

# Equal Pay for Equal Work?

## Aspects of the Gender Pay Gap

The publication about current gender differences in earnings in the Slovak Republic contains papers discussing this issue from various aspects. The book is the eighth one from the series *Aspekty* (Aspects). These series of the book edition ASPEKT open up different approaches to gender issues that have become part of the public and political discourse (reproductive and sexual rights of women, violence against women, women in politics and women's politics, gender mainstreaming, histories of women, gender aspects of parliamentary elections).

The publication brings results of analyses carried out within the project "Gender Pay Differences as an Important Aspect of Gender Equality Discourse – the Analysis of the Current Situation in Slovakia" which in the second half of 2007 was coordinated by the Feminist Publishing and Educational Project ASPEKT Bratislava and financially supported by the foundation Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

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Jarmila Filadelfiová

### | The Gender Gap

What Statistical and Research Data Do (Not)  
Tell Us about Women's and Men's Earnings

#### Situation in Slovakia

In Slovakia, there are two institutions providing data about the gender pay gap: the Bureau of Statistics of the Slovak Republic and Trexima. Data sources are surveys of the income structure and so-called integrated system of labor value based on the selection of employers' organizations providing statistical data on behalf of their employees. In panel household surveys (surveys of family budgets) the gender difference is not followed. Although Slovakia in 2004 joined the European survey of living conditions known as EU-SILC (so far two out of four planned surveys have been conducted mapping the situation in 2004 and 2005), the data collected to this date have not been analyzed from the gender perspective. Therefore, this study utilizes only the first two above mentioned data sources. Data provided by the Bureau of Statistics of the SR are based on annual averages; Trexima publishes gender differences for the third quarter of each given year.

- **Women in the SR make on average considerably less than men.**

Statistical data for the year 2006 show that women in the SR made on average 26, 9 % less than men. The average monthly earnings of men came close to 23 thousand SKK while women's salary did not reach 17 thousand SKK.

While in the past decade the European average of the gender pay gap has a decreasing trend, in Slovakia the gender pay gap is increasing. In 1997 women made 21, 5% less than men, nowadays the difference has increased to 27 %. With this kind of difference

Slovakia ranks among three countries with the largest gender pay gap – Cyprus and Estonia have similar figures (*Tackling...*, 2007).

The dynamics of men's income increase has been higher than the dynamics of women's income increase. While from 1997 to 2006 men's average income before taxes increased in 51%, i.e. it increased more than twice. In the same period women's average income increased only in 47 %.

- **Gender pay gap is larger when we compare monthly earnings rather than hourly rates.**

International analyses have pointed to the fact that there is a difference when comparing hourly and monthly earnings of women and men. In general, the difference is higher in monthly than hourly rates, as monthly earnings are also influenced by the number of hours spent working, overtime, and various bonuses. This also holds for the situation in Slovakia.

According to the data provided by Trexima, in the third quarter of 2006 the difference in hourly wages between men and women was 23, 3 %, in monthly income it was 26, 2 %. Compared to hourly rates, monthly averages increase the gender pay gap in 3 %. In addition to differences in the labor market status and gender difference in the employment rate, this difference is also caused by a different system of income calculation (its fixed part and bonuses).

- **The gender difference in remuneration varies according to various components of the income.**

The difference between women and men in Slovakia varies according to individual components of the final financial remuneration. Some of them reflect horizontal and vertical labor market segregation, lower remuneration in occupation with the prevalence of women, others are more influenced by the number of hours spent working and the type of job (additional payments – e.g. financial compensations for worse working conditions, overtime payments), while others allow for more subjectivity (merit and performance bonuses, premiums).

The smallest difference between women and men was in the fixed base pay. In 2006 it was less than 22 %, which is in 5 % less than in

the case of the overall income. A much bigger difference can be observed in those components of income that depend on subjective assessment of entitlement or on collective bargaining – merit and performance bonuses. In 2006, women in the Slovak Republic received on average bonuses in 50 % lower than men, and their premiums and bonuses represented only 52, 9 % of those of men. This huge difference indicates that women in Slovakia probably work in positions where bonuses are not provided, but also that they receive less of them than men. This difference increases the already existing gender pay gap even further.

- **Also in Slovakia the gender pay gap is much more pronounced in the private sector.**

Also in the comparison of the private and public sector, the situation in Slovakia is in line with European trends. Salaries in the private sectors are overall much higher. And much bigger is also the gender pay gap. While the average hourly earnings of women in the public sector is about 85 % of that of men, in the private sector it is about 75 %.

