

ARENAS

ANALYSIS OF AND RESPONSES
TO EXTREMIST NARRATIVES

Report on Institutional & Social Actors'
Existing Strategy and Remediation
Recommendation : *A Focus on Gender
through Gender Equality in European
Countries.*



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By
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The ARENAS project looks at extremist narratives that affect political and social life in Europe. It examines the nature of these narratives and seeks to understand the discourses they impact, particularly about science, gender and the nation. By understanding how these narratives work, ARENAS will empower people to resist them. To foster a spirit of people living together in harmony across Europe, policy recommendations will be made as to how to prevent such narratives from taking hold in the future.

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OUR PARTNERS

Our partnership consists of **12 organisations** from **9 countries**, each bringing unique experience, expertise and skills to the project.



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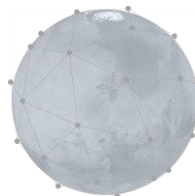
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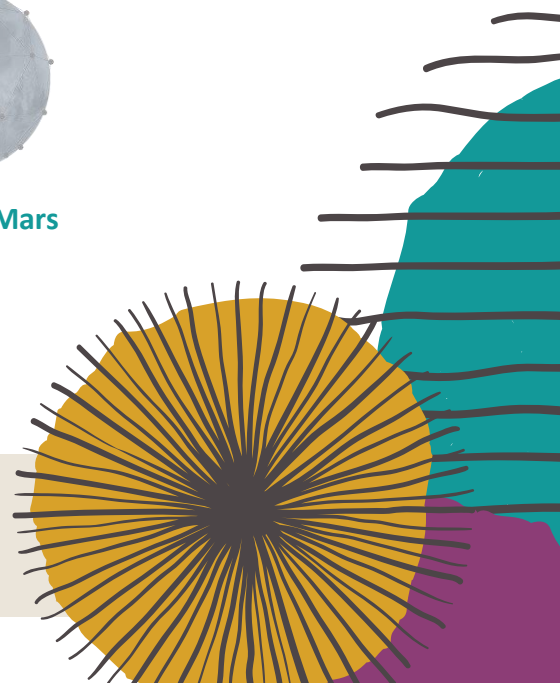
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Why Gender Is Central To The 3 Issues Of Nation, Gender And Science



Presentation of the report in the framework of ARENAS project by Béatrice Fracchiolla, CNRS, Université of Lorraine, WP5 coordinator.

Foreward

This report is more specifically based on what each country has tried to do at the institutional level and in terms of legislation, in particular education, to promote gender equality at the level of each nation. The approach adopted is also consistent with the cultural, historical and geographical characteristics of each country. The particular attention paid to institutions and laws in this first report should be seen in the context of Task 2, which specifically deals with the comparison of national and European laws and extremist discourse, and with the specific focus of WP5 on the educational dimension for young people in order to propose mediation and remedial discourse. These two dimensions are present in the work carried out in France, for example, by the Conseil Économique Social et Environnemental, in which Béatrice Fracchiolla took part, and the opinion published <https://www.lecese.fr/travaux-publies/de-la-banalisation-de-la-violence-verbale-au-discours-de-haine-decrypter-mieux-agir-pour-restaurer-le-lien> in February 2025.

What makes WP5 different from the other work packages within ARENAS is that it uses what is already known about hate speech and extremism as a basis for looking at the other side of the coin, which is how to mediate in order to deflect it, or how to remedy it where possible. WP5's watchword is that language matters. With this in mind, we have created the following research blog, hosted by the CNRS portal dedicated to research blogs, to accompany our research and thinking throughout the ARENAS project : <https://betterworld.hypotheses.org/>. - which comes in addition to what was already planned in the Grant Agreement. More specifically, WP5 stems from the results and work already carried out by linguists in the framework of the European H2020 Practices project (Partnership Against Violent Radicalisation

Online in the Cities) and the resulting publications, to which Béatrice Fracchiolla also contributed: *Discours de haine et des radicalisations. Un glossaire des notions*, edited by Nolwenn Lorenzi Bailly and Claudine Moïse, at ENS éditions, Lyon in 2023; and *La haine en discours*, edited by Nolwenn Lorenzi Bailly and Claudine Moïse, le Bord de l'eau, collection documents in 2021. More broadly, WP5 draws on the work carried out for over twenty years in France by a group of researchers on verbal violence and hate speech, with numerous publications (see in particular: <https://groupedraine.github.io/>). As well as wider analyses and recommendations beyond Europe (<https://www.un.org/fr/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-versus-freedom-of-speech>).

The amalgam of Science and Nation through Gender in the narratives and discourses of extremist movements and parties

The relationship between gender, science and nation is often at the heart of the arguments of extremist movements and parties - whether political or religious. Gender is frequently weaponised within nationalist discourses which:

- **Attack gender studies and reproductive rights** using **anti-scientific rhetoric**.
- Promote **biological essentialism**, claiming that gender equality contradicts scientific reality.
- Disseminate **pseudoscientific claims** about gender and intelligence, the validity of transgender identities, and reproductive autonomy.

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- **Frame gender equality as a foreign or globalist threat** to national sovereignty.
- **Use gender discourse to justify anti-immigration narratives**, arguing that gender rights are incompatible with migrant cultures.
- **Promote traditional family values as a foundation of national identity**, positioning feminism and LGBTQ+ rights as a societal danger.

Using women's bodies as a weapon to expand the nation

For example, as early as 1980, the Hungarian parliament enshrined “family” as the pillar of the nation in the national constitution (adopted in 2012). The legal endorsement of a specific conception of the family served as the basis for the introduction in 2019 by Viktor Orbán's government of a series of natalist policies aimed at encouraging Hungarian women to have more children. Among the measures adopted are a lifetime income tax exemption for mothers who have had at least four children; substantial financial assistance for couples who commit to having three children within the next ten years in order to buy a new home. These measures reflect the Hungarian government's conservative approach to family policy. They are part of an overall discourse that emphasises the promotion of the 'national' birth rate rather than immigration as a means of compensating for demographic decline. This policy can also be interpreted as encouraging women to return to the domestic sphere to bring up their (many) children while limiting their economic and professional independence - and thus their power to potentially take on other roles in the world and society.

We can clearly see how gender and nation get intertwined in this occasion, and also weaponized in

order to keep “others” out of the Nation. More recently, French President Emmanuel Macron spoke of ‘demographic rearmament’ at the presidential greeting ceremony on television on January the 1st, 2024, - to express the fact that France needed more children to be born. This expression – most clearly weaponized - also shows how nation and women's bodies are interlinked.

If we now think of abortion, on the opposite side, for an example: it is also an issue linked to the nation; the relationship between women's bodies and their 'domination', which is linked to the issue of abortion and birth control is centered in the search of control over women's bodies.

As the later example also shows, the Italian Member of Parliament for the 5 Star Movement Gilda Sportiello criticised the government's amendment authorising the presence of anti-abortion activists in clinics in her Parliament speech of the 17th of April 2024. She especially got angry after a male member of parliament who defended this amendment said it was a way to give women, “l'opportunità della vita” (the chance of/for life).

Another event of that kind took place in France: to mark World Menopause Day on 18 October 2023, the CNews programme ‘L'Heure des Pros’ invited seven male experts to talk about menopause, including a gynaecologist, but no women were on the set.

This event (fortunately) created a great deal of controversy, but it shows that, once again, it is mainly and abnormally men who are invited to debate and decide on the future of women's bodies on issues that they have no experiential means of understanding. When it comes to women's bodies, there are religious, political and scientific arguments at play (strength, brain size, height, 'mother' of the nation) because women give birth to future citizens – thus we can say in a way that male and patriarchal domination of women's bodies essentially aims at protecting and controlling unborn children.

