



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting in the ESIF and national budgets

Slovakia, 4-5 February 2020

Comments paper - Slovenia



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

This programme is implemented by the European Commission and shall contribute to the further development of an area where equality and the rights of persons, as enshrined in the Treaty, the Charter and international human rights conventions, are promoted and protected.

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Gender Mainstreaming and Budgeting in Slovenia

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Abstract

In 2019, the gender equality index in Slovenia accounted for 68.3 points, ranking Slovenia 11th among EU countries and above the EU average. Slovenia was the first transition country to establish an office promoting gender equality and mainstreaming. The principle of gender equality is continuously promoted through Slovenian legislation and policy framework. The most notable activities in the integration of the principle of gender equality in Slovenia have often been implemented on a project basis and co-funded by EU funds. In Slovenia, ESI funds play a key role in enhancing the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by targeting investments in services and infrastructure designed for assessing affordable, sustainable and high-quality social care, health care and long-term care. Furthermore, ESF funds actively support tailor-made social inclusion and activation programmes for the most vulnerable groups. These projects have greatly influenced the promotion of gender equality in Slovenia. However, since the gender gap is far from closed in the majority of the social domains, projects co-funded by ESI funds that directly focus on gender equality should be encouraged even more. Additionally, future programmes should more strongly encourage systematic and comprehensive collection of gender-disaggregated data. Additionally, it is of great importance to encourage frequent and comprehensive updates on the outcomes of projects executed through the EU funds. Only through such a rich data collection can the government and media actively promote gender equality.

1. Relevant Slovenian context

1.1 Gender mainstreaming: legislation and basic policy framework

The recognition of gender mainstreaming in Slovenia goes back to the early 1990s, when the Parliamentary Commission for Women's Policy was established to monitor the position of women and to be responsible for submitting proposals for the possible improvement of women's situations. At that time, a need for a female-oriented government body was recognised; therefore, the Women's Policy Office was established in 1992 (renamed the Office for Equal Opportunities in 2001; abolished in 2011). As such, Slovenia was the first transition country to establish an office promoting gender equality and mainstreaming. Additionally, a huge step

forward was made during Slovenian EU candidacy in the period 1996-2004. In 2002, gender mainstreaming was introduced into the Slovenian legislation through the Equal Opportunities between Women and Men Act. The Act obligates the government and ministries to take gender equality into consideration when planning, designing or implementing measures; each ministry also needs equal-opportunity coordinators. Gender mainstreaming was recognised as a horizontal strategy that needed to be implemented through all policy areas by the first national programme for gender equality in 2005 (EIGE, 2019b).

Today's main strategic governmental document, which defines the objectives, measures and key policy makers dealing with gender equality in the Republic of Slovenia, is the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The current National Programme for the period 2015-2020 builds on the experiences and the assessment of progress from the previous National Programme from 2005-2013. Similar to the previous programme, the current one defines general priority areas for improving the status of men and women and ensuring sustainable gender equality. It also identifies key challenges and issues for the 2015-2020 period. Compared to the previous programme, the current one includes fewer but more concrete objectives; the indicators included also measure the effectiveness of objectives, which are more precisely defined and more clearly related to the measures concerned. Based on past assessments, the programme is now more focused on underrepresented groups, such as women from ethnic minority groups, rural areas, lower socio-economic status, etc. The objectives and measures of the programme are implemented through two-year action plans (MDDSZEM, 2016b). The National Programme recognises that the area of gender equality is an interdisciplinary approach; therefore, various stakeholders were included when drafting the programme, including NGOs and other experts. However, in Slovenia, gender budgeting is still not in practice (EIGE, 2019b; OECD, 2017).

The Slovenian Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZEM) is responsible for promoting gender equality, specifically its Equal Opportunities Division. Among other tasks, the Division is responsible for drawing up the National Programmes, carrying out analyses and conducting awareness-raising campaigns. It also provides the ministries and local communities expert support in integration of gender equality perspectives into their policies¹. Furthermore, in 2015, the Expert Council for Gender Equality was established as an expert and advisory body of the MDDSZEM. The council monitors the implementation of the provisions of the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act and the objectives and measures of the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for

¹ <https://www.gov.si/en/state-authorities/ministries/ministry-of-labour-family-social-affairs-and-equal-opportunities/about-the-ministry-of-labour-family-social-affairs-and-equal-opportunities/equal-opportunities-division/>

Women and Men. It also assesses the situation and progress made in the achievement of equality between women and men in general (MDDSZEM, 2016a).

In 2016, Slovenia again established an independent body for gender equality promotion, the Advocate of the Principle of Equality, with relatively stronger autonomy. However, the institution still receives more attention to the other issues it promotes than gender equality activities (EIGE, 2019b).