A look at individual components of the income shows that the gender-based pay difference in the private and public sector is huge already at the base pay. While in the public sector the base pay of women was 88, 6 % of men's, in the private sector it was 77, 7 %. The pay gap increases with other components of income. Women's premiums and merit pay were in the private sector only at the level of 58 % of men's bonuses, other income components were at only 56 % of those of men.

- **Horizontal segregation of the labor market is very pronounced in Slovakia and “female“ jobs are less valued.**

As many international studies have identified, among factors that significantly influence the gender pay gap is the labor market gender segregation and undervaluing of jobs with the prevalence of women.

Concentration of women and men in certain jobs is a long-term issue in Slovakia and it has not changed much in the past decade. There are sectors in which men dominate and in which the share of women has even decreased. On the other hand, in the female

dominated sectors the prevalence of women is stable or has even increased. In the Slovak Republic in the long term women prevail in health care and social work, but also in education, hotel and restaurant services, banking and insurance, and according to the last survey women have gained majority also in so-called other public services.

Most female dominated sectors are characterized by salaries lower than the Slovak average. For instance, in healthcare and social services, where in 1997 women made up 79, 6 % of the labor force and where the average salary was 10 % below the average, the share of women even slightly increased in 2006 (to 80, 6 %) while salaries have fallen 20 % behind the Slovak average. Similar trends can be observed in hotel and restaurant services, education or other public services. On the other hand, there are sectors in which relative to the Slovak average the decrease of share of women has been accompanied by the salary increase – for instance in transport and telecommunications, or banking and insurance business. Above-average earnings are especially in male dominated sectors such as production and distribution of electricity, real estate, trade, transport, postal services and telecommunications and mining and mineral extraction. High earnings were recorded also in two sectors where in 2006 women prevailed – these are trade and repairs, and financial services. In the latter sector, earnings were the highest of all: 38 409 SKK which is more than twice the average monthly salary. However, in this sector the gender pay gap was the largest – women reached less than 55 % of men's earnings. This indicates that the gender pay gap is also likely to be large within these particular sectors.

● **The gender pay gap occurs not only between sectors but also within sectors.**

When looking at both the absolute and relative income difference within particular sectors we can see that the gap is largest in those with the highest earnings. It means that even if women do work in sectors with high earnings this advantage does not concern them as much as men. In 2005, the gender gap was the largest in trade and repairs (37, 1 %) and banking and insurance business (36, 9 %). These were followed by industry (34, 7 %) and real estate (34, 1 % of difference between women and men). Also in well-paying sectors

women earn less than men. In all four analyzed sectors, the gender pay gap has increased within the past 10 years. It should also be stressed, that the gender pay gap occurs without exception in all sectors, even in the feminized ones – where the difference is slightly lower (less than 30 %).

- **The increase of the educational level does not automatically mean that women get better positions and a better pay.**

In spite of a higher education level, women occupied less than a third of the highest level jobs. In 2006, among legislators and top managers there was only 27, 9 % of women. On the other hand, women prevail in office jobs and in services and trade (almost 70 %). Analyses of concrete occupations show that more than 40 % of women work in only 5 occupations (shop assistants, cleaners and domestic workers, restaurant workers, office workers and nurses). The concentration of women is much higher than the concentration of men – only 30 % of men work in the top 6 male occupations.

However, even if women hold top positions or work in the highest-paying occupations they do not earn the same money as men. The gender pay gap is the most pronounced in the highest-paying occupations. While in 2006 the average hourly rate of men was 310, 9 SKK, women's hourly rate was almost 100 SKK less (227, 4 SKK).

- **The gender pay gap is universal, it concerns all groups in the labor market.**

The comparison of women's and men's earnings according to age groups shows that the gender pay gap is universal, concerning all age groups. The pay gap is the smallest for women just entering the labor market after finishing school, it increases with age. The biggest gap – when women earn almost one third less than men was in the age group of 35 – 39 years. Then the gap decreases slightly – to about one quarter, but the difference still remains even in the oldest age group.

The situation is similar when comparing the average hourly rate controlling for education. Even in Slovakia, the rising level of education does not bring women a decrease in the pay gap. Statistical data indicate that the tendency is even to the contrary.

The gender gap is the biggest in the groups with the highest attained education. While the average difference in the hourly rate of women is about 24 %, women with a science degree earn less than 50 % of men's earnings. Also from the perspective of education, the gender pay gap is universal – it concerns all educational levels.

- **Women in Slovakia are concentrated in lower income levels while men prevail in higher ones.**

Due to the universal nature of the gender pay gap, when looking at individual and labor market characteristics it is not surprising that the share of women and men in particular income levels differs. Women are concentrated in lower income intervals, men are spread more evenly across the income spectrum and they concentrate more in higher income levels.

