

The Selected Aspects of Gender Equality in European Union

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Abstract

Despite the laws and regulations that should ensure equal gender treatment, women are still disadvantaged in all businesses and public sector. This discrimination is manifested particularly in the approach to jobs, financial evaluation, political nominations and opportunities of developing their abilities regardless of gender. The gender differences in work and public life remain even today the most visible evidence of inequality between men and women in our society. The gender equality is one of the fundamental principles of EU law and all its member countries committed to be in the compliance with it. This article reviews the current state of gender equality in EU.

Key words

Gender equality, equality of employment opportunities

JEL Classification: J16, J71, J80

Introduction

The notion "gender differences" means in general the differences between men and women in the measurement of the participation in the business sphere, in the amount of the financial evaluation for equal job position, in the political nominations and, last but not least, also in the possibility of getting equal job position.

The women has always to be confronted with the prejudices of the society. However, they are successful in the participation in the business and public life. What is more, they are always put also into the role of the mother and wife. There is always a bigger chance for men to get equal job position as the women would like to get, especially because the reason that the future employer should have some doubts that the mother-women has to be not only the employee but she has also to manage the majority of the childcare and household, beside her job position tasks. Discriminated are also single and unmarried women-candidates. The main reason can be again a doubt from the side of the future employer that she will go on the maternity leave.

The EU embodied the gender equality and the strengthening of the women-position into a number of laws and strategic documents. This is maybe the reason why the position of women improves every year.

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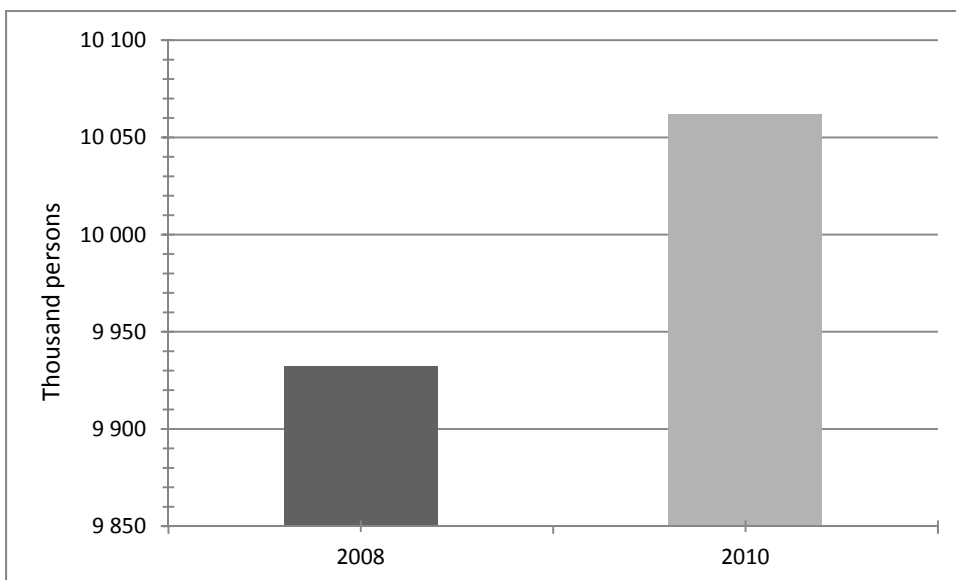
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1 Gender equality in European Union (EU)

Gender difference in the business means that there is a certain difference between the participation of men and women in the business field. However, these differences are not trivial. On the contrary, they are very outstanding (Bárošová, 2009). The evidence of this fact is, in addition, visible also in the following table below. There is presented the statistics about the business of men and women in EU.

The progress in the number of businesswomen in EU is clearly visible in the next graphical overview. In 2008, the number of businesswomen reached 9 932 400. Despite the incoming crisis, which entry the whole world in this year, the number of women increased to 10 062 100. It means, the growth was about 129 700 beginning businesswomen. In the percentage, this growth is +1,3 %.

Graph 1 Number of businesswomen in EU in thousands



Source: NADSME. 2010. *Report about the state of the small and medium businesses in SR*. Retrieved from http://nadsme.sk/files/Stav_MSP_2010-fin.pdf

To compare the progress in the number of businesswomen in EU and in Slovakia, we have to mention the growth indices, i.e. the increase or decrease of businesswomen between the years 2008 and 2010, as stands in the following table.

