

Mapping gender equality in the border region of Hungary and Slovakia, and possibilities for developing opportunity-creating strategies

Summary

Within the framework of the project EFOP-5.2.2-17-2017-00043 of the Zoltán Magyar Folk School Association - entitled "Development of Gender Opportunity Strategies in International Cooperation in Tata" - an international research was conducted on the extent and assessment of gender equality. The need for research is justified by the fact that, on the one hand, Hungary and Slovakia are lagging behind in gender equality ranking in Europe, and on the other hand, there are several social symptoms that the burden on mothers who play a major role in families is not reduced.

Since 2005, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has been measuring gender equality indicators in all countries of the European Union. The index of the European Union is 67.4, that of Hungary 51.9, which is the second lowest among the member states, ahead of only Greece. Slovakia is ahead of Hungary with an index of 54.1. The indices consist of a total of 31 indicators and examine the following six main areas: power, time, knowledge, health, money, and work. The given score shows the evaluation of the area in relation to 100, where 100 means that the position of the two sexes in the area is exactly the same.

With our **prominence research**, we sought the answer to how respondents perceive inequalities and what tools exist and what would be needed to reduce them. We are looking for respondents who, due to their position, are able to directly or indirectly influence the preparation processes of decisions and developments. Data collection took place using qualitative and quantitative methods, online and paper-based questionnaires, and interviews in the border area of Hungary and Slovakia between February and November 2019.

The study summarizing the results of the research describes the analysis of the questionnaire data collection and is supplemented by the information collected during the interviews. For the analysis, we interviewed 100 Slovak and 100 Hungarian experts in line with the requirements of the transnational cooperation program. Our questionnaires were designed for the workplace environment, and in addition to the objective characteristics of equal opportunities, the questions also mapped the respondent's subjective judgments on the topic. We examined how the respondent's workplace ensures gender equality in practice, such as the use of flexible forms of employment that are particularly beneficial for

women raising children, and asked if there are plans to improve them.

We examined how the career prospects of women and men, the gender ratio of senior executives, and their salaries in a given organization develop.

Equal opportunities indices in Hungary and Slovakia also lag behind the European average. Three roles, and three areas of everyday life, are important in exploring the reasons for this: the world of family, household, and paid work. Women have traditionally played a greater role in the family and in the household, and on average they still lag behind men in terms of paid work, science and careers. In fact, that is one of the intrinsic reasons for inequality, because there is no financial benefit for work in the household and family, while work in the labor market is paid for. This unpaid work undertaken as a female task based on social consensus hinders women's advancement in professional life. And a larger section of society considers all this to be appropriate.

In the course of our data collection, we also found several examples of young women sharing the opinion that the main role of a woman is to perform family and household tasks, and that of a man is to earn an income. However, the educated young generation is already showing changes in the sharing of family roles, for example, more educated young fathers are now more likely to play their part in raising children.

An interesting paradox of the results of our measurements is that while respondents generally know the good answers to achieve equal opportunities, in everyday practice they can easily turn a blind eye to inequalities. There is a kind of blindness in perceiving inequalities. A concrete example of this is that three-quarters of our respondents say that a glass ceiling does not even exist. Although when they had to quantify the wages of women and men, they themselves reported higher wages for men.

According to our measurements, there are no significant differences between the studied areas of Hungary and Slovakia in terms of equal opportunities indicators. Respondents in both countries were able to report few workplace measures that would increase equal opportunities. Among the few minor differences, for example, the subjective perception of equal opportunities was more positive among Slovak respondents, while their employers reported less specific procedures for promoting equal opportunities. This is contradicted by the fact that there are fewer mentions of initiatives to improve gender equality among Slovak respondents than among Hungarian respondents.

According to the statistical descriptive analysis of the research, three-quarters of the respondents were women. There was no significant difference in the gender distribution of respondents between the two countries. There was no conscious choice of gender ratio in the sample selection, the respondents' response was of course voluntary. Nearly half of the respondents are employees of a budgetary body, slightly more than a quarter are companies of different sizes and less than a quarter represent the non-profit sector.

In one-fifth of the cases in Hungary and in almost a quarter of the cases in Slovakia, our respondents were employees of organizations with less than 10 employees. 24% of the employers represented by the respondents in Hungary, much more in Slovakia, 48% employ more than 10 but less than 50 people. In Hungary, the number of organizations between 50 and 200 people is about 29%, in Slovakia the same number is typical in 19%. The share of organizations with 200-1000 employees is 7% in Slovakia and 14% in Hungary. Employees with more than 1,000 people occur in Hungary in 12 and in Slovakia only in 2%.

In order to map the situation of equal opportunities in a more delicate way, we used several tools in our questionnaire, including open-ended questions. Respondents were asked to define the concept of equal opportunities between women and men in their own words. Among the responses, equal opportunities were mentioned the most, followed by equal recognition, equal rights, and equal treatment.