In 2006, the average salary of up to 10 thousand SKK was earned by 10, 7 % of men compared to 20 % of women. Almost 55 % of women earned up to 15 thousand SKK compared to 36 % of men.

On the other hand, in 2006 more than 23 % of men earned the income higher than 25 thousand crowns compared to 11 % of women. In the top income category the pay gap is triple. The income of 50 thousand SKK and more earned 4, 6 % of men but only 1, 6 % of women.

- **In Slovakia part-time work is used only to a small extent and more often by women.**

According to international analyses and European documents, the gender pay gap is partly caused by the fact that women more than men work in part-time jobs. However, in Slovakia this factor plays a minimal role, as very few people take advantage of part-time work. Nevertheless, it is usually women who tend to work part time.

In 2006, 4, 6 % of women worked part time compared to 1, 3 % of men. It means that women represented three thirds of all people working part time.

It is evident that this factor has little impact on the final earning of women and men. Relative to the year 2000, only a small increase has been recorded, which allows us to surmise that in a near future no significant change will occur. So what is the division of gender labor related to housework and family care?

- It is usually women who interrupt their careers or take a job with less responsibility.

Studies carried out in the past years indicate that also in Slovakia women carry the biggest share of responsibility for the household, children and dependent family members. The 2006 survey of the Slovak National Center for Human Rights showed that the tendency towards shared responsibility (a participatory model) is growing and there even is a small group of families where fathers are the primary caretakers. But the rule still is that a larger share of responsibility for the run of the family is on women's shoulders. The participatory model of family care prevails only with leisure activities, others (everyday chores) still rest with women.

The representative survey carried out within the project *Plus for Women 45+* showed that a relatively large group of women indicated that they made compromises in their careers due to family responsibilities. Almost 10 % of women of the age 45 and older, who have ever been employed, stated they had to take on a less responsible work position. More than a quarter of these women had to find the kind of job that enabled them to take care of their children or other family members. More than 16 % of them had even completely left their jobs for some time.

Studies show that a major share of family and household care still lies with women and that women's careers are much more impacted by family problems and responsibilities. It also seems that changes towards new models of care and related participation of women in the labor market are occurring only very slowly.

## The Need for Intervention and Identification

Statistical and research data indicate that the gender pay gap in Slovakia not only persists, but has even deepened in the past years. Causes of the gender gap are multiple; even direct discrimination by the employer is not a matter of the past.

The gender pay gap is an important indicator that something is going on, something is wrong. It is not just a matter of remuneration. It is also related to choices and opportunities impacting the income. Therefore, it is necessary to work with aspects such as equality of opportunities in the labor market and in reconciliation of work and family life.



It is not possible to achieve positive change without broader interventions – from legislative changes to development of family and gender policies to social campaigns. The gender pay gap can only be overcome when interventions will take place at all levels, with participation of all responsible actors and when attention will be paid to all underlying factors (see *Tackling...*, 2007).

As concerns data, we would need more reliable statistical indicators enabling a more nuanced access to the analysis of the gender pay gap, and unification and better definition of studied indicators that would allow for reliable comparison in time and the study of additional characteristics. The problem mostly lies in the lack of followed characteristics – independent variables. It is not possible to make more in-depth analysis such as according to the sector or occupation or basic demographic features (marital status, number of children and the like).

There are other shortcomings in the quality of the data. It does not suffice to just collect data about independent and dependent variables; equally important is also their analysis. The Bureau of Statistics of the SR is conceived solely as a data provider, it does not have a strong analytical unit, or competencies or possibilities to combine and complement statistical data with other types of research findings (also quantitative). Slovakia is not exceptional in this respect, statistics bureaus of other countries are conceived in a similar way. But if sociological and social analyses are not in the competency of the national bureau of statistics, other research institutes and monitoring institutes fill this gap. Slovakia, however, lack such kind of institutions. Gender analyses and research are only carried out by individual analysts working within existing general research organizations. The Monitoring Center for Human Rights, founded on the basis of the antidiscrimination law in 2004 whose task – according to its Foundation Chart, should be to monitor and analyze gender equality indicators – including the gender pay gap, is not fulfilling this task. It does not have required capacities and professional qualities.