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Let's continue to talk about the reproduction of the species, but this time with the help of science. It is only since 2021 that women have been able to undergo Insemination with an Anonymous Donor in France, but not if they are single. On the other hand, the overwhelming majority of single-parent families in France are women with children. So the extremism directed at women is directed at their bodies: to be protected, defended, controlled and dominated (whether it's Insemination with Anonymous Donor, prostitution, abortion, wearing the veil in public spaces, at all times and everywhere), these laws - which are extreme - directly concern only women and women's bodies, and their arguments are always based on a scientific or national foundation (Fracchiolla, Béatrice 2021, notice 'signes religieux', Publicationnaire, dictionnaire encyclopédique et critique des publics, <http://publicationnaire.huma-num.fr/notice/signes-religieux/>).

This is why the question posed by WP5 is first and foremost about gender as the main theme and the intersection of the other two, science and the nation, which have always provided arguments for misogyny (hatred of women) by taking the narrative shortcuts typical of extreme discourse.

The fallacious argument of science

If we take, for example, the rule on gender grammatical agreement in French, laid down by Nicolas Beauzé in 1767: 'Le genre masculin est réputé plus noble que le féminin à cause de la supériorité du mâle sur la femelle' ('The masculine gender is considered more noble than the feminine because of the superiority of the male over the female'). This text illustrates how a common but untrue representation of opinion is turned into a pseudo-scientific argument on which to base a grammatical rule.

Another example in his thesis entitled *The gendered voice, between ideologies and practices. A socio-phonetic study* (2015), Aron Arnold demonstrates how in medical textbooks and manuals, it is always the male body that serves as the benchmark, and reference, as a 'body - that would be - neutral' (...) versus a female body supposedly 'marked', other, imperfect and second (226-27, chapter 6) ; but also 'pathological' in relation to the masculine, due in particular to the premenstrual vocal syndrome highlighted in phonetic studies. We learn that phonetic literature systematically uses male vocal tracts to represent human vocal tracts. The author also highlights a tendency to consider these elements of domination as 'natural' from an evolutionary point of view. For example, an infant dressed neutrally, without pink or blue, is generally perceived as a boy. The violence here is frozen in 'true' discourse - scientific, unchallengeable, unquestionable - sedimented, as it were, when he explains the recurring phonetic literature: 'describing a vocal tract of 170 mm, i.e. a male vocal tract, as a "normal vocal tract" is tantamount to saying that the male body is the normal body. This implies that any non-masculine body is abnormal. (p.230). Aron Arnold goes on to show (p.243) how it is cyclicity itself that is presented as 'fundamentally' unstable, whereas studies conducted over the long term provide objective results that tend to say quite the opposite of the 'true' elaborated discourses (in particular, the fact that men's voices had experienced more variation and therefore instability than women's over 33 days (p.242).

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The foundations of storytelling: beliefs vs science

We can see, then, that narratives based on hate speech are founded above all on **beliefs**, and in the case of gender, on the belief that women's bodies are under control. A **fundamental principle should therefore precede and preside over any law**, which would assert that **no law should or can be promoted, passed or applied that seeks to regulate, modify or constrain anything that relates solely to the body or appearance of people on the basis of their sex or gender**. In other words, no law should apply only to women or only to men because **laws are made for all human beings** so that they can lead their lives together in society. Furthermore, the choice of gender as a theme to illustrate our work in ARENAS was based on the fact that every society/nation is built on the basis of sex and gender relations in order to form a family and live together – as explained before. For this WP5, the basis of reflection for the counterapproach is indeed the notion of “living together” in all its political and social meaning (and as it has been studied for the last 4 years in the Centre de Recherche Et de Médiation UR3476 at University of Lorraine where Louise Burté is doing her PhD under the supervision of Béatrice Fracchiolla, in the frame of WP5).

Moreover, the arguments that tend to divide sex and gender relations in binary terms are themselves mostly based on so-called “scientific views” (questions that refer to a supposedly scientific vision of things – but in reality naturalise and essentialise sexes and therefore genders in a binary and differential way – and therefore in a comparative – division of the sexes – and a fortiori of the genders).

The concept of Human rights

Equality legislation is no exception to this rule, as most documents contain speeches ‘in favour’ of equality or ‘against inequality’, in order to *achieve* more equality. The notion of inequality, therefore, continues to circulate in discourse, and therefore in representations, through all these discourses. The question posed by WP5 in this regard is how to **propose and bring together alternative discourses** that, by avoiding the pitfalls of comparison, etc. mentioned above, allow societies to build on positive representations that are, so to speak, ‘pre-existent’ to all representations of sex and gender. Our **first conclusion in this respect** – looking at all the documents – is that **the most effective discourses are precisely those that in one way or another escape the binary and differential staging of gender and are based on the consideration that gender equality is a fact**.

Our emotions prevail

The question of the relationship with the Other, in society, and therefore in every nation, is also at the heart of this differentiationist and binary issue, in that it creates, from a discursive point of view, the included and the excluded, the good and the bad, not on the basis of critical and conscious reasoning, **but on the basis of emotional feelings** (I like it or I don't like it), which in turn generate stereotypical, categorizing, inclusive and exclusive discourses. In this respect, WP5 also intends to explore these discursive issues, which, from a cognitive point of view, are related to the fact that we construct our knowledge through categorisation/discrimination processes. In this perspective, WP5 is not **merely deconstructing extremist narratives** but also developing **alternative, non-confrontational storytelling strategies** that:

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- **Avoid binary framing** (e.g. male vs female, modernity vs tradition).
- **Emphasise gender equality as a social norm**, rather than a contested issue.
- **Counteract emotional manipulation in nationalist and anti-scientific discourse.**

Testing Didactic Sequences for Future Recommendations

One of the aims of education is to achieve a scientific-based knowledge where hypotheses are also made based on existing scientifically proved facts (vs beliefs). Through the didactic sequences that are led as a task of WP5 (M18-24) we want to test these 'positive' alternative discourses and experiment with de-categorisation and other stagings to see to what extent the staging of discourses can possibly change our ways of looking at things. Some of the initial narrative and discursive 'tools' we have identified for working in this direction, after testing various gender 'educational' documents produced by different institutions (universities, European projects, NGOs), are listed below. It is on the basis of these tools that we wish to attempt to implement the proposal for teaching tools aimed at educating future European citizens, and therefore future Nations, by basing discourse on a principle of gender and sexual equality that is already presupposed - and therefore by transforming (common/historical) narratives in order to enable representations to be modified. This approach is underpinned by a number of theoretical assumptions from the philosophy of language, cognitive psychology, anthropology, sociology and linguistics, among which the performativity of

discourse, the importance of trust in what is said, and the development of critical thinking and distance (Palo Alto School).

The empathic approach

One of the discursive tools is **the development of an empathic approach** of the kind found, for example, in role-playing games: **based on the principle that if we 'think' first with our emotions and not with our rational brain**, putting ourselves in the other person's place, understanding and welcoming them in their diversity by feeling (more or less) what they feel, **this will be more effective than any other discourse.** That's why, to sum up, the recommendations developed by WP5 are rooted in the principle of narrative deconstruction through a process of discursive deconstruction and reconstruction, with gender as a focal example for clarity. Phase 1 focuses on the example of gender, and its findings and recommendations are intended to be transferable to other themes - i.e. nation and science because the three themes are intertwined, as shown earlier.

The focus of the recommendations, which will be updated in M36, is on the narrative structure - discourse, counter-discourse, alternative discourse, etc. - that has already been identified through initial document comparisons in Phase 1. Phase 2 involves setting up experiments, still focused on gender, to test how narrative modes can be transformed. This phase aims to identify three main types of general recommendations that can be broadly applied to reframe 'extremist narratives'.