Table 1 Trend in the number of businesswomen in EU and in Slovakia in %

Country / years	2008/2009	Increase or decrease	2009/2010	Increase or decrease
EU (27)	99,7	-0,3	101,6	+1,6
Slovakia	121,3	+21,3	95,5	-4,5

Source: Processed according to: Barošová, M. (2010). *Chosen aspects*. Retrieved January 15, 2012 from http://www.sspr.gov.sk/texty/File/vyskum/2010/Barosova/Vybrane_aspekty.pdf

In the time of the penetration of media during the crisis in 2008, there was a decrease of businesswomen in EU. However, in Slovakia, we experienced the enormous increase of women who decided to run a business. Maybe they tried in that way to solve their financial situation after the maternity leave, or eventually, after the job loss because many companies reduced their number of employees in that year. In 2010, EU underwent the slow increase in the development of the number of businesswomen. On the other hand, in Slovakia, there occurred the slow decrease, around 4,5 %. This could be possibly caused by the disproportionate number of the established companies in the years 2008/2009. We can state that from the side of women, there is an evident interest to apply in the business sphere.

A detailed overview of the ratio of the gender representation of businesspeople in EU is in detail described in the next table.

Table 2 Businesspersons total number in EU in 2010 (in thousand persons)

EU Member States	Total number	From that		
		Men	Women	% of Women
EU	32.915,9	22.853,9	10.062,1	30,5
Belgium 5.	600,6	418,2	182,4	30,3
Bulgaria 4.	357,9	229,5	128,4	35,8
Czech Republic	836,4	604,4	232	27,7
Denmark	231,9	169,2	62,6	26,9
Germany	4.257,8	2.915,0	1.342,8	31,5
Estonia	45,8	30,7	15,2	33,2
Ireland	303,9	244,6	59,3	19,5
Greece	1.329,8	940,1	389,7	29,3
Spain	2.948,6	2.020,7	927,9	31,5
France	2.811,8	1.988,9	822,9	29,3
Italy	5.393,2	3.893,4	1.499,9	27,8
Cyprus	64,5	46,7	17,8	27,5
Latvia 1.	94,7	56	38,7	40,9
Lithuania 3.	124,4	73,9	50,5	40,6
Luxembourg	17,1	11,3	5,8	33,9
Hungary	451,4	304,1	147,3	32,6
Malta	23,3	19,9	3,4	14,6
Netherlands	1.204,2	805,0	399,2	33,2
Austria	475,4	306,8	168,6	35,5
Poland	3.017,4	1.981,2	1.036,2	34,3
Portugal 2.	1.085,7	643,9	441,8	40,7
Rumania	2.001,0	1.438,5	562,5	28,1
Slovenia	119,4	84,7	34,7	29,1
Slovakia	367	272,2	94,8	25,8
Finland	314,3	213,4	100,9	32,1
Sweden	486,1	353,5	132,5	27,3
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK)	3.952,5	2.788,0	1.164,5	29,5

Source: Self-processed according to: Barošová, M. (2010). *Chosen aspects*. Retrieved August 16, 2012 from http://www.sspr.gov.sk/texty/File/vyskum/2010/Barosova/Vybrane_aspekty.pdf

The average of women representation in the business for the whole EU is 30,5 %. Slovakia occurs under this average with 25,8 % in 2010. However, in 2010, the statistical office identified the number of women in the Slovak business environment by 27,5 %. It means that the all-European statistics reports the slightly modified number. It can be caused by the fact that the statistics was not processed from the data of the annual average. Slovakia was at the last place also between the V4 states. The highest number of the businesswomen participation from these states proved Poland, followed by Hungary with the higher number as the average of EU and the Czech Republic at the third place with around 3 % under the average of EU.

