. Retrieved March 5, 2020, from https://www.gender.gov.sk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/metodika_audit_verejnej_spravy/

The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union was passed on December 7, 2000, at the Summit in Nice. The Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which was announced by the European Parliament, Council and Commission on December 12, 2007 in Strasburg, has the same legal force as the Treaties.

The preamble of the Charter says: "... conscious of its spiritual and moral heritage, the Union is founded on the indivisible, universal values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity; it is based on the principles of democracy and the rule of law."

Article 20 of the Charter guarantees equality before the law, "All are equal before the law," and Article 21 guarantees non-discrimination, according to which, any discrimination, especially based on gender, race, colour of skin, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or faith, political or other thinking, membership in a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation, is prohibited.

Article 23 explicitly deals with the equality of men and women and through its formulation it allows it to adopt affirmative action (compensating measures): "Equality of men and women must be ensured in all areas, including employment, work and rewards. The principle of equality does not prevent the preservation or adoption of measures, which establish specific benefits for the less represented gender."¹⁴

The European Pact for Gender Equality

It is a document for the years 2011 - 2020, in which the European Union states that equality of men and women is its fundamental value and also an important factor in achieving economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. By adopting the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Commission again confirms the ambitions of the EU in the field of gender equality. One of its goals is: to remove gender differences in the field of employment, education and support of social inclusion, especially by reducing poverty, and thus contribute to the growth potential of the European workforce and support a better balance of work and private life throughout the life of an individual. Increase participation of women in the labour market and contribute to the solution of demographic challenges, but also to adopt measures to fight all forms of violence of women¹⁵.

The EU council recognizes that the equality of men and women is the basic value of the European Union and that the policies of gender equality are important for economic growth, prosperity and competitiveness. Five years since the adoption of the first pact for gender equality a new driving force is necessary to repeatedly confirm and support the close link between the Strategy of Equality of Men and Women 2010 - 2015, adopted by the European Commission, and the Europe 2020 Strategy - strategy of the European Union for employment and intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth. The council therefore repeatedly confirms its commitment to fulfill the ambitions of the EU in the field of gender equality listed in the Treaty and especially to¹⁶:

1. remove gender differences in the field of employment and social protection, including the same reward for men and women, to achieve the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy, especially in three areas, which are of great importance for the gender equality, specifically employment,

¹⁴ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia: Treaty of Rome. Retrieved April 25, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/europska-komisija/zmluvy-eu-o-rovnosti/>

¹⁵ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia: European Pact for Gender Equality. Retrieved April 26, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/dokumenty/europska-komisija/europsky-pakt-pre-rodovu-rovnost-2011-2020/europsky-pakt-pre-rodovu-rovnost-plne-znenie/>

¹⁶ European Union Law (2020). The European Pact for Gender Equality. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011XG0525\(01\)&from=EN/](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011XG0525(01)&from=EN/)

education and support of social inclusion, especially by reducing poverty, and thus contribute to the growth potential of the European workforce,

2. support a better balance of work and private life throughout the life of an individual, even for men and women, to reinforce gender equality, improve the participation of women in the labour market and contribute to the solution of demographic challenges, and

3. fight against all forms of violence on women - in the interest of ensuring that women can fully enjoy their human rights and to achieve gender equality, also in respect of the inclusive growth.

The EU council called for the following activities in these areas to be carried out at the level of the member states and the Union itself¹⁷:

- measures to remove gender differences and to fight gender segregation in the labour market:

a) support the employment of women of all age groups and remove gender differences in the field of employment also by fighting all forms of discrimination;

b) remove gender stereotypes and support gender equality at all levels of education and professional training, as well as in work life, with the goal of reducing gender segregation in the labour market;

c) ensure equal reward for equal work and work of equal value;

d) support the strengthening of the position of women in political and economic life and strengthen the business activity of women;

e) encourage social partners and companies in the development and effective implementation of initiatives in favour of gender equality and support plans of gender equality in the workplace, and

f) support the participation of men and women in the decision-making process at all levels and in all areas, so that all talents are utilized to the fullest;