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Here are outlined some of the key principles that we plan to use to inform the design of our didactic sequences and platform, based on the work accomplished until now. The main idea is to propose alternative narratives (images, scenarios) rather than directly confronting existing ones in a combative sense. This approach favors deviation or divergence over confrontation in the conventional, violent sense. These principles can be summarised as follows

- Avoid binary modes of differential opposition; instead favor generalisation through diversity (inclusive rather than exclusive narrative modes).
- Encourage the scenarisation of diversity in storytelling and discourse through careful selection of examples.
- Avoid polarising controversies and dogmatic black-and-white polemics. Instead, strive for nuanced articulation and reformulation without straying from the issue.
- Demonstrate openness to negotiation and conciliation, avoiding outright rejection or antagonism towards opposing views. In the case of provocation, adopt a measured response that reflects informed authority rather than reactive force, in keeping with the classical notion of authority as understood in the Latin tradition.
- Revive the basic principles of Greek and Latin rhetoric to guide discourse.

- Avoid counter-speeches that merely reverse the opposition without escaping the binary controversy. Instead, promote mediated perspectives that allow for distancing and objectification. This approach allows individuals to transcend personal beliefs and open up to otherness, which is the core alternative to extremist narratives.

- Addressing issues of representation, such as idealised norms (e.g. mannequins and body standards) that encourage conformity and obscure broader concerns such as politics. Conformity often involves blending in with the masses, seeking desirability by becoming unremarkable and mirroring those deemed desirable.

- Recognise that extreme narratives often evoke intense emotions, creating a neurological pull towards strong feelings of existence. This emotional galvanisation can lead to manipulation, similar to the principles used by cults and authoritarian systems.

- Prioritise the development of alternative discourses and narratives, as highlighted in community work. Focus on staging and articulating the desired world as if it already exists, thus making it visible and performative in the collective imagination. Simply highlighting negativity or problems tends to reinforce those problems and perpetuate despair.

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- Advocate positive representations of the world that promote hope and optimism. Ground the discourse in evidence while challenging narrative extremism.

- Address the growing concern that AI risks dehumanisation. Deconstruct representations by making people aware that these representations exist, predate us and are shaped by environmental, educational and historical factors.

- Promote understanding of alternative perspectives, fostering empathy through travel, films and encounters with others.

- For the didactic sequence and platform: to present different life stories and situations, demonstrating the richness of alternative narratives.

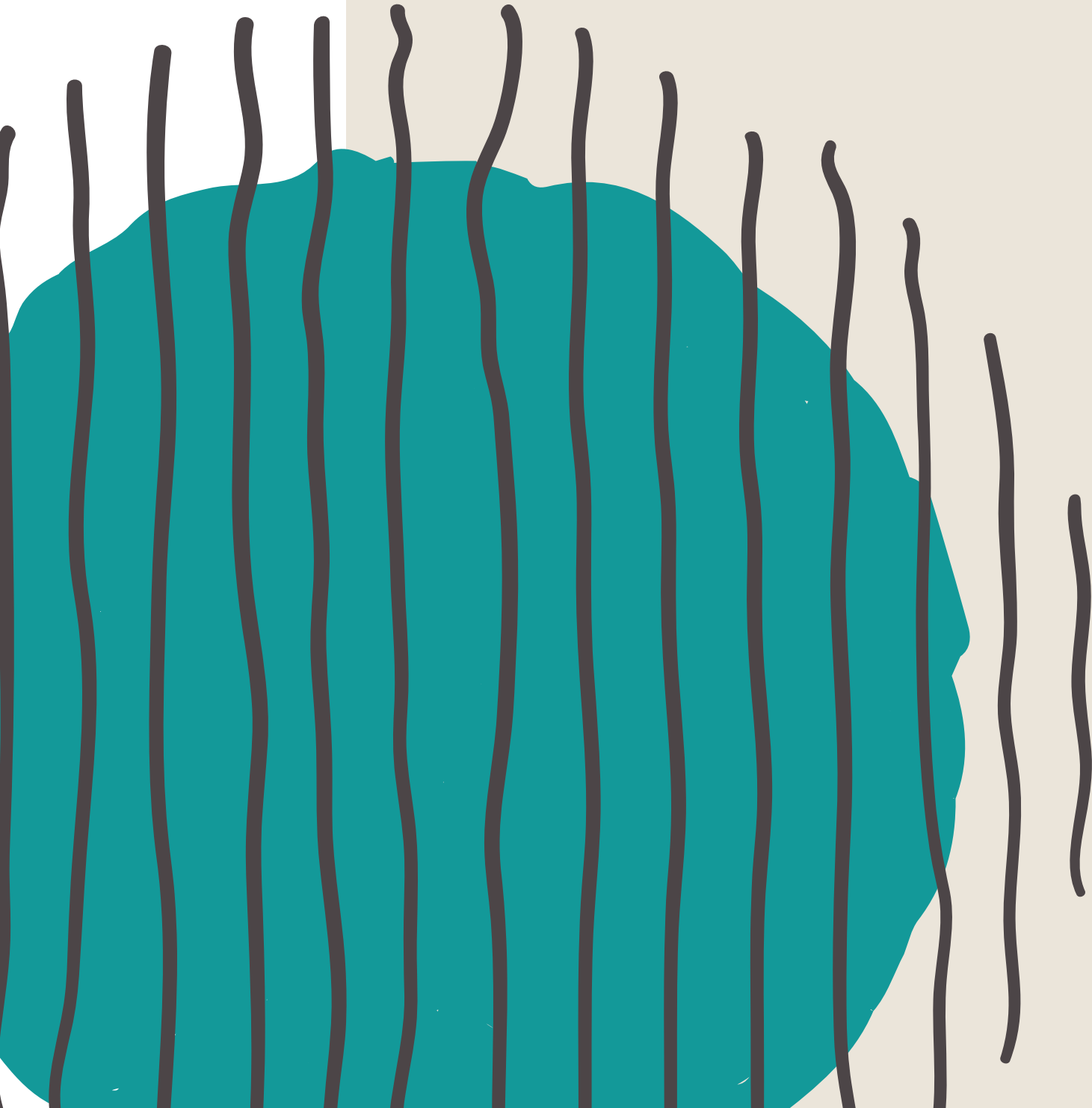
Thus, the final WP5 report will **experiment with alternative discourse strategies**, focusing on:

- **Narrative deconstruction** (reframing extremist arguments).
- **Empathy-driven storytelling** (countering exclusionary narratives).
- **Educational tools to promote inclusive national identities.**

The following report thus intends to give a view on what the current situation is as the result of the last ten years in the ARENAS partners countries in terms of law and gender as foundation of the nation in terms of individuals and families. All countries show that gender is still an issue. We also hypothesize that the fact that gender is presented as an issue creates the issue itself – as said a little earlier (Klemperer, 1971). This report will be reviewed if needed, with add-on at M36. Some parts of it will be inserted in the final “White paper on Strategies and recommendations of mediations and remediations for extreme narratives discourses (D5.4 due on M46).

01

Gender Equality: European Perspective



GENDER EQUALITY: EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE



Introduction and Aims

This report aims to provide a concise overview of gender equality activities in the partner countries over the past decade to understand the current situation. It is our basis for a better understanding of people's actual representations of gender and the evolution of gender roles in society. We have paid particular attention to the three focus countries of WP5 (Italy, Spain and Latvia). The annexes provide further insight into gender issues and gender education, with authentic documents attached to the summary. A list of the documents included in the annexes is provided where relevant. It is indicated as "Additional resources (cf. Country's annexes)" after the list of references. In agreement with the project coordinator, we have decided to add some information on Poland and Greece (in relation to Cyprus).

Summary of the report

What the report shows: Although many actions have been taken, are being taken and are planned for the coming years to reduce gender discrimination and promote gender equality in all European partner countries, it is clear that these two issues, which are strongly linked to cultural practices, beliefs and behaviours, remain problematic at many levels in many countries, despite all the actions taken at different institutional levels.

The hypothesis and ambition of WP5 is to make people understand that language, which creates the representations that underlie our practices, beliefs and behaviours, is at the origin of the very way we make society. But language is also the vehicle by which we share our beliefs and representations, and therefore how we pass them on to our children. Insofar as it creates reality, language is at the heart

of what needs to be thwarted, understood and taught, and the laws themselves are shaped by language. This report will form the basis of our next WP5 educational sequences D5.2.

