

## **GENDER AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT – EQUAL CHANCES FOR WOMEN AT THE LABOUR MARKET**

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**Abstract.** The article contains basic concepts of equal opportunity policy and gender issues. The economic dimension of equality policies were discussed and evaluated. Assessment was done of the situation of women at national and European labour market. The reasons for lower participation and employment of women as well as their discrimination on the labour market were discussed. Statistical studies confirm that both in Poland and in European Union countries there are important differences in wages. Comparison of such measures as GII, GEI and GPG shows a clear division between groups of countries: the developed ones (mainly Scandinavian) where differences by gender are not present or are minor, group of countries from the Mediterranean basin, where situation of women is more sensitive to the influence of stereotypes and traditional patterns, and a less developed countries from Central and Eastern Europe, where women still do not have equal opportunities in the labour market.

**Key words:** equal chances policy, labour market, gender pay gap, European Union, Poland

### **INTRODUCTION**

Equality is an essential characteristic and indicator of democracy, which is why the goal of many modern societies is the desire to respect the principle of equal opportunities because undoubtedly translates into the quality of social, political and economic life of citizens, thus ensuring a more sustainable and balanced socio-economic development. In view of the fact that in every society groups are present in a particularly vulnerable to the unequal treatment which reduces the chances of improving the quality and conditions of life and welfare of the public, there is a more or less conscious need to undertake meas-

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ures aimed at balancing opportunities for people exposed to discrimination for any reason. Objectives, instruments, actions and measures aim of doing so are referred to the notion of equality policy, having central importance for sustainable development at all levels of the economy and society. Discrimination can occur both on grounds of gender, age, race, nationality, disability, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Many places in the discussions as well as activities engaged themes of gender, which leads to perverse misunderstandings and ideological disputes, which we have seen in Poland, unheard of in other countries, scale. The article attempts to address these disputes but focusing mainly on the comparison and the description of objective scientific facts mainly using the Central Statistical Office and Eurostat statistics and reports from Polish and foreign scientific research. This made it possible to confirm that the situation of women in the labour market is more difficult compared to the opportunities that of men.

## RESULTS

### Biological sex and gender

In English, there are two equivalents of defining the concept of gender is sex understood as biological sex and gender understood as gender. Biological sex is a set of physical characteristics that differentiate women and men. These features are universal and unchanging. Conversely, the term gender in science appeared in the late 1960s of the twentieth century to show expectations of women and men in a given culture. Differentiating element is that gender is socially constructed, and therefore has the characteristics of variables. The perception of gender is subject to constant evolution as a result of changes taking place in society and is not devoid of stereotypes, which often lead to discrimination [Firlit-Fesnak and Szytko-Skoczny 2007, Matysiak 2012] Walter Lippmann [1922] in *Public Opinion*, work published in 1922, defined the concept of stereotype as “simplistic and inaccurate as a result of socially transmitted rather than personal experience, resistant to change, imagination reality, the images in our head”. Define gender stereotypes so generalized beliefs about women and men, simplified descriptions of “man’s man” and “femine woman”. Pankowska [2005] writes that femininity is associated with the sphere of domestic life, family and motherhood and masculinity associated with work, power and public activity. That is why so much importance in efforts to equal opportunities plays a struggle against stereotypes, with simplified descriptions, which in many cases lead to discrimination. There are various forms and types of discrimination. Discrimination can occur either due to gender, but also due to age, race, nationality, disability, religion, ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation. In the context of gender studies there is the concept of “gender socialization” as a list of the standards and practices of which the individual is subjected in society in different periods of life [Majewska and Rutkowska 2008]. Knowledge of these processes allows to explore and predict the behaviour of social groups and aware of the differences and similarities in the roles performed by women and men. The gender perspective free from emotions, in this study where research is concentrated on the labour market topics, is therefore both necessary and beneficial for cognitive and practical purposes.