In 2019, the MDDSZEM has accepted several amendments that improve the situation of families such as an extended paternity leave; amendments that improve the situation of families: (1) where mother is unemployed or has not been employed by all 12 months prior to claiming maternity benefits, (2) with children in need of special care, (3) of student families².

1.2 EU-funded projects for increasing gender equality in Slovenia: some good practices

In 2019, the gender equality index in Slovenia accounted for 68.3 points, ranking Slovenia 11th among EU countries and above the EU score. The Slovenian scores are above the EU scores in all domains except health and knowledge. During 2005-2017, the score increased by 7.5 points – a relatively average pace. The improvement was the highest in the area of power (with a 21.1-point increase). A huge challenge remains the time domain, where the score slightly decreased over time (EIGE, 2019a). Similarly, the OECD's SIGI index, measuring gender-based discrimination, places Slovenia eighth (among 120 countries), where the prevention of discrimination in families was indicated the most problematic (STA, 2019).

The most notable activities in the integration of the principle of gender equality in Slovenia have often been implemented on a project basis and co-funded by EU funds (European Parliament, 2015). Already during the Cohesion by 2013, the ESF funds had made significant impacts on the promotion of gender equality in Slovenia (ESS, n.d.). Gender equality was mainly promoted through the Operational Programme for Human Resources Development with the goal of achieving greater employment and social inclusion of particularly vulnerable population groups, including women. The objective was to include at least 55% of women in the programmes (MDDSZEM, 2016b).

From the beginning of 2007 to January 2012, 37,459 Slovenian women were included in the programmes of the Employment Service of Slovenia, co-funded by the ESF. The estimated value of all financial resources earmarked for employment measures for women was 83,226,600 EUR. 8,743 women were enrolled in the *Institutional Training Programme*, and 4,808,650 EUR were earmarked for this programme. 1,169 women were enrolled in the *Preparation for Certification of National Vocational Qualification*, and 1,052,100 EUR were allocated to the programme. 9,981 women have been enrolled in the highly successful *On-the-Job*

² <https://www.gov.si/novice/vlada-potrnila-vec-sprememb-ki-izboljsujejo-polozaj-druzin/>

Training Programme, which received 15,969,600 EUR throughout the period. The programme *Formal Education* included 1,845 women, and 1,568,250 EUR were earmarked for this programme. Programme *Znanje uresničuje sanje* (Eng. The Knowledge Realises a Dream Programme) included 3,193 women and received 1,915,800 EUR. The very successful *Self-Employment Subsidy Programme* included 5,365 women and received 24,142,500 EUR. The promotion of employment of older unemployed individuals included 352 women, the promotion of employment of young unemployed individuals included 120 women, the promotion of part-time employment included 948 women and the promotion of employment of long-term unemployed individuals included 644 women; 13,143,300 EUR were allocated to this programme. 4,764 women were enrolled in the *Hire Me* employment programme, to which 19,056,000 EUR were allocated. The *Opportunity for Me* programme included 42 women, the programme being earmarked for 315,000 EUR (ESS, n.d.).

Furthermore, an ongoing project for obtaining a *Family-Friendly Company Certificate* (co-funded by the ESF) assesses and advises employers about tools to use to better manage their human resources in the context of reconciling employees' work and family lives. Applicants are awarded a certificate for reducing discrimination in employment due to gender or family status, thus promoting the concept of equal opportunities (ESS, n.d.).

In Slovenia, ESI funds play a key role in enhancing the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights by targeting investments in services and infrastructure designed for assessing affordable, sustainable and high-quality social care, health care and long-term care. Furthermore, ESF funds actively support tailor-made social inclusion and activation programmes for the most vulnerable groups (European Commission, 2019).

Under the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the EU Cohesion Policy from 2014-2020 (co-funded by ESF), 15 multigenerational centres have opened their doors. To tackle the demographic challenges, these multigenerational centres support active learning in all stages of life, providing activities that foster social cohesion and inclusion and encourage integration of vulnerable groups. The centres offer activities to enhance parenting skills, supervised summer activities for children and occasional childcare, activities facilitating the reconciliation of professional and family life, cooking classes, etc. The total project funding accounts for 8,625,000 EUR; EU contribution accounts for 6,900,000 EUR³.

The ministry also actively calls for proposals for co-financing the social activation projects that are co-funded by the ESF within the Operational Programme for the Implementation of the European Cohesion policy 2014-2020, the 9th priority axis Social inclusion and poverty reduction, 9.1. priority investment Active inclusion,

³ <https://www.eu-skladi.si/en/cohesion-by-2020-1/success-stories-of-2014-2020/vecgeneracijski-centri-2>

including promoting equal opportunities, active participation and improving employability, 9.1.2. specific objective Empowering target groups to move closer to the labour market. Among the other domains, the ministry calls actively promote projects encouraging social activism of women from other cultural areas, such as Roma and migrant women. The calls also actively promote women employed in culturally based occupations.