Introduction to the report

The latest Gender Equality Index 2023 report by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) shows that despite improvements in the quality of life at work, in education and in economic decision-making, gender inequalities continue to widen in the European Union, for example in the economic sphere (personal economic situation) or in the health sphere (health status and access to health care) (EIGE, 2023: 11).

In addition to violence against women (femicides, domestic violence, etc.), gender discrimination (LGBTphobia, sexism, intersectional discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991)) and persistent professional and socio-economic inequalities (difficulties in obtaining a job because of gender, pay gap, etc.), violations of the most fundamental rights (see articles 1 and 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) are also located in and through language. Hate speech is one of the most recognised forms of such manifestations of antagonism and hostility. It is defined by the Council of Europe as "any form of expression that incites, promotes, disseminates or justifies violence, hatred or discrimination against a person or a group of persons on the grounds of their characteristics or their real or perceived status such as 'race', colour, language, religion, nationality, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation".

Gender Equality: European Perspective

In line with the overall objective of ARENAS, WP5 aims to highlight and educate young people about the fact that language works through categorisation and differentiation, which are the basis of stereotypes and discrimination and the operators of extreme narratives and discourses. The aim is to raise awareness that the way we express ourselves has an impact on others and on our relationships with others.

In particular, by addressing the issue of the construction of these extreme and extremist narratives (still based on discriminatory discourses capable of inciting hatred and violence against others) on the subject of gender, the aim is to highlight the existence of these discourses in our contemporary societies, to unveil their socio-historical ramifications and, above all, to find the levers through mediation actions in the form of evaluative and didactic activities with a young European school audience. Following the grant agreement signed with the EU, the Protocol will be implemented in three target countries: Italy, Spain and Latvia.

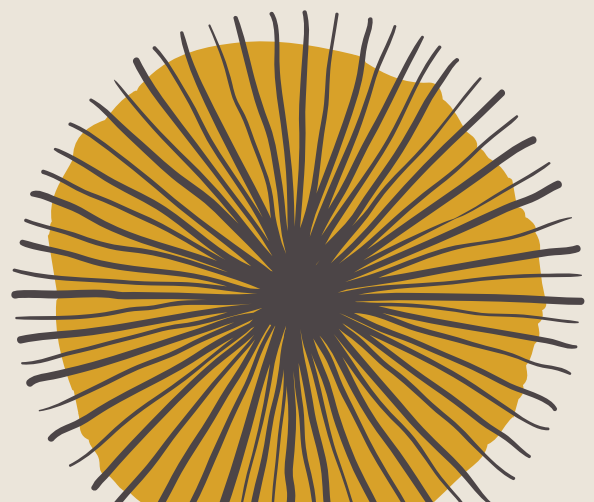
The main research hypothesis of WP5 is that the change of mentalities and representations mainly involves narratives, speeches and their (future) circulation: addressing the tools of this change to the youngest is the best way to give them the means to address persistent and targeted issues related to gender and its perception by gradually transforming the representations related to it. It is a question of questioning existing practices through the prism of persistent tensions, finding ways out of them and calming them down. This report, therefore focusses on the actions already taken by public actors against gender discrimination in the European countries covered. The hypothesis is that, on the basis of these findings and the possible shortcomings of public policies, a mediation action focussed on language (and here on gender) would highlight the impact of language on the construction of gender perceptions and make them evolve towards an inclusive, conscious and more harmonious approach.

European Union strategies and international cooperation

Member States' efforts to promote gender equality are closely linked to broader European Union strategies and international cooperation, such as the EU's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, which aims to achieve gender equality in all Member States. This strategy focusses on key areas such as combating gender-based violence, closing gender gaps in the labour market and tackling gender stereotypes. A country's accession to the EU is a means of strengthening overall action against discrimination and for gender equality.

EU Member States also cooperate internationally through initiatives such as Horizon Europe, which supports research and innovation in the field of gender equality. This cooperation enables countries to benefit from shared knowledge and resources and to contribute to the development of best practices in promoting gender equality across Europe.

Finally, through their participation in international frameworks such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), EU Member States uphold global standards for gender equality and implement best practices to prevent gender-based violence. This international cooperation reinforces the commitment to create an inclusive and just society for all genders.



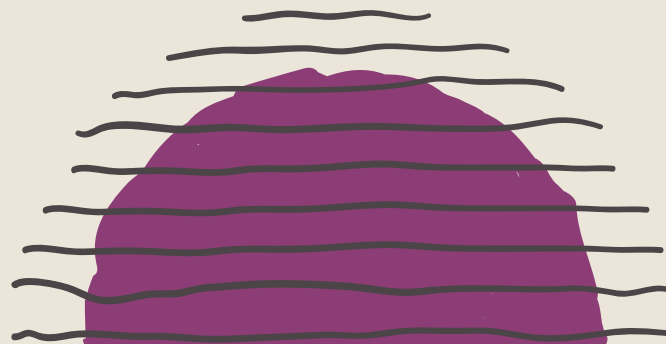
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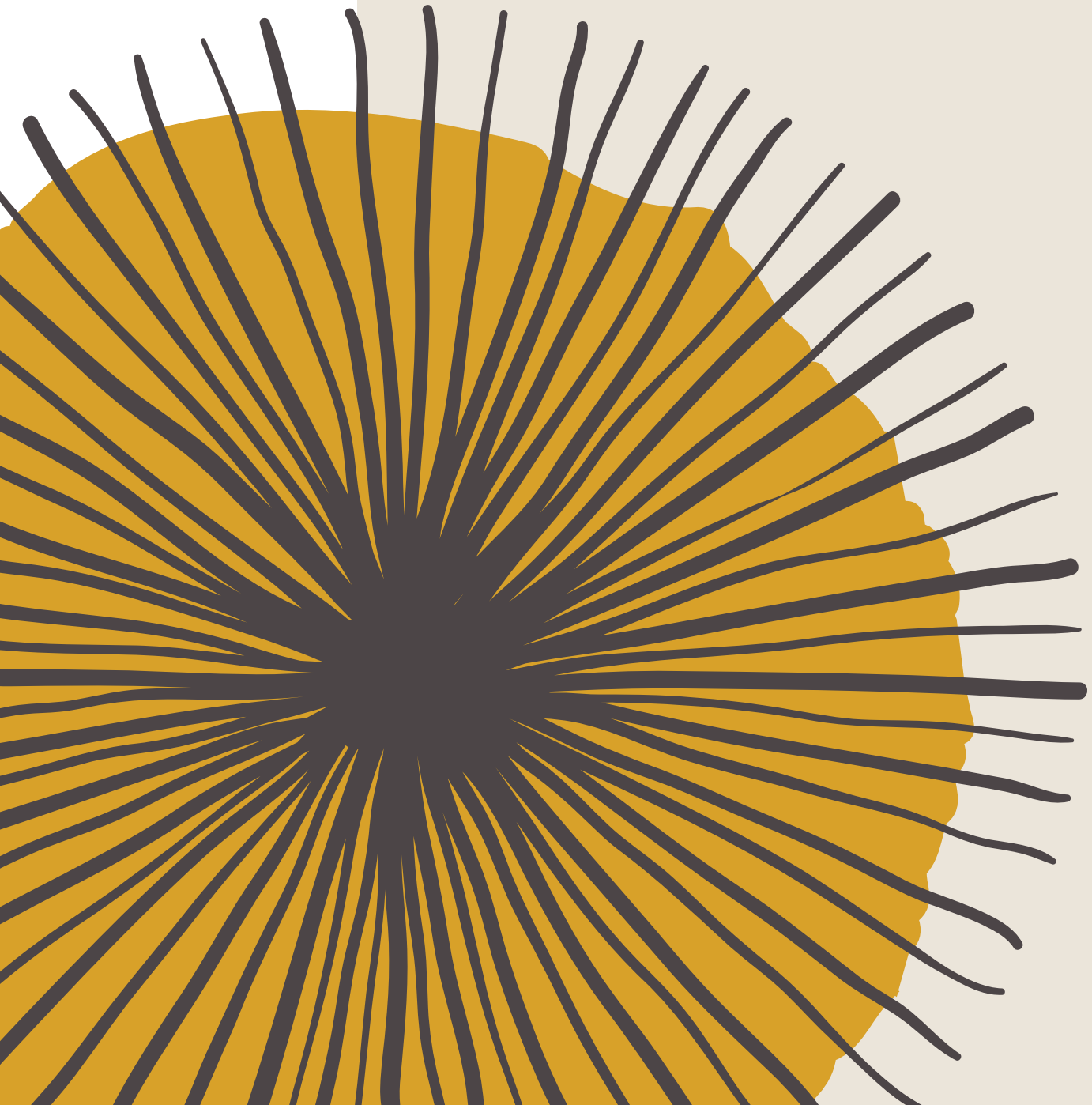
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02