### The economic importance of the equality policy

The perception of the needs of equal opportunities by gender is important in economic terms. It is noted that the relationship between higher levels of economic growth and respect for the rights of equality, since higher level of development leads to progress in areas such as education, culture and health care. The higher the activation of women in the labour market, the greater the growth of the domestic product by using larger labour force in qualitative and quantitative terms. Gender equality brings economic benefits, and its absence compounded losses. Equal opportunities between women and men contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of the economy and better economic performance. Awareness of equality leads to positive change in society. It helps to overcome stereotypes and improve the quality of life. Gender equality has a positive impact on the economic result of the whole economy. This is expressed through the ability to achieve higher GDP, alignment still existing pay gap which is not justified by objective reasons. The equal chances in addition to the quantitative aspects has also the qualitative aspects. It brings increasing women's participation in the labour market, namely the aspect of diversity. The incorporation of gender mainstreaming in all areas of activity and policies of the EU and member states also add arguments for improving economic efficiency.

Discrimination based on sex brings the decrease in efficiency. A situation in which the economic role of individuals is determined by the sex and not their abilities and skills, leads to inefficiency. In order to eliminate discrimination and segregation can be achieved growth of the labour force with different skills and thus improve the process of organization of work. The participation of women in the economy on an equal base as men can also have positive effects on family life, if the interests of women will be supported by a policy of promoting a balance between family and work roles [Parlament Europejski 2007].

The principle of equality is one of the main objectives of the European Union. Records relating to equal opportunities for women and men are in the Amsterdam Treaty and European Council regulations governing the implementation of the European Social Fund in all EU countries.

On the labour market are some phenomena and processes related to the discrimination relating to gender, which operate under the lapidary names, they are: *glass ceiling*, *glass walls*, *sticky floors*, *tokenism*. As the glass ceiling is determined "obstacles faced by women having managerial functions and it symbolizes the visibility of promotion while its incomprehensibility". The result is that women are rarely represented in top positions and rarely reach the areas associated with power. Glass wall is a term relating to the situation in which women often work in peripheral, secondary positions with the poor prospects for promotion. Sticky floor is the term that describes a situation of women dominance in low-income occupations and prestige, where opportunities for promotion are limited (e.g. secretaries, hairdressers, etc). Tokenism – the term for the situation, where the presence of very few women in groups or in positions dominated by men and it gives incorrect illusion of existing gender equality and thus "releases" with responsibility for the maintenance of discriminatory attitudes and behaviour [Sawicka 2009, 2013].

### **Equal opportunities for women on the labour market – assessment of the situation**

Gender is one of the main characteristics to be included in the statistics of the labour market. Many of the issues in this area presented are divided into groups of men and women. Individual capabilities, predisposition and the decisions of workers and persons seeking employment are varied depending on gender [*Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy* 2014]. Promoting the principle of gender equality in employment is considered to be an essential element of economic and social development and is a key mechanism to fight against unemployment and poverty. It is also an important factor contributing to the increase of the economic independence of women. Working women bring their contribution to the household resources, which cause the greater economic independence and empowerment of women [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 2015]. Despite this unequal gender participation, especially of women, still represents an obstacle to sustainable development.

Human Development Report 2010 introduced the index of gender inequality index (GII), which illustrates the inequality between women and man in the following dimensions: health, participation in society and the labour market. The indicator can range from 0 to 1, and when closer to 1 the disparities between the sexes are greater. Analysis of data shows that women are often discriminated in such dimensions as: health, education or the labour market, which in turn leads to restrict their freedom. There is a great diversity between regions: from Slovenia 0.021 to 0.320 in Romania. Large imbalances in the position of the sexes take place in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, to contribute to this low participation of women in representative bodies, including the Parliament, and a lower percentage of women in the labour force. Gender inequality index for Poland was 0.139. In developed countries is noted greater equality between women and men in terms of education and their position on the labour market. However, many Member States have problems with the proportional representation of women in the public institutions including the Parliament [*Human Development Report* 2013] (Fig. 1).

