

Jarmila Filadelfiová, Zora Bútorová (ed.): Women, Men and the Age in the Labour Market Statistics. (Ženy, muži a vek v štatistikách trhu práce)
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The existence of gender in/equality has already become a subject of public debates and has also been reflected in an intensive search for empirical arguments. The accession to the European Union made the situation, in some ways, easier. Along with new cognitive frames, it also brought new possibilities of financing the projects focused on discrimination, the labour market and social inclusion.

The publication *Women, Men and the Age in the Labour Market Statistics* (by the Institute of Public Affairs) was created within the project *Plus for Women 45+*, financed by the EU Community Initiative EQUAL. The aim of the project is to identify “specific combinations of gender and age stereotypes in different domains of Slovak society” (p. 7) with an emphasis on women’s success in the labour market. Also in this case, the Institute for Public Affairs proved that it can anticipate issues which will later become the focus of public politics. Social research has not paid attention to these aspects of the topic in this way yet. Fortunately, the goal of the project is to publish six books representing different methodological approaches – from media content analysis to qualitative sociological research. The attempt at methodological pluralism accurately reflects the issue’s multilevel character. Moreover, it shows that even the assumed use of the findings in public policy does not necessarily suppose that the data is only quantitative.

Women, Men and the Age in the Labour Market Statistics is the first of six studies to be published. It provides an analysis of statistical data, research findings concerning gender asymmetries in labour market and an overview of the relevant demographic indicators. Studies like this are not as common as might be supposed. The turbulent character of the transformational era both complicates the access to data and brings uncertainty to the interpretation of existing databases and indicators. The authors of the publication are aware of these problems and point them out. The study is mainly focused on current data from the Slovak Republic which were, wherever possible, supplemented by the data from the past and from the European Union.

The book consists of four chapters on demographic development, population structure, labour market, and unemployment - all as related to age and gender structure. Each chapter provides a lot of information. The first chapter is on the demographic context of the labour market. The author identifies key trends in reproductive behaviour and in the family and household structure. She identifies the aging of the population as “the most significant result of the natality and fertility decline combined with mild prolongation of mean life expectancy” (p. 19). The author points out that while in the 1990s Slovakia experienced aging within middle generation, the last years show a transition towards “intensive” aging with an increasing number of people who belong in the oldest category.

The author pays attention to the impact of demographic trends and changes in the size and structure of families and households. She points out that between 1961 and 2001, the number of one-child families and singles increased, while the amount of two-parent families decreased. The average size of a family changed too (from 3.4 member in 1970 to 2.6 in 2001) and the ratio of families with three and more children declined as well. On the other hand, the ratio of children born out of wedlock increased. The author does not limit herself only to the enumeration of particularities, but searches for connections and implications for public policies.

The second chapter deals with age and gender structure. It is focused on the number of men and women in different age categories and categories regarding economic activity. Here, the author follows several lines in her inquiry, since the definitions of productive age in Slovakia were different for men and women. This was subsequently changed through a gradual equalization of the retirement age at 62 years. The author analyses the process of the decline in the number of people in the pre-productive category after 1990, which is reflected by an increased ratio of economically active, productive people. She demonstrates the growth of the economically active population by the fall of the economic weight index value. This index represents the relationship between three categories – it shows how many people are in the pre-productive and post-productive age per 100 people in the productive age. While in 1995 the value of the economic weight index was 66.2, in 2004 it fell to 56.4. Drawing on this data, the author concludes that “the potential for economic activity and employment increased during the 1990s.”

The aim of the next two chapters was not to look for empirical evidence confirming gender (and age) asymmetries in the labour market (which are evident and therefore became a starting point for this study), but to point out their different forms and contexts. The author begins with outlining the educational structure and professional orientation of men and women and their economic activity in different age categories. Later she analyses unemployment rates. It seems that the following three sub-chapters form the core of the book: gender segregation in the labour market, gender and age dimensions of a working position, and rewarding of men and women according to their age. The author provides data which support the statement that “the labour market in Slovakia is characterised by feminisation in many sectors and professions and by the link between “feminine” working positions and low payments and fewer opportunities for career and further education” (p.101). The gender distribution into different labour market segments corresponds with different education choices, but “some disproportions exceed differences in education” (p.102). As an example, she points to the low representation of women in the highest occupational categories. This does not reflect their educational potential. The summary of statistical data on the differences in wages by gender and wage is a welcome addition. These chapter documents a well-known fact that women’s wages are lower than men’s in all age and educational categories.

The closing chapter is about the gender and age dimensions of unemployment. It also provides plentiful data gathered from various sources. The emphasis is put on long-term unemployment as the weightiest problem in the labour market. In compared to the previous chapter which was voluminous and complex, this part is shorter and easier to read.

Women, Men and the Age in the Labour Market Statistics offers a lot of data that have been collected and interpreted for the first time within one book. The publication not only provides data from many various sources but also interprets them and looks for connections and implications. It enables quick orientation both for students and scholars. One of the comparative advantages of this book (as well as of other books published by the Institute of Public Affairs) is its graphic design. In spite of its aim to offer a profusion of tables and graphs, this book is elegant and clearly arranged. Therefore it provides both an intellectual and aesthetic experience.

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