

Perception of equality between men and women in Slovakia¹

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Perception of Equality between Men and Women in Slovakia. The paper deals with the topic of gender equality perception in Slovakia. As an EU member since May 2004, Slovakia has introduced many anti discriminatory measures as a part of the accession process. An important part in the evaluation of the success rate of such measures is the collection of gender sensitive data. This study works with such data collected by a project supported by the EQUAL initiative. A comparison of public opinion perception of gender based inequalities in the Slovak labour market between 2002 and 2006 shows a relatively stable picture although some shifts towards the more "household work doing men" and a dual career family can be observed. Even though the feeling that women assert their rights more is stronger then in 2002 some paradoxes do exist. Contrary to the EU average the public opinion in Slovakia sees the NGOs and the EU as the combatants of the discrimination rather than the national governments or the parliament. The article concludes with an appeal for collecting of sex segregated data and gender statistics as it sees them being essential for social theory building as well as for better social policy decisions. Sociológia 2007, Vol. 39 (No. 3: 259-271)

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Gender equality both, as a political and a technical project, has been implemented for at least three decades in diverse parts of the world with some, however, not always with great success. This is partly the reason why women's rights and gender equality advocates virtually all over the world have in recent years intensified their pressures on global institutions, supra national bodies and, in particular, on national governments to implement their commitments related to women's empowerment and gender equality at all levels of decision making and in all policies (gender mainstreaming)⁴. In many countries, especially in Europe, governments seem to be more responsive to specific areas where gender based discrimination and inequalities appear, such as gender based violence, gender un/balanced political participation, gender pay gap, gender based job segregation,

unequal labour market participation (men vs. women) and reconciliation of work and private life and more equal sharing of family and caring responsibilities between women and men. This responsiveness can be to some extent attributed to increased pressures of gender equality advocates and women's organizations to strengthen woman's human and citizenship rights (especially issues related to violence and political participation), but at the same time is based on other objective processes and pragmatic grounds. Among them demographic changes and ageing of European societies which negatively impact on the existing social security and health care systems and labour markets are the most important.

A common obstacle for better understanding of the interrelated "gender gaps" and for developing holistic, more effective approaches to understand and tackle their complexity has been lack of data. Comparative and/ or national sex segregated data (statistical data as well as a more soft evidence) are far from being sufficient and/or satisfactory. This has had a negative impact on prospects to mainstream gender in all policies and measures and address inequality between men and women in diverse areas of life. Lack of data is also a significant hindrance for "engendering" a broadly defined social theory. Despite this assertion, there have been some promising developments lately. The leading international institutions such as UN, including the World Bank and ILO, the EU or OECD have started more systematically collecting and analysing sex segregated data, developing methodologies to measure "gender gaps", working on various sets of gender indicators, collecting good practices and developing strategies to "mainstream gender" within areas of their mandates⁵. In order to improve system of comparative and reliable data collection in the EU the European Commission took decision⁶ to establish the European Institute for Gender Equality. The main role of the institute will be "to collect and analyse objective, reliable and comparable information and data at community level, the development of appropriate methodological tools in particular for the integration of the gender dimension in all policy areas; it will facilitate the exchange of best practices, the dialogue among stakeholders and will raise awareness among EU citizens⁷."

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⁴ By commitments we mean mainly binding international legal instruments such as CEDAW, or commitments such as implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action (Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995) and Millennium Development Goals, in particular Goal 3: promoting gender equality and empowerment of women. Equally important are national actions plans of gender equality adopted (in various formats) by majority of European governments.

⁵ The entire list of relevant publications would be long. We would like to mention only some recent ones. For example The Global Gender Gap Report 2006, presented at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland (authors Hausmann, R.; Tyson, L. D; Zahidi, S.) available at www.weforum.org; OECD report Women and Men in OECD Countries released in January 2007 available at www.oecd.org website; UNIFEM report The Story Behind the Numbers, available at <http://www.unifem.sk/index.cfm?Module=Static&page=w&s=IWP>, or a very recent EU publication Gender Pay Gap – Origins and Policy Responses, available through http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/emplweb/gender_equality/publications_en.cfm.

