



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Women and the Media

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Gender equality in Croatian media sector

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1. Relevant country context

First attempts to regulate gender equality in Croatia date to socialist Yugoslavia, when large progress was made with inclusion of women in the labour market and politics. The development of gender equality in Croatia since independence could be divided in two phases: nationalist or statehood in the 1990s (when the accepted female roles were the ones of a mother, caregiver or victim) and the integration or Europeanisation discourse in 2000s (when legal and institutional progress has been made, but not followed by the transformation in cultural norms).¹ Institutionalisation of gender equality policies started in 2000s, with the process of accession of Croatia to EU. The concept of gender equality was introduced into Constitution after 2000. In this period the Parliamentary Commission for Gender Equality and the Committee for Gender Equality of Croatian Parliament were established. National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality 2001-2005 was a starting point in which government officials and NGO groups cooperated. This served as a ground for the first Gender Equality Act adopted in 2003, which aimed to harmonise the legal system with EU *acquis communautaire*. Law on Fight against Discrimination was put in force in 2009 and defined discrimination as unequal treatment based on belonging to certain social groups, e.g. gender. Ombudsperson for Gender Equality (in the following text, Ombudsperson) monitors gender equality rights since 2003. After 2003, the Government's Office for Gender Equality was created. In 2008, the newest Gender Equality Act was adopted, in accordance with EU directives for gender equality. National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015 was accepted in 2011. National Plan for Fight against Discrimination 2008-2013 had a specific goal to fight against discrimination through media, but gender equality was not defined as a specific goal of the Plan. Sexual harassment is defined in the Article 156 of the Penal Law (2017).

1.1. Relevant policies regarding gender equality in media

Gender equality in media in Croatia is regulated by Law on Gender Equality (2008), Law on Electronic Media (2013) and Law on Croatian Public Television (2012). Article 9 of the Law on Electronic Media defines media sector as responsible for promoting gender equality and Fund for Pluralism and Diversity at the Agency for Electronic Media (in the following text, the Agency) as responsible for financial support of media content which promotes gender equality. National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015 proposes seven measures for introducing gender sensitive policies in the media.² Croatian public television is regulated the most in terms of gender equality policies. It cooperates with Ombudsperson in holding training programmes in gender equality in the media for its employees, monitors the gender representation in its

¹ Bijelić, 2006, in Popović, H., & Šipić, J. (2013). Women and Elections: Between the 'Voice' of the Media and the 'Voice' of Political Actors. In Širenje područja političkog: novi pogledi na političku participaciju žena. Centar za ženske studije, p. 197.

² Croatian Parliament (2011) National Policy for Gender Equality for the Period 2011-2015, Zagreb: Government of the Republic of Croatia, Office for Gender Equality, p. 68

employment structure and annually reports its status to Government Office for Gender Equality. Croatian public television also promotes gender equality in media indirectly, by transferring 3% from its licence fees to the Fund for pluralism and diversity which is dedicated to producing content that promotes human rights, minority and gender issues. Law on Gender Equality (2008) obliges media to adopt self-regulatory documents regarding gender equality, to promote gender equality through their programmes and bans offensive, degrading or humiliating representation based on sex and sexual orientation. Media is defined as a priority topic in the National Plan for Fight Against Discrimination 2017-2022, and the fight against discrimination in media is defined as a fight against hate speech, stereotypical portrayal of minority social groups and their underrepresentation in media. The Plan specifies two main goals: minimising stereotypical representation of minority groups and greater inclusion of minorities in media production.

1.2. Important institutions and stakeholders

1.2.1. Ombudsperson for Gender Equality

The Ombudsperson is responsible for monitoring gender representation, reporting upon citizen complaints, publicly addressing issues of sexism in media, organising educational workshops in the media sector, monitoring self-regulation acts of media, involvement in development of media policy and reporting on the issue of gender equality to Croatian Parliament and citizens. The 2017 report concludes that there has been no progress in media representation of women, with persisting stereotypical portrayal. However, the change is noted in citizen's awareness of the issue, as more citizens report complaints on the sexist portrayals of women in media.

