

Technium.

47/2023

2023

A new decade for social changes

Technium

Social Sciences

Powered by

PLUS
COMMUNICATION



International
Communication & PR



Gender (in)equality in (European) society

Dusanka Slijepcevic, MA – Senior Teaching Assistant

Department of (Applied) Sociology, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Banja Luka, Bulevar vojvode Petra Bojovica 1A, 78 000 Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina;

Dragana Vilic, PhD – Full Professor

Department of Economics and Business Management, Faculty of Economics, University of Banja Luka, Majke Jugovica 4, 78 000 Banja Luka, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Correspondence email: dusanka.slijepcevic@fpn.unibl.org

Abstract. **The subject** is gender inequality in Europe from 2020 to 2030. What are the measures to problem solving or the Gender Equality Strategy (2020 – 2025) challenges? **The scientific goals** are scientific description, understanding and causal explanation of problem, based on secondary data by international organizations, EU statistical institutions and measures of the Strategy, from the scientific theory of liberal feminism. **The methodology** refers to the analysis of problem indicators and the synthesis of proposals for its solutions. **The results** relate to the expanding the scientific knowledge of European society and its problems, and a pragmatic explanation with an overview of solutions.

Keywords. Europe; gender (in)equality

1. Introduction

In the Republic of Srpska gender inequalities (hereinafter GI) are expressed in the public, labor market, division of labor and responsibilities in family life, as well as in perception of gender roles; information on gender equality (hereinafter GE) policies is insufficient and fragmentary, with a lack of visions to promote GE [3]. Hence, GI [13] is a global social problem, easy to see through statistics. According to the records [8, 9, 10], in the European Union (hereinafter EU), 33% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence; 22% of them have experienced violence from an intimate partner, while 55% have been sexually harassed, with women more likely to experience sexual harassment online than men. Furthermore, women earn on average 16% less than men per hour; only 67% are employed, compared to 78% of men; on average, women's pensions are 30.1% lower than men's pensions; 75% of unpaid care and household chores are done by women. Last but not least, only 7.5% of bosses and 7.7% of directors are women, only 22% of artificial intelligence (AI) programmers are women, 39% of the EU Parliament are women.

Having in mind this in the member states of the EU, there is a question what is the situation in non-member states, such as the Republic of Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively the Republic of Srpska too!? Judging by the aforementioned statistics, GE is at odds with GI, not with sex diversity [15]. It is a requirement and principle of human rights and responsibility

of governments and society [16]. GI is a product of a complex set of social forces [51].

2. Theory and methods

Equality is the lever of social life, so that all people, regardless of biological, sexual characteristics, reach their full potential, as an integral part of human capital, and in the context of human resource management.

GE is a demand that can be achieved and monitored through the Equality Index. 'In times of crisis (coronavirus pandemic, author's note) GE must not be suspended or removed from the agenda of other 'more important' issues, but quite the opposite - GE is, especially in times of crisis, the center of all other issues' [40].

The Gender Equality Index is an important EU measurement instrument, measuring GE on a scale from 1 (complete inequality) to 100 (complete equality) across 6 domains: knowledge, work, money, health, time and power, as well as 2 subdomains: violence and cross-inequalities (cross/intersectional inequality, multi-level inequality) [according to the President of the Coordination Body for GE, Zorana Mihajlović, according to the 14]. The index is an indicator of the 'gender gap' in these domains, even in the most developed Western countries, EU member states, while the gap in the field of work and availability of financial resources for women is particularly characteristic of Serbia [49]. The Index was established in the EU in 2012, and Serbia was the first non-EU country to adopt it in 2014 [50, p. 204]. The first index was developed by Serbia in 2016, and in 2018 its second Index, which again makes it the first in the region to monitor the dynamics of EU countries in this area, which shows a strong commitment to European values and political readiness to improve GE in Serbia. The Gender Equality Index for Croatia in 2020 is 57.9 [11].

According to the latest Index (for 2020) of the *European Institute for Gender Equality* [11], the EU is at least 60 years away from full GE, with a score of 67.9 out of 100 achieved at the current pace, as the EU improves by only half a point each year. Among the member states, Sweden, Denmark and France take the first places, while the most improvements were achieved by Italy, Luxembourg and Malta, because since 2010 they have each won about 10 points. Greece, Hungary and Romania are lagging behind in terms of improvement. The situation was explained by *Carlien Scheele*, Director of the EIGE, who highlighted the coronavirus pandemic as a serious threat to GE progress, which is why policymakers will have to use the results of the Index to devise inclusive solutions that promote GE during and after the pandemic.

The EU Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025) identifies key actions for the next 5 years (2020-2025) to accelerate gaining equality. The Strategy uses a two-pronged approach, where 'gender mainstreaming' is combined with other targeted actions, while *intersectionality* remains the horizontal principle of its implementation. International and national legal frameworks for GE (e.g. the Beijing Declaration and the Law on GE of B&H) are obliged to approach the 'gender mainstreaming' [40]. Gender mainstreaming implies the inclusion of a gender perspective in all areas of public policy, at all levels and at all stages of policy making. Intersectionality refers to the view that all women are different and that they may face discrimination based on personal characteristics. In addition, the Gender Equality Strategy includes earmarked funding for a gender-equitable future, as the next EU budget (2021-2027) will support and fund projects related to gender equality through a number of EU programs: from dedicated grants under the Citizens program, Equality, Rights and Values to large EU structural, social and cohesion funds. The Beijing Declaration (1995) proclaimed the achievement of high socio-economic benefits through investment in women's education, and defined GE education as one of the best ways to achieve economic growth and sustainable development [35, p. 10]. *The principles* of the strategy are: *ending gender-based violence;*

challenging gender stereotypes; closing the gender gap in the labor market; achieving equal participation in different sectors; closing the gender pay and pension gap; closing the gender care gap; achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics.

