



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
5 March 2012

English only

Economic Commission for Europe

Conference of European Statisticians

Group of Experts on Gender Statistics

Work Session on Gender Statistics

Geneva, 12-14 March 2012

Item 8 of the provisional agenda

Indicators of gender equality

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Note by European Gender Equality Institute ¹

Summary

This paper introduces the European Gender equality index (GEI) for Europe, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), will release late 2012. It is based on the analysis of the European policy priorities, an overview of the main dimensions and sub dimensions are presented.

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I. Introduction

1. The action plan of the Commission Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015² states the importance for the construction of the European Gender Equality Index (GEI). The European Institute for Gender Equality is in charge of this difficult task.

2. The aim of the GEI is not to provide a universal definition of what constitutes gender equality. At best, we can only consider that gender equality as a concept is the overlap of many competing views and agendas. It is well known as composite indicators are developed as a communication tool to highlight an issue and not an end in itself. Indices cannot be expected to answer theoretical questions or replace in-depth research but should provide an arena for debate and promotion of policy and research.

II. Framework

3. Gender equality is a complex, multi-dimensional and normatively as well as politically controversial subject. There is a “diversity of meanings of gender equality across Europe”, as Verloo and Lombardo (2007, p.21) show in a comprehensive analysis of gender policies in different European member states. Thus, the conceptualisation of a framework of gender equality is not just a task of impartially describing a certain phenomenon, but of constituting or deciding on a certain approach: “the process of choosing what to measure is political” (Moser 2007, p.9).

4. Our aim, however, is to propose a set of dimensions which could adequately map the concept of gender equality. These domains were developed following an in-depth analysis of relevant European measures and policies; previous reports commissioned by EIGE; and informed by the academic literature in the field of gender equality.

5. Within the literature on gender equality various theoretical approaches are distinguished as will be outlined. Different approaches to gender equality and their associated dimensions are presented to ground our proposed conceptual framework into current academic approaches. Finally, a definition of our proposed dimensions and sub-dimensions are set out.

III. Dimension of the Gender Equality Index for Europe

6. The EU’s gender equality policy has to be a main reference in developing a framework thus, key documents have been analysed. Against the background of both theoretical considerations and the main approach and areas of EU’s gender equality policy, the foundations of a conceptual framework were defined. According to EU’s gender equality policy two overall equality objectives have been identified: equal distribution as well as dignity and integrity.

² SEC(2010) 1079/2, Commission Staff working document, Actions to implement the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015, Accompanying the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015.

7. An in-depth analysis of the main theoretical approaches and of key policy documents revealed priority areas upon which a conceptual framework for the GEI could be derived.
8. These domains consist of:
- a) Work
 - b) Money
 - c) Power
 - d) Health
 - e) Harm
 - f) Knowledge
 - g) Time
 - h) Aggravating factors.

A. Work

9. Gender inequalities in the workplace can be associated with three particular aspects, including the gaps between women and men in employment rates, in pay and benefits and in occupational or workplace representation (Casey, 2011).
10. Women are over-represented in lower positions, temporary and part-time work, as well as operating in particular sectors (Baker, Lynch, Cantillon, & Walsh, 2004).
11. The gender gap in employment has been linked to slower rates of economic growth. Indeed, gender inequality in employment has the potential to reduce economic growth since it creates an artificial reduction of the pool of talent in the workforce or among the self-employed (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009).
12. For the sub-domains in the domain of work the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Participation	– Participation: equal active/inactive participation of women and men
Segregation	– elimination of horizontal segregation – elimination of vertical segregation
Quality	– elimination of gender gap in low quality work
Work life integration:	– extent to which people exercise their choice in integrating work and personal life.

B. Money

13. Focusing on improving the participation rate of employment gender gap is not in itself sufficient and should be looked at in the context of other patterns of inequality (Casey,

2011). Furthermore, gender inequality in pay could also reduce economic growth as this could lead to higher rates of savings, improved investments and credit reimbursing, as well as investing in the human capital of the next generation (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). Our second proposed dimension, money, looks at equality of access to resources for women and men. Policy at the EU level has looked at the issue of equal pay for equal jobs (Women’s Charta, Strategy for gender equality). The focus of EU policy in this dimension is to close the gender gap in economic independence (Road map for gender equality, Women’s Charta, Strategy for gender equality).

14. For the sub-domains in the domain of money the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • equal income • equal economic independence • equal pay for equal work and work of equal value
Economic situation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • elimination of gender bias in poverty

C. Power and participation

15. Our third proposed dimension, power and participation, focuses on the equal share between men and women of positions of power and their fair representation in the political, social and economic spheres. This dimension, as the first one, is also usually included in many other conceptual proposals for the index. Power and representation remains an important area of gender inequality in the literature. Casey describes this as inequality in “participation of management and governance of organizations in all sectors of the labour market” (2011, p. 376).

16. Baker et al (Baker et al., 2004) see inequality in power in participation in the gender disparities of women and men in politics, business, armies, police force, prisons, bureaucracies, hospital, schools, universities and religions.

17. The focus of EU policy in this dimension is to ensure equality in decision making (Women’s Charta, Strategy for gender equality) and equal participation (Roadmap for gender equality). The Roadmap for gender equality emphasises the equal participation of women and men in politics, economics and science and technology, while STR focuses on equality in decision making.

