

The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Tackling the gender pay gap

Belgium, 20-21 October 2016

Comments Paper - Slovakia



The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

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.

For more information see: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/grants1/programmes-2014-2020/rec/index_en.htm

The Gender Pay Gap in Slovakia

Silvia Porubánová

Institute for Labour and Family Research

1. Country context

The Gender Pay Gap (GPG) represents the difference in the average hourly wage of men and women, expressed as percentage. Historical gender stereotypes associated men with the dominant position, which was also reflected in earning potential. But economic independence is a necessary condition for the ability of women to have control over their own lives and make decisions freely.

The Slovak Republic addresses gender equality in its domestic legislation rather effectively. Equality between men and women is enshrined in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic and further elaborated in the country's specific legislation. The Anti-Discrimination Act is specifically relevant as it prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender, while compliance with the principle of equal treatment is not fulfilled merely by refraining from discriminatory practices, it equally emphasises prevention of discrimination and the need for adoption of preventive measures.

The latest amendment of the Act extended the possibility of the adoption of affirmative action on grounds of sex/gender for all public administration bodies and legal entities. Similarly, the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sex/gender and the obligation of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value for men and women are enshrined in the Labour Code, as well as in other relevant legal acts.

In any case, Slovakia is a country with significant differences between men and women in the labour market which remained stable over time. The employment rate of women is persistently lower than that of men (60.3 % vs. 70 % in 2015, Eurostat). The gender pay gap – the overall difference in income between men and women – remains at 20.5 % in Slovakia which is significantly above the EU average.

Gender inequalities in the work process as well as in other areas are caused by a number of factors. Among the most prominent ones are the traditional division of gender roles, low awareness of one's rights and gender-based inequalities, absence of real affirmative action and, last but not least, the absence of services for better work-life balance support.

Although the gender pay gap persists in Slovakia at about 20 %, the gap between average salaries received by men and women in Slovakia has narrowed over the past decade by 7 %. This means that women in Slovakia need to work more than two months more on average to receive the same annual salary as their male counterparts. The recent reduction in the salary gap is a consequence of the economic crisis and a general drop in salaries.

The largest gap is found among university graduates with top senior posts; the smallest difference is between men and women who have lower salaries. Women make up to 80 % of the people employed in social work, education and health care. However, when it comes to the private sector (where salaries are higher), women

represent only 42 % of all employees. (The majority of the EU countries recorded a higher gender pay gap in the private sector than in the public sector. This might be due to the fact that within the public sector, in most countries, employees are protected by collective pay agreements and other similar contracts establishing wage levels).

Women in Slovakia are often faced with horizontal and vertical segregation. In fact, the fields of healthcare, social services and education tend to be dominated by women, over 4/5 of the workforce in these sectors consists of women and it is 3/5 for the public policy sector. The greatest differences can be found among entrepreneurs where the ratio for women and men is 1:3.

Horizontal segregation of the labour market in Slovakia is very pronounced and “female” jobs are less valued. GPG occurs not only between sectors, but also within sectors. The increase of the educational level does not automatically mean that women get better positions and better pay.

Gender-based segregation closely relates to lower average salaries for women since the gender pay gap remains pervasive. Women are more likely to be in a low-income group as their hourly wages do not even reach 2/3 of the median hourly wage of the Slovak economy. Despite good educational background (the percentage of women with degrees is higher compared to men), women do not earn comparable sums since education in “typically women fields” is seen as less valued.

2. Policy debate

An important positive development in Slovakia is the publication of data on gender inequalities (including the GPG) by the Statistical Office and the related launch of its website with up-to-date information on gender equality issues. This data reveals inequalities and discrimination in both public and private life.

The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MOLSAF) organises the competition “Family, Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities Friendly Employer”.

MOLSAF also established in the framework of its Department of Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities a sub-department for the horizontal priority “Equal opportunities” in the Structural Funds and in the Cohesion Fund. Active labour market measures include also support of employees with low wages.

The MOLSAF gender equality department has already launched a project called “Family and Work” which is part of the long-term objective of the EU operational programme “Employment and Social Inclusion”. It targets women with small children, who are the most underprivileged group on the labour market. In particular, it tries to provide flexible employment for women who are at home with small children.

Since 2012, this department prepares the yearly Gender Pay Day. Activities include: distribution of information on the gender pay gap, organisation of events and meetings with NGO’s, government representatives and experts.