According to the EIGE, improved GE in decision-making is a major driver of progress in the EU. The domain of power, which measures the engagement of women and men in decision-making in politics, economics, media, research and sport, accounts for 65% of the total progress in the Index from 2010. However, with a score of 53.5 out of 100, the domain with the lowest points remains. Improvements are greatest in the private sector, due to improved gender balance on company boards. Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Finland, Sweden and the Great Britain have almost a third of women on company boards. France is the only country with more than 40%. Although these countries have helped improve results in this area, the rate of change will soon slow if other countries do not start catching up. 'In countries such as France and New Zealand, where there is a long tradition of liberal beliefs and social protection under the auspices of the state, the elite may take care of the masses even when they do not need them. In the much more capitalist United States, however, the elite could use the first opportunity to destroy what is left of state social protection programs' [19, p. 109-110].

Given the fact that, in the 21st century, post-industrial civilization is based on artificial intelligence, bio-engineering and nanotechnology [19], hence the focus of the 2020 Index is on the impact and effects of digitalization on working lives of women and men. In general, men dominate the development of new technologies throughout the EU. Therefore, women face a slightly higher risk of being replaced by robots at work and are underrepresented in the development of artificial intelligence, digital start-ups and high-tech products (spacecrafts, fiber optics, lasers and microchips). The expansion of work organized through online platforms reproduces traditional GI, such as the pay gap and gender segregation. For example, men are more likely to work on software development or food delivery, while women are more likely to work on online translation or household chores.

At the end of the new century, equality became the ideal of societies around the world, partly due to the arrival of new ideologies, communism and liberalism, but also due to the industrial revolution, after which broad sections of the people gained more importance than ever, so it all initiated the historical currents of the 20th century in the direction of reducing inequality between classes, races and sexes; hence, in 2000, hierarchies still existed, but there was more equality than in the world in 1900 [19], precisely because of the above-mentioned social factors. Already at the beginning of the 21st century, people had expectations that the establishment of equality would continue or even accelerate, i.e. that globalization would bring economic progress to every part of the Earth, but it turned out more likely to predict that the 21st century will create societies with the greatest inequalities throughout history, as globalization and the Internet widen the gap between classes to such an extent that the gap between the human species and more biological castes is to be expected [19].

Considering the above, a specific research question arises: How much is the problem of GI represented in (European) society and what are its characteristics and causes from 2020 to 2030? What are the measures to problem addressing or the challenges of the Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025)? *We assume that the problem of GI is significantly represented in (European) society because it is dominantly conditioned by gender socialization and the (un)intended consequences caused by it, i.e. cultural patterns that are difficult to change due to lifelong exposure to them (gender stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, violence, segregation in education and at work, etc.).*

The explanation of the question, as a research problem, will be approached from a **liberal feminist perspective** [on pluralism of liberal theories see in: 53, p. 49 – 55], that is 'most

mainstream and inclusive branch focusing on working within the system to end sexism' [28, p. 25]. 'Liberal feminism is based on Enlightenment beliefs of rationality, education, and the natural rights that extend to all men and women' [28, p. 17]. 'Liberal feminism, accordingly, is the branch of liberalism committed to women's liberty and equality and the branch of feminism committed to the attainment of these liberal values for women' [26, p. 24].

According to this perspective no one benefits from GI, because men also suffer from suppression of their potentials, especially women [18]. Why is it so? The answer lies in stereotypes and prejudices that women are irrational, due to biological determination of their own sex, and thus social norms of gender roles in accordance with sex, which prevented the cultivation of women through participation in public life [33, according to 35]. These gender stereotypes initiated classical liberal feminism in the 18th and 19th centuries, as a theoretical and political paradigm, based on the representative teachings of John Locke and John Stuart Mill on the importance of the individual and his right to freedom of opinion, expression and association [35]. Through the prism of liberal feminist teaching, many women, with the potential to be successful and qualified members of the workforce, are not given the opportunity to develop their talents, while men are denied some of the pleasures of a close relationship with their own children.

'According to liberal feminists, female subordination is rooted in a set of customary and legal constraints that block women's entrance to success in the public sphere' [7, p. 60]. All because the roots of this problem are not in the structures or social institutions, but in the culture of society. Socialization for gender roles results in producing inflexible expectations of woman and man. Discrimination prevents woman from having the same opportunities as man.

Hence, the creation of equal opportunities, especially in education and work, is the main goal of liberal feminism, which can be achieved by introducing laws and trying to eradicate sexism and stereotypical perceptions of women and men from children's books and mass media. Thus, it seeks reforms, which will take place within the existing social structure, with action of relevant social actors through a democratic system, to enable woman to have the same access to high-status jobs as man.

'On the one hand, liberal feminism is emerging as the least threatening form of feminism for the state, so other forms of feminism are often presented in the media and the public as feminisms that are against family, motherhood and men. On the other hand, liberal feminism as a theory can be acceptable to any woman 'who identifies with the values of the middle class and liberal ideas of equality of opportunity and independence. You do not have to be white or middle class to strive for these values, and therefore the ideas of liberal feminism are accepted by more women than is usually thought' [Eisenstein, according to 33, p. 133]''.

At the beginning of the 21st century, liberal feminism is still a strong position in feminist theory. One of the most important representatives of contemporary liberal feminism in the 20th and 21st century is the American philosopher and lawyer Martha C. Nussbaum, who builds liberal feminism on John Rawls' theory, John Stuart Mill's classic utilitarian tradition and on insights of classical liberal feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, advocating that all people have equal dignity and worth, regardless of their situation in society, where society must respect and promote freedom of choice, universal human nature (mind, reason and ability to choose, i.e. the ability for moral choice), which is not gender-marked, so that it includes women as well as men [according to 33]. As Nussbaum emphasizing, in response to feminist critiques [for more see: 20, p. 71 – 74], 'women all over the world use liberalism language' [36, p. 175].