Defining equal opportunity of men and women with own words

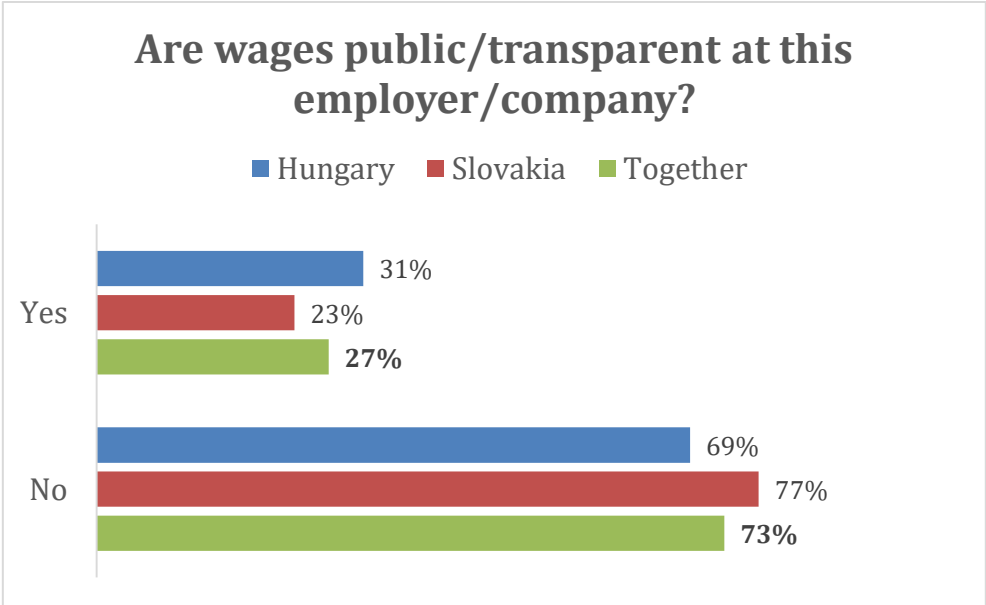
(women and men together, N=200)

Our data collection also included an assessment of whether the employer is using procedures that promote equal opportunities. Is there an equal opportunities officer, strategy, plan, or equal opportunities working group, code of ethics, or harassment procedure. half of the employers do not have any equal opportunities procedure.

Among those who have one, most mentioned the code of ethics (36 mentions) and the equal opportunities plan (31). In Hungary, more people mentioned the existence of an equal opportunities rapporteur, plan and code of ethics than in Slovakia.

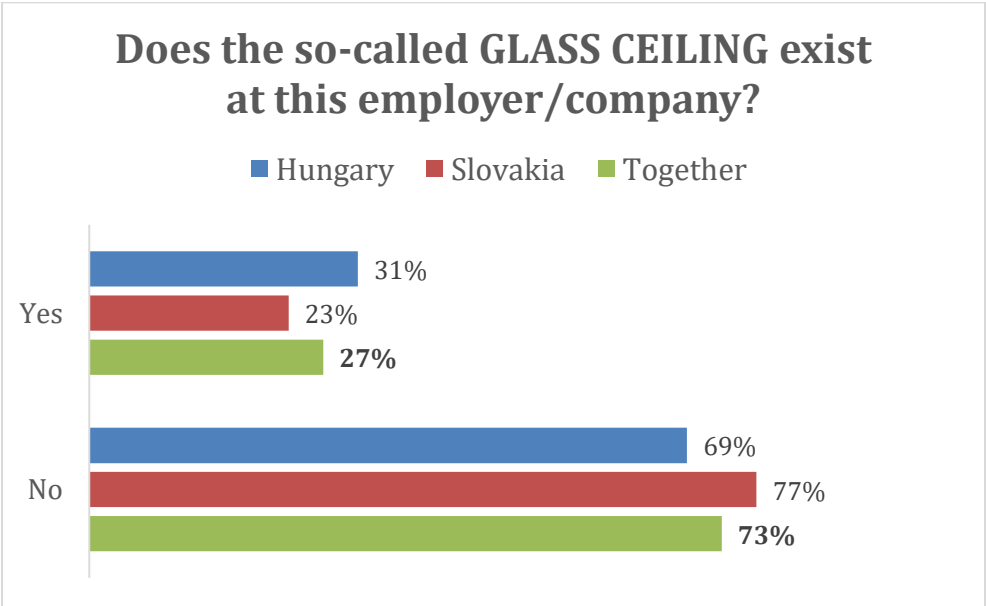
81% of employers do not even have a program to support gender equality, and there is not much difference between countries. At the program level, only about one-fifth of the respondents' employers have the issue of equal opportunities.

Equal pay for men and women is difficult to achieve until wages are made public. That is why we also asked about the visibility of wages.



Are wages public at the employer? (N=200)

It can be seen that in the two countries combined, wages are not officially public in three-quarters of jobs. Comparing the two countries, 31% of respondents in Hungary and 23% in Slovakia said that wages were public.



Does the so-called glass ceiling exist at the employer? (N=200)

The lesson from the figure above showed that respondents did not seem critical enough in this regard, as three-quarters of all respondents said that there was no glass ceiling phenomenon in their workplace.

In comparison, Slovak respondents reported less perceptibility of the glass ceiling than their Hungarian counterparts.

During the interviews with the experts, we characterized the culture and policy determining gender inequality. We sought an answer to the discrepancy between the higher average level of education of women and the fulfillment of lower statuses. We analyzed aspects of female-male pay inequality, childbearing, and female career issues in light of invisible, unpaid work done at home. We also listed good practices and changing trends during the processing of the interviews.

Based on the interviews with opinion-forming experts in Hungary, it can be said that there are serious efforts in Hungary to form attitudes that form the basis of gender equality in the academic and civil spheres. Examples of these are, although recently discontinued, university education in gender, also known as gender, in a wide range of research areas; or a civic initiative that introduces young girls to disciplines that are mostly practiced by men. Awareness-raising, opportunities and knowledge of rights are key issues in improving gender equality.

The interviews raised the issue of reconciling the pay gap, childbearing and other female roles with careers (career under-planning) and the pay gap between 'masculine' and 'feminine' occupations. These circumstances all determine the degree of equal opportunity.

In this study, we summarized some important suggestions for improving gender equality. This also requires a change in the social climate and stereotypes. This can be achieved by shaping attitudes towards male and female roles.

Knowledge of rights is essential for all citizens. The issue of violence against women, which is often underestimated, silenced, must be given priority and supported at the legislative level.

There is a need for a family policy which balances as equally as possible the unequal distribution of domestic and childcare work across all family models.

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