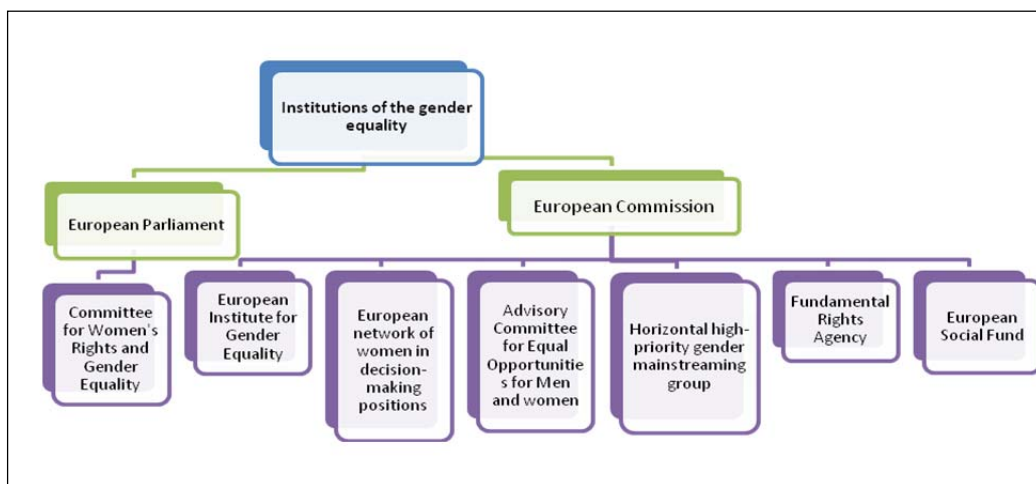
We can count the Latvia, Portugal, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Belgium to the states with the highest participation of women, by 40 %. We can include Malta, Ireland, Slovakia, Sweden and Italy to the states with the lowest participation of women in the business sphere. In this scale of EU, the Czech Republic was placed at the 21st place.

1.1 Policy and measurements in the field of the gender equality in EU

"Equality is one of the five values which is the European Union (EU) based on. Its responsibility is to aim at the equality of men and women within all its activities. This equality is specified in the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Hereby, the discrimination on the basis of the gender is strictly forbidden" (Report of the Commission of the European Parliament).

"According to the European Commission, the women business potential is the undiscovered source of the new growth and job positions" (Euroactiv, 2009). However, the number of businesswomen in EU is significantly lower than the number of businessmen. Therefore, the question of the equal opportunities became one of the main fields of the social life. The European Commission pays attention to this problematics in an effort to change this status.

Figure 1 Institutional Framework of the Gender Equality in EU



Source: Self-processing according to: Slovak Women Lobby. (2012). *Institutions of Gender Equality*. Retrieved January 28, 2012 from <http://zenskaloby.wordpress.com/rodova-rovnost-v-eu/institucie-rodovej-rovnosti/>

The main department of the European Parliament (EP) which deals with the questions of the gender equality is the **Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality** which was established in 2004. One of its basic functions is to examine whether the prepared legislation does not have a negative influence on the women rights. The chairperson of this committee is Anna Záborská and one of its members is the Slovak EP representative Edita Bauer.

Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality has the following activities and responsibilities (Euroactiv):

- determination, enforcement and protection of women rights in the EU and the society measurements related with it,
- enforcement of women rights in the third world countries,
- policy of equal opportunities, inclusive of the equality between men and women, with respect to the labour market opportunities and their treatment at work,
- elimination of all forms of discrimination based on gender,
- enforcement and further implementation of the principle of gender equality in all political fields,
- integration and enforcement of international contracts and agreements concerning the women rights,
- information policy related to women.

From the 1st January 2011, women rights agenda in the field of the gender equality was moved to the portfolio of the European Commission for Justice, basic rights and nationality. Since 1981, **Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities for Men and women** was established on the basis of the Commission resolution 82/43/EEC. It helps the Commission with the preparation and implementation of the EU measurements aimed at the support of the equal opportunities between men and women. The committee has 68 members and there is involved every member state of EU, employers' and employees' organizations on the level of the EU.

In 2007, **European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE)** started its activity. It is located in Vilnius (Lithuania). It is the main institution in the field of the gender equality on the level of the EU and it offers the technical support to the institutions of the gender equality in the member states of EU. The aims of the institute are as follows (EIGE):

- collection and analysis of the comparable data about the questions of the equality of men and women;
- production of methodical instruments dedicated mostly to help by the penetration of the questions of the gender equality into all fields of the policy;
- simplification of the replacement of the proven methods and the support of the communication between the concerned parties;
- increase of the public awareness about the questions of the gender equality.