In the *Women and Human Development: Capabilities Approach* she describes discrimination against women: 'Women in much of the world lose out by being women. Their human powers of choice and sociability are frequently thwarted by societies in which they must

live as the adjuncts and servants of the ends of others, and in which their sociability is deformed by fear and hierarchy' (Nussbaum, 2001: 298). So, the main contribution of liberal feminism is showing how much 'modern society discriminates against women' and that its (political) goals are: gender-neutral childrearing, affirmative action, more legal rights for women and shared parenting [29, p. 10].

Having in mind this concepts, and based on *the secondary data collaction and analysis* [30] from surveys of relevant international organizations and EU statistical agencies, a description, understanding and explanation of the social problem of GI will be made, based on *EU Commission* documents [8,9,10] and Index (for 2020) of the EIGE. The already available data are ideal to be used because they are 'reliable, suitable and adequate' [24, p. 111] and also because 'secondary analysis enables researchers to analyse datasets that they would not dream of being able to collect themselves' [5, p. 520].

An analysis of the measures of the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 was also performed, in order to, in addition to scientific contribution, also contribute to social goals, especially pragmatic ones (raising awareness of the problem and familiarity with its practical solutions).

3. Research results and discussion

GE is impossible without *freedom from stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, segregation and violence*. Unfortunately, 'from the moment a girl infant is wrapped in a pink blanket and a boy infant is wrapped in a blue blanket, gender role development begins' [28, p. 64]. Furthermore, boys are taught more independence, separation, and risk-taking, and their toys encourage these behaviors while girls toys encourage domesticity and social orientation [28].

So, *gender stereotypes and prejudices* are one of the fundamental causes of GI in society. Thus, for example, 44% of Europeans believe that caring for home and family is the most important role of women, while 43% of them believe that earning is the most important role of men [8,9, 10].

Gender norms, based on power relations and traditional understandings of the social roles of men and women shape social practices, influencing laws and policies, and preventing changes in education [45]. During formal and non-formal education, the transfer of pro-masculine knowledge, values and experiences is most common, and differentiation of sexes in elective subjects and choice of occupation is conditioned from the earliest age by cultural patterns (gender socialization) which represent the framework of curriculum [4].

Gender stereotypes are often combined with other stereotypes (based on race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation) and can reinforce the negative effects. Sexist practices, according to research on the non-formal school curriculum, have not been noticed by students because they often lack awareness about gender issues.

On the other hand, teachers are not aware of the different effects of their teaching practices on students. Different expectations regarding student achievement stem from teacher prejudice: a disproportionate percentage of all their interactions are focused on boys, who receive more praise, feedback and encouragement than girls [Lynch, Lodge, according to the 4]. Teachers are encouraging more cooperation in girls and more competitiveness in boys [28]. Gender stereotypes and sexism are also present in school textbooks and teaching materials, so teachers need to discuss it with students.

Schools, together with parents, need to combat the strong influences that some popular magazines, children's comics, video games and multimedia products have on children and young people [4].

Gender stereotypes, prejudices and inequalities can also be reinforced by artificial intelligence. Nevertheless, it can offer solutions to many social issues, so it has become a strategically important area of economic progress, which is why women must be part of its development as researchers, developers and users. GE in science must be understood 'in terms of three dimensions: to promote research by, for and about women' [41, p. 9].

Segregation in education and work also hampers GI. This means the concentration of women or men in certain spheres and/or jobs. Despite efforts to address this issue, such as specific initiatives to encourage women to study engineering or information and communication technology (ICT), segregation has, in fact, increased since 2010.

In the EU, only 2 out of 10 ICT jobs are performed by women. There is a shortage of men in the care sector. They make up only 15% of health care workers. Thus, for example, compared to women, a higher percentage of men complete studies in STEM and related fields (72% engineering, production and construction and 58% natural sciences, mathematics, statistics and ICT) [6].

The feminization of occupations concerns lower paid jobs and is an indicator of the subordinate position of women in society and a key factor in reproducing GI in accessing spheres of greater influence and power. Women are distributed in professions with less pay, power, and prestige, such as nursing and teaching for women and engineers and architects for men [28]. It is because 'men in female-dominated fields have more advantages than women in male-dominated fields' [28, p. 349]. The opposite is the masculinization of occupations - the dominance of men in prestigious occupations, which bring higher earnings and greater social influence. Because all of these, changes in consciousness, value systems and social norms are needed.

That's why an education is an important link in mitigating gender differences and weakening gender stereotypes [54]. It could be achieved by 'feminist education for a critical consciousness' [22, p. 19].

Gender-based violence, i.e. violence against women because they are women, is rooted in GI. Violence against women is 'rooted in male domination' and that the ideology of male supremacy both encourages and supports violence against women [23, p. 117].

33% of women in the EU have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, 22% of women have experienced intimate partner violence, while 55% of women have been sexually harassed, and women are more likely to experience sexual harassment on the Internet than men [8, 9, 10].

The gender gap in an education, literacy, and employment in India is huge so violence toward women is a top priority for feminists there [28]. In Afghanistan, Taliban resurgence is harming women, by closing of girls' schools and being violent to women's businesses [28].

Some forms of gender-based violence are: sexual harassment, abuse of women and female genital mutilation, antifeby pills, abortion and forced sterilization, early and forced marriage, so-called 'honor violence' and other harmful practices. For example, FGM (female genital cutting) is practiced largely in North and Sub-Saharan Africa, because of belief that a girl cannot be married unless she undergoes FGM, despite laws to the contrary [28]. In China and East and South Asia, the one-child policy reinforced ancient son preference and is associated with abortion of female fetuses, dowry violence against women, and female infanticide, neglect, and abandonment [28].

When it comes the trafficking, the majority of victims in the EU and out are women, most often trafficked for sexual exploitation.