Another indicator which shows gender equality is gender equity index (GEI), which measures the level of inequality of women and men in different areas of life and includes several indicators representing three dimensions, which measure differences between women and men in three key areas, i.e. education, participation in the economy and gender equality (empowerment). A country in which women and men have equal access to education is a value of 100 points on the index. The maximum number of points does not mean that the quality for example, in education in both cases is identical. A similar situation occurs in the other two dimensions. The value of the GEI is the arithmetic mean of these dimensions. Gender equity index in the various EU Member States ranges from 0.63 in Malta to 0.88 in Finland. Also in this case there are differences between the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and the rest of the UE, especially Scandinavian countries. Poland with a score of 0.76 is in the middle. The lowest level of inequality between women and men exists in the Nordic countries, where GEI achieved the highest values (Fig. 2).

Another indicator for measuring gender equality is gender equality index. This indicator is based on the following domains: jobs, money, knowledge, power, health, time. An indicator of Gender Equality Index can take values from 1 to 100, where 100

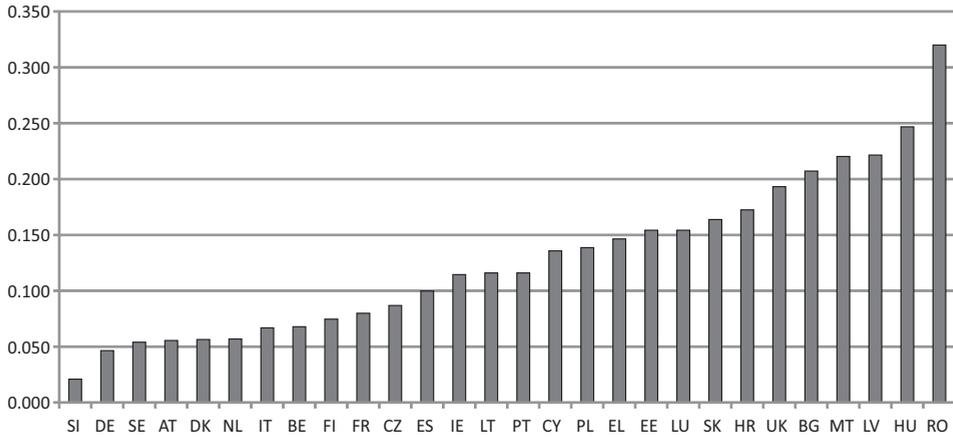


Fig. 1. Gender inequality index (GII) in the 2013 (countries codes according to UE Inter-institutional style guide)

Source: Own calculations based on retrieved from on-line report of UN Development Programme retrieved from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/table-4-gender-inequality-index>.

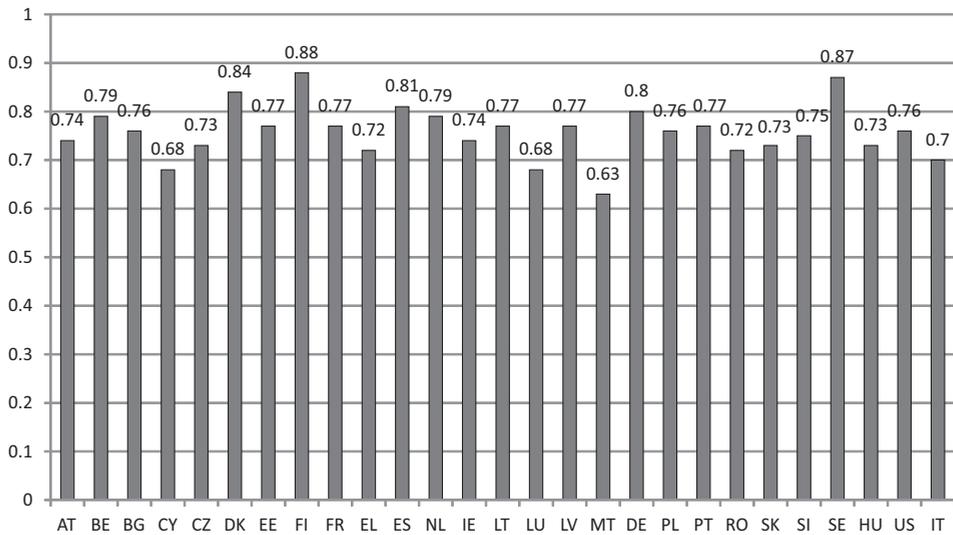


Fig. 2. Gender equity index (GEI) in the 2012

Source: Own calculations based on on-line Social Watch report retrieved from <http://www.socialwatch.org/node/14367>.