Additionally, there are several current projects that indirectly promote gender equality and are co-funded by the ESIF, such as: (1) *Project Learning for Young Adults*, implemented already since 2000. The project is also meant for young adults who are socially excluded due to domestic violence, abuse, self-destructive behaviour, eating disorders, etc.; (2) *Incentives for Permanent Employment of Young People*; (3) *Project Model M*, which encourages young individuals to create their own businesses; (4) “*Le z drugimi smo*” (Eng. Only with Others We Are), which, among other aspects, promotes respectful communication, conflict resolution and zero tolerance of violence.

Besides the projects co-financed by the ESIF, there are two notable exemplifying good practices co-financed by the EU Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC) Programme 2014-2020: (1) In 2016-2017, a project called *Aktivni.vsi* (Eng. Active.All) was implemented. The project was aimed at promoting active fatherhood and eliminating gender stereotypes in the field of unpaid work. Among the other aspects, the project included implementation of a media campaign to promote active fatherhood, consisting of an online quiz, a documentary on the past and present roles of fathers and videos promoting active fatherhood. Moreover, a puppet show on gender stereotypes was performed, which also resulted in a written fairy tale to help address the issue in schools and kindergartens⁴. (2) The “*Odklikni.si*” application was a part of the CyberVAW project intended to stop the online harassment and violence against women and girls, implemented between July 2017 and December 2019⁵.

2. Transferability aspects

The mentioned projects have greatly influenced the promotion of gender equality in Slovenia. However, since the gender gap is far from closed in the majority of the social domains, projects *directly* focusing on gender equality should be encouraged even more – several Slovak ESIF projects seem to be good examples. Furthermore, even though Slovenian women earn relatively similar amounts of money as men, they still perform much more of the household work than men do (Istenič, 2019). Therefore, projects concerning reconciliation of family and working life, co-funded through ESIF, should be encouraged.

⁴ <http://aktivni-vsi.enakostspolov.si/>

⁵ <http://odklikni.enakostspolov.si/>

Similarly to Slovenia, in Slovakia, the share of EU funds used is still relatively low. One factor that might help lower the bureaucratic burdens are projects such as the Slovenian *Stop the Bureaucracy* (co-funded by ESF), which could provide better regulatory and business environments, especially through IT-supported solutions that shorten procedures, making them simpler and more transparent. The project is meant to work systematically for the prevention of administrative barriers, informing individuals and companies about innovations and news in the field of better regulation, good practices and user initiatives. Their portal is also intended for regulatory drafters and other employees in the state administration who encounter administrative procedures through their work. Similarly, the Slovenian government has launched a call for renewal and optimisation of the state administration websites (co-funded by ESF).

Similarly to the projects performed in the Czech Republic, the projects that estimate the impact of ESIF programmes on the equality of men and women are highly encouraged in Slovenia. Such projects not only help to assess the impact of ESIF funds on gender equality promotion but also tackle those domains of gender (in)equalities that need to be promoted emphatically in the future, especially by collecting qualitative data through interviews with important stakeholders and target groups, which seems to be a very promising methodological framework. Such data would certainly be invaluable for Slovenian researchers in the field as well as state administration and potential project applicants.

3. Conclusions

There is a need to collect gender-disaggregated data, both qualitative and quantitative, more systematically and comprehensively. Only through systematically collected data can the government and media actively promote gender equality. Therefore, future programmes should more strongly encourage systematic and comprehensive collection of gender-disaggregated data. Further, it is of great importance to focus on data collection from domains in which gender differences are still very large. In Slovenia, for example, this concerns differences in the household work performed by women and men. Differences in the household and care work performed are an important domain in gender equality promotion; however, the data about the time used for various activities (i.e. time use surveys) are still not systematically and frequently collected and published in the majority of EU countries, including Slovenia. Only with such data at hand can the government, media and general public fully understand the problem of gender equality in society and the importance of its promotion. With this in mind, additionally, it is of great importance to encourage frequent and comprehensive updates on the outcomes of projects executed through the ESI funds, possibly also through video clips, applications, quizzes, etc. to reach the general public, especially the young.

Next, ESIF funds should be focused more on working against gender stereotypes and not predominantly on gender differences in the labour market. Furthermore, to promote as many applications for ESIF projects as possible, it is important to reduce

bureaucratic requirements for project proposals and simplify procedures. In relation to this, it would be valuable to regularly perform trainings for potential applicants of ESIF projects.

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