Internet violence against women represent an obstacle to women's participation in public life, while harassment and abuse on social media have far-reaching consequences for their daily

lives. So, ‘identifying where women are included and where they are excluded gives a picture of the discrepancy between inherited notions of what women are and their lived experiences’ [42, p. 536].

Females use social media more for leisure and entertainment and report higher stress levels while males have higher burnout rates from social media use [28].

All these practices against women cause irreparable damage to their psycho-physical health. Despite the seriousness of the problem, it is most often ignored both inside and outside the EU, and not reported.

3.1. *Gender Equality Strategy Measures*

Gender-equitable economy is the path to GE. Women and men should have equal opportunities: for economic independence, to be paid equally for work of equal value, to have equal access to finance and fair pensions. They should share care and financial obligations equally.

A gender-equitable economy is achieved through gender-sensitive education, i.e. curriculum. Unfortunately, ‘the process of education is highly gendered and operates through a hidden curriculum; gender segregation in kindergarten is reinforced by toys and games promoting high activity for boys and quietness for girls’ [28, p. 383].

‘The basis of scientific and technological progress of a society is education’ [48, p. 199]. That is why it is important for it to be gender sensitive, having in mind the current education directions: ‘(1) deepening the gap between rich and poor and (2) reducing disparities and raising the standards of the poor - wealth for all’ [43, p. 121].

Gender thematization of upbringing and education is not a matter of fashion or dictation [34, p. 5]. ‘... What matters is not just the size of money incomes or the amount of commodities produced, as emphasized in mainstream economics. Rather, it is what a person does (or can do) with the commodities or given characteristics that the person comes to possess or control, in order to enhance his or her wellbeing’ [12, p. 425].

An important measure is the **elimination of gender differences in the labor market**. The gap between the employment rate of women and men in the EU is 11.6%; only 55.3% of women born outside the EU are employed, compared to 69.7% of women born in the EU; in the EU, only 16% of Roma women are paid; women make up 10% of the workforce in the construction sector and 25% of the workforce in agriculture, forestry, fisheries and transport, while men make up 25% of the workforce in education and 20% of the workforce in the health and social sector [8, 9, 10].

Increasing women's participation in the labor market has a positive impact on the economy. It empowers women to participate in public life and be economically independent. The female employment rate in the EU is higher today than ever before, but many women still face barriers to accessing and remaining in the labor market. Some women are structurally underrepresented in the labor market, often due to overlapping gender conditions with other conditions, such as belonging to an ethnic or religious minority or a migrant background.

Improving the balance between business and private life of workers is one way to close the gender gap in the labor market. Both parents must be entitled to family care. The directive on work-life balance introduces minimum standards for family leave and flexible working conditions, and the equal distribution of care responsibilities between parents is promoted. Globally, only every 10th manager in private and venture capital firms is a woman, although in private funds that respect gender equality 72% of partners are women; almost 92% of the total capital invested in Europe is received by male-only founding groups [8, 9, 10].

There is a stereotype that women are more adaptable and obedient and that can work for lower wages, even in exploitative conditions [Caraway in: 45]. In terms of computational skills, women are at a disadvantage. One of the causes of such differences is inequality in the labor market in the past and present, which prevents women from using these skills [45].

For jobs with the most basic level of responsibility, workers need basic literacy skills - reading and writing. If they want the maximum economic return on their investment, they need the ability to absorb, use and disseminate information [44].

Empowering women in the labor market also means providing them with opportunities for successful investment in entrepreneurship, their integration into the labor market and GE in the 'male' sectors. 'Research on Chinese women under market-driven development shows a paradox —women report both gains and losses in their homes and workplaces' [28, p. 204]. Finally, it is proven that 'a large share of housework negatively affects women's happiness, in particular for those employed for more than 30 hours per week' [32, p. 14].

Furthermore, it is important *to achieve equal participation in different sectors of the economy*. For this goal, education is very important. 'To an education, especially higher education, has been assigned a significant role in the vision of the future society' (48, p. 111, according to 47, p. 175).

Although more women than men have a university degree in Europe, women are still underrepresented in better paid professions. And 'clearly better-paying jobs with comfortable time schedules tend to offer the greatest degree of freedom to the worker' [On women at work see more in: 22, p. 49; p. 49 - 54]. In contemporary times, a number of women studying is increasing and the motives for that are usually getting out of poverty, better living conditions for the family, contributing to the community, sense of self-sufficiency, using their own potential and such [25].

Some research on education assumes that the problem of GI in education is perceived as a problem of cognitive differences or deficits [Lynch, Lodge according to the 4]. Despite such prejudice, in terms of academic achievement in most countries, women perform better than men, are more likely to have higher qualifications, but they are paid less than men. Even in sectors where they are more numerous, they have less self-confidence and self-esteem. However, it is rare to care how, despite their good results, to correct their lack of self-confidence, as they often self-underestimate.

When it comes to low-paid jobs, the share of women is higher. Among students with excellent achievement in mathematics or science in OECD countries, every 4th boy expects a career as an engineer or scientist, while only every 6th girl has such expectations; every 3rd girl expects to work in healthcare, while only every 8th boy has such expectations; the digital sector employs 3.1 times more men than women; women make up only 22% of programmers dealing with artificial intelligence [8, 9, 10].

With the very rapid transformation and digitalization of the economy (digital transition) and the labor market, 90% of jobs today require basic digital skills. The share of women among those studying and pursuing a career in ICT in the EU is only 17%, and among people with a degree in STEM only 36%, despite the fact that girls achieve better results in digital literacy, which is a significant difference and paradox.

In developed societies, the share of women among students and the highly educated is higher than of men. A number of factors determine the achievement of a high level of education: social origin, family economic status, belonging to a narrower socio-cultural framework [Diprete, Buchmann in 54].

In countries where women have a lower level of education, there is a relatively low proportion of their participation in paid work [Psacharopoulos, Patrinos in 44]. Thus, gender

differences at the level of higher education are implied by gender orientation towards certain groups of occupations or individual professions [54].