⁶ The text of the decision was published in the OJEU of 30 December 2006.

⁷ See EC website:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_institute/index_en.html.

The situation at a national level, especially in the new EU member states that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 has been somehow progressing as well. Apart from improvements in collecting and analysing nationally wide sex segregated data by national statistical offices, various EU funded programmes and initiatives (such as EQUAL) have helped to collect and analyse more soft (qualitative) or/and detailed data (often by research institutes but also by NGOs) that contribute to better understanding of a nature of gender gaps in a particular country, region and/ or a social group.

This article builds on one such project, supported by the EQUAL Initiative⁸. We use some findings from face-to-face interviews collected in May 2006 with 2521 adult (older than 18 years) respondents, focusing on perception of equality between men and women and gender in/equalities on the labour market in particular. Our aim is to compare and interpret how subjective perceptions of in/equalities between women and men in the labour market and in employment changed between 2002⁹ and 2006. We will also briefly touch upon the role of the EU and the newly emerged national institutions and “engendered” laws in this development. Rather than going into deep analyses and discussion, for example, on an institutional design, we will focus only on a normative side: what role should these institutions, mainly according to their mandates, play in implementing gender equality at a national level. We will also look at a survey, indicating what the expectations of Slovaks are related to these and other institutions. The ultimate goal of the paper is to encourage discussion on the challenges and gaps in implementation of gender equality in Slovakia, rather than to explicitly contribute to development of the theory.

Perception of gender based inequalities in the EU

European Union adopted in the past 30 years a number of laws to prevent and fight against gender based discrimination and to promote equality of women and men, mainly in employment and in the workplace. Despite the improved legal protection, gender equality is far from being achieved and various forms of discrimination and inequalities persist. For example, the average gender pay gap is in the EU at 15% in public and 25% in private employment. Slovakia is (following the UK) the second worst off country when it comes to this indicator: average hourly wages of women in public and private sectors combined are almost 30% less than those for men¹⁰.

⁸ More information on the gender related projects supported by the Initiative Equal can be found at: <http://www.equalstlovakia.sk/index.php?id=100>

⁹ We have worked with the “Potential of active public involvement of women” by IVO (Gyárfášová – Pašková 2002) and the ISSP “Family and changing Gender Roles III” 2002 (Piscová – Bausová – Zeman 2003) surveys.

¹⁰ The Gender Pay Gap – Origins and Policy Responses. European Commission, Luxembourg, 2006.

Women in the EU also tend to be more unemployed than men: comparative figures for 2006 say that the difference is almost two percentage points (7.0% and 8.9% respectively). In Slovakia the difference is even wider (12.3% and 14.7% respectively). Female employment rates are significantly lower than those of men the difference is some 15 percentage points at the EU average and also in Slovakia¹¹. There is worth stressing, that some statistics are missing, non-existing or patchy also because some gender related discriminatory practices and phenomena are very difficult to capture in statistical data (sexual harassment, gender based discrimination in hiring and firing, gender stereotypes, etc.).

Table 1: **In your opinion, which of the following have an important role to play in combating discrimination? (in %)**

	EU	SK
Schools and universities	42	35
Parents	40	28
The media	34	45
The government	31	14
Employers/ companies	20	13
Political parties	13	11
Parliament	12	5
Religious authorities	11	14
Local or regional authorities	10	5
The EU	10	17
Trade unions	8	9
International institutions such as CoE, UN, etc.	8	18
NGOs, associations	7	23

Source: Special Eurobarometer 236 “Discrimination in the European Union”, 2007

At the occasion of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007), the European Commission commissioned a survey about subjective perception of discrimination and inequality in Europe¹². The survey revealed some interesting findings that put Slovakia in a comparative perspective. Thus, for example, while discrimination on the basis of gender is perceived by an average of 40% of the EU population (43% women and 36% men), in Slovakia only 32% (38% women and 25% men) think that discrimination based on gender occurs. However, while only 27% of the EU population thinks that compare to 5 years ago discrimination based on gender is more widespread in Slovakia there are 32% those who support this