European network of women in decision-making positions began its activity in 2008. This network of the European commission associates women in decision-making positions in the field of the policy and economy and it creates the platform for the member states to replace the proven methods and successful strategies to improve the balance between the men and women representatives in the decision-making positions.

Men and women equality is enforced also by the **European Social Fund**. It was established in the 1950s of the 20th century. The main target of the fund is to decrease the differences in the field of the prosperity and the standard of living in the member states and the EU regions and therefore, to support their economic and social integrity. Various subjects, e.g. public administration, non-profit organizations or non-governmental organizations, can request the financial grant which represents 50-80% of the total costs of the funded activity. The target of these grants is to support the employment of the disadvantaged groups on the labour market.

EU took up the activity of the **Fundamental Rights Agency** (FRA) according to the regulation of the European Community Council (ECC) n. 168/2007 from the 15th February 2007. The agency is placed in Vienna. The aim of the agency is to collect, analyze and publish the objective information about the status and the compliance of the fundamental rights in the EU.

In the projects co-funded by the structural funds, the strategic target is the gender equality. Here, the emphasis is on the prevention of the discrimination based on the gender and other characteristics and their elimination. However, the equality of opportunities does not mean only the assurance of equal conditions but especially the creation of such conditions which respect the specific requirements and experience of the disadvantaged groups. **Regulation of the European Community Council (ECC) n. 1083/200681** about the European funds defines the support of the equality of men and women and prevention of the discrimination as the role of the member states and the European Commission. According to the regulation of the European Council section 16, projects which are co-funded by them have to „support the equality of men and women and the incorporation of the gender equality“. This regulation is reflected into the strategies of the individual member states, mainly in the enforcement of the so-called **horizontal priority gender mainstreaming** (Pietruchová & Magurová, 2011).

EU tries to support the achievement of the gender equality also by the financial help of the various projects. In years 2007-2013, EP and EC decided in the regulation n. 1672/2006/EC from the 24th October 2006 that there was appointed the program of the EU in the field of the employment and social solidarity named – **Progress**. The program supports the following fields:

- employment,
- social protection and incorporation,
- work conditions,
- discrimination restriction,
- equality of men and women.

EU supports the projects which are aimed at the elimination of the gender inequality, discrimination of women and also the establishment of the support centres and information networks for the beginning businesswomen. They can share there their experience, raise some contacts and develop the co-operation with other businesswomen.

1.2 Gender equality in the basic documents of EU and legislation on gender equality

Within EU, there can be mentioned some measurements against the gender inequality which are embodied directly in the Treaty establishing the European Union (in Treaty of Amsterdam). What is more, the member states of the EU have to implement not only this treaty but also the measurements and directives dealing with the support of the equality of men and women in various fields.

Figure 2 Measurements of Gender Equality in EU



Source: Self-processing.

Treaty establishing the European Community (EC) – Treaty of Rome was signed by six founding members of the European Union in 1957 in Rome. In section 2, there is underlined that the support of the equal status of men and women is one of the targets of the EC. In section 3 (2) states that the Community is centred by all its activities on the elimination of the inequality and the support of the equality between men and women. The section 119 involves the assurance of the application of equal remuneration of men and women by equal work. In 1975, there was signed a *directive about the equal remuneration*. Its main target was the equal remuneration of men and women. It was obligatory that the member states have to apply this directive into their own legislation.

Treaty of Amsterdam, Treaty establishing the European Community (TEEC) signed on the 2nd October 1997, in section 6, paragraph 1 declares that “the Union is established on the basis of the principles of freedom, democracy, respect of human rights, fundamental freedoms and legally consistent states which are common for all member states.” According to the section 2, gender equality becomes one of the main targets of the EU; in all activities specified in the section 1, the Community is aimed to the elimination of the inequality and the support of the equality between men and women. The section 3, paragraph 2 embodies the duties of the member states, especially the direction of all its activities to the elimination of the inequality and the support of the equality between men and women (Women equality and women status).

All 27 member states signed in 2007 the **Treaty of Lisbon**. The section 157 deals with the duty of equal remuneration of men and women for equal work. Each member state can apply also certain individual advantages for the less-represented gender group to compensate the unequal treatment on the labour market.