It is essential that women not only complete their studies, but also to have access to those areas of study in which they are still mostly a minority - especially science and technology [Azoulay in 45]. Reasons for less commitment of women to study in the STEM field: the absence of female role models in this field, social norms, cultural practices, fear of the male-dominated field, belief that it is difficult to combine work with family responsibilities, etc. In richer countries, with greater GE, there are generally fewer women graduating from STEM, as they are encouraged to participate in STEM education, but personal preference prevail. For women in less developed countries, a career in this field, well paid and relatively secure, may seem like a good option [6]. On the other hand, boys should be encouraged to gain work experience in the protection and teaching professions [4].

All in all, girls and boy are faced with the contemporary society dilemma: 'Education for profit or education for democracy', 'for freedom and human development' as noted by Nussbaum [38, p. 13 – 26; 37, p. 6 – 13; 22, p. 19 - 24].

The fight against gender pay and pension differences is also crucial. The principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value has been enshrined in the treaties from 1957 and transposed into EU law. Yet women on average still earn less than men.

The differences in employment and pay on the basis of sex overall over life result in an even greater difference in pensions, so that in old age women are at greater risk of poverty than men. In the EU, the gender pay gap is 15.7%, while in the EU the gender pay gap is 30.1% [8, 9, 10].

To eliminate the gender pay gap, all its root causes need to be addressed, including lower women's participation in the labor market, their 'invisible' and unpaid work, more frequent part-time work and more career breaks, as well as vertical and horizontal segregation, based on gender stereotypes and discrimination. When information on wage levels is available, it is easier to detect differences and discrimination. Due to a lack of transparency, many women do not know or cannot prove that they are underpaid.

An indispensable measure is **an elimination of gender differences in care**. Successful work with responsibilities at home is a challenge, especially for women. Women often decide how to work in accordance with their care responsibilities and whether how they share it with partner. This is a particular difficulty for single parents, most of whom are women. Most people assume that a woman raising children alone, especially sons, will fail to teach them to become a patriarchal, which is not the case [22; On feminist parenting further more at pp. 72 - 78].

Women also bear the disproportionate burden of unpaid work. An even distribution of household responsibilities is very important, as is the availability of childcare, social care and household services, especially for single parents. Insufficient access to quality and affordable organized care services is one of the main drivers of GI in the labor market.

'The movement of care from unpaid to the paid sector by creating more child and adult care services will result in more carers being paid for the work that is currently provided for 'free' [21, p. 458]. Investing in care services is therefore important to support women's participation in paid work and their professional development. It can also contribute to the creation of jobs for women and men.

'Even in the nations with more developed economies, like the United States, where paid care sectors are the largest and most developed, the majority of care work is done within families, without pay, and overwhelmingly by women' [2, p. 472].

In order to progress towards GE, in the division of household labor and care, we must challenge the tenets of traditional masculinity that household labor and care is regarded as

‘women’s work’. Women in the EU spend 22 hours a week on care and household chores, and men only 9 hours a week; 80% of care in the EU is provided by informal carers, and 75% of them are women, many of whom are of migrant origin [8, 9, 10].

Although women predominate in the teaching profession, international trends suggest that men dominate leadership positions in education. In recent studies, as the reason for this the women themselves state family responsibilities (their partners do not take an equal share of childcare), masculinized culture, and that they may not be able to devote themselves fully ([4]).

Some predominantly female occupations (e.g. primary and secondary school teachers, nurses) also have problems reconciling work and family responsibilities due to shift work (and/or weekends), which makes women's positions more difficult. On the other hand, highly male-profiled occupations, which are usually physically more difficult, when it comes to secondary education, or which carry specific risks to life (police and army), have a number of negative effects at the individual level (health threats, increased death risks), but also in the sphere of marriage and family (frequent or long absences) [54].

When women reach positions that are predominantly held by men, it is necessary to prevent possible obstacles, in the form of punishments (humiliation, sexual harassment and violence) [27].

Achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics is also required. The number of women in leadership positions is still too small (in politics, government agencies, the highest courts or boards of directors), even in cases where there is GE at lower levels. If only men are in leading positions, for a long period of time, this shapes the pattern of employment of heirs, sometimes due to unconscious favoritism.

Gender representation is crucial for successful inclusive, diverse leadership and for proposing innovative ideas in a dynamic society. Enabling citizens from all backgrounds to participate in society is a necessary precondition for functional democracy.

Women make up only 7.5% of board chairmen and 7.7% of CEOs of the largest companies in the EU, listed on the stock exchange; only 32.2% of members of EU national parliaments are women [8, 9, 10]. Despite some progress in recent years, women in European companies and industry remain underrepresented in decision-making positions. Equal opportunities for participation are key to representative democracy at all levels - European, national, regional and local.

In the 2019 European elections, the share of women among elected members of European Parliament was 39%, and in 2014 it was 37% [8, 9, 10]. So, ‘feminists need norms according to which they can orient themselves, build a collective movement, and make political judgments’ [52, p. 118].

Gender mainstreaming and an intersectional perspective in EU policies are measures towards a gender-equal future. Incorporating a gender perspective into all EU policies and processes is key to achieving GE. Gender mainstreaming ensures that policies and programs maximize the potential of all sexes.

In the digital transition, it is crucial that more girls acquire IT skills, so that they can participate in shaping the future digital world.

When it comes to health, the sexes face gender-specific health risks. The gender dimension was included in the EU's anti-cancer plan launched in 2020. EU Plan to fight drugs 2021-2025 was adopted in 2020, and deals with the gender issues that women and girls face in drug abuse.

Women are a heterogeneous group and may face intersectional discrimination based on several characteristics. For example, a person with a disability, who is female and a migrant, may be discriminated on three or more grounds. The action plan for integration and inclusion,

and the EU strategic framework on disability, Roma inclusion and children's rights will be linked to this strategy, and to each other.