Executive Summaries of the Country Gender Equality Reports



Executive Summaries of the Country Gender Equality Reports

Cyprus

Cypriot society has historically been patriarchal, with gender roles defined by a strong emphasis on family and domestic responsibilities for women. However, Cyprus' integration into the EU in 2004 was a defining moment for the country's approach to gender equality. The need to align with the EU has led to the adoption of numerous legislative measures aimed at promoting gender equality, as in 2004. This period also saw the emergence of civil society organisations promoting women's rights and gender equality, which further contributed to changing social attitudes. Despite this progress, Cyprus still has a long way to go to achieve full gender equality, in particular in tackling entrenched cultural norms and stereotypes.

Finland

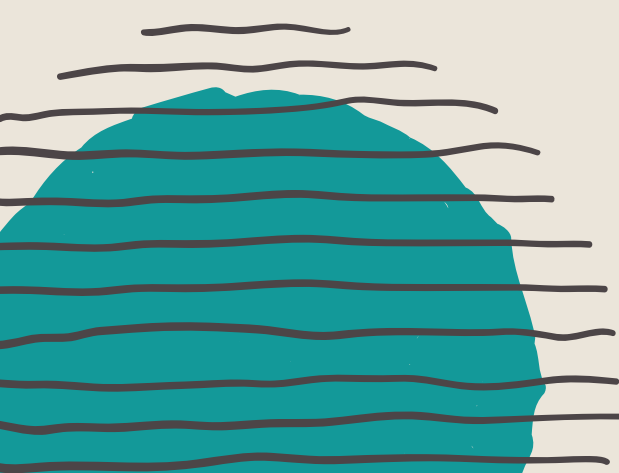
Finland is recognised as a world leader in gender equality, with a strong legal and policy framework to promote equal opportunities and prevent discrimination. The Finnish Constitution and the Gender Equality Act serve as the basis for these efforts, mandating equal treatment in education, employment and public life. The Finnish government, through the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, is implementing a National Action Plan to reduce gender-based violence and ensure the well-being of women and men alike. Finland's education system is characterised by a gender-sensitive curriculum that integrates gender equality principles from primary school through to higher education.

France

France has made significant progress in promoting gender equality - or more precisely, 'equality between the sexes' - in particular through its comprehensive legislative framework and national education policy. The French government has integrated gender equality into the national curriculum and implemented training programmes for educators to address gender issues in the classroom. Laws such as the 2013 Charter for Equality between Girls and Boys in Schools and the 2018 Law against Sexual and Gender Violence underline France's commitment to combating gender stereotypes and promoting inclusivity in education. The government also actively supports initiatives, programmes and partnerships with local organisations to promote a culture of respect and equality at all levels of education. France's approach is further strengthened by its alignment with the European Union's gender equality strategies and international conventions, although it remains somewhat reluctant to talk about "gender", preferring "equality between boys and girls".

Germany

Germany has developed a robust framework for promoting gender equality, with a focus on both the state and federal levels. The country's legal foundation is underpinned by the Basic Law, which enshrines equality between men and women. Each of Germany's federal states has appointed equality commissioners to oversee gender equality in public administration and education. At the federal level, laws such as the Federal Equality Act and the Self-Determination Act of 2023 are key components of Germany's efforts to promote gender equality and protect the rights of transgender, intersex and non-binary people. Germany also places a strong emphasis on gender-sensitive education, with initiatives to integrate gender equality into school curricula and teacher training programmes.



Executive Summaries of the Country Gender Equality Reports

Greece

Greece (in parallel with Cyprus) has made considerable progress in promoting gender equality, with a strong legal framework supported by the Greek Constitution and laws such as the Law on Substantive Gender Equality and the Law on Combating Gender-Based Violence. The General Secretariat for Family Policy and Gender Equality oversees the implementation of gender equality policies, including the National Action Plan for Gender Equality and the National Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women. Greece has also integrated gender equality into its education system with initiatives aimed at challenging traditional gender roles and promoting inclusivity. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly in changing societal attitudes towards gender roles and ensuring effective enforcement of gender equality legislation.

Ireland

Ireland has implemented several measures to promote gender equality, with a focus on tackling gender-based violence and ensuring equal opportunities in education and employment. The annual report of Women's Aid highlights the prevalence of domestic violence and the annual report of the Courts Service records a significant number of protection orders. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and the Central Statistics Office provide further data on sexual violence, highlighting the need for continued efforts to combat gender-based violence. Ireland's legal framework includes key legislation such as the Employment Equality Acts and the Domestic Violence Act, which provide protection for women and promote gender equality in the workplace. The Irish Government also supports gender-sensitive education and youth engagement programmes to promote a culture of respect and equality from an early age.

Italy

Italy has made significant progress in promoting gender equality, particularly through its legal framework and institutional policies. The Italian Constitution guarantees equality before the law, and laws such as the Code of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women and the Law on Violence against Women provide comprehensive protection for women's rights. Italian governments have implemented various strategies to address gender-based violence, including the National Strategic Plan on Male Violence Against Women and the establishment of specialised courts and support services for victims. The country's commitment to gender equality is further strengthened by its alignment with European Union policies and international conventions.

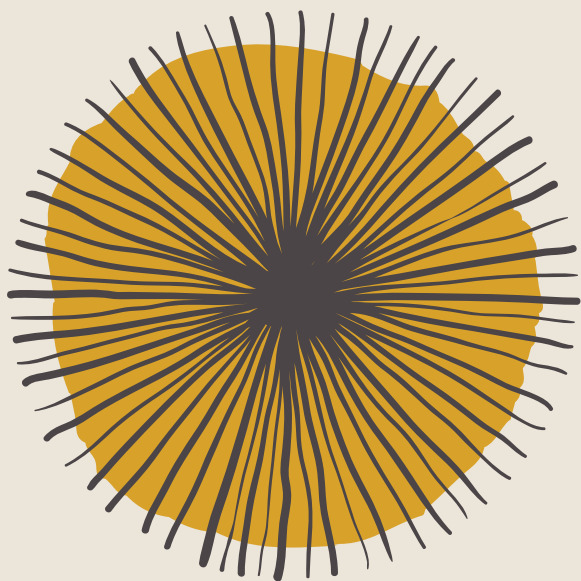
Latvia

Latvia has developed a comprehensive approach to promoting gender equality, supported by a strong legal framework and institutional policies. The Latvian Constitution and laws such as the Law on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Labour Law provide the legal basis for gender equality in employment, education and public life. The Latvian government, through the Ministry of Welfare, is implementing the National Programme for the Promotion of Gender Equality, which includes measures to reduce the gender pay gap and increase women's participation in decision-making. The Office of the Ombudsperson of Latvia, the independent body for the promotion of gender equality, is also a key actor in strengthening the legislative and public apparatus. Latvia is also addressing gender-based violence through the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, although the latter was ratified only recently (2023). The country's education system integrates gender equality principles into the curriculum, supported by programmes that engage young people in promoting social justice and equality.