means the best of the situation. Also analysis of this indicator shows that there are differences between EU countries from a gender perspective. The average score for the EU countries stands at 53 points, which is far from accepted gender equality. There is a big discrepancy between Member States: from 33.7 points in Romania to 74.2 in Sweden. Four Member States again achieve results that far exceed the average of the EU:

Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands. Poland takes 9th position from the end. As in the case of previous measures, as well as the Gender Equality Index reaches the highest values in the Nordic countries. The low value is in the Mediterranean countries (Fig. 3).

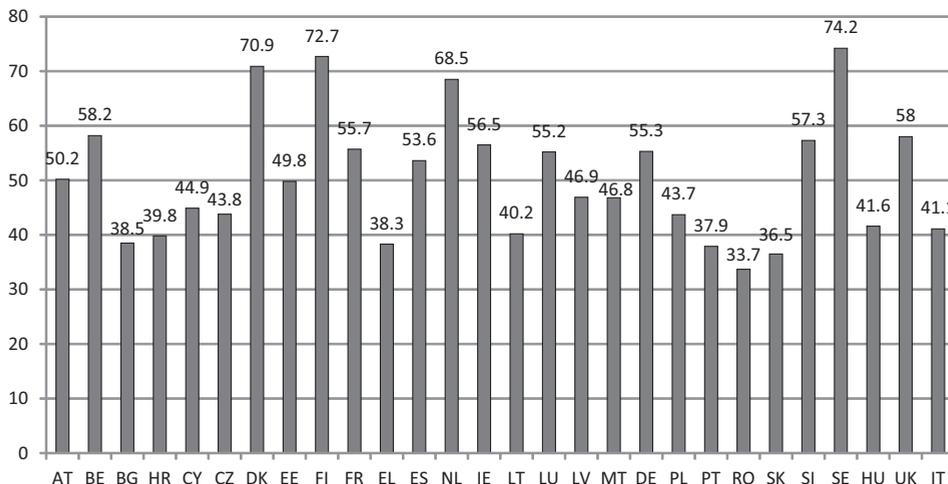


Fig. 3. Gender equality index in the 2012

Source: Own calculations based on European Institute for Gender Equality [2015].

In the European Union the strategic objective is adopted in the perspective of 2020 to have 75% the employment rate both in women and men groups. Despite the fact that the employment rate for women rose to 63% of it, still it is lower in comparison with the rate of employment of men, which was 75%. To improve the situation of women in the labour market has contributed to a certain extent the financing of the EU funds: in the years 2007–2013 investments in childcare facilities and to promote the participation of women in the labour market is endowed with the estimated amount of 3.2 billion EUR from the structural funds, which caused a considerable multiplier effect [*Równość płci: stały postęp dzięki działaniom UE* 2014].

A major problem of the modern world there are disparities in the pay gap between women and men, called the pay gap. This phenomenon is international in nature and occurs around the world, both in Europe and in Poland. Numerous surveys confirm the existence of this phenomenon. For these comparisons to be used is the gender pay gap (GPG) referred to as the difference in percentage points between the level of the average gross wage per hour of work for men and women, expressed as a percentage in relation to the wages of men. According to Eurostat, in 2013 in the EU as a whole, the women's earnings were on average 16% lower than men's. GPG indicator was varied and amounted to, from 3.2% in Slovenia to 30% in Estonia (Fig. 4).

