



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Gender segregation in the labour market and education

Denmark, 29-30 September 2015

Comments Paper - Lithuania



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Justice

This publication is supported by the European Union Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020).

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Addressing gender bias in kindergarten pedagogues and STEM area in Lithuania

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1. Gender equality policy context and background of Lithuania

1.1. Introduction

The number of women in the Lithuania labour market is high. Women make up 54 % of the total population. According to the Labour Force survey data¹ for the year 2014, the activity rate of women aged 15-64 stood at 71.6, that of men at 76 %, the employment rate of women aged 15-64 stood at 64.9, that of men at 66.5 %. The female unemployment rate stood at 9.2, the male one at 12.2 %. Recent years have seen a key change in higher education. Women are enrolling and graduating at higher rates, and men are not keeping up. Male students strongly outnumber female ones in STEM disciplines.

1.2. Gender equality policy context

The essential principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania (Article 29, 1992)². Gender equality as a principle objective is enshrined in The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men³ (1998) and the Law on Equal Opportunities⁴ (2004).

All recent governmental documents, including four National Programmes for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2000-2004, 2005-2009, 2010-2014, 2015-2021), have explicit references to gender mainstreaming as a gender equality strategy, either as an objective or as a principle governing gender equality policy.

However, despite formal legislation and declarations, Lithuania actually encounters problems in the field of gender equality. Implementation of declared ideas and legal commitments in practice falls short of the level which is sought to be achieved. This is reflected by the key indicators. Data of the World Economic Forum proves reverse trends of gender equality advancement in Lithuania which dropped down from 14th position in 2007 to 28th in 2013⁵. In the EIGE-developed Gender Equality Index, Lithuania is far below average on gender equality in Europe and from 43.6 in 2005 dropped to 40.2 in 2012⁶. According to EIGE data, Lithuania joined the Member

¹ Women and Men in Lithuania 2014. Statistics of Lithuania, Vilnius, 2015.

² <http://www3.lrs.lt/home/Konstitucija/Konstitucija.htm>

³ The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=276095

⁴ The Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=276095

⁵ World Economic Forum (2013), The Global Gender Gap, 2013, p. 8, available at www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GenderGap_Report_2013.pdf

⁶ European Gender Equality Institute. Gender Equality index, available at: <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/MH0215178ENN.pdf>

States group (UK, Croatia, Slovakia, Romania) where the scores of the Gender Equality Index have dropped in both time periods (2005-2010 and 2010-2012).

1.3. Gendered segregation on the Lithuanian labour market and in the education system

Preschool level of education system – absolutely feminised. Wherewith lower level of education system the more women are employed. At the micro-level, in the labour market and business, the prevailing vertical and horizontal segregation shapes 'feminine' and 'masculine' areas of employment, which in turn promote and develop gender asymmetry and determine the lower income of women compared to that of men. As in all EU countries the sharp gender segregation in the Lithuanian labour market and education remains. According to the Labour Force survey data⁷ for the year 2014 health care and social work, where women made up 85.5 % of all employees, remained the most feminine fields of activity; in education, women made up 79.3 %. The purpose of pre-primary education is to help a child satisfy inherent, cultural (including ethnic), social and cognitive needs. The programme of pre-primary education is pursued by nurseries, kindergartens, schools-kindergartens as well as by basic schools or other providers of educational services holding a licence. Pre-primary education shall be provided to a child from birth until the commencement of provision of pre-primary or primary education. According to the Lithuanian Classification of Education, pre-primary education is assigned to level 0. The right to work as pre-school education pedagogue (ISCED0) and pre-primary education pedagogue (ISCED1) has a person who has attained a higher education level (a post-secondary education level acquired before 2009 or a specialised-secondary education level attained before 1995); persons must, within two years from the beginning of work as a teacher according to pre-school, pre-primary and general education curricula, acquire a pedagogue's qualification, taken in accordance with the procedure laid down by the Minister of Education and Science a pedagogical-psychological knowledge course⁸. Since 2010 future pedagogues are introduced by an additional motivation test that tests the entrees' conscious decision to study within the pedagogical programmes, strive for teacher/educator career.

The number of pedagogues in pre-school establishments increased slightly, even though due to the demographical decrease of Lithuanian population and emigration the number of future pedagogues is lowered, nevertheless the number of pedagogues shifted fractionally: 2010 – 99.3 %, 2011 – 98.7 %, 2012 – 99.3 %, 2013 – 99.6 %. According to the Labour Force survey data for the year 2014, human health and social work, where women made up 85.5 % of all persons employed, remained the most feminine field of activity. More than 71 % of these pedagogues have higher education. At institutions of higher education, women accounted for the largest proportion in social work (89 %).