18. The equality in decision-making is one of the principles of the Women’s Charta (2010) as an under-representation of women in positions of power can be observed, in particular at the highest levels, although they have the required qualifications. Action to promote equal participation of women and men in decision-making at all levels and in all fields are to be promoted by the Member States (Pact 2011), as women do not have full access to decision-making (Charta 2010). The gender balance in decision-making needs to be improved (Strategy 2010) to arrive at a fairer representation of women and men in positions of power (Charta 2010).

19. For the sub-domains in the domain decision-making the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender balance in political decision-making
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender balance in judges gender balance in university professors
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender balance in entrepreneurship gender balance on boards

D. Health

20. Our fourth proposed dimension, health, consists of inequality in health status, access to health services and behavioural inequalities.

21. A link has been established between gender equality and improvements in overall levels of public health. Backhans et al (2007) suggest that this could be linked to three areas. First, it could be due to the inequality of welfare resources: the feminisation of the labour force may have improved women's mortality prospects compared to men's. Secondly, it could be linked to role expansion and stress. Role stress might negatively impact on women's health, since they operate both within the public and private spheres. However, this may be mitigated by health benefits gained through greater economic independence, increased bargaining power in the household, as well as personal, skill and social benefits. Finally, it could be linked to health related behaviours. The behaviours of men and women may differ alongside alignment with patterns of masculinity and femininity. This includes cigarette and alcohol consumption, but also reluctance to adopt a healthy lifestyle or lower levels of access to preventative health care.

22. However, it appears that there is a threshold response to gender equality in terms of health. Beyond a certain level of gender equality, the benefits to the health of women and men start to decline again (Backhans et al., 2007).

23. Baker et al. (2004) claim that the privileged have healthier lives than poorer people do. We extend this argument, not to that of social class alone, but also to that of gender.

24. This dimension converges with the dimensions identified in three of the reviewed theoretical models.

25. For the sub-domains in the domain health the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all aspects of women and men in the physical as well as the psychological point of view
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> gender related behavioural differences behind inequalities in health
Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mismatch between demand and supply, eg with unmet needs, or degree of access

E. Harm

26. Our fifth proposed dimension, harm, combines three key areas which we see as paramount to understanding gender equality: direct harm, structural harm and cultural harm. This conceptualisation is related to the violence typology developed by Johan Galtung. It is a new dimension which has not been included in previous conceptual frameworks and maps onto EU policies and measures.

27. For the sub-domains in the domain harm the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> physical or psychological violence that is gender based
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a more equal society, with a focus on poverty
Cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stereotypes and cultural norms that underpin gendered practices

F. Knowledge

28. Our sixth proposed dimension, knowledge, examines differences between women and men in terms of education. Although the gap is narrowing, historically women have had lower levels of literacy internationally (Baker et al., 2004).

29. Some of the focus of EU measures has included other areas related to access to knowledge such as access to digital internet (EU2020) and mobility in education (EU2020). This is a dimension that has been used in the construction of other gender related indices.

30. A link between gender inequality in education and economic performance has been noted. This is explained by this type of gender inequality leading to decreased levels of investment in human capital (Klasen & Lamanna, 2009). Furthermore, according to the Women's Charta (2010) *educational stereotypes affect the life choices and the economic independence of many women.*

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Attainment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> equal participation and equal success without a gender bias and the elimination of segregation
Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access and use of internet skills or the use of secondary languages
Lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> education and training is linked to different life periods and learning places

G. Time

31. Our sixth proposed dimension, time, also represents a departure from previous conceptualisation. We propose that this dimension encompasses three sub-dimensions all related to time.

32. Baker et al. (Baker et al., 2004) note that time use surveys systematically identify that women work (paid and un-paid) more than men.

33. There is a strong emphasis in EU policies on work-life balance (EGEP) or the reconciliation of work, private and family life (RM). This often translates into policies related to family-leave or childcare arrangements.

34. In the Strategy (2010) and the Charta (2010) it is emphasised that parenthood has a strong impact on labour market participation of women. Moreover the care for dependants other than children is of growing importance. Reconciliation of paid work and care is a crucial prerequisite of labour market participation. In the Roadmap (2006) reconciliation is one key priority. To understand the gender bias in labour market reconciliation of work and family has to be considered. Reconciliation is one prerequisite to promote better work-life balance for women (Pact 2011).

35. For the sub-domains in the domain unpaid work the following objectives have been identified:

Sub-Domain	Gender equality objectives
Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time spent on work related activities
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time spent on caring activities with children, other dependent adults or housework
Leisure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> time spent on leisure activities

H. Aggravating factors

36. Our seventh proposed dimension, discrimination, adds another departure from previous gender equality conceptualisation. This dimension recognises that the effect of either migration status and other grounds of discriminations apart from gender can serve to multiply the effect of gender equality.

37. Categories in which gender could be aggravated by other factors: prisoners, homeless people, refugees, asylum seekers (Baker et al., 2004).

38. Moreover, applying a concept of gender equality, women and men can not only be considered as homogeneous groups. Also other social categories that influence their social positions have to be taken into account. In the feminist literature this is currently discussed with respect to the concept of intersectionality (first named by Crenshaw 1989).

39. In key documents of EU's gender equality policy different groups of women are taken into account with focus on "older women, single parents, women with a disability, migrant women and women from ethnic minorities" (Strategy for equality 2010-2015, p.4). This reflects an intra-categorical approach of intersectionality (McCall 2005) which takes into consideration differences and inequalities within a certain category of concern. Thus, when it comes to "translate" gender equality objectives into indicators and variables to measure the extent of gender equality, a multi-categorical perspective ensures to take different groups into account that are especially affected by gender inequalities in terms of "double discrimination" (Roadmap, p.10).