- measures to support better balance of work and private life of men and women:

a) improve the provision of adequate, available, high-quality services of care for pre-school children, with the goal of achieving the goals set out at the meeting of the European Council in Barcelona in March 2020, while taking into consideration the demand for such services and also to take into consideration the intra-state systems for providing childcare services;

b) improve the provisioning of services of facilities for the care of other dependent persons, and

c) support flexible working conditions and different forms of vacation for men and women;

- measures to fight all forms of violence on women:

a) adopt, introduce and monitor strategies focused on removing all forms of violence on women on the intra-state and Union levels;

b) reinforce prevention of violence on women and improve protection of victims and possible victims, including women from all disadvantaged groups, and

c) emphasize the role and responsibility of men and boys in the process of removing violence on women;

- administration of public affairs, implementation and monitoring:

¹⁷ European Union Law (2020). The European Pact for Gender Equality. Retrieved April 30, 2020, from [https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011XG0525\(01\)&from=EN/](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/SK/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011XG0525(01)&from=EN/)

The Council reaffirms its commitment to enforce the administration of public affairs through the implementation of gender equality by its inclusion in all areas of policies, including external activities of the EU, as well as taking into consideration the importance of the roles of men and boys in the spreading of gender equality, and also by observing that the effect of gender equality is considered in the impact assessment of new EU policies. The Council encourages the member states and the Commission, especially through Eurostat, to further develop existing statistics and indicators divided based on gender and use the possibilities of the European Institute for Gender Equality to the fullest.

It encourages the member states to implement gender equality and support policies of gender equality in the drafting and implementation of the national programmes of reforms, especially in terms of directives for the employment policies, and to properly use the approved indicators of gender equality, which were developed under the joint assessment and under the review of the Beijing Action Platform implementation in all relevant processes and areas of policies.

The Commission and the Council also call for the perspective of gender equality to be integrated into the annual growth survey, standpoints of individual countries and recommendations of individual countries. The ministers should discuss progress in the implementation of the European Pact for Gender Equality annually at the Council Level.

The Strategy of Gender Equality 2020-2025

This strategy is the first comprehensive strategy of the Commission in this area for the next 5 years. The Strategy of Gender Equality 2020 – 2025 establishes key measures for the next 5 years and it undertakes to provide for the Commission to include the perspective of equality into all areas of the EU policy. “Under the strategy of gender equality, we anchor gender equality as the core development of the EU policies. Our goal is to ensure that women do not have to overcome further obstacles, to achieve, what men have as given, and instead be able to fully use their potential.”¹⁸

Thus far, no EU member state has achieved equality of men and women. Progress is slow, while the gender differences remain in employment, reward, care and pensions. The strategy drafts a set of key measures, including the removal of gender-conditioned violence and stereotypes, with the goal of overcoming these gaps and allow Europe to fully use its potential in business, politics and society, to ensure equal participation and opportunities in the labour market, including equal rewards, and to achieve gender equality in decision-making and politics.

According to the Commission, 33% of women in the EU faced physical and/or sexual violence, while 55% of them were sexually harassed. Women in Europe must live without violence and harmful stereotypes. To achieve this goal, the Strategy demands legal measures to criminalize violence on women. The Commission intends to implement measures especially in the field of criminal activity, where harmonization is possible throughout Europe.