Increase of state-funded places at STEM higher education establishments. In 2015 as well as 2014 the majority of state financing funds (more than one third of the overall sum) are allocated by the state towards physical and technological sciences. In 2015, 15 % of entrees chose engineering and technological science studies. At the beginning of the 2014-2015 academic year, the estimated number of women in educational institutions totalled 51 %, that of men 49 %. Among all students enrolled in higher education women accounted for 57 %, men for 43 %. At

⁷ Women and Men in Lithuania 2014. Statistics of Lithuania, Vilnius, 2015.

⁸ Republic of Lithuania Law on Education, available at:
http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=1050203

schools of higher education, women accounted for the largest proportion in social work (89 %), medicine and journalism (79 % in each field), pedagogy and veterinary (75 % in each field), and humanities (74 %), men in engineering and computer science (88 % in each field), civil engineering (86 %), and transport services (85 %). But most of pedagogues who graduated are not working in the education system. Most (87 %) teaching staff at general schools were women. At colleges and vocational schools, women made up 69 %, at universities 52 % of the academic staff. Comparing 2010 and 2012 year statistics of Bachelor degree graduates in STEM field indicates increase of women numbers in engineering (from 13 % to 21.4 %), in informatics (from 16.1 % to 18 %) and mathematics (from 57.9 % to 64.8 %). Master degree holders increase in engineering from 26.9 % to 29.9 %.

In 2014, according to a survey on research and development (R&D), the number of women with a scientific degree engaging in R&D (in the general government and higher education sectors) totalled 49.5 % of all researchers (with a scientific degree), that of men 50.5 %. Male researchers with a scientific degree accounted for a larger proportion in technical (69.8 %) and physical (66.4 %) sciences, while female researchers with a scientific degree – in social and sciences humanities (61 and 59.1 % respectively) and other biomedical (natural) sciences (55.9 %).

2. Policy debate

Analysis on gender role stereotypes in the labour market has demonstrated that society imposes the pressure on individuals through the constructions of expectations about what is “feminine” and “masculine”. This is evident, for example, in the occupational orientation of women and men in Lithuania. A recent study on women’s career in natural and technological sciences analysed the social-cultural obstacles, gendered stereotypes and cultural prejudices about women’s role in society from school up to university and the scientific community. The study argues that traditional attitudes and patriarchal norms about gender relations and system which persist in Lithuanian society significantly influence girls’ professional orientation and their limited choices for natural and technological sciences. Generalising women situation in physics in Lithuania determined two main reasons: girls do not choose physics as a profession and women-scientists abandon their career in physics. Some of the factors influencing the choice of girls gifted for sciences are: inadequately low prestige of physics in the society; unattractive and inadequate image of scientists; social environment does not motivate girls to choose sciences as profession; the physics’ teaching is not oriented to a woman as well: the textbooks are written by men, are engaging for boys, in the given examples masculine hobbies are reflected; a woman physicist role model is not being formed; girls do not see their place in physics as well as further career perspectives in science; teachers’ qualification and their awareness about gender equality problem is significant; parents’ attitudes and support are invaluable while choosing scientist’s profession; university education does not take into account the peculiarities of women thinking. One third Lithuanian women physicists, having scientific degree, have left this field. It is thought that women-scientists resign from physics profession because they are not satisfied with career perspectives in science⁹.

Women scientists argue that segregation of occupations in the universities shows the tendency that social sciences are more often chosen by women than technical and natural sciences. Though the growth of number of women (not men) could be

⁹ Women in Sciences and High Technology in the Baltic States. Problems and Solutions. FP6 BASNET project results. (2007). Vilnius.

noticed in technical and natural sciences through the period 2001-2009, however, men are still in leading positions of the educational and scientific structures. Data on attitudes of school students towards professional orientation also shows that women are hardly motivated to choose technical and natural sciences for their career. They usually devalue their own abilities and consider themselves incapable to study technical and natural sciences. Gender stereotypes that persist in society, family and school directly and indirectly influence women and, consequently, men's choices in their occupation.

The national project “*Promotion of gender equality in science*”, LYMOS, financed by ESF and national budget was implemented and the new edition of the Strategy of Women's and Men's Equal Opportunities in Science, was developed (2011-2012). Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania will take responsibility of implementation of this Strategy.

Aiming to create an empirical-informative background for the introduction of gender equality focused structural change in Lithuanian science institutions and, correspondingly, to contribute to the implementation of EU science policy priorities in the country, the FP7 project „*Institutional Transformation for Effecting Gender Equality in Research*“ piloted Gender Equality Plans to improve the career progression of women scientific researchers in STEM (www.integerproject.eu) during period 2011-2015 (Šidlauskienė, Butašova, 2014).

The empirical study „*Structural changes in Lithuanian science system: requirements, possibilities and challenges*“ has been designed and carried out under the project GEIRICA framework (www.sapgeric.eu2013.vu.lt/geirica).

