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Overcoming gender inequalities and sexism through policies, civil society initiatives, education and research

Brigitte Hipfl
Klagenfurt University

1. National Context

The main legal basis for Austria's commitment to implement gender mainstreaming is the Federal Constitution, which contains the principle of non-discrimination and equality of men and women as a mandatory requirement. Since 1979, the Equal Treatment Act has regulated equal treatment of women and men at work in private enterprises. In line with EU legislation, the Act was extended to include the discrimination grounds of ethnicity, religion or beliefs, age and sexual orientation in 2004. Selective measures for improving the income transparency between women and men were included in 2011. The Federal Equal Treatment Act applies to all persons employed with federal authorities or applying for employment or training with federal authorities.

In 2009, gender budgeting, as the financial instrument of gender mainstreaming, was included in the Austrian Constitution. With the Federal Budget Law of 2013, each federal ministry and supreme state organ has to determine gender equality outcomes for every societal aspect of its activities. However, when it comes to media organisations, only the public broadcasting service, ORF has implemented policies and monitoring mechanisms to promote gender equality and gender budgeting.

1.1. Gender (in)equalities in media production

The percentage of female journalists in Austria is around 40 %, with a tendency towards a more equal distribution of female and male journalists in Austria in the younger cohorts (40-50 years and younger) compared to older journalists¹. Vertical or hierarchical segregation is mostly evident in the proportion of women in top management positions – 13 % chief executive officers and about 30 % leading positions in journalism in Austria in 2013² – and in the most insecure positions, like free-lance journalists where the percentage of women (37 %) is higher than the percentage of men (25 %)³. We can see positive effects when an equal opportunities plan has been implemented as it is the case for the Austrian public broadcasting service, ORF. In 2018, the proportion of women in central management positions has

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- ¹ Andy Kaltenbrunner, Matthias Karmasin & Daniela Kraus (eds.) (2008). *Der Journalisten-Report 2*. Wien: Facultas WUV; Roman Hummel, Susanne Kirchhoff & Dimitri Prandner (2013); *Medienkarrieren im Umbruch*. Projektbericht Salzburg, https://www.uni-salzburg.at/fileadmin/multimedia/Kommunikationswissenschaft/documents/Aktuelles/PR/MedienkarrierenUmbruch_2013.pdf; Global Media Monitoring Project, National Report, Austria (2015); Marie-Isabell Lohmann & Josef Seethaler (2016). *Journalists in Austria*. Country Report der World of Journalists Study. https://epub.ub.uni-muenchen.de/30966/1/Country_report_Austria.pdf
- ² European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) (2013). *Women and the Media – Advancing gender equality in decision making in media organisations*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union
- ³ Roman Hummel, Susanne Kirchhoff & Dimitri Prandner (2013). *Medienkarrieren im Umbruch*. Projektbericht Salzburg, https://www.uni-salzburg.at/fileadmin/multimedia/Kommunikationswissenschaft/documents/Aktuelles/PR/MedienkarrierenUmbruch_2013.pdf

increased to 40 %, although for senior department heads the percentage of women is still just under 20 percent⁴. When it comes to the different topics covered in journalism (horizontal segregation), sport is predominantly covered by male journalists, while service and lifestyle, health, education and science are covered more often by female journalists.⁵ Several associations and groups of women journalists at national and regional levels are involved in networking, organising seminars, conferences, discussions, trainings, mentoring, and yearly awards, as, for example, the “Female Journalist Award” and the “Young Female Journalist Award” by Women’s Media Network⁶.

In the creative industries like film, music and video games, gender bias and gender inequalities are even stronger than in journalism. The first *Austrian Film Gender Report* (2018) on Austrian film industry shows that the lower the position in the hierarchy, the more women are to be found. For example, the percentage of female film directors is only 12 %. There is also an obvious gender pay gap since, in almost all creative positions, the honorarium paid to women is lower than the one paid to men.⁷ In 2017, the Austrian Film Institute implemented a “Gender Incentive System” to increase the employment of female filmmakers⁸. The women and film network, *FC Gloria* offers mentoring for women in the film industry, developed a database of women working in the film industry, and has organised for the first time the FC Gloria Film Prizes in 2018⁹.

In the music industry, the situation is much the same. The creative areas and executive decision-making is male dominated. Initiatives like *Ladyfeste* (a festival which creates an inclusive, participatory space of intervention), archives that document female, feminist, and queer musicians, as well as workshops like *The Pink Noise Girl Rock Camp*, are attempts to motivate and empower girls and women to get involved in producing music¹⁰.