¹¹ Source: EUROSTAT

¹² Discrimination in the European Union, Special Eurobarometer 263, 2007.

statement¹³. Slovaks are more prone than the EU average to support the idea of introducing specific measures to achieve equal opportunities between men and women in employment (88% as compare to 79% of the EU average). Such measures usually require legal backing (positive action legislated/ enabled at a national level) and/or proactive approach from employers to remove obstacles for a more gender balanced work places. In this context rather paradoxical appear the expectations of Slovaks that especially NGOs, International institutions, the EU¹⁴ or the media have an important role to play in combating discrimination, while a role of national and local governments, parliament and employers has been ranked (compare to the EU average) low. This is, in fact, a very interesting finding (a paradox) which will be closer discussed in the conclusions of this paper.

Changes in public opinion on the status of gender equality in Slovakia

Perceptions of certain societal changes, among them shifts in equality between men and women, are usually not a subject to a rapid change (as compare to, for example, political changes). Despite this general observation as part of EQUAL project “Slovakia on the road to gender equality” we tried to find out if there have been any detectable trends in changing perception towards gender equality in Slovakia’s public opinion. The insertion of a question-set identical with questions from a survey conducted by the IVO institute in 2002¹⁵ and from the ISSP 2002 questionnaires¹⁶ into the May 2006 survey conducted by the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences provided us with some comparable data.

Even when expecting only minor changes in public opinion the results of the comparison turned to be rather surprising. The first set of questions focused on appraisal of the existence or non-existence of equal opportunities for men and women in different situations (table 2 summarizes the results). Answers of men and women to the same questions remained remarkable stable between 2002 and 2006. Not only the raking of the situations remained stable – from the very problematic (gender pay gap, reaching of higher managerial positions) through the problematic (applying for a job, keeping a job) to the unproblematic (enrolment in secondary schools or universities) but also the intensity of public opinion perception of those problems remains markedly stable. (See Bahna 2006) All the differences remain in the range of statistical insignificance with the exception of the first situation which produces differences just at the edge of statistical

significance, suggesting a vague improvement in equality between men and women when applying for a job. The following are the responses to the first set of questions:

Table 2: Please tell us your opinion on whether women in Slovakia are better off / worse off or have the same opportunities as man (same prospect, same possibilities)? (in %)

	2006			2002			
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Change
When people apply for a job:							
Men are preferred (definitely + rather)	53.1	74.6	64.2	56.6	79.0	68.3	-4.1
Same opportunities	38.2	19.8	28.7	32.4	16.3	23.9	4.8
Woman are preferred (definitely + rather)	3.7	1.2	2.4	3.5	0.7	2.0	0.4
Can't say	5.0	4.5	4.7	7.5	4.1	5.7	-1.0
When it comes to wages or pay for work							
Men are preferred (definitely + rather)	65.0	83.8	74.7	61.6	81.6	72.1	2.6
Same opportunities	28.2	11.9	19.8	30.1	13.5	21.4	-1.6
Woman are preferred (definitely + rather)	2.3	0.2	1.3	1.7	0.5	1.1	0.2
Can't say	4.4	4.1	4.2	6.6	4.4	5.1	-0.9
When they seek to keep their jobs at the time of redundancies							
Men are preferred (definitely + rather)	43.0	60.1	51.8	43.7	62.4	53.5	-1.7
Same opportunities	41.1	27.4	34.0	40.6	25.9	33.0	1.0
Woman are preferred (definitely + rather)	8.6	4.7	6.6	4.7	3.3	3.9	2.7
Can't say	7.3	7.8	7.6	11.0	8.4	9.6	-2.0
When they seek to be promoted to a higher position at work							
Men are preferred (definitely + rather)	64.4	82.8	73.9	60.7	81.0	71.3	2.6
Same opportunities	26.6	12.1	19.1	27.7	12.4	19.7	-0.6
Woman are preferred (definitely + rather)	4.1	1.6	2.8	2.4	1.0	1.7	1.1
Can't say	5.0	3.6	4.3	9.3	5.6	7.3	-3.0
When they apply for enrolment in secondary schools or university							
Men are preferred (definitely + rather)	4.7	10.8	7.9	7.7	11.8	9.9	-2.0
Same opportunities	81.5	76.4	78.9	79.5	77.0	78.2	0.7
Woman are preferred (definitely + rather)	5.4	2.0	3.6	3.0	0.7	1.8	1.8
Can't say	8.4	10.9	9.7	9.7	10.5	10.1	-0.4