On December 2014 the Minister of Science and Education passed the order „*Recommendations for ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in Lithuanian science and education institutions*“ which encourage institutions to implement structural change promoting gender equality.

The exclusive Periodical Issue “*Gender Studies and Research*” is published since 2005 in Lithuania. An interdisciplinary scientific journal, critically analyses the problems of today's sex and gender systems research perspectives.

The Government investment agency *Invest Lithuania* in 2014-2015 initiated the project *Create for Lithuania* aiming at increasing the interest of natural and engineering subjects, improving results for these subjects in schools and that way increase the number of entrants at these fields.

The Education Development Centre is participating in COMENIUS- *Lifelong Learning Programme project MARCH: Making science Real in sCHools* enhancing reflection and dissemination innovation in Science Education in secondary schools at a European level. 30 school teachers from STEM area probated abroad¹⁰.

Publically on media debates on minority of men working in kindergartens is rare; the arguments are: education and social science professional are perceived as unmanly, with low salary, because many want to earn high amounts of money instantly; low prestige of the professional, negative attitude of a man working with children, sometimes even an antagonist position of the society (if you are working

¹⁰ See <http://www.upc.smm.lt/projektai/pkt3/rezultatai/1men.php>;
<http://www.upc.smm.lt/projektai/pkt3/naujienos/stazuotes17.php>

with little children, you are not a normal man), that's is why some parents are against that, however the majority are satisfied and understand that a man working at a kindergarten is an advantage, not a drawback. The behaviour of women educators is very caring, cautious and men are pragmatic, dynamic, they are daring, enthusiastic and innovative and that is what children need. Civil servants from the Ministry of Science and Education motivate men and women to study claiming that: „to motivate men to work in pre-schooled institutions on exclusive conditions is an unseemly method because a pedagogue, firstly, has to be motivated to work with children, have the desire and abilities. Hence there are as many men working in kindergartens as there are men who have the calling for such a job“.

3. Transferability aspects

All three discussion papers comprehensively present implemented good practices mostly related to the practical projects, result-based, influencing attitudes and diminishing the gender stereotypes and gender bias.

The National education strategy for 2013-2022, passed in 2013 in Lithuania, aims to achieve a one-fifth of total pedagogues at schools to be men. The goal is to increase the number of men from 12.4 % (2011) to 20 % in 2022. According to the vice-minister G. K., the particular measure to achieve this goal does not exist and has not been discussed in the Ministry, „This should increase naturally...there are no means to control this artificially“¹¹. Therefore the Danish practical project approach to fund five different municipalities (increasing diversity in the day-care sector by testing new methods and ways to increase the diversity among the pedagogical staff) can be transferable for Lithuanian municipalities, but as always it is difficult to manage the funding from municipality budget and find initiatives to start such pilot projects. Some strict hygiene norm requirements in Lithuania can limit e.g. Forest Man kindergarten establishment. Nevertheless, the Danish good practice idea could be included into Municipalities Idea Bank for Gender Equality. There are different social mechanisms to attract man, for example, instead of the military service men would have the opportunity to choose social or pedagogical work.

The Dutch good practice example on the stimulation policy of the Dutch government to encourage STEM participation among girls and women is valuable as joint initiative of the national government, business community, trade unions, educational community and regional stakeholders. The general STEM stimulation policy laid out by the Dutch government and demonstrated globally political will of state is aimed at enforcing equal rights for women in all areas of society including education and the labour market. In the Dutch example this concerns activities and products over the years to address the entire chain of primary education to labour market participation. With reference to modern girl student-centred learning educational paradigm non-profit organisation VHTO, the Dutch National Expert Organisation on Girls/Women and Science/Technology designed teacher-centred mosaic architecture of content for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary education (the entire chain of primary education to labour market participation). Student-centred learning theory and practice are based on the constructivist learning theory that emphasises the learner's critical role in constructing meaning from girls **everyday life interests, new information and prior experience**. The proposed measures are not a new policy, but could be

¹¹ http://www.lrt.lt/naujienos/lietuvoje/2/24854/didins_vyru_skaiciu_mokyklose_bet_nezino_kaip

revised in student-oriented trend and considered as fully transferable, relevant practice to the Lithuanian context.

The Northern Irish good practices examples: STEM Charter, Success through STEM – STEM Strategy, STEM Employers Equality Network and other Networks and other engagement of the STEM organisations would be less effective in the changes of attitudes and balancing gender in labour market in the Lithuanian context.

Concluding, it should be stressed that on national level Lithuania needs more resources for the gender equality measures implementation, starting from the proactive obligatory awareness rising courses for civil servants and to practice postmodern values. On European level for the overcoming gender segregation in the labour market and education more innovative transnational projects are needed.

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