In 2000 in Nice, there was adopted **The Charter of Fundamental Rights** in EU. In 2007, the charter became the legally binding. The section 20 guarantees the equal protection of the law, the section 21 forbids any discrimination and the section 23 insures the assurance of the equality in all fields, including the employment, job positions and remuneration of men and women.

Directive 92/85/EC from the 19th October 1992 deals with the health protection and safety of the pregnant women-employees and those employees who gave the birth recently or nurse. What is more, it handles also the maternity leave and the discrimination at work.

Directive of the EU Council 96/34/EC from the 3rd June 1996 is based on the general agreement about the parental leave signed between the UNICEF, CEEP and ETUC determines the minimal requirements in the field of the parental leave for men and women, including their employment protection.

Directive of the EU Council 2004/113/EC from the 13th December 2004 about the practice of the principle of equal treatment of men and women, the access to the products and services and to their provision (gender directive).

Directive of the European Parliament and Council 2006/54/EC from the 5th July 2006 about the practice of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in the matter of the employment and profession covers more aspects of the equal treatment in the more complex way.

The year 2009 was the turning point in the field of the gender equality of men and women. The parliament passed the bill of the Slovak European Parliament representative (EP) Anna Záborská about the integrated approach to the equality of men and women within the work of the committee and delegations of the EP. The report proceeds the enforcement of the equality of men and women during the legislative process in the parliamentary committees.

Evaluation of the integrated approach to the gender equality emphasizes that the integrated approach to the equality involves the re-organization, improvement, development and evaluation of the policy. The most important target is to integrate the aspect of the equality into all policy on all levels and all stages from all members who usually participate in the taking of the political decisions (Záborská). The European Community appeals to the political groups to respect the target of the balanced participation of men and women by the appointment of persons into the top managerial functions. The requirement of the equality of men and women has to be expressed by the applied approach which does not put both sides against each other.

1.3 Gender discrimination and anti-discrimination policy

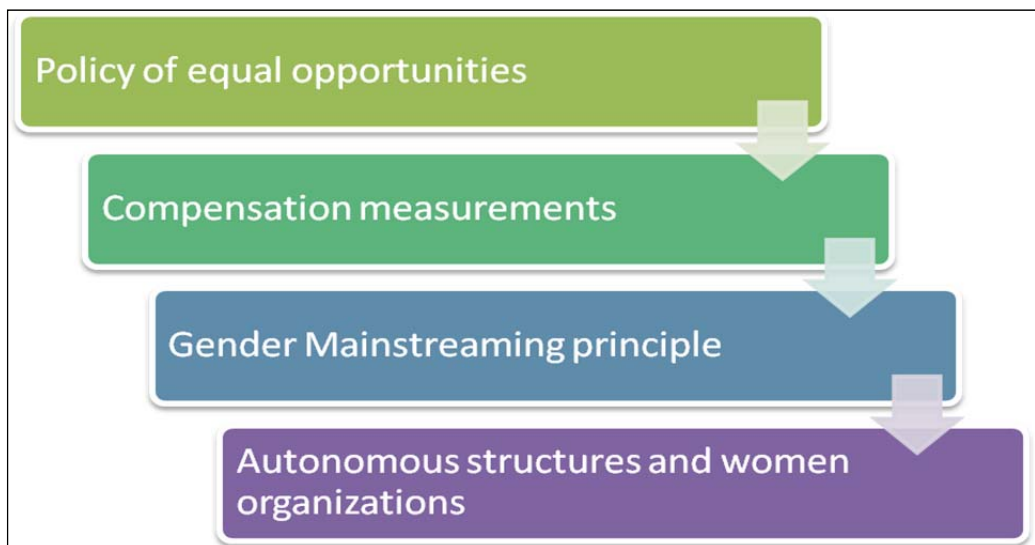
The discrimination is forbidden upon any reason, especially gender, race, skin colour, language, age, sexual orientation, belief or religion, health disability, political or

another beliefs, national or social origin, nationality or ethnic group membership, property and gender. What is more, also the intrusion and sexual harassment belong to the discrimination practices.

Gender discrimination includes also the discrimination on the basis of the sexual orientation. We can point the persuasion that men and women have to be different in principle because they have to complete each other. This stereotype eliminates the possibility of the equal and valuable relationships between persons of the same gender. However, their partnerships are the everyday reality also for the differently oriented people (Pietruchová & Mesochoritsová, 2007).