1.2.2. Government Office for Gender Equality

National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015 addressed the issue of gender equality in the media by promoting gender sensitive language in public, promotion of employment of women in information and communication sector, promotion of sensitiveness to gender stereotypes through media literacy, informing citizens about gender equality policies and issues through public media, funding gender sensitive programmes in media, monitoring gender equality in media, and training for media professionals. Government Office for Gender Equality is an institution responsible for monitoring of the implementation of these measures. The policy report states that most of the proposed measures were implemented and lists the relevant outcomes.³

1.2.3. Agency for Electronic Media

The Agency has a role of ensuring media pluralism and diversity, including content diversity and equal gender representation. To promote such media content, it assigns financial subsidies to media through its Fund for media pluralism and diversity (Croatian public television transfers 3% from its licence fees to the Fund). The Agency also monitors and sanctions media according to the Law on Electronic Media and Law on Croatian Public Television collects citizen complaints on media content and promotes media literacy (which includes issue of gender equality in media).

1.2.4. Ministry of Culture

Department for media was established in 2013 at the Ministry of Culture and aimed to develop a new media strategy to improve the position of media and journalists. In the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture 2019-2021, one of the emphasised goals

³<https://ravnopravnost.gov.hr/UserDocImages//dokumenti/Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87a%20URS//Izvje%C5%A1%C4%87e%20o%20provedbi%20Nacionalne%20politike%20za%20ravnopravnost%20spolova%202011.-%202015.%20%20u%20razdoblju%20od%202014.%20do%202015.pdf>

is media and audio-visual sector development. The Plan does not mention gender equality, but only puts a general goal of ensuring media pluralism through Fund for Pluralism and Diversity.

1.2.5. Civil society sector, professional associations and academia

Civil society had substantial impact in advocating gender equality policies. Since 1996, NGO B.a.b.e. have led the programme “Women and media”, through which they monitored media texts and regulation, promoted media literacy, trained media professionals and produced their own media content by which they advocated gender equality. Centre for Women Studies has dealt with feminist critique of media through its education programmes. Centre for Education, Counselling and Research has been dealing more intensively with issues of women in media since late 2000s, especially by publishing its own online feminist media outlet. NGO groups and civil society initiatives were most important for establishing online-based media about gender equality or women’s rights. Croatian Journalism Association in its Journalism Code of Ethics prohibits stereotypical portrayals based on gender and reporting that promotes discrimination. The Council of Honour reacts to violation of these codes through public reports. Most of the university communication and journalism education programmes deal with gender issues as a part of addressing diversity in media. There are a few university or institute centres addressing gender equality issues: Centre for Youth and Gender Studies at the Institute for Social Research in Zagreb, Centre for Ethnicity, Citizenship and Migration Studies at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, Centre for Women Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Rijeka. Croatian Sociological Association has a section “Women and Society” and Centre for Media and Communication Research at the Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb participated in the project “Women and the Media in the European Union” by EIGE.

1.3. Examples of good practice in fighting gender inequalities in media

The activities of the Agency for Electronic Media in terms of promoting gender equality could be emphasised as a good practice. However, there has been little monitoring of successfulness of such measures to promotion of gender equality. In 2014, the Agency implemented Declaration of Mediterranean Network of Regulatory Agencies for promoting gender equality in media and fight against gender stereotypes. The Agency began monitoring gender representation in news television programmes and advertising in 2014 and 2015. In 2017, the Government Office for Gender Equality in cooperation with the Agency announced campaign of promoting and representation of female sport in media. In cooperation with UNICEF and other partners it developed a project of media literacy, consisting of media campaigns, events and education workshops. The media literacy project among other things promotes education about gender representation and recognition of gender stereotypes in media.⁴

Ministry of Culture established a programme of funding non-profit media which lasted 2013-2016. This programme had a positive impact on promoting alternative women’s media by allocating funds to media that represent minority social groups or issues. However, this programme did not pass without public criticism and was abruptly closed in 2016 after new government led by the conservative coalition took power.

In 2017, the Ombudsperson presented the EU funded project “Towards effective protection: changes in the system of fighting against gender violence”. The project

⁴ <https://www.medijskapismenost.hr/>

aims to build cooperation with media outlets and representatives, monitor portrayal of gender violence in media and as a result provide education for media sector and journalists and develop a Media Code, which would serve as a guideline for ethical reporting and representation of gender violence in media. The Media Code is announced to be developed in cooperation with Croatian Journalism Association.