The size of the GPG ratio varies considerably between Member States. The cause of the differences in the remuneration of women and men are not objective phenomena, because formally women are better educated than men, the differences were rather as

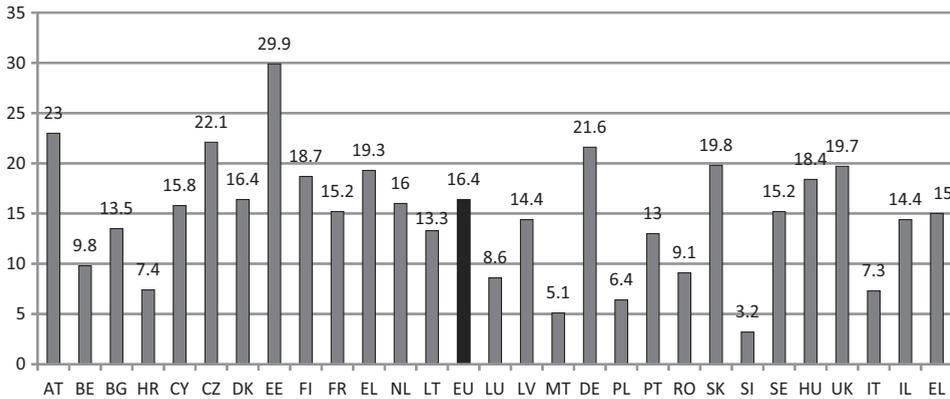


Fig. 4. Gender pay gap (GPG) in the UE Member States, 2013 (%)

Source: Own calculations based on Eurostat newsrelease from 5 March 2015. Retrieved from <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&pcode=tsdsc340&plugin=1>.

the result of historical discrimination and the underestimation of women's competences and skills. Work which women do still is seen as less valuable, and women's remuneration for tasks requiring from a man of similar qualifications or experience are generally lower. Differences also arise from segregation in the labour market, prevailing gender stereotypes and the obligation to reconcile working life with family life, which mostly affects women. Occupations in which women predominate are generally worse paid, and in management positions well paid, are dominated by men.

In 2014, the average participation of women on the boards of large listed companies in the EU amounted to 20%. The highest level of representation of women was taking place in such countries as France and Latvia (32%), Finland (30%) and Sweden (28%). In Slovenia, Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Germany on the boards of listed companies were at least 20% of women. In the Netherlands, every fifth woman participates in committees of listed companies. The lowest level of representation of women was in Malta, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Cyprus and Portugal. In Poland, this level was 15%, which means that it is below the EU average (Fig. 5).

The role of women is seen very stereotypically, then she should resign from professional work to raise children. As a result of which women are more likely to forgo work and not keep coming back to it full time after the birth of a child.

The difference in the distribution of domestic and family responsibilities is one of the main factors contributing to the formation of the pay gap and women lower rate employment. The existence of the pay gap and a shorter time to women's work means that, in future, they will receive a lower pension as compared to men.

According to the European Commission, the difference in the amount of pensions for women and men is 39 p.p. [*Równość płci: staty postęp dzięki działaniom UE* 2014]. The consequences of unequal wages can be seen earlier than retirement. In sociological sciences you will encounter the concept of the feminization of poverty, which means