In terms of vertical segregation, an extensive awareness raising campaign on the gender pay gap, its pervasiveness and harmful effects, has been launched in 2014

within the framework of the national project 'Institute for Gender Equality'. The campaign, titled 'When I Grow Up' (<http://kedvyrastiem.sk/>), has been received very well and followed by an intense public discussion on gender disparities and their impact on the future and ambitions of women and men in the labour market and in the private sector.

3. Transferability aspects

Reducing the gender pay gap is an important topic on the European and national political agenda. The causes of the GPG are multiple. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on different aspects such as equality of opportunities in the labour market and reconciliation of work, family and private life. It is not possible to achieve positive change without broader interventions, from legislative changes to the development of family and gender policies to social campaigns.

Furthermore we need more reliable statistical indicators enabling a more nuanced access to the analysis of the GPG, and unification and better definition of indicators that would allow for a reliable comparison in time and further research. The issue is that Slovakia has no special institution for the regular monitoring or the research and analysis of gender equality.

However, Belgium might be considered to provide a more positive example. The EU Member States have rather diverse approaches when it comes to tackling the gender pay gap. In Slovakia, the GPG has a low profile both in the public debate and on the policy agenda.

The Belgian practice is very interesting for post socialistic countries, including Slovakia, in particular the Gender Pay Gap Law, Royal Decree of 25/4/2014, Ministerial Decree of 25/4/2014 which requires the employers to make a detailed analysis of the remuneration structure in the company every two years, gender neutral remuneration policy in companies, social elections every 4 years, social balance sheet and pay gap reports.

Unfortunately, it seems that the transfer of most of the Belgian practices to Slovakia would be not possible. Determination of pay is often at the centre of collective bargaining systems as it is in Belgium. The gender pay gap, the distribution of pay and the general level of pay are the result of the system of collective relations and its inherent characteristics. Closing the pay gaps cannot be effective without the strong involvement of the social partners, unions and employers.

4. Recommendations

In view of the Belgian example and experience it became absolutely clear that the holistic strategy is needed. Firstly, the political will is missing across the whole political spectrum. Social dialogue and the position of Trade Unions are not strong in this area, collective negotiations are usually very formal and not flexible.

Further recommendations suggest developing:

- Policies directed at the availability and dissemination of information among relevant actors (such as employees and employers);

- Policies to develop or strengthen the infrastructure with respect to equal pay;
- Strategies on gender equality and equal pay;
- Policies directed towards a more integrated system of wage-setting;
- Policies to develop legal measures enforcing equal pay;
- Equal Pay Days, Equality labels, charters and awards;
- Audits to reduce the gender pay gap;
- Specific legislation and collective agreements;
- Overvaluing of women's work and skills;
- More women in senior and leadership positions;
- Approaches promoted by governments, the social partners and companies to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions;
- Public and private sectors need to work in partnership to make further, sustainable progress in this area;
- Calls for political will on the part of governments;
- Country comparisons (correlation between national pay gaps and female employment rates);
- More comprehensive empirical analysis of the roots on gender disparities in job opportunities;
- Support action by the Member States;
- Promoting networking between all stakeholders;
- Exchanges of experience and good practices at European level.

And last but not least: the focus should be on the value of work for women and men. The low pay (in the Slovak context) is characteristic not only for the sectors where women are overrepresented. The holistic perspective is necessary for visible progress in tackling the gender pay gap.

The Slovak Presidency continues the work and negotiations that have started during the preceding Presidencies and will encourage discussions, actions and the exchange of good practise related to gender equality and gender mainstreaming.

References

Addressing the gender pay gap: Government and social partner actions-Slovakia online [http:// www.eurofound.europa.eu](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu)

Boll,Ch, Leppin,J.,Rossen A.,Wolf A. *Magnitude and impact factors of the gender pay gap in EU countries* online: http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_pay_gap/2016_factors

Eurostat 2016, online database [http:// ec.europa.eu/eurostat](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat)

Gender pay gap remains a problem online [http:// www.spectator.sk](http://www.spectator.sk)

Gender equality at the heart of decent work, International Labour Office, Geneva, 2009

[http:// www.gender.gov.sk](http://www.gender.gov.sk)

National Strategy For Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic 2014-2019, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic October 2014

National Action Plan For Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic 2014-2019, Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic October 2014

Tackling the gender pay gap in the European Union, European Union, 2014