N₂₀₀₆ = 2521, N₂₀₀₂ = 1875

Sources: Slovakia on the road to gender Equality, SÚ SAV 2006, Potential of active public involvement of women, IVO 2002

The first set of questions above focused on the equal opportunities of men and women in situations related to paid work. To generalize we could say that the majority of both – men and women agree on the statement that “men are definitely

¹³ This is also supported by the comparison of the findings of two research surveys (2002 and 2006) which we use in the paper.

¹⁴ This finding is supported also by the results of our May 2006 survey – NGOs and the European Commission were the top two institutions promoting equal opportunities of women in Slovakia. (See Bahna 2006)

¹⁵ The survey “Potential of active public involvement of women” was conducted by the IVO institute in June 2002, N = 1875.

¹⁶ The ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles 2002 survey was conducted by the Institute for Sociology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences in September 2002, N = 1133.

or rather preferred” in all the surveyed situations – with the exception of school enrolment, where the “same opportunities” answer clearly prevailed. We can say that around 83% of women and 65% of men indicate a preference for men in the case of promoting to higher positions or financial rewards. While applying for a job, preference is given to men according to 75% of women and more than 50% of men. When seeking to keep a job in times of redundancies 60% of women and 43% of men state that men are preferred.

Even when stating that men and women agree on the view that men are preferred, men were more likely to answer with the option “Woman and men have the same opportunities”. Among the respondents claiming that men are preferred women were far more likely to choose the answer “Men are definitely preferred” while men rather choose the less radical “men are preferred”¹⁷. The breakdown of responses in the 2006 survey by economic background of respondents did not show any statistically significant difference in any of the surveyed areas. There was a general accord in the opinion of the position of men and women. Also some expected differences in answers of younger and older respondents were not confirmed by the survey. Even if we work with a purely female subpopulation, there is no demographic feature indicating a statistically relevant difference in responses of women to this question.

In the introduction of this paper we stressed that the existing gender gaps are closely interrelated. Thus, inequalities based on sex on the labour market and in the workplace are very often influenced by a more general perception of gender roles and by prevailing gender stereotypes in society – among both, men and women. Therefore the second set of questions focused on attitudes towards traditional and egalitarian family values. The Tables 3 and 4 summarize the comparison of 2006 and 2002 surveys. Table 3 displays some changes that need to be carefully interpreted. It seems, that the respondents tend to expect more men’s involvement in housework (but interestingly the opinion change is more significant among men). A slight move in favour of the dual earner family can also be noted. Nevertheless the expected moves are on the edge of statistical significance and the results as in the case of equal opportunities remain very similar.

Table 4 handles the dichotomy of work vs. family life – the questions focus from different angles on woman’s employment. All in all we could say that the results display a very slight move towards the “pro – paid work/ employment” for women statements. For example the largest change occurred in the answers to the question whether family life suffers when a woman has a fulltime job. In 2006

45% of respondents agreed with that statement which was about 8% less than in the 2002 survey. (Table 4)

Table 3: Currently there is a lot of talk about a change in man and woman's role division. Do you agree or disagree with the following assertions: (in %)