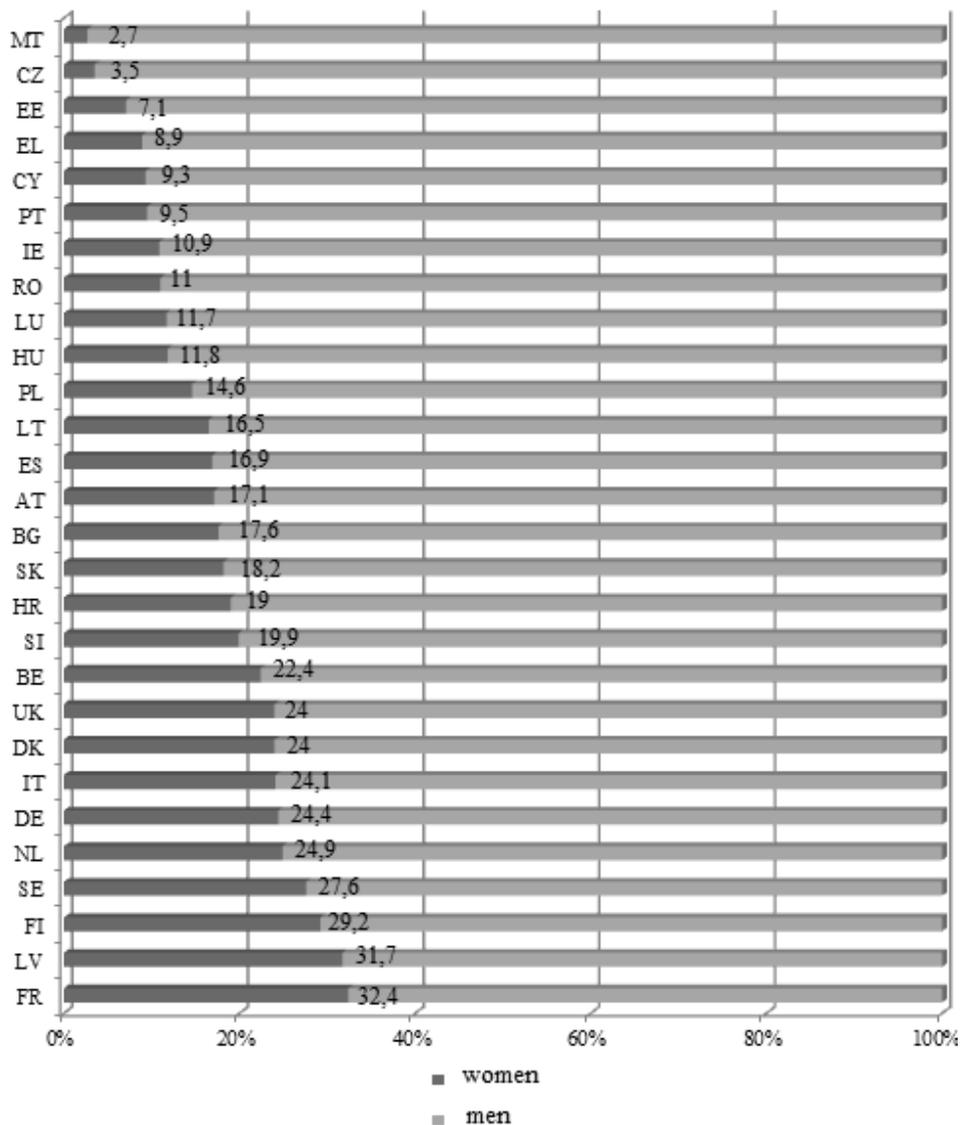


Fig. 5. Representation of women and men on the boards of large listed companies in the EU, October 2014

Source: Own calculations based on European Commission [2015].

that women and their children more often are exposed to poverty and social exclusion. Besides women as opposed to men have lower self-esteem and lower expectations. Are less likely to negotiate the salaries because they believe that will have a negative effect on the employment decision. Significant change is needed also in the mentality of the workers. Break with the commonly perceived stereotype perceptions women as mothers and

wives, and only later as an employee. The participation of women in the labour market is increasing in most countries, but still remains lower compared to men. The most common causes of this include: inflexible working hours, which are not compatible with the obligations of the mother, the inability to work part-time, the unequal distribution of family responsibilities associated with home work and the care of children, gender roles, stereotypes and attitudes related to gender, difficulties in entering the labour market after the birth of a child. It has been reported that women who do not have children attain higher employment compared with women who are raising children [United Nations Economic Commission for Europe 2015].

### **The situation of women on the labour market in Poland**

Over the years 2010–2013, the share of economically active women increased by 1 p.p. and accounted for 49% of the labour force ratio for comparison, men accounted for 64% of the vote. This means that the level of participation of women is still lower than that of men. In 2013, per 1,000 active population men, there were 554 inactive, while the active population per 1,000 women fell to 1,060 inactive. A group of passive population working for the most part are women, which is 61% of the population. Therefore, you can talk about feminization of passive population. By analyzing the ratio of professional activity by age, it turns out that this distribution is slightly different among women and men. The highest percentage of women in the economically active age 40–44 years, whereas among men aged 35–39 years, the highest level of women's professional activity is visible in the case of women with higher education, close it is to the index for men, the difference in this case was less than 5 p.p. while for other levels of education ranges from 15 to 23 p.p. [*Kobiety i mężczyźni i na rynku pracy* 2014].