The third area of working with data on the gender pay gap is regular publishing of trends in individual indicators and their analysis. In this respect, the inspiration could be taken from the Eurostat that regularly provides EU institutions and the public not only with reports on gender equality in general, but also with reports on the gender pay gap. Data provided by the Bureau of

Statistics of the SR are often discontinuous – they are irregular and do not follow the same format or indicators. The gender pay gap should be regularly included in reports about the situation of women and men presented to the government and parliament – just like it happens at the EU level. More attention should also be paid to other research. It can be said that the inclusion of gender research in the EQUAL and Sectoral Operational Program Human Resources has not helped to improve the situation in gender research. Some initial probes have been carried out; but only one project (Trexima) had a specifically gender focus. In other projects the issue of the gender pay gap has been tackled at the level of opinion polls. Therefore, more effort should be exerted also to achieve improvement in the area of statistical data collection and research.

Olga Pietruchová

## | Undervalued Women's Work

History, Legislation and Conceptualization  
of the Gender Pay Gap

The paper points to the theses put forth by feminist economic theory and the need to take them into account in so-called general economic analyses. Feminist theory emphasizes (Madörin, 2004) that the production of material conditions for meeting basic needs must be taken into account as a separate economic issue, as the basic precondition of human freedom. Economic theories are based on the assumption that political, social and economic rights are accessible to all, which is not true. Also in this sphere, the hierarchical and asymmetric power arrangements between men and women play a role. Therefore, we need a specific economic approach focusing on human rights. Current economic gender analyses – with the exception of few positive examples – are done in line with the neoliberal approach according to the “Add-Women-and-Stir” method. Feminist economics is skeptical about achieving gender equality e.g. in income as long as the overall view on the economy and labor values does not radically change.

Pietruchová states that we can identify three separate models of gender equality (Rees, 1998):

- equality when male standards are applied on women and they have to adjust, i.e. equality in the sense of sameness. Rees calls this “tinkering with equality“;
- equal evaluation of inputs and outputs by which men and women contribute to gender segregated society. Rees calls this “re-stitching” of the situation so that it would be acceptable for both men and women;
- a new standard for men and women in which changed gender relations will replace current segregated institutions and standards of masculinity and femininity.

It is obvious that only the third model can lead to overcoming of the andocentric perspective on the economy and labor value. At present, the only starting point is systematic gender mainstreaming. It is important that women’s movement, who initiated the process of gender mainstreaming, “safeguards” its application in the real life, so that its main idea – new arrangements of gender relations, would not get lost in the bureaucratic process.

Ol’ga Gyárfášová - Martin Slosiarik

## | Gender Coordinates of the Value Space

Analysis of Value Orientation of Women and Men in Slovakia

The analysis focuses on gender differences in the perception of importance of selected values; internal differentiation within the group of women; characteristic traits of this internal differentiation; main lines defining and structuring women’s value system and boundaries revealed by gender comparisons. It is based on research done by the International Republican Institute in which respondents were asked to indicate the level of importance of 33 listed values. They concerned both the private and public sphere and represented ideological priorities on various axes: citizenship

and the nation, market values and welfare state values, labor values and leisure values.

The analysis of value priorities of women and men in Slovakia revealed some interesting facts. First of all, values perceived as the most important – the family and security, are common to both women and men, both regard them as priorities. Differences occur in the perception of values considered less important.

Further analysis of gender differences showed that the value space is defined by the dimension of community and individualism, the second dimension was the world of work and the private world. Empirical analysis indicates that women more emphasize community, spiritual and traditional values while men are more oriented towards individual (personal) values. More marked difference can be observed also in the sphere of formalized public rules and institutions (competition, capitalism). However, gender differentiation is influenced by a number of intervening variables – young women of 18 to 34 years and women with higher education score more on the side of the male value world; women living in cities score close to it. On the other hand, older men score more on the side of the female value ladder. The analysis indicates that the distance between women and men in general is much smaller than between some particular groups of women and men.

An important variable contributing to heterogeneity of the female world is age. It defines value priorities for both men and women and it can be said that in the young as well as older age the value worlds converge. Another differentiating factor is education. Value priorities of women with more education are close to those of educated men and they diverge from the value world of older, less educated women living in the countryside. In other words, these data may be said to disconfirm straightforward gender stereotyping and point to a high degree of internal differentiation and individuality disturbing the imagined gender boundary.

Ľubica Kobová

## | What Does Gender Equality Have to Do with Feminism?

### Gender Discourses on Equal Pay and Work-Life Balance

This study partly explores the way of media appropriation of selected events and themes in the period from May to July 2007. It is based on the assumption that gender discourse specifically focusing on gender equality in the labor market is in the Slovak language media being formed in two main discursive strands. These define “what has been ‘said’ and/or what is, was and will be ‘sayable’ at a particular past, present and future point in time” (Jäger, 2005, p. 47).