Advocating for gender equality and the empowerment of women around the world is a main goal of the EU's external action. Women's empowerment is the women ability to take control over their own destinies [28]. 'Woman power', among others, consist of demanding equal rights-equal protection in political arenas, equal access to economic wealth and such alike [23]. An example of lost women economic and political power are Russian women after the collapse of the Soviet Union, when they, in transitional economy, have lost jobs, has declined their pay, and they have sharply increased work hours in their homes [28].

It is important that the EU's internal and external actions are coordinated and mutually reinforcing. Thus, support is needed for women to engage in non-traditional jobs, in order to contribute to breaking social taboos and achieving change for the better [27]. In this context, increased participation in government would give women the legitimacy of change agents. In order for that to happen, it is necessary to raise the aspirations of girls and their parents through positive examples in order to encourage.

It is very important to evaluate an unpaid work of women and girls, so as not to remain forever the exploitative basis of the global economy.

Access to gender-sensitive education can be facilitated thanks to technologies (Android phones, tablets, computers, etc.), if economic and infrastructural conditions are provided in advance. To educate the girls, it is necessary to suppress the phenomenon of child marriages, but also to remove obstacles, such as sexual harassment. Furthermore, schools have a key role in promoting GE, through raising awareness, correcting misinformation, providing new models of behavior and so. In order to achieve a development and social cohesion, it is important to prepare girls and women for equal participation in community life, including decision-making [4].

All around the world, girls and boys from socially deprived groups and communities leave school early, whereby girls become young mothers, thus entering a circle of poverty from which their children are not excluded. Therefore, states need to solve the problem of dropping out of school by various incentives to acquire qualifications and by financial measures to support families and schools [4]. The systemic affirmative action, such as focusing on the problem of education of rural women and providing their technical training, achieves even greater progress towards GE [25].

'Scandinavia has the highest global rank on GE; in Norway, the gender perspective is central to all government decisions' [28, p. 205].

It is also important to: '... include women and their perspectives into scientific research which would bring them from the margins to the centre, making them visible and showing that they provide valuable knowledge about the functioning of social worlds' [17, p. 61].

It is also necessary: '... to make efforts to find ways to overcome the existing crisis manifested in all aspects of human existence, to achieve human emancipation and achieve a society that will meet the needs of contemporary man' [47, p. 31].

On the other hand, having in mind the example from the region, i.e. that the Government of the Republic of Serbia, at the Session on October 14, 2021, adopted the Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 – 2030, it is important to point out the instructed constructive critics.

According to media reports, the text of the draft *National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030* is not harmonized with the *European Union Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025*, which does not even mention 'gender sensitive/neutral language', as pointed out in the letter of Matica Srpska, the oldest literary, cultural and scientific institution in Serbia, to the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue.

Some other shortcomings are related to the fact that: 1) the draft Strategy violates the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia (which already knows the concepts of gender and GE); 2) to favor 'gender sensitive language' under the pretext of using only terms and expressions almost exclusively in the masculine gender; 3) to state only measures to improve the position of women, but not men, where there are gender disparities in favor of women; 4) do not treat women and men equally; 5) do not respect the autonomy of the University, guaranteed by the Constitution, specifically the 'right to determine study programs', because it provides for 'gender mainstreaming of higher education' and 'the need for gender-sensitive higher education reform', which could be question, e.g. teaching literature, if literary texts (especially world literary heritage) that possibly contain gender stereotypes were removed, as a reflection of the time and social context in which they were created, which would ultimately result in deconstructing existing literary canons, created by generations; 6) violates the Constitution when proposing the establishment of a 'gender balance in research teams', which would give greater priority to sex over the quality of researchers (especially in areas where the number of professional men is small), which is contrary to the principles of scientific research; 7) The vision of the draft Strategy, in addition to women and men, assumes persons of 'different gender identities', which are not specified.

4. Conclusions

In the theoretical and methodological framework, to explain the problem of GI, we started from a liberal feminist perspective that roots of the problem are in the culture. Even at the beginning of the 21st century, liberal feminism remains a strong position in feminist theory for advocating that all people have equal dignity and value and that society must respect and promote universal human nature which is not gender-marked, so it includes both men and women.

Our assumption, that the problem of GI is significantly represented in (European) society because it is dominantly conditioned by gender socialization and the (un)intended consequences caused by it, i.e. cultural patterns that are difficult to change due to lifelong exposure to them (gender stereotypes, prejudices, discrimination, violence, segregation in education and at work, etc.), is confirmed.

The results highlight the solutions reached by the analysis of documents: gender equality economy; gender sensitive education; elimination of gender differences in the labor market; achieving equal participation in economy sectors; combating gender pay and pension gaps; eliminating gender differences in care; equality in leading positions in society; achieving gender balance in decision-making and politics; gender mainstreaming and intersectional perspective in EU policies; advocating for GE and the empowerment of women. In the eventual adoption of the Strategy for Gender Equality in non-EU member states, which should be in line with the EU Strategy (European Commission) for Gender Equality (2020-2025), it would be important to pay attention to the already mentioned constructive critics.

If, according to the Gender Equality Index (2020), the EU is 60 years away from full GE, with a current score of 67.9 points, how many years of complete GE, and the constitution of the Gender Equality Index in general, are still non-members of the EU, the Republic of Serbia, and especially Bosnia and Herzegovina, respectively the Republic of Srpska, for which UNICEF B&H states that are still 'a traditional society in which women fight for a better position every day'!?

To solve this problem, it would be crucial to prevent violence, especially against girls and women, and to prevent all ideologies which threaten women's rights. It would be necessary, from the earliest age of children, to formally educate girls and boys on GE, especially in the

digital sphere, which is becoming an inevitable part of the future life and work of the sexes, and where it is important for women to encourage them to contribute to its growth. It is also important to develop and nurture non-violent relationships and a culture of dialogue in society.