1.4. Main challenges and weaknesses in the media sector

1.4.1. Feminisation of the precarious and insecure profession

The share of women in media sector is higher in Eastern European countries, but this is more often a sign of less secure, less prestigious and poorly paid and precarious profession.⁵ In fact, journalism in Croatia is a highly precarious profession which went through the process of feminisation. More than half of journalists in Croatia are female (53,9%).⁶ Report on the position in labour market of graduated students of journalism demonstrates the precarity of the profession. About one quarter of graduated journalists have a permanent work contract (26,14%), while 42,86% have a temporary work contract and 24,62% work with various freelance, part-time, apprentice and informal contracts.⁷ More than half of the graduated students (53,14%) are paid a monthly wage of 674 euro and less, less than the country average wage.⁸ Most graduated students in journalism are female (in 2012, 68,5% female and 31,5% male graduates).⁹ In news and information programmes in Croatian televisions, women outnumber men as reporters and journalists.¹⁰ Male journalists are however more represented as members of Croatian Journalism Association (57%).¹¹ There is a consistent gender pay gap in information and communication sector. In 2016, women earned 84,9% of their male colleague's wage for the same work position.¹² However, the data on wages from the media sector is difficult to measure due to the precarious nature of the profession.

1.4.2. Horizontal and sectorial segregation

Summary of EIGE findings from Croatia's national survey support the thesis about hierarchical segregation in media industries.¹³ Although women represent majority in newsrooms (52%), there are no women in the highest decision-making levels within the organisation, which covers all strategic decisions related to the organisation. Besides hierarchical segregation, results show sectoral or vertical segregation in media organisational structure. Women prevail in those areas that are perceived as an extension of their domestic responsibilities like creative, communication and HR departments, sales and public relations, fiction programmes, children's programme, education and culture or lifestyle and entertainment programme.

⁵ EIGE, 2013, Advancing gender equality in decision-making in media organisations.

⁶ Peruško, Z., Čuvalo, A., & Vozab, D., 2016. Journalists in Croatia

⁷ Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, internal report, 2016.

⁸ Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb, internal report, 2016.

⁹ Croatian Bureau of Statistics, <https://www.dzs.hr/>

¹⁰ Car, V., Leaković, K., Stević, A., & Stipović, J., 2017. Women and Men in Television News—The Unequal Voices. *Medijska istraživanja*, 23(1), 73-10

¹¹ Car, V., & Bukvić, M., 2016. Croatia: Journalism—still a popular profession, and increasingly female. In *Requirements for Modern Journalism Education—The Perspective of Students in South East Europe*. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung.

¹² Information and communication sector in Croatia includes: publishing, film, video and audio production, broadcasting, telecommunication, IT and computer programming (Croatian Bureau of Statistics).

¹³ EIGE, 2013.

1.4.3. Regulation in media outlets

EIGE study shows that the internal regulation in Croatian media organisations is very weak or only started to be developed. Policies regarding gender are mostly incorporated in general work policies and are treated by departments like HR, not by specialised equality departments. If the policies and measures exist, they mostly aim at protection of women from harassment. Croatian public television was at the time of analysis the most progressive organisation among analysed and the only one that adopted gender equality policy. Besides this policy, public television addresses gender equality through dignity at work policy, maternity leave policy and through equality awareness training for its employees.

1.4.4. Gender stereotypes in media

Research consistently shows underrepresentation of women in media. Early content analysis research in 1990s demonstrates underrepresentation of women in media, especially in news, political, economy and business sections, while they appear more frequently in lifestyle and entertainment sections and programmes.¹⁴ Although progressive policies and regulation of gender equality in media were implemented after 2000, research shows the continuation of stereotypical representation in traditional and new media. Recent analysis of Croatian newspapers found that women are underrepresented but are more often given the primary role in the entertainment sections and are significantly portrayed in roles of motherhood, family life and sexuality.¹⁵ Analysis of gender representation in news and information programmes at the major national television channels showed that women and men are equally represented as editors of news programmes, that women are more often authors of news reports, stories and headlines, but men are more visible as news anchors, reporters, main protagonists of news stories and information sources.¹⁶