These discursive strands are studied on concrete analysis of modes of presentation of concrete events.

### Methodological approach: critical discourse analysis

The study analyzes the issue by applying the tools of critical discourse analysis. We believe that policy making, to a large extent, depends on who, even temporarily, is winning in the struggle for means of communication and interpretation (Fraser, 1995, p. 44). The main part of political struggle is taking place at the level of defining political agendas and their further interpretation and utilization. This struggle is equally the work of experts in narrowly defined epistemic communities as well as the outcome of exchange between various types of majorities or minorities among the public.

### Definition of the discursive strand of gender-based pay inequality

The discursive strand of gender-based pay inequality is defined by presentation of statistical survey *Development of the income structure and differentiation in 1997-2006* (2007) published on 31 May 2007 by the Bureau of Statistics of the Slovak Republic. This report contained data about the income structure divided according to the criteria of gender, education, occupation, region and economic sectors. It was not a matter of course to expect that the gender pay

gap will become the leitmotif of the press conference presentation of the report. This theme was subsequently reflected in a number of dailies, and the broader issue of labor market gender equality was further elaborated on in the ensuing discussion in a few following months. The discussion was for some time stopped on 18 July 2007 when the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Václav Špidla presented the Communication from the EC *Tackling the Pay Gap between Men and Women* in which, inter alia, summarized the gender pay gap, analyzed its causes and introduced ways of their elimination at the level of the EU.

### **Definition of the discursive strand of reconciliation of work and family**

The discursive strand of reconciliation of work and family is examined on the presentation of winners of the “The Most Family-Friendly Employer” („Zamestnávateľ ústretový k rodine“) on 28 May 2007. On this occasion, the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic organized the conference “Employers Supporting the Family and Gender Equality” („Ústretovosť zamestnávateľov k rodine a rodovej rovnosti“) that spurred media reactions to the topic.

In these two discursive strands, that study identifies the following characteristics:

#### **Issues are raised by experts**

The issue of pay equality is framed and raised by bearers and transmitters of expert knowledge. In the media, the problem has not been raised by a certain law suit or by publicizing of a certain case by e.g. a labor union – i.e. by a subject that would be directly impacted by pay inequality.

The pay equality discursive strand is characterized by mutual confrontation of experts – scientists from the Slovak Academy of Sciences, an analyst from the private sector, a representative of the bank sector. This confrontation problematizes the issues in order to frame it by unquestionable expert knowledge backed by “hard” quantitative data provided by the Bureau of Statistics of the SR.

A broad spectrum of presented expert opinions points to the

importance of the expert epistemic authority in formulation of the issue. However, if a concrete actor (e.g. a scientist) is granted the authority to formulate expert opinions, his or her epistemic authority is also transferred to their individual experience, which can reproduce gender stereotypical framing of the issue.

In the studied case, the dialogue of experts considerably narrows the issue down: from the broader issue of pay differences in general viewed from various angles (SITA, 2007), to the problem of the gender pay gap as such (Kahanec, 2007; Štulajter, 2007), to the issue of the gender pay gap in managerial positions (Đurana, 2007; Jančík, 2007).

### **The problem is the family, not work**

The problem of reconciliation of work and family is dramatized and the main actors – employers and families, are identified as two antagonistic subjects. The media discourse articulated the perspective of employers when stressing that reconciliation of work and family life is in the first place beneficial for them. It is assumed that employers' adherence to nondiscrimination principles stipulated by the law is commonplace, and thus employers can broaden positive regulations beyond the definition of their duties for the benefit of their employees. Hence, if the employer-employee relations in the workplace are not problematic, the causes of employees' discontent must lie outside of the workplace. Measures taken by employers shall then intervene in the sphere usually regarded as strictly separated from the sphere of work, i.e. in the family. This creates a direct, unmediated relationship between the family and employer – labeled as the “happy family means direct profits”.

### **Flexible work is the solution**

Flexible work arrangements, as practically the only way of reconciliation of work and family life, are legitimized by a broad spectrum of credible public actors and nonmaterial actants. The scope of positions that can occupy the empty or unverballed place of the agent having an interest in establishing flexible work is broad and it forms a representative coalition consisting of domestic and international representatives of employers, also mediated by the EU

via the document *Prínosy politik ústretových k rodine v rámci krajín EÚ* (Benefits of Family-friendly Policies in the Countries of the EU). According to the media discourse, the coalition of subjects and actants is being lead by the amended and hence progressive legal norm – the Labor Code.