	2006			2002			
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Change
Both the man and the woman should contribute to the house hold income							
Agree strongly + agree	88.2	90.1	89.2	80.5	84.4	82.5	6.6
Neither agree nor disagree	8.0	6.6	7.3	12.3	10.4	11.3	-4.0
Disagree strongly + disagree	2.8	2.9	2.9	7.0	4.9	5.9	-3.1
Can't choose	1.0	0.4	0.7	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
A man's job is to earn money; a woman's job is to look after the home and family							
Agree strongly + agree	50.2	39.1	44.5	53.8	45.1	49.2	-4.7
Neither agree nor disagree	27.5	29.5	28.5	25.8	24.7	25.2	3.3
Disagree strongly + disagree	21.6	31.1	26.5	20.4	30.3	25.6	0.9
Can't choose	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
Men ought to do a larger share of household work than they do now							
Agree strongly + agree	43.5	78.1	61.4	33.5	72.3	53.7	7.7
Neither agree nor disagree	33.0	16.6	24.5	35.5	19.0	26.9	-2.4
Disagree strongly + disagree	20.5	4.3	12.1	28.5	7.5	17.6	-5.4
Can't choose	3.0	1.0	2.0	2.4	1.2	1.8	0.2
Men ought to do a larger share of childcare than they do now							
Agree strongly + agree	50.8	77.5	64.6	42.2	76.1	59.8	4.8
Neither agree nor disagree	30.3	16.4	23.2	34.3	18.7	26.1	-3.0
Disagree strongly + disagree	15.0	4.6	9.6	19.9	4.4	11.8	-2.2
Can't choose	3.9	1.5	2.6	3.7	0.8	2.2	0.4

N₂₀₀₆ = 2521, N₂₀₀₂ = 1133

Sources: Slovakia on the road to gender Equality, SÚ SAV 2006, ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles 2002, SÚ SAV 2002.

Interesting were also the answers to the question whether women in Slovakia assert their rights sufficiently. In 2006 more than 47% men thought that women sufficiently assert their rights. Women, to the contrary, clearly stated that they do not sufficiently assert their rights (69%). It has to be noted, though, that there were far less women who “certainly” agreed with that statement than those who “somewhat” agreed (19% to 50%). Women without children stated more often that women assert their rights. Opinions of women on this question did not vary by the educational level of the respondents.

¹⁷ For exact figures see Bahna 2006.

Table 4: Do you agree or disagree with the following assertions: (in %)