The Commission states that women in the EU earn on average 16% less than men and they still face obstacles in accessing and remaining in the labour market. Gender equality is a necessary condition for an innovative, competitive and prospering European economy. Given the demographic challenges and ecological and digital changes, support of women in their search for employment in fields with lack of qualified workforce, especially in the fields of technology and artificial intelligence, will have a positive impact on European economy. To solve inequality of pay, the Commission leads a public consultation on the transparency of rewarding, and it will submit binding measures by the end of 2020. In order to allow women to prosper in the labour market, it will double its effort to enforce EU standards related to the balance of

¹⁸ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). Gender equality in Slovakia: European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025. Retrieved May 20, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/europska-strategia-rodovej-rovnosti-2020-2025>

work and private life, which will allow actual selection of men and women, so they can develop both personally and professionally. Gender equality in the context of the labour market, social inclusion and education will continue to be monitored during the European semester.

Women continue to be underrepresented in the top positions, including the largest companies in the EU, where only 8% of CEOs are women. To allow women career growth, the Commission will continue to strive to adopt a proposal from 2012 on gender balance in boards of directors. The Commission will also support the participation of women in politics in the European Parliament Elections in 2024 by financing and exchange of good practice. By 2024, the Commission itself will strive to achieve a 50% gender equality on all management levels. The Commission has included suggestions of the member states and the European parliament in the multiannual financial framework for 2012-2027, which ensures the integration of the gender dimension into various financing tools, especially the Plus European Social Fund, European Fund for Regional Development, Creative Europe, European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, Cohesion Fund and the Invest EU Programme¹⁹.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is of the opinion that through positive increase of gender equality in the EU, it is possible to create an additional 10.5 million jobs by 2050. The employment rate would reach 80%, which could increase the domestic gross product of the European Union by almost 10% by 2050. According to this argumentation by the EIGE research, GDP growth is the second positive impact of increasing gender equality, which reflects the macro-economic performance of the economies of the individual states. More investments, welfare, higher levels of development and of living standards may be observed in growing economies²⁰.

IV. Conclusion

The question of gender equality has been an issue for several decades in a broader context, not only in Slovakia, but throughout the EU. In the past year, the reference framework - Strategic Commitment to Gender Equality, which was created by the European Commission for the years 2016 - 2019, has expired. This document dealt with areas of participation in the labour market, economic independence, salaries and pensions, equality in management positions and fight against gender-based violence. More and more member states strive to introduce national strategies or action plans for equality of men and women, with the goal of solving issues of gender inequality. The ambitions in individual states differ. However, the individual policies have a joint focus on gender equality in the labour market and gender-based violence. Less attention is paid to decision-making and most attention is paid to education, professional training, gender stereotypes and so-called work-life balance, i.e. harmonization of work and private life. Slovakia applies gender equality through the dual approach. The dual approach used in Slovakia is one which takes into consideration the possible existence of gender differences, and it integrates measures for their compensation. At the same time, this principle oversees the specific support of women or men in areas where certain groups are clearly disadvantaged. The projects for solving inequality are co-financed by the European Structural and Investment Funds, based on the approved Partnership Agreement of the Slovak Republic for 2014-2020. Faster and better-quality solutions in the area of ensuring gender equality are expected to have a clear impact on improving economic performance and economic growth. The new institute for solving gender inequalities for the next 5 years is the Strategy of Gender Equality 2020-2025. Vera Jour, the vice-president for values and transparency, stated in this

¹⁹ Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic (2020). *Gender equality in Slovakia: European Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. Retrieved May 20, 2020, from <https://www.gender.gov.sk/europska-strategia-rodovej-rovnosti-2020-2025>

²⁰ European Institute For Gender Equality, Luxemburg (2020). *The Publications Office of the European Union*. Retrieved April 30, 2020 from <https://eige.europa.eu/sk/in-brief>

document: “Despite all of its shortcomings, Europe is a good address for a woman. Since our society is undergoing important transformations, may it be green or digital, we have to ensure for all men and women to have equal opportunities and not to deepen the inequalities. Quite the contrary, we have to create conditions for women to become actors of fair balance of work and private life.”

Acknowledgements

This research was funded by Vega research project no. 1/0037/20: “New challenges and solutions for employment growth in changing socio-economic conditions”

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