Executive Summaries of the Country Gender Equality Reports

Poland

Poland's approach to gender equality is shaped by its historical context and a strong legislative framework, with key laws such as the Act on the Implementation of Certain EU Regulations in the Field of Equal Treatment and the Act on Combating Domestic Violence. The Polish Constitution guarantees equality before the law, and the Labour Code protects against gender discrimination in the workplace. Government strategies include the National Action Plan for Equal Treatment and initiatives to promote gender equality in employment and education. Poland is also addressing gender-based violence through the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and the establishment of support services for victims. Despite these efforts, challenges remain, particularly in areas such as reproductive rights and the influence of conservative social attitudes. In this respect, the election of the nationalist conservative PiS party to government in 2015 marks a new era that continued and accelerated a process, started already in the 2000s, that can be characterized as a significant setback regarding gender equality. This evolution, sometimes seen as a 'conservative backlash' has led to several policies aimed at reinforcing traditional gender roles and family structures.



Slovenia

Slovenia has established a strong framework for promoting gender equality, supported by its Constitution and laws such as the Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Employment Relations Act. The Slovenian government is implementing the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, which includes measures to reduce the gender pay gap, increase women's representation in decision-making and combat gender-based violence. Slovenia is also addressing gender-based violence through the Law on Prevention of Domestic Violence and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. The country's education system integrates gender equality principles into the curriculum, supported by initiatives to promote youth engagement and social justice. Slovenia's commitment to gender equality is reinforced by its participation in European Union initiatives and international cooperation.

Spain

Spain has made significant progress in promoting gender equality, in particular through its comprehensive legal framework and institutional policies. The Spanish Constitution guarantees equality before the law, and laws such as the Organic Law on Effective Equality between Women and Men and the Organic Law on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence provide robust protection for women's rights. The Ministry of Equality oversees the implementation of gender equality policies, including the Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities and initiatives to combat gender-based violence. Spain's education system promotes gender-sensitive curricula and youth engagement programmes aimed at fostering a culture of respect and equality, making Spain a leader in gender equality in Europe.

03

Table: Gender-Based Violence Statistics in Selected European Countries





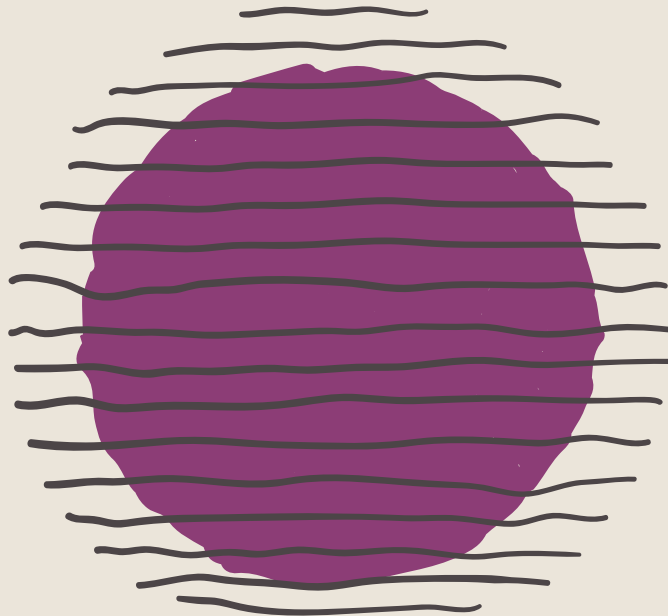
Table

Gender-Based Violence Statistics in Selected European Countries

	Domestic Violence	Sexual Violence	Harassment	Legal Measures
Cyprus	At least 28% of women have experienced some form of domestic violence ¹ .	A study conducted by the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies indicated that women and girls are the overwhelming majority of survivors of sexual and gender-based violence among asylum-seekers in Cyprus.	No specific statistics available.	Various legislative measures influenced by EU directives, including Law 115 (1)/2021 which criminalizes many forms of violence against women, and a 2021 anti-harassment and stalking law.
Finland	17,400 cases reported in 2020; 80% of victims are women.	10% of women and 2% of men had experienced sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime ² .	47% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment since the age of 15.	Act on Equality between Women and Men; Anti-Discrimination Act; National Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women.
France	220,000 women aged 18-75 are victims annually; 149 women killed by their partner or ex-partner in 2019.	580,000 women aged 18-69 experienced sexual violence or attempted sexual violence in the past five years.	12% of women experienced workplace harassment; 87% experienced harassment in public spaces.	Laws against psychological violence and street harassment; fines for street harassment.
Germany	Approximately 148,031 cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2021, with 81% of victims being female ¹ .	13.4% of women have experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 ¹ .	50% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in their lifetime ¹ .	Federal Equal Opportunities Act; Self-Determination Law of 2023.
Greece	21.3% of Greek women and 13.2% of Greek men report that domestic violence against women is common in Greece ¹ .	5.1% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months	No specific statistics available.	Law on Substantive Gender Equality and Combating Gender-Based Violence.
Ireland	43,472 contacts with survivors in 2020; 2,520 applications for safety or protection orders.	2,837 sexual offences recorded in 2020.	Not specified.	Employment Equality Acts; Domestic Violence Act.
Italy	6.7 million women aged 16-70 have experienced physical or sexual violence by a partner during their lifetime; 116 women killed by partners in 2020.	31% of women aged 16-70 have experienced physical or sexual violence	33% of women experienced physical or sexual harassment in the past 12 months.	Laws against domestic violence and stalking; specialized anti-violence centres; extension of time limit for reporting gender-based violence crimes.
Latvia	8,022 cases reported in 2020; 85% of victims are women.	15.4% of women have experienced physical violence; 4.4% have experienced sexual violence	15% of women reported experiencing sexual harassment in the workplace.	Law on Protection Against Domestic Violence; National Programme for the Prevention of Domestic Violence.
Poland	68,000 cases reported in 2020; majority of victims are women.	19% of women have experienced physical and/or sexual violence	22% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment since age 15.	Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence; ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015.
Slovenia	22% of women and 16% of men experienced physical (including threats) or sexual violence since the age of 15.	3.4% of women aged 15-49 years reported that they had been subject to physical and/or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months.	No specific statistics available.	Family Violence Prevention Act; ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015.
Spain	45,457 cases reported in 2020; 1,101 women killed by their partners or ex-partners between 2003-2020.	2.5% of women aged 16 or older reported experiencing sexual violence.	9.6% of women reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in the previous year.	Organic Law 1/2004 on Gender Violence; specialized courts for gender violence.