### **Slovakia is “catching up”**

The usual discourse about the need to catch up and simultaneously about Slovakia’s lagging behind the old EU members states is being reproduced. For instance, statement about little knowledge about reconciliation of work and family among Slovak employers is illustrated on one concrete case to which the media discourse finds solutions in the form of broadening and application of “non-discriminating strategies”, which of course are “compulsory figures” – but not in Slovakia, rather in Great Britain. In contrast to the grey past, their application in the progressive spirit bears the promise of a rosy and uncomplicated future for employers, strengthened by references to the context of old EU members states. However, it is not assumed that these states could share several problems of life-work balance and hence have the need to resolve them further.

### **Genders are oppositional and thus complementary**

The pay equality discourse is presented as a pay gap between two oppositional sexes. Gender equality should mean gender balance – women are the men’s counterpart and their different identities are in this understanding of gender equality harmonized – rather than acknowledging the equality of rights and opportunities.

There is an assumption that the space that women are to enter is defined as male. Men have the authorization to open up avenues for women. Women should be successful not due to the change in the non-supporting environment but because they have the kind of education that authorizes them to enter this male space.

### **Gender equality is articulated in an anti-feminist manner**

Parts of both discursive strands are also non-feminist or even anti-feminist stances. In spite of the fact that gender discourse adopts many gender equality concepts – esp. through EU legislation and



policies, and implicitly also their feminist and other transformative political stances, it is characterized by continuity with established non-feminist ways of understanding of the gendered nature of social relations. Therefore, I believe it would be more productive not to expect its radical change towards a more pro-feminist position, rather to study how individual gender equality concepts are linked together.

### **Pay difference is not understood as the violation of the equality principle**

Media discussion did not touch upon the complicated nature of proving violations of the Labor Code, which in Article 119a Point 2 stipulates that “Women and men have the right to equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value”. The pay equality theme has not been raised due to some concrete case of violation of the equality principle, but due to publication of statistical data concerning all people in the labor force in the Slovak Republic. Out of them the area of the most pronounced difference – that of high managerial and decision-making positions, was singled out.

### **The Issue of vertical labor market segregation can diminish the importance of horizontal segregation**

Narrowing of the gender pay gap issue to the area of managerial jobs can potentially lead to changes in the dynamics of participation of women and men in the labor market and in their remuneration. As Catherine Hoskyns (1999) writes, the times of economic and labor market boom and to them related increase of women in paid employment during which the foundations of European equal pay legislation were laid (esp. by the Amsterdam Treaty) are over. “Market pressure is now more likely to be directed at persuading men into insecure and risky jobs rather than at improving any further the situation of women.” The only exception is the situation at the highest positions, in which it is more likely to “achieve cracks in the glass ceiling than to gain advantages for women in low-paid, low-skilled jobs.” (Hoskyns, 1999, p. 40.)

There is a warranted fear that the issue of vertical segregation may overshadow horizontal segregation, just like it happened in the pay equality discourse analyzed in this study. Also, systematic

diminishing of the importance of horizontal segregation can potentially contribute to systematic decreasing of state finances that are the only source of income of women in horizontally segregated occupations such as in education and health care.

Broadening of the discussion to include questions of women's remuneration in horizontally segregated areas of the labor market requires opening of the question of the social value of particular occupations. The public discussion must include the questions whose work is more important for social reproduction of inhabitants of the same state unit, or who plays what role in this reproduction and who is entitled to money from the state budget: shall we better value a nurse or a policeman, an elementary school teacher or a professional soldier?

### **Economization of reconciliation of work and family delegitimizes social citizenship**

The fact that work-life balance measures are applied almost exclusively by employers in the private sector attest to economization of the issue that could otherwise be a legitimate part of the state social policy. Responsibility for provision of a narrowly defined set of social securities and increasing of the quality of life is in the case of a concrete population group – employees of companies applying work-life balance measure, placed on the labor market actors who present this issue as a benefit that goes beyond the standard definition of duties and responsibilities of employers towards their employees. However, the concept of social citizenship is for the main part of citizens just an empty normative foundation of the disappearing welfare state.

Individual responsibility of an employer providing so-called social benefits can become a modality of a new – market – organization of citizenship. But failure in ensuring these benefits can lead not only to the exclusion of citizens from the labor market but to social exclusion as such.

### **Familization – the family should be the key place of social integration**

Reconciliation of work and family life together with the processes of work flexibilization can happen on the background of *familization*

when family means the main place of social integration. It is the family or the couple with children, not an individual employee, who is the target of intervention on the part of the employer.