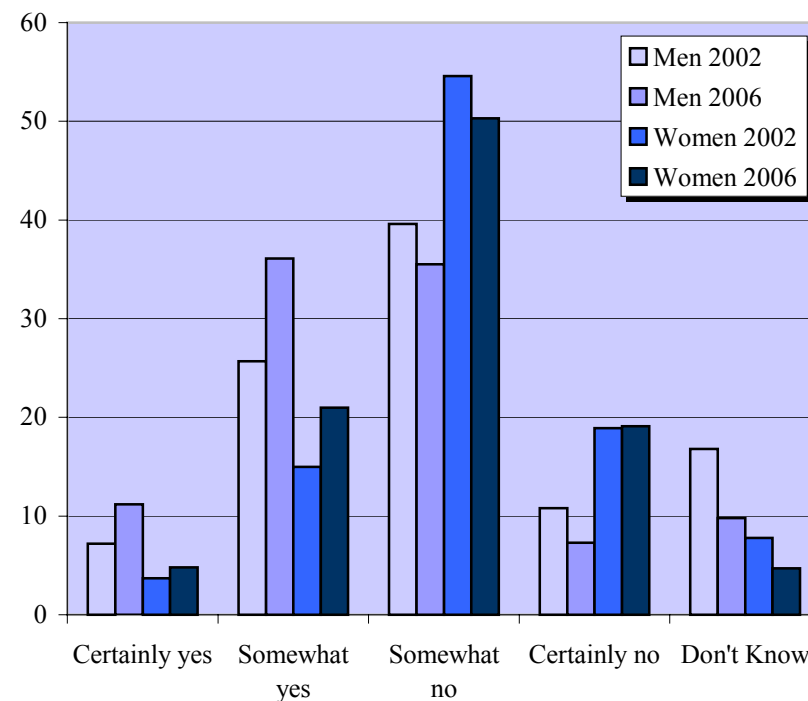
	2006			2002			
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total	Change
A working mother can establish just as warm and secure rel. with her children as a mother who doesn't work							
Agree strongly + agree	64.8	76.0	70.6	63.4	74.2	69.0	1.5
Neither agree nor disagree	13.1	9.5	11.2	15.3	12.2	13.7	-2.5
Disagree strongly + disagree	18.0	13.1	15.5	18.9	12.7	15.7	-0.2
Can't choose	4.1	1.4	2.7	2.4	0.8	1.6	1.1
A pre-school child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works							
Agree strongly + agree	45.8	42.7	44.2	51.5	49.1	50.2	-6.0
Neither agree nor disagree	19.6	18.8	19.2	18.6	15.8	17.1	2.1
Disagree strongly + disagree	28.9	36.7	32.9	27.6	34.3	31.1	1.9
Can't choose	5.7	1.8	3.7	2.4	0.8	1.6	2.1
All in all, family life suffers when the woman has a full-time job							
Agree strongly + agree	47.2	43.1	45.1	55.3	50.6	52.9	-7.8
Neither agree nor disagree	21.5	21.5	21.5	20.6	18.8	19.7	1.8
Disagree strongly + disagree	28.9	34.2	31.7	22.8	29.9	26.5	5.2
Can't choose	2.4	1.2	1.7	1.3	0.7	1.0	0.8
A job is all right, but what most women really want is a home and children							
Agree strongly + agree	62.8	61.8	62.3	65.1	68.6	66.9	-4.6
Neither agree nor disagree	22.1	25.0	23.6	22.2	20.0	21.1	2.5
Disagree strongly + disagree	9.3	10.9	10.1	8.5	10.7	9.6	0.5
Can't choose	5.8	2.3	4.0	4.2	0.7	2.4	1.6
Being a housewife is just as fulfilling as working for pay							
Agree strongly + agree	38.0	37.4	37.7	41.4	40.4	40.9	-3.1
Neither agree nor disagree	24.8	20.9	22.8	27.8	18.8	23.1	-0.3
Disagree strongly + disagree	27.6	38.4	33.2	24.1	40.2	32.5	0.7
Can't choose	9.5	3.3	6.3	6.8	0.5	3.5	2.8
Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person							
Agree strongly + agree	55.9	65.7	61.0	51.5	62.6	57.3	3.7
Neither agree nor disagree	24.8	22.1	23.4	24.3	21.2	22.7	0.7
Disagree strongly + disagree	12.2	9.6	10.9	18.4	15.1	16.7	-5.8
Can't choose	7.1	2.6	4.8	5.9	1.0	3.4	1.4

N₂₀₀₆ = 2521, N₂₀₀₂ = 1133

Sources: Slovakia on the road to gender Equality, SÚ SAV 2006, ISSP Family and Changing Gender Roles 2002, SÚ SAV 2002.

It seems that men have apparently noticed media campaigns of women's NGOs¹⁸ and women's issues are discussed, so they perceive that women assert their rights. On the other hand, women – perhaps in the light of their own experience – conclude that they do not sufficiently assert their rights.

Chart 1: Do you think that women in Slovakia sufficiently assert their rights? Change: 2002 – 2006 (in %)



N₂₀₀₆ = 2521, N₂₀₀₂ = 1875

Sources: Slovakia on the road to gender Equality, SÚ SAV 2006, Potential of active public involvement of women, IVO 2002

Chart 1 offers a comparison between responses of men and women in years 2002 and 2006. There is a noticeable shift to more respondents believing that women assert their rights. In 2006, there were clearly more