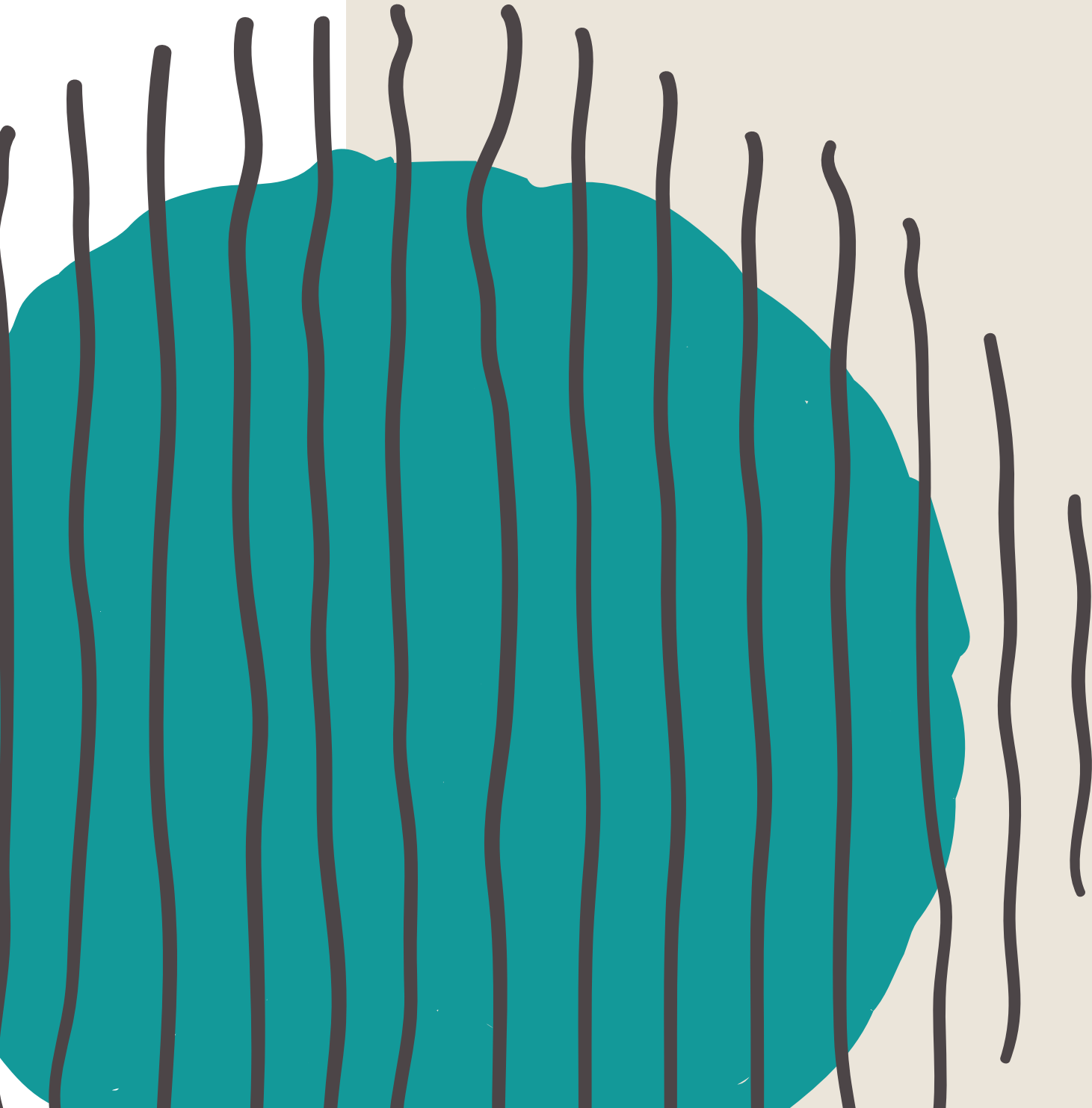
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04

Country Reports



Country Reports

In-depth Insights into Gender Equality, Legal Frameworks and Progress across Europe



The following section provides a comprehensive analysis of gender equality for each country, exploring the historical context, legal framework, institutional strategies and the integration of gender equality initiatives in educational settings. It also highlights each country's alignment with European Union directives and international conventions and provides a detailed examination of the country's efforts to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence. At the end of each country synthesis there is a brief bibliography of resources, sometimes with a list of additional resources provided by partner countries to support the synthesis. These additional resources are also available in the country annexes.

Gender Equality in Cyprus

Historical Background and Context

The history of gender equality in Cyprus has been shaped by a combination of traditional social norms and the influence of external factors, in particular, the island's alignment with European Union standards. Historically, Cypriot society has been deeply rooted in patriarchal values, with gender roles traditionally defined by a strong emphasis on family and domestic responsibilities for women. However, the modernisation of Cypriot society, coupled with its accession to the European Union in 2004, has had a significant impact on the development of gender equality.

Cyprus' integration into the EU marked a pivotal moment in the country's approach to gender equality. The need for harmonisation with the EU led to the adoption of numerous legislative measures aimed at promoting gender equality. This period also saw the emergence of civil society organisations advocating for women's rights and gender equality, which further contributed to changing social attitudes. Despite this progress, Cyprus continues to face challenges in achieving full gender equality, particularly in tackling entrenched cultural norms and stereotypes.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

In Cyprus, the promotion of gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence have been significantly influenced by the country's alignment with the *acquis communautaire* of the European Union. This alignment has led to the adoption of numerous legislative measures aimed at promoting gender equality. One of the cornerstones of these efforts is the National Action Plan (NAP) for Gender Equality 2019-2022. This plan focuses on the integration of gender considerations in different sectors of society, with an emphasis on gender mainstreaming. In this context, an ad hoc committee – comprising representatives of the Ministry of Justice and Public Order, the Committee on Gender Equality in Employment and Vocational Training, the Cyprus Academy of Public Administration, the Ombudsman and the Office of the Gender Equality Commissioner (GEC) (established in 2014) – was set

up to prepare a guide on gender mainstreaming in public policies.

In addition to the NAP, Cyprus has developed several sectoral action plans addressing specific aspects of gender equality. The National Youth Strategy of Cyprus, adopted by the Council of Ministers in 2017, and the Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Cyprus, prepared by the European Commission and the Council of Europe in 2020, are such initiatives. These strategies recognise the diversity of young people (see "Principles of National Youth Policy" in the Country Sheet on Youth Policy in Cyprus), including their gender and sexual orientation, and aim to empower them through targeted policies and programmes. The Ministry of Health has also played a key role in these efforts by launching the National Strategy for the Sexual and Reproductive Health of Young People 2018-2025. This strategy represents a significant initiative by the government to address the non-discrimination and sexual and reproductive health needs of young people, in line with Cyprus' international commitments.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Government of Cyprus has prioritised the promotion of non-discrimination across different dimensions, including disability, gender, sexual orientation and cultural background. A key initiative in this regard is the horizontal integration of the gender dimension in the state apparatus. This process was initiated by a series of meetings between the Gender Equality Commissioner and representatives of various ministries, universities and institutions on 20-23 July. The Council of Ministers also mandated the Gender Equality Commissioner to prepare and monitor the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2024-2027. This strategy is expected to build on previous efforts and provide a more structured and measurable approach to promoting gender equality in Cyprus.



Gender Equality in Cyprus

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

The promotion of gender equality in Cyprus extends to the education sector, where the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has implemented a series of three-year action plans within the framework of the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and Horizon Europe. These plans aim to integrate gender equality at all levels of education and are coordinated by a special inter-ministerial committee (President of the Committee on Gender Equality in the Workplace and Vocational Training and Commissioner for Legislation during the term of Prodromos Prodromou and Louisa Christodoulidou Zannetou). Educational initiatives include voluntary student competitions, teacher seminars and the inclusion of gender issues in the curriculum, particularly in the health education curriculum under the chapter on sexual and reproductive health. These efforts aim to challenge gender stereotypes and promote a learning environment that supports gender equality from an early age.

Gender-Based Violence

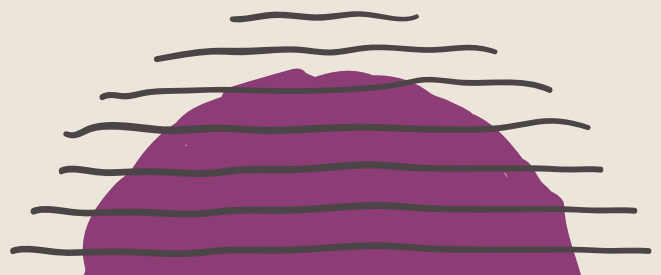
Gender-based violence remains a significant problem in Cyprus, despite legislative and institutional efforts to combat it. A report by the Advocates for Human Rights (AHR) and the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS) on the situation in Cyprus regarding gender-based violence (2023) reveals persistent problems in implementing and harmonising laws to effectively protect victims, in providing resource centres and shelters for victims of gender-based violence, and in addressing intersectional discrimination as well as the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Similarly, a 2022 report by the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) states that despite positive changes such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2017 or the adoption of Law 115(1)/2021 on the Prevention and Combating of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and Related Matters, the Law on Protection against Harassment and Stalking of 2021 and the Law on Combating Sexism and Sexist Behaviour of 2020,

Cyprus is still struggling to fully comply with this legal framework and to prevent gender-based violence and protect victims. Both reports recommend, among other things, training for civil and judicial officials, harmonisation of the legal framework on gender-based violence and improved coordination in the implementation of laws, improvement of support and assistance to victims, collection of data on all forms of gender-based violence, inclusion of an intersectional perspective in the care of victims of gender-based violence, and further enforcement of legislation on gender-based violence.