Also the issue of resolution of gender-based pay inequality is relegated to the individual level. For instance, the decision about which partner will take the so-called parental leave to care for small children depends on which partner has higher salary. The pay gap between men and women is the most pronounced during the time when they raise small children – people adjust to the possibilities of the labor market when that partner who can bring a higher income enters the labor market. It is not necessary to emphasize that this partner is usually the man, and that it would be hence hard to speak about the reconciliation of work and family in terms of transformed gender division of labor. The family is still a dominant value for both men and women in Slovakia. But what is its present-day face? It is important to look at it in the continuity of social and historical changes, which does not mean its automatic “traditionalization” in the sense of hegemonic catholic Christian ideology.

Gal and Kligman (2000) state: “The general assumption seems to be that it is the „public“ that changes, not the ‘private’ sphere. (...) While the state and other institutions are questioned and viewed with suspicion by large segments of the population, the family is generally sacralized, and not only by nationalists. (...) The private household continues to be valued as the place where people live their honest, authentic, and meaningful lives. In the communist era the danger was understood to be the intrusiveness of the state; now it is more often the uncertainty and untrustworthiness of state action and the insecurity of markets and employment. The image of a stable, autonomous family survives, despite the fact that in East Central Europe too, over the last several decades, there have been profound changes in household composition, dramatic increases in divorce rates and in single parenting, as well as decreases in fertility and in the public subsidizing of childbearing and child rearing. The idea of the East Central European family as an almost isolated, reassuring constant in a world of social uncertainty must be understood as a discursive construction.” (Gal – Kligman, 2000, p. 68-69.)

## **Reconciliation of family and work does not mean redistribution of care work between women and men**

The concept of reconciliation of work and family contains and idealized and stereotypical discursive construct of the family. Not even its “translation” from the transnational setting of the EU contributes to its more transformative and feminist understanding. As Maria Stratigaki points out, reconciliation of work and family, initially meant as a measure to support gender equality in the labor, has during several decades of “moving” between various European documents, institutions and politicians gradually changed its originally feminist meaning from sharing to reconciliation. She argues that the “original policy goal, the redistribution of domestic work between women and men, has been obscured, if not abandoned, to accommodate a growing policy priority on the creation of employment. Reconciliation, reformulated to mean improving women’s ability to combine paid work and family work in their own lives, eventually became an integral part of the EU employment policy in the late 1990s, but reconciliation now served the goal of legitimate and more flexible work conditions rather than changing gender relations within the family.” (Stratigaki, 2004, p. 32.)

## **Public policy and media discourse co-opt feminist concepts**

In Slovakia, the gender discourse is characterized by cooptation of feminist concepts.

“In the cooptation process, the concept itself is not rejected, but its initial meaning is transformed and used in the policy discourse for a different purpose than the original one.” Cooptation undermines gender equality in two ways. Transformation of the concept is gradual and it can easily be unnoticed while its impacts on gender equality deteriorate or can have an effect to the contrary. And what is important, “cooperation works against mobilization and pressure by interested parties and individuals by using the original as well as the transformed concept as an alibi. It is difficult to mobilize against a claim that appears to be one’s own even if it is no longer used to mean what one intended.” (Stratigaki, 2004, p. 36.)

The study of gender discourse can no longer point to the positive

fact of mere presence of gender concepts and gender policies in the public discussion. It is necessary to study how creation of gender policy, including the pay equality and labor market participation policies, change and transform concepts coming from the transnational setting of EU gender equality policies, and how such fundamental value concepts as the family, social security and health acquire meaning. They do not attest only to changes in usage; they participate in formation and management of social practices. Despite the fact that the state administration keep ignoring the expertise coming from NGOs and individual experts studying gender equality from the feminist perspective, due to the fact that these actors contribute to creation of the public gender discourse, the feminist concepts have gained currency and being used by other, mostly non-feminist actors, have been gaining new meanings.

### **“Gender stereotype” as a co-opted concept**

Both discursive strands – pay equality and reconciliation of work and family – co-opted feminist concepts, and in their hegemonic form are becoming the means of perpetuation the status quo. Rather than being part of transformation policy, they perpetuate and reproduce gender inequality. It is happening e.g. with the concept “gender stereotype” and from it derived adjective “stereotypical” and the like. Gender stereotype is not seen as a relational category defining gender attributes of masculinity and femininity in their mutual interaction. More often it becomes the confirmation of insurmountable gender differences that, however, can complement themselves. The ideal of gender relations to be followed is becoming the vision of harmonic family happiness situated within the global economy – the happy family brings profits to employers.