2. Policy debate and developments

2.1. Stalled development

After Croatia became the EU member in 2013, the progress in ensuring gender equality has been stalled, as this issue also became politically contentious. After 2015, when national policy for gender equality was no longer in effect, the new National Policy for Gender Equality 2017-2020 was announced, but it has still not been enacted. In the National Plan for Fight Against Discrimination 2017-2022 fight against discrimination based on gender is not defined as a priority topic but is emphasised as a dimension in other topics. In 2018, Croatian Parliament finally ratified Istanbul Convention, after facing a strong opposition from the conservative and religious political parties and civil society. The media sector is expecting Ministry of Culture to develop the Media Strategy, which has been announced in 2016, but there is still no clear information on when the proposal could be developed. The Media Department of the Ministry of Culture during the social-democratic coalition government developed a draft of the proposal for the media strategy in 2015, which did not specifically address gender inequality in media.¹⁷ Ministry of Culture is also designated to redistribute funds for community media from the European Social Fund, which is seen

¹⁴ List of studies is available in Vozab, D., & Zember, A., 2016. Croatia: Does equality in organisation lead to equality in content?. In *Gender Equality and the Media: A Challenge for Europe*. Routledge.

¹⁵ Majstorović, D., & Vilović, G. 2018. The Presence and Depiction of Women on the Front Pages of Croatian Daily Newspapers: In the Service of Promoting Gender Stereotypes?. *Media Studies*, 8(16).

¹⁶ Car et al., 2017.

¹⁷ https://www.hnd.hr/uploads/files/nacrt_prijedloga_medijske_politike_republike_hrvatske.pdf

as a chance for promotion of media which deal with gender equality. The call for funds distribution is after a long pause now open for public consultation. In the education sector, the reform has been announced through which the programme of civic literacy would be included in public schools, including media literacy and human rights education (which includes gender equality). However, such programme was carried out only experimentally in certain schools. In 2018, the campaign #BreakTheSilence emerged, problematising the mistreatment of women in Croatian hospitals in reproductive health, especially focusing on unnecessary painful procedures in hospitals during childbirth and miscarriage.

2.2. Retrograde tendencies

In 2010s in Croatia the neoconservative religious movement gained greater political influence. The movement consists out of an umbrella of civil society groups connected with fractions of Catholic Church in Croatia, advocating stricter regulation of abortion, enforcing traditional gender norms and promoting heterosexual relationships. In its wide reaching political initiatives, the movement has a heavy media campaign, which advocates an agenda opposing gender equality. The main postulate of the agenda is that through international pressures a “gender ideology” is promoted, which jeopardises traditional gender roles and Catholic values of Croatian society.¹⁸ The movement is also active in the media sector, with establishment of the connected media outlets and public campaigns.

3. Transferability aspects from the host country, conclusions and recommendations

The Croatian and French contexts differ strongly in the level of openness to accepting gender equality policies and measures. While French Ministries are strong actors in combat against sexism and gender inequality, in Croatia this responsibility is being transferred to weaker institutions, such as the Ombudsperson and the Agency for Electronic Media. Croatia therefore lacks a stronger institutional cooperation in ensuring gender equality, together with professional media and journalism associations. French Ministry of Culture and Communication provides data about position of women and wages in the audio-visual sector, which is a measure Croatian Ministry of Culture could undertake. Additionally, in the Croatian context, Ministry of Culture addresses the media sector in its latest Plan only sporadically and transfers the responsibility of promoting media pluralism to the Agency. Following the host country case, Ministry of Culture should define its role in promoting media pluralism in a more active and detailed way and address the promotion of gender equality in cultural and media sector.

In Croatia, gender equality in media is mostly hidden under media pluralism measures, and therefore it is difficult to measure successfulness of such measures in terms of promoting gender equality. The Agency and Ombudsperson monitor media through content analysis of media programmes. However, there is no systematic monitoring of the employment structure, wages and working conditions in media institutions and no studies of sexual harassment and mobbing in the media sector.

¹⁸ Although recent representative survey commissioned after parliamentary elections in 2016 by Faculty of Political Science in Zagreb shows that the advancement of women rights is accepted among Croatian citizens: 51,9% agree strongly that this should be a priority issue of the future Government and 30,3% somewhat agree of advancement of women's rights should be a priority political issue.

Systematic monitoring of wages and position of women in the media sector labour market would bring a clearer picture of inequalities.

Other than these recommendations, there is a strong need for:

- Development of the National Policy for Gender Equality by the Government Office for Gender Equality;
- Development of the strategic document for the media sector by the Ministry of Culture;
- Monitoring and ensuring adoption and implementation of internal gender equality policies in media.