Anti-discrimination gender policy has more stages which influence and complete each other.

Figure 3 Anti-discrimination policy



Source: Self-processing according to: Slaninková, K. (2012). *Gender equality, equal opportunities, antidiscrimination*. Retrieved from <http://www.poradca.sk/SubPages/OtvorDokument/Clanok.aspx?idclanok=110053>

Policy of equal opportunities. It is concerned about the creation of the most fundamental requirements of the barrier elimination for the equality of chances. The target is to ensure that all members of the society have the opportunity to express themselves freely and according to their abilities and possibilities (Bárošová, 2010).

Compensation measurements as the process which eliminates the negative impacts of the discrimination. These measurements help to balance job positions especially at the beginning of the career of all people.

Enforcement of the gender approach (Gender Mainstreaming). Basically, we can speak about the equal evaluation of the men and women performance in every part of the organization. In the case of broader understanding of the diversity – age, ethnic, religious, health, sexual orientation etc. – we refer to the enforcement of the principle of the diversity (Diversity Management).

Autonomous structures and autonomous practices of women organizations applying the human-legal and gender-sensitive approaches. Moreover, independent women organizations are necessary within the political parties that long till the discrimination in the society is eliminated (Slaninková, 2012).

European Road-map (plan) for gender equality in years 2006-2010

"Road-map for the equality between men and women" was passed by the European Commission on the 1st March 2006. It determines six main priorities in years 2006-2010 (Gender equality and regional development) as follows:

- equal economic independence for men and women; this includes the implementation of Lisbon targets about the employment, wage differences elimination and the support of businesswomen,
- synchronization of private and professional life,
- equal representation in the decision-making process,
- elimination of all forms of gender violence,
- elimination of gender stereotypes,
- propaganda of gender equality in the external and development policy.

We can achieve the above mentioned priorities by the management development. The Road-map inspired by the framework strategy includes the integration of the gender dimension into each EU policy and the enforcement of some specific measurements. The grant of the Structural funds for the implementation of the Road-map can be realized in these two aspects. What is more, it can be expressed also by the methodology, respect of the gender equality by the preparation and implementation of the programs and selection criteria for projects. European Commission and member states will take into account the support of the gender equality by the provision of the supply from the Structural funds in years 2007-2013, there through also the allocation of the necessary resources.

Strategy of the men and women equality in 2010-2015

Strategy of the men and women equality in 2010-2015 signed on the 21st September 2010 presents the work program of the Commission related to the equality between men and women in years 2010 – 2015. It follows the approach centred on men and women contained in some concrete initiatives and it incorporates the principle of the equality of men and women into all policies and activities of the EU (i.e. gender equality). That means, it is characterized for all EU activities. The main target is to propagate the gender equality (Strategies and legislation in the EU). Within this strategy, there was processed the project "Women on the Board Pledge for Europe" which should help to increase the women representation in the top managerial positions by the year 2015 to 30 %.

It is necessary to mention also the basic **document of the UNO about the women rights CEDAW** which stands for as an agreement about the elimination of all forms of the women discrimination. "The extraordinary meaning of the CEDAW agreement is that it embodies the fact that it is the only one international human-legal agreement which aimed at the women discrimination elimination in the broad range of fields of the public and private life. Consequently, the agreement requires from the contracting states the effective women discrimination elimination. At the same time, it

emphasizes that women are further confronted with various forms of discrimination, exactly because they are women" (Lamačková, 2008).

The situation about the gender equality improved through last years markedly. However, women continue further to be disadvantaged, especially in the access to job positions and financial evaluation. The evaluation of women is therein at about 20 % lower than by men on the same job position. Similarly, the low representation of women is also in the economic decision-making positions and political positions.

Conclusion

The intent of this article was to evaluate the chosen fields of the gender equality in the European Union. The fact is that there is still much lower percentage of businesswomen as businessmen. We can state that the situation is similar for more years. The obvious evidence of this fact is only the average representation of women in the EU business sphere, i.e. 30 %. Slovakia even occurs under this average. EU passed several strategic documents related to the gender equality. Unfortunately, as it was proven by several statistics, these documents will not change the general awareness of the society and the long-term discrimination of women towards men. The gender equality should be integrated especially into the general perception of people and the awareness of the whole society.

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