**In conclusion: not even a “hard” economic theme can guarantee seriousness of gender discourse.**

One could expect that the topic of the labor market and economy in general, together with explicit deliberation about women and men (i.e. not about gender neutral citizens) might be that critical moment for the women’s public agenda to be finally taken seriously. There are other gender-related themes in the public discussion: e.g.

violence against women which was for the public discussion opened by a minoritarian feminist public mostly during the Fifth Woman campaigns, or the issue of reproductive and sexual rights consistently utilized by political elites for building their political authority – the legitimacy of the former was questioned while the latter has become an obvious indicator of competency of political leaders to hold an office. In contrast to these themes, the issue of the labor market and the economy is “finally” a serious, or from the perspective of the media, “hard” topic. However, the very presence of the issue of a different status of women and men on the labor market (be it the issue of pay differences or work-life balance) together with the co-opted feminist vocabulary do not guarantee the kind of transformative policies that would lead to gender equality.

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## Recommendations

- Responsible state authorities and public organizations should further a non-exclusive public debate on gender equality that would encourage feminist opinions to be expressed and treat them as relevant.
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family and the Bureau of Statistics of the SR should invest their resources into methodological development of gender pay gap study.
- The Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Family in its capacity of a leading state institution in the field of reconciliation of work and family should aim to develop alternative approaches to the most pressing issues such as flexibilization of labor, feminization of specific segments of labor market and the gender pay gap.
- The Bureau of Statistics of the SR should publish the gender pay gap data on a regular basis and present the research findings to a wide array of public actors (ministries, the parliament, respective ministerial committees, governmental councils, non-governmental organizations, think tanks etc.).
- The Bureau of Statistics of the SR should strengthen its analytical unit in order to be able to combine and complement gathered statistical data with other types of research findings.

- Individuals with expertise in the field of gender analysis, based in a wide array of institutions – think tanks, non-governmental organizations, universities, research institutions, – should be institutionally supported. Furthermore their expertise should become a valuable resource for state institutions in need of feminist situated gender analyses.
- Journalists writing about economic affairs and domestic politics are needed to participate in socially responsible and reflective production of gender discourse in public.
- Interdisciplinary networks of experts and policy makers working across all levels of society should focus on production of knowledge on social, political and economic issues with a significant gender dimension.
- In order to prevent continuous and narrowing economization and accompanying formalist simplification of gender equality discourse, impact studies focusing on redistribution of care work and paid labor from feminist standpoints should be supported.
- Wherever possible, situated feminist knowledge production in the field of economic, social and political analysis recognizing the principles of gendered social equality should be strengthened and used as an instrument for preventing gender policies to be co-opted by non-transformative and formalized public policies.

## Organizations and people

ASPEKT is the first feminist organization in Slovakia. It was founded in 1993 as an interest association of women, who agreed it was time to take the discourse on equality and democracy seriously and apply it to the lived realities of the people of feminine gender in Slovakia. Already second decade ASPEKT does so by means of its (subversive and pioneering) publishing, political, research and educational activities. [www.aspekt.sk](http://www.aspekt.sk)

FOCUS Agency since its establishment in 1991 belongs to topnotch research institutions in Slovakia. It specializes in provision of complex analytical services and expert consultations in marketing and public opinion research. The agency strives to bring relevant – accurate, timely and objective, data about the market and society.



Institute for Public Affairs is an independent public policy think tank. It has a broad range of research and publishing activities increasing the expert potential of the country. The Institute was founded in 1997 with the aim of fostering values of the open society and democratic political culture in public policy and decision making.

Jana Čvilková (1963), gender expert, co-founder and director of ASPEKT.

Jarmila Filadelfiová (1956), sociologist. She specializes in the study of reproductive behavior and demographic trends, family and social policy, the status of women in society and gender equality. At present she is the analyst of the Institute for Public Affairs.

Oľga Gyárfášová (1957), sociologist, program director of the Institute for Public Affairs. She specializes in the study of political culture and voting behavior, as well as social inclusion and gender issues. She teaches at Comenius University in Bratislava.

Eubica Kobová (1978), philosopher, doctoral student at Comenius University in Bratislava, editor and collaborator of Feminist Publishing and Educational Project ASPEKT, Bratislava. She specializes in social and political philosophy, feminist studies of science and queer theory.

Oľga Pietruchová (1962), gender expert, director of the Society for Planned Parenthood and head of the NGO Pro Choice. She specializes in gender equality issues and women's reproductive rights. She collaborates with UNDP and other renowned organizations.

Martin Slošiarik (1976), sociologist, head of research at the FOCUS Agency supervising quantitative surveys carried out by the Agency. He specializes in methodology and methods of multivariate statistical analysis.