1.2. Representation of women in the media, gender stereotypes and sexism in the media

In general, the tendency of mass media to push women into symbolic annihilation, or stereotype and trivialise them, is still to be acknowledged. We also need to be aware of the ambivalence of visibility of women in the media, since visibility often means stereotypical media presence¹¹. As the latest data from the Global Media Monitoring Project (2015) reveals, exploring the visibility and voice of women in Austrian news media illustrates that women remain the focus of news in traditional media in 21 % of the cases, and in the Internet the figure is 16 %. As the evidence shows, in 2005 and 2010 there was a tendency for women “who make the news” to appear in lower profile sections of the news.¹²

The use of gender stereotyping and sexism in advertising is still very popular under social conditions of attention economy, where attention has become a key commodity.

⁴ ORF Gleichstellungsplan 2018-2019. Wien: 2018

⁵ Susanne Keil & Johanna Dorer (forthcoming). „Medienproduktion: Journalismus und Geschlecht“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

⁶ <http://www.frauennetzwerk.at/ueber-uns/>

⁷ Eva Flicker & Lena Lisa Vogelmann (2018). *Österreichischer Film Gender Report 2012-2016*. Wien

⁸ Austrian Film Institute. <https://equality.filminstitut.at/en/what-happened-so-far/>

⁹ FC Gloria. Frauen Vernetzung Film. <http://www.fc-gloria.at/>

¹⁰ Rosa Reitsamer (forthcoming). Feministische Veranstaltungs-Öffentlichkeiten. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer; <https://girlsrock.at/>

¹¹ Martina Thiele (forthcoming). „Geschlechterstereotype und Geschlechterrollen“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

¹² Global Media Monitoring Project, National Report, Austria (2015)

A new tendency is toward humorous advertisement, which combines irony and humour with sexism, thus making the advertisements ambivalent in the sense that they are both, sexist and ironic deconstructions of sexism. Research by Förster and Brantner (2016) shows that humour has the potential of “masking the offence” for recipients¹³. Current forms of gender-stereotypes in advertising are also (re)produced by the increase of gender-marketing, that is, by specifically addressing women based on what is perceived as being typical for them, as, for example, foremost is emotionality. However, there are also approaches like “femvertising” as practiced in advertisements of *Dove* skin products, claiming to strengthen female self-confidence by using models that do not fit dominant slim body ideals, while at the same time practicing so-called “commodity feminism” (Holtz-Bacha forthcoming)¹⁴.

As a consequence of the overall dominance of gender stereotyping in advertisements, Austria also has its “Advertising Council”, a self-regulating institution within the media and advertising industry that developed a code of ethics, and is supported by an “Anti-Sexism Advisory Board”.¹⁵ The “Austrian Advertising Council” is reactive, responding to complaints and giving recommendations that can result in the request for the termination of an advertising campaign. In 2017, the “Austrian Advertising Council” received 357 complaints. Initiated by Austrian Women’s Minister, the website of the “Austrian Advertising Council” also includes the “Retouching Barometer”, a tool that allows visitors to the website to check the percentage in which image processing programs have contributed to the emergence of “perfect” slim and beautiful bodies. This tool is supposed to be used, in particular, by adolescents for consciousness-raising. In addition, there are three operating “Advertising Watch Groups” (in Vienna, Graz, and Salzburg), organised by city administrators and comprising of experts in media and communication studies, gender studies, violence protection organisations, anti-discrimination institutions, consumer and health institutions, all of whom monitor advertisements, develop prevention measures and contact enterprises in case the classification of an advertisement is perceived as sexist.

The proliferation of stereotypical images of female beauty is to be found in various media – from film, reality TV, casting shows, social media to apps. In the case of children’s television, animation films are populated by hyper-sexualised female figures, which are, in most cases, less active, and situated in less responsible positions compared to their male figures. There are also films produced for girls, comprising of strong female protagonists, who are constructed as ideal figures (including exaggerated body proportions like wasp waists)¹⁶. Reality TV shows, TV casting shows, and “beauty apps” (which are aesthetic self-tracking and modifying devices) explicitly focus on what is considered beautiful, and suggest that continuous work, moderation, and optimisation of one’s own body (self-technologies) will result in social recognition, as well as social and material success. Working on one’s body and trying to improve one’s beauty has to be understood in its relation to the current neoliberal and postfeminist sensibility. One key element of neoliberalism is a general move towards self-governing and individual entrepreneurship. This idea of individual

¹³ Kari Förster & Cornelia Brantner (2016). „Masking the Offence? An Ethical View on Humor in Advertising“. *Journal of Media Ethics*, 31,3,p. 146-161; Ulli Weihs (forthcoming). „Feministische Werbekritik zwischen Selbstregulierung und Aktivismus“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

¹⁴ Christina Holtz-Bacha (forthcoming). „Werbung und Gender-Marketing“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

¹⁵ Österreichischer Werberat. <https://werberat.at/werwirsind.aspx>

¹⁶ Maya Goetz (forthcoming). „Geschlechterbilder im Fernsehen“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

choice is combined with perpetual unhappiness and dissatisfaction with one's own body, and the continuous striving for self-perfection regarding body and appearance¹⁷.