The multidisciplinary approach of other relevant experts and services (victim support, social and health services) is also indispensable.

Media and culture have a significant impact on shaping perceptions of reality, because they are channels for challenging stereotypes and prejudices.

References

- [1] Adopted Strategy for Gender Equality from 2021 to 2030, Belgrade, October 14, 2021. <https://www.srbija.gov.rs/vest/582820/usvojena-strategija-za-rodnu-ravnopravnost-od-2021-do-2030-godine.php>
- [2] Armenia, A. Caring as Work: Research and Theory, In Risman, B. J., Froyum C. M., Scarborough, W. J. (eds), *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender (2nd ed.)*, pp. 469 – 478, Switzerland, Springer International Publishing AG. 2018.
- [3] Babović, M., Vuković, O., Petrović, I. *Gender equality in the Republic of Srpska: Public opinion survey*, Banja Luka, Gender Center of the Government of the Republic of Srpska, Center for Social Research. 2012. <https://www.secons.net/files/publications/95-publication.pdf>.
- [4] Council of Europe. Gender-aware policy in education Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)13 accepted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on October 10, 2007 and explanatory memorandum. Government of the Republic of Croatia: Office for Gender Equality. 2010.
- [5] Dale, A. Wathan, J., Higgins, V. In Alasuutari, P., Bickman, L., Brannen, J., *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*, pp. 520 – 535, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, SAGE Publications. 2008.
- [6] Dijkstra, L., Norlén, H., Papadimitriou, E. *The Regional Gender Equality Monitor Measuring female disadvantage and achievement in EU regions*, [Joint Research Centre, European Commission](https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/05cf3c93-3b0a-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-107975937). 18.09.2019, EUR 29679 EN, 45 - 46. 2019. <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/05cf3c93-3b0a-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1/language-en/format-PDF/source-107975937>
- [7] Enyew, B. E., Mihrete, A. G. Liberal feminism: Assessing its compatibility and applicability in Ethiopia context, *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*, 10(6), pp. 59-64. 2018.
- [8] European Commission. *A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. Communication from The Commission to the European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the regions. 2020. <https://humanrights.gov.mt/en/Pages/Gender%20Equality/European%20Affairs/Gender-Equality-Strategy-2020-2025.aspx>
- [9] European Commission. *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: Equality Union: Strategy for Gender Equality 2020-2025*. Brussels. 2020. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/HR/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152&from=EN>
European Commission. *Striving for a Union of Equality The Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025*. 2020. https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/aid_development_cooperation_fundamental_rights/gender_equality_strategy_factsheet_en.pdf.
- [10] European Institute for Gender Equality. *Gender Equality Index 2020: Can we wait 60*

- more years? 2020. <https://eige.europa.eu/news/gender-equality-index-2020-can-we-wait-60-more-years>
- [11] Floro, M. S. Integrating Gender in Economic Analysis, In Evans et al., (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, pp. 413 – 430, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, SAGE reference. 2014.
- [12] Gavrić, S., Ždralović, A. (ed.). *Gender Equality - Theory, Law, Policies: Introduction to Gender Studies for Students of Social Sciences in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Sarajevo, Sarajevo Open Center. 2019.
- [13] Government of the Republic of Serbia, Coordinating Body for Gender Equality, *Index of Gender Equality in the Republic of Serbia. (2018)*. <https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/index.php/sr/akademski-kutak/publikacije/indeks-rodne-ravnopravnosti-za-republiku-srbiji-2018>
- [14] Government of the Republic of Srpska, *Equality of the sexes/Basic terms*. https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentarrs/Pages/GenderOsnovni_pojmovi.aspx
- [15] Government of the Republic of Srpska, *Standards for gender equality*. https://www.vladars.net/sr-SP-Cyrl/Vlada/centri/gendercentarrs/PAO/Pages/Standardi_za_ravnopravnost_polova.aspx
- [16] Grenz, S. Power in Feminist Research Processes, In Evans et al., (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, pp. 61 – 74, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, SAGE reference. 2014.
- [17] Haralambos, M., Holborn, M. *Sociology: Themes and Perspectives*. Zagreb, Golden marketing. 2002.
- [18] Harari, J. N. *21 lessons for the 21st century*. Belgrade, Laguna. 2019.
- [19] Higgins, T. E. *Feminism as Liberalism: A Tribute to the Work of Martha Nussbaum Symposium: Honoring the Contributions of Professor Martha Nussbaum to the Scholarship and Practice of Gender and Sexuality Law: Feminism and Liberalism*, 19 Colum. J. Gender 65 (2010), 64 – 87. 2010.
- [20] Himmelweit, S., Plomien, A. Feminist Perspectives on Care: Theory, Practice and Policy, In Evans et al., (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, pp. 446 – 464, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, SAGE reference. 2014.
- [21] Hooks, B. *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics*, Cambridge, MA, South End Press. 2000.
- [22] Hooks, B. *Feminist Theory from margin to center*, Boston, South and Press. 1984.
- [23] Kothari, C. R. *Research Methodology: Methods & Techniques*, New Delhi, New Age International (P) Ltd., Publishers. 2004.
- [24] Krstec, T. The right to education for women. In Zaharijević, A. (ed.). *Did someone say feminism? How feminism affected the women of the XXI century*, 4th updated edition, edition for Bosnia and Herzegovina (81 - 92), Sarajevo, Sarajevo Open Center Heinrich Böll Foundation - BiH Office CURE Foundation. 2012.
- [25] Law, S. A. In defense of liberal feminism, ELECD 99, In West, R., Bowman, G. C. (eds), *Research Handbook on Feminist Jurisprudence*, pp. 24 – 43, Northampton, MA, Edward Elgar Publishing. 2019.
- [26] Leach, A. *12 steps to achieve gender equality in our lifetimes*. 2016. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/14/gender-equality-women-girls-rights-education-empowerment-politics>
- [27] Lindsey, L. L. *Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective (6th ed.)*, London & New York,

Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2016.