The level of unemployment was higher for women than men. In the years 2010–2014 the rate of unemployment among women and men decreased by 0.8 p.p., and in 2014 amounted to 9.3% for women and 7.4% for men. The structure of unemployment in the various age groups is identical to that in the population of men and women. This means that the highest rate of unemployment in the case of the youngest. The number of people out of work is definitely lower in the case of women and men representing higher education [*Kobiety i mężczyźni i na rynku pracy* 2014].

Compared to men, more women working in the public sector, i.e. up 18% for men and 33% for women. Women predominate as employed persons, the small proportion of women as employers and self-employed persons. The most feminized section of the national economy include: health care, social welfare and education, in which women were about 8 out of 10. The largest group, both women and men, carries out work for 40–49 hours a week. There are not seen significant differences in this respect between women and men. Analyzing the employment of women and men employment shows that the highest proportion of women work in services, while men dominate especially in industry and agriculture. Women as often as men are employed on the basis of contracts for an indefinite period, however, there are differences according to age. In a group of younger workers, i.e. 15–24 years, the proportion of men having a contract for an indefinite period is 7 p.p. higher than women's [*Kobiety i mężczyźni i na rynku pracy* 2014].

## CONCLUSIONS

In the study there was presented the economic and social dimension of inequality of the population of women in the labour market. For this purpose, it were used the comparisons from different European Union countries. It was noted a correlation between higher levels of economic development of the country and the existence of democratic rights in the area of gender equality. This applies to the equal opportunities for women on the labour market, but also the presence of them in the sphere of culture or education.

On the labour market are some phenomena and processes related to the discrimination relating to gender, which operate under the lapidary names, they are: *glass ceiling*, *glass walls*, *sticky floors*, *tokenism*.

The population of women in comparison with men's reaches lower indicators of labour and employment, in turn, the higher is the level of women unemployment. Statistics show more difficult situation of women in the labour market. The causes of women inequality is to be found much often in less developed economies. The lack and scarcity of the institutional care of children and other dependents is influencing women professional activity much more than men, especially for women returning to the labour market after a longer break (maternity live).

Another indicator of the infer position of women in the labour market is undervaluing their work through what women in comparison to men receive lower wages.

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## **PLEĆ A ZRÓWNOWAŻONY ROZWÓJ GOSPODARCZY – RÓWNOŚĆ SZANS KOBIEC NA RYNKU PRACY**

**Streszczenie.** Artykuł zawiera podstawowe kwestie polityki równości szans i równości płci. Dyskutuje się i ocenia ekonomiczny wymiar polityki równościowej. Dokonano oceny sytuacji kobiet na krajowym i europejskim rynku pracy. Przyczyny mniejszego udziału i zatrudnienia kobiet, jak i ich dyskryminacji na rynku pracy zostały omówione. Badania statystyczne potwierdzają, że zarówno w Polsce, jak i w krajach Unii Europejskiej istnieją istotne różnice w poziomie płac (rozpiętość w wynagrodzeniu według płci). Zestawienie takich mierników jak GII, GEI i GPG wskazuje na wyraźny podział na grupy krajów: kraje rozwinięte (w tym głównie skandynawskie), gdzie różnice według płci nie występują lub są nieznaczne, grupa krajów z basenu Morza Śródziemnego, gdzie sytuacja kobiet jest bardziej wrażliwa na wpływ stereotypów i tradycyjnych wzorów, oraz słabiej rozwiniętych krajów z Europy Środkowej i Wschodniej, gdzie kobiety wciąż nie mają równych szans na rynku pracy.

**Słowa kluczowe:** polityka równości szans, rynek pracy, różnice w wynagrodzeniu kobiet i mężczyzn, Unia Europejska, Polska

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