1.3. Digital media as both a safe and enabling space for women, and a space of violence against women

Digital media make it possible for women of all ages to address and discuss topics that are of relevance to them. On the one hand, digital media has become a protected space for girls, women, queers etc. that offers new forms of participation and mobilisation, and allows new forms of publics to emerge. For example, in Austria, as an effect of #metoo, Austrian women with a so-called "migrant background" initiated #meTwo. On the other hand, digital media has become a space where practices like hate speech, mansplaining, and trolling are forms of attacking, devaluing, and discrediting women, feminists, and queers, and are expressions of antifeminism and antigenderism¹⁸. In Austria, currently the legal foundation for the fight against sexual harassment in social media is publicly discussed after former female politician Sigi Maurer who had sued a man for sexual harassment in social media was convicted of defamation. With broad support of the feminist public, the current Austrian Women's Minister (Juliane Bogner-Strauß) advocates a change of law to give women legal opportunity to defend themselves quickly and easily against hate speech in the net. The Austrian Minister of Law (Josef Moser) also sees loopholes, but warns against occasional legislation.

2. Good Practice Examples

Gender Equality in education, education towards gender equality: The "Gender Equality Policy Decree" and the "Media Education Policy Decree" are "teaching principles" that are supposed to be implemented in all schools and in all school subjects, meaning that teachers are asked to make media literacy and gender equality an integral part of their regular teaching. For both, gender equality and media education, teachers can find guidelines and background materials on the ministry's website, and in the case of media literacy, also on the website *mediamanual*. However, the ambitious approach of both decrees could not be fully put into practice in schools – partly, because of a lack of training of teachers in media education and gender issues. The same is to be expected with the newly issued, "Masterplan for the Digitalisation of Education". Besides the need for appropriate training and further education of teachers, as well as university programmes in media and gender, children's competitions like "Zéro cliché" in France can help making issues of gender equality a natural part of education.

Positive effects of a Gender Equality Plan in public broadcasting service ORF: In 2015, the ORF gender equality plan has been awarded the "Women's Empowerment Principles CEO Leadership Award" by the United Nations.¹⁹ In ORF, all decisions relevant to the company are subject to a 'gender check' to consider and prevent potential gender inequalities as early as possible in decision-making. New

¹⁷ Julia Elena Goldmann & Liesa Herbst (forthcoming). „Körpernormen und Schönheitsdiskurse in den Medien“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer; Ana Sofia Elias & Rosalind Gill (2017). „Beauty-surveillance: the digital self-monitoring of neo-liberalism. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 21, 1, p. 59-77

¹⁸ Ricarda Drüeke (forthcoming). „Digitale Öffentlichkeiten und feministische Protestkulturen“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer; Kathrin Ganz (forthcoming). „Hate Speech im Internet“. In: Johanna Dorer et al. (eds.). *Handbuch Medien und Geschlecht*. Wiesbaden: Springer

¹⁹ Global Media Monitoring Project, National Report, Austria (2015)

managers have to attend two seminars on gender competence, one of which focuses on gender stereotypes and includes the reflection of the participants' own unconscious prejudices. As a reaction to the public discussions on sexual harassment initiated by #metoo, the equal opportunities officer developed a guideline including information about sexual harassment. The ORF has a special curriculum for career advancement of women, which was completed by ten women in 2017. The Gender Equality Report 2018 also specifies as an action required: to increase the proportion of women in technical occupations and the implementation of the gender equality plan in ORF's subcompanies.

Gender Budgeting of Austrian Film Institute: Starting in 2017, all submissions for funding are subject to gender budgeting. This means that for all submissions it must be indicated what percentage of the calculated personnel cost goes to women and which to men. Measures to increase the employment of women film professionals: If a proposal includes a significant number of women in decision-making positions, the *Gender Incentive* becomes effective, which means that the production company receives an additional € 30.000,00. The Austrian Film Institute initiated in 2015 the bi-annual workshop *ProPro – The Producer's Programme for Women* to support women to develop their film projects and/or company strategies.²⁰

Beer mats on gender (in)equality: During the annual *Festival of Austrian Film, Diagonale*, in Graz, gender (in)equality is literally brought on the table by beer mats addressing gender issues. The campaign was initiated by the women and film network *FC Gloria* and the *Diagonale*; the visualised topics on the beer mats change every year.²¹

Women's Health Action Plan – Measures for self-confident body images: Federal initiatives like "Girl's Days" and the "Retouching Barometer" pursue the goal of breaking down traditional role models and sensitize for media constructions of beautified bodies.