- [28] Lorber, J. *The variety of feminisms and their contributions to gender equality*, Oldenburg, Oldenburger Universitätsreden: Ansprachen, Aufsätze, Vorträge. Bibliotheks- und Informationssystem der Universität Oldenburg. 1997.
- [29] MacDonald, S., Headlam, N. *Research Methods Handbook: Introductory Guide to Research Methods for Social Research*, Manchester, Centre for Local Economic Strategies. 2014.
- [30] Matica Srpska, Strategy for gender equality violates the Constitution, 10/01/2022. <https://www.vreme.com/vesti/matica-srpska-strategija-za-rodnu-ravnopravnost-krsi-ustav/>
- [31] Mencarini, L., Sironi, M. Happiness, Housework and Gender Inequality in Europe, *European Sociological Review*, 28(2), 203-219. 2012.
- [32] Milojević, I., Markov, S. (ed.). *Introduction to gender theories*, Novi Sad, Mediterran Publishing, University of Novi Sad, Center for Gender Studies, ACIMSI. 2011.
- [33] Milutinović Bojanić, S. Gender education and education: an (impossible) dialogue, in Čeriman, J., Milutinović Bojanić, S. (ed.), *Gender education and education: an (im)possible dialogue*, p. 5 - 101, Belgrade, Center for Ethics, Law and Applied Philosophy, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade. 2016. <https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/sr/akademski-kutak/publikacije/rodno-vaspitane-i-obrazovane-nemoguci-dijalog>
- [34] Momčilović, V. *Feminist contributions to gender equal education in the world*, Novi Sad, ACIMSI - Center for Gender Studies of the University of Novi Sad. 2012. https://www.academia.edu/5419500/Feministi%C4%8Dki_doprinosi_rodno_ravnopravnom_obrazovanju_u_svetu
- [35] Nussbaum, M. Feminist critique of liberalism, In *Word*, 71(17), 169 – 205. 2003. <http://www.womengo.org.rs/feministicka/tekstovi/marta-nusbaum.pdf>
- [36] Nussbaum, M. C. Education for Profit, Education for Freedom, In *Liberal Education*, pp. 6 – 13. Annual meeting of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. 2009. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ861161.pdf>
- [37] Nussbaum, M. C. *Not for profit: Why Democracy needs The Humanities*, Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press. 2010.
- [38] Nussbaum, M. C. *Women and Human Development: Their Capabilities Approach*, New York, Cambridge University Press. 2001.
- [39] Popov Momčinović, Z., Ždralović, A., *Status of gender equality - effects of the implementation of the B&H Gender Action Plan at the local level in six selected local communities (Tuzla, Srebrenik, Gračanica, Bratunac, Milići and Srebrenica)*, Tuzla, Bratunac, Association "HO HORIZONTI" Tuzla; Association "Women's Forum" Bratunac. http://horizonti.ba/wp-content/uploads/stanje_ravnopravnosti_spolova.pdf.
- [40] Rosa, R., Drew, E., Canavan, S. An overview of gender inequality in EU universities, In book *The Gender-Sensitive University A Contradiction in Terms?* pp. 1-15, Project, SAGE - Systematic Action for Gender Equality, 2020. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/342688307_An_Overview_of_Gender_Inequality_in_EU_Universities
- [41] Sjoberg, L. Female Combatants, Feminism, and Just War, In Evans et al., (eds.), (2014), *The SAGE Handbook of Feminist Theory*, pp. 535 – 549, Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington DC, SAGE reference. 2014.
- [42] Suzić, N. *Sociology of education*. Srpsko Sarajevo. Institute for textbooks and teaching aids of the Republic of Srpska. 2001.
- [43] The Economist Intelligence Unit., (2010), *Women's Economic Opportunity Index - A*

- new pilot index and global ranking from the Economist Intelligence Unit Findings and methodology.* http://graphics.eiu.com/upload/WEO_report_June_2010.pdf.
- [44] UNESCO. *Global Education Monitoring Report – Gender Report: Building bridges for gender equality*, Paris, UNESCO. 2019.
- [45] UNICEF. Gender equality. [10/01/2022] (<https://www.unicef.org/bih/rodna-ravnopravnost>)
- [46] Vilić, D. *Contemporary social processes and changes: Consequences and reactions*. Banja Luka, Kasper. 2009.
- [47] Vilić, D. *Knowledge society*. Banja Luka, Scientific Association Sociological Discourse. 2021.
- [48] Vujadinović, D. *Theoretical and methodological framework for understanding gender relations in modern times - The case of Serbia.* <https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/index.php/sr/akademski-kutak/tekstovi/teorijsko-metodoloske-pretpostavke-za-razumevane-rodnih-odnosa-u>
- [49] Vujadinović, D., Stanimirović, V. *Gender relations in Serbia in the age of transition - between emancipation and re-traditionalization.* <https://www.rodnaravnopravnost.gov.rs/sites/default/files/2017-02/Prof.%20dr%20Dragica%20Vuajdinovic%20Rodni%20odnosi%20u%20Srbiji%20u%20doba%20tranzicije%20izmedju%20emancipacije%20i%20retradionalizacije.pdf>
- [50] Wharton, A. S. *The Sociology of Gender: An Introduction to Theory and Research*, USA, Blackwell Publishing. 2005.
- [51] Zerilli, L. Feminist theory and the canon of political thought, In Dryzek, J. S., Honig, B., Phillips, A. *The Oxford Handbook of Political Theory*, pp. 106 – 124, Oxford New York, Oxford University Press. 2006.
- [52] Ždralović, A. *Theoretical Disputes on Justice: Liberal Perspectives and Response to Criticism*, Sarajevo. Faculty of Law. 2021.
- [53] Шобот, А. Gender educational characteristics and education reform. *New Serbian political thought. Special issue, 19(2)*, 215 – 234, 2011.