¹⁸ Such as "The Fifth Woman" and "Let's Do It!", both were carried out after the 2002 survey. There were also numerous awareness raising conferences organized and publications produced, mainly in 2003 and 2004 as a part of the EU accession process. For example in 2003 the European Commission supported the project Human and Citizenship Rights of Women in Slovakia: Towards Equal Opportunities, focusing on awareness raising campaign about the so-called EU Gender Directives that were transposed into national legislation as part of acquis. (Centre for Work and Family 2003)

responses “Somewhat yes” and fewer responses “Somewhat no” given by both men and women. The move in the responses “Certainly yes” and “Certainly no” was less prominent – but with a visible shift among men and a minimum shift among women (beyond the survey’s statistical accuracy rate), namely from 3.7% “Certainly yes” responses in 2002 to 4.8% in 2006. There also were fewer people who had no opinion on the issue in 2006 as compared with 2002.

The above mentioned assumption regarding the effects of media campaigns seems to be plausible and offers an indirect evidence of media influence on public opinion. As we can see there is a stronger shift in the male respondents of our sample which may confirm the aforementioned sceptical opinion of women reflecting the reality more critically while more men know the “right answers” than it was the case in 2002. This assumption is also underpinned by the minimum shift in the “Certainly yes” and “Certainly no” response categories by women.

Conclusions

In summarizing the findings from the 2002 – 2006 comparison we could conclude that while there has been no change in perceiving the reality of equality between men and women, there have been slight observable changes in the self declared attitudes towards gender roles in the household, as well as a shift towards acceptance/ support of female participation in paid work. If this should lead us to the conclusions that “gender stereotypes are breaking” is still unclear. As we know, the public opinion changes faster than the real behaviour, so the public opinion shift could be an indication of a yet to be changed reality.

The findings could be also an outcome of growing gender equality awareness (as a result of the EU accession processes and/ or increased activities of NGOs...) and/ or a display of politically correct answers to the questions posed. Especially the pre-accession period when Slovakia was obliged to transpose the so-called gender equality EU Directives into the national body of legislation was accompanied by numerous campaigns and awareness raising actions that promoted gender equality as one of the main values of the EU membership and a condition for growth and stabilization of democracy.

A slight shift towards self-declared attitudes supporting female employment on the one hand (by both, women and men) and the tendency to a more equal sharing of domestic chores and child care between a men and a women, can be interpreted also as a reflection of current socio-economic realities: a recognized need to secure dual income from paid work (families, couples with children) for the case one of the partners loses a job, and the lack of affordable, high quality services

such as child day care or care services for ill, disabled or elderly members of a family that are essential for supporting a dual earner household model.

In connection with the later, a special attention would deserve an analysis of the role various institutions¹⁹ play in shaping our views (and behaviours), including those about the situation and roles of women and men in society. This topic, however, would deserve a special paper/ a series of papers. Equally interesting is to follow what are the (changing) expectations of citizens from the (new) institutions in addressing their needs. We have previously mentioned the findings of the latest Eurobarometer²⁰ which revealed that Slovaks expect from NGOs, International institutions, the EU and the media to play a chief role in combating discrimination and promoting gender equality. These results signal that the general public might be increasingly aware of gender equality and more general issues related to anti-discrimination, nevertheless, do not fully recognize that the primary actors who should implement measures to address these areas are the national and local governments, parliament and employers – all the institutions which have been in the EU survey ranked low.

In the conclusion we would like to reiterate the importance of sex segregated data and gender statistics that are essential for understanding the profound changes men and women in Slovakia have been undergoing. They are equally important for policy makers (mainstreaming gender in all policies and programmes and to ensure equality between men and women in all areas of life), for women’s rights and gender equality advocates (evidence based advocacy) and last but not least, without them there is a relatively limited space for our national/ original contribution to social theory and wider (European) discourse on the topic. In addition, lack of sufficient and reliable data can lead to a situation when women’s and men’s perception, needs and expectations will not be fully recognized and their interpretation might be hijacked by various ideological and/ or interest groups.

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¹⁹ Chiefly political and economic institutions and corresponding systems of rights and obligations.

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