No Hate Speech Initiative: In 2016 the National Committee for the implementation of the "No Hate Speech" Initiative of the Council of Europe was formed, consisting of representatives of federal ministries and NGO's²². Workshops are organised to reduce prejudices and lower the acceptance of hate speech. An essential aspect is the encouragement to actively address and speak up against hate speech in online media.

Gender Equality in Sport: A strategy group on gender equality in Austrian sport, comprising of representatives of all leading Austrian sports organisations, was founded in 2015. Their work focuses on a balanced share of male and female coaches, measures against sexual violence in sport, fighting stereotypes in sport and aiming at gender sensitive media representations²³.

Initiatives by civil society, scholars, feminist groups to empower girls and women by *Girl Rock Camps*, *Girl Zine Workshops*, female online and offline networks.

²⁰ <https://equality.filminstitut.at/en/what-happened-so-far/>

²¹ <http://www.fc-gloria.at/fokus/kampagnen/bierdeckel-2018/>

²² <http://www.nohatespeech.at/no-hate-speech-kampagne/>

²³ http://www.100sport.at/files/doc/Projektunterlagen/GeEquality_Handlungsfeld_4_Stereotype.pdf

3. Transferability aspects

There are a number of similarities in the policies and in the overall approach taken in France and in Austria: For example, French Rebsamen law (addressing sexism at the workplace) equals Austrian Equal Treatment Act. In France, as well as in Austria, a strong focus is placed on education towards gender-equality. In both countries, there are initiatives in schools, and occasional seminars at colleges and universities. As in France, issues of gender equality are not mandatory in the training and further education of media professionals.

Transversal action:

The French paper speaks of a transversal action, underlining how important it is that different public authorities in the media field are involved. In France, both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Culture and Communication are strongly engaged, whereas in Austria, the involvement is by the Ministry of Women, Families and Youth, as well as the Ministry of Education, Science and Research. The Arts and Culture Division of the Federal Chancellery of Austria and the Austrian Film Institute commissioned the first *Austrian Film Gender Report* in 2017, whereby a periodic continuation of the report is planned. The implementation of the French model of a Gender Equality Observatory could be a positive step to provide data about women's functions and wages in the audio-visual sector.

The regulatory powers of the French audio-visual regulatory authority (CSA) have been extended by French law aiming at 'real equality between women and men'. One effect is that national television and radio services are obliged to deliver qualitative and quantitative figures about gender representations in their programmes to the CSA, which are then evaluated and published in annual reports. CSA also alerts the public about problematic instances in radio and TV programmes, and can apply economic sanctions against sexist and sexual abuses. In comparison, the Austrian regulatory authority for electronic media and electronic audio-visual media (KommAustria) has not yet included gender issues in its agenda. Here the legal possibilities should be discussed as to how KommAustria can also take regulatory action in matters of gender equality, including continuous monitoring.

Continuous monitoring would not only complement the work of self-regulatory bodies like Austrian Advertising Council, Austrian Press Council and Austrian Media Council (which only act on complaints), but would also raise awareness of the issue of gender equality.

The commitment of the French Press Agency (AFP) to increase the number of female experts in the news reports, pay more attention and respect to female victims suffering gender violence, and to use gender-sensitive language can be followed as a good practice example in approaching various actors in the Austrian media sphere, like the Austrian Press Agency and the Austrian Journalists Club (APA), so they become similarly active.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The successful example of public broadcasting by ORF suggests the need of gender equality policies on the national as well as on the EU level, which then can force private institutions to implement gender equality measures. The implementation of incentives for gender equality measures can also prove to be helpful. What is needed is continuous monitoring of the implementation of equality measures and their effects. We need continuous research that explores the current media and journalism

dispositive, and its potentials for transformation towards gender equality. We also have to analyse processes of “doing gender (doing ethnicity, doing religion, doing age) while doing journalism”, that is, in-depth explorations of the interrelations of gender-related and professional journalistic practices²⁴. Finally, we need to explore what media images “do” in the sense of consumers’ and users’ self-images.

²⁴ Johanna Dorer (2017). „Geschlechterverhältnisse in Medienorganisationen. Wie weiter?“. In: Susanne Kirchhoff, Dimitri Prandner, Rudolf Renger, Gerit Götzenbrucker & Ingrid Aichberger (eds.). *Was bleibt vom Wandel*. Baden-Baden: Nomos, p. 159-178