The horizontal integration of the gender dimension into government mechanisms, initiated by the Gender Equality Commissioner, is therefore a promising approach. However, its success will depend on the consistent application of gender equality principles at all levels of government and the ability to measure and evaluate the results of these initiatives. In addition, addressing gender-based violence requires a comprehensive approach that includes robust legal protection, effective enforcement and widespread public awareness campaigns.

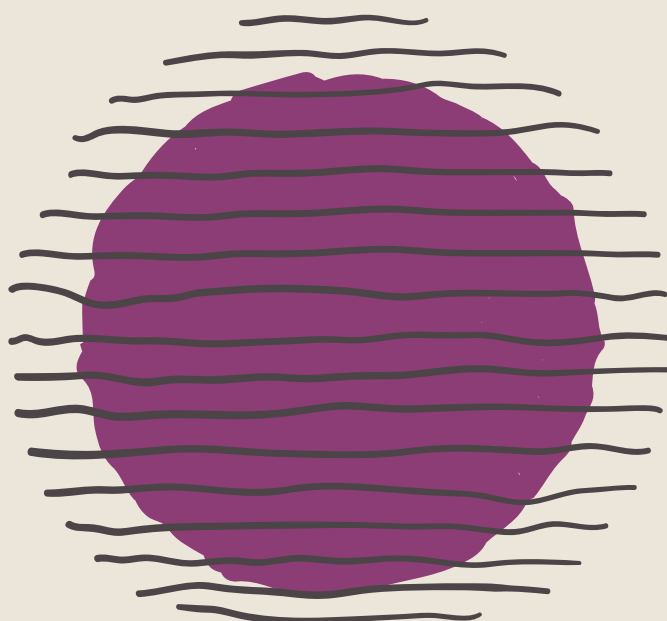
Highlights

Cyprus is a republic, but religion (Orthodox Christian) is central and has a strong influence on politics and society in general. As a result, many issues (such as feminisation) have been taken up first by Greece and then by Cyprus in response to European policies. For example, only recently has the University of Cyprus included provisions on feminisation in its official texts and developed a strategic equality plan in cooperation with the EU. Greece also recognises same-sex civil unions, while same-sex marriage has been recognised in Cyprus since 2015. Cyprus' accession to the EU has made it possible to implement efforts in the field of human rights and gender equality.



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Gender Equality in Finland

Historical Background and Context

Finland has a long history of promoting gender equality, often seen as a pioneer in advancing women's rights. In 1906, Finland became the first country in Europe to grant women full political rights, including the right to vote and stand for election. By 1907, 19 women were members of the Finnish Parliament. The foundations for a progressive society that continues to prioritise equality were laid by this early commitment to gender equality.

Throughout the 20th century, Finland's efforts to promote gender equality expanded, particularly in the areas of education, employment and social welfare. The country's welfare state model, characterised by universal health care, childcare and education, has been instrumental in promoting gender equality by enabling both men and women to combine work and family life. Finland's approach to gender equality is also deeply rooted in its cultural and social values, which emphasise inclusiveness, fairness and respect for diversity.

In recent decades, Finland has continued to build on this heritage by aligning its national policies with European Union standards and international conventions. Reflecting its commitment to promoting equality in all areas of society, Finland is consistently ranked among the most gender-equal countries in the world.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Finland has developed an effective legal framework to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. The main piece of legislation in this area is the Act on Equality between Women and Men (Equality Act), originally adopted in 1986 and subsequently amended to strengthen its provisions. The Equality Act mandates equal treatment in all areas of life, including education, employment and political participation. It also requires the active promotion of gender equality in schools, workplaces and public institutions.

Another landmark piece of legislation is the Non-Discrimination Act, which complements the Equality Act by prohibiting discrimination on a number of grounds, including gender, gender identity and sexual orientation. The Act requires public and private bodies to take proactive measures to prevent discrimination and promote equality.

Finland has also taken specific measures to combat gender-based violence. The National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women sets out guidelines for preventing violence, protecting victims and prosecuting perpetrators, with measures to improve the legal framework, strengthen support services and raise public awareness of gender-based violence.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is the main government body responsible for coordinating gender equality policy and overseeing the implementation of the Equality Act. The Ministry works closely with other government departments, civil society organisations and international bodies to promote gender equality in Finland.

One of the Finnish government's central strategic instruments is the Gender Equality Action Plan, which sets out specific measures to promote gender equality in various areas. The Action Plan is regularly updated to reflect new challenges and priorities and includes targets for reducing the gender pay gap, increasing the number of women in decision-making positions and improving the reconciliation of work and family life.

At the local level, municipalities play a crucial role in the implementation of gender equality policies. For example, many municipalities have established gender equality committees or appointed gender equality officers to oversee the implementation of local initiatives, all with the support of the Finnish Association of Local and Regional Authorities, which provides guidance and resources to help municipalities promote gender equality.



Gender Equality in Finland

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

The Finnish education system is widely regarded as one of the most equitable in the world, and gender equality is a fundamental principle embedded in the national curriculum, as evidenced by Finnish Gender Sensitive Education.

Schools are indeed required to promote gender equality and address issues related to gender stereotypes and discrimination. The curriculum includes topics such as human rights, gender equality and sex education, with an emphasis on promoting respect for diversity and inclusiveness. In addition, subjects included in the Finnish national core curriculum are not gender-specific and are taught to all students, such as home economics, which is part of the curriculum for seventh graders. Teachers are trained to recognise and challenge gender bias in the classroom and to create a supportive learning environment for all students.

Finland also attaches great importance to involving young people in promoting gender equality. Various programmes and initiatives aim to empower young people to become advocates for equality and social justice. For example, student unions and youth councils in Finland actively promote gender equality and provide platforms for young people to voice their concerns and propose solutions to gender-related issues.

In addition to formal education, Finland supports lifelong learning initiatives that promote gender equality. Adult education centres, vocational schools, and universities offer courses on gender studies, equality, and diversity, enabling individuals of all ages to deepen their understanding of these critical issues.

Gender-Based Violence

Finland has made significant progress in addressing gender-based violence, but challenges remain. For example, a study conducted by Tilastokeskus (Statistics Finland) in 2021 showed that gender-based violence is still an issue in Finland, as women (57%) and men (46%) have experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, be it

physical, sexual or threats of violence. The National Action Plan to Reduce Violence against Women is the main framework guiding the country in this area. The plan includes a wide range of measures to prevent violence, protect victims and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.

Coordination of support services for victims of gender-based violence is also a central feature of the plan. Finland has established a network of shelters, crisis centres and helplines that provide essential support to women and children affected by violence. These services are complemented by legal aid, counselling and rehabilitation programmes to help victims rebuild their lives.

Finland also recognises the importance of prevention and education in tackling gender-based violence. Schools and universities play a vital role in raising awareness and teaching young people about healthy relationships, consent and respect. Public awareness campaigns, often supported by governments, also aim to change societal attitudes towards violence and promote a culture of zero tolerance.

Highlights

Finland is a country where gender equality has long been a matter of principle and is culturally deeply rooted. Finland is a pioneer: it gave women the right to vote and stand for election in 1906, which led to 19 women being elected to the Finnish Parliament as early as 1907. The Finnish model, which includes universal health care, childcare and education, has promoted gender equality by enabling men and women to reconcile work and family life. Youth education in Finland is central to promoting gender equality at all levels. A strong legal framework also supports the promotion of gender equality (the Gender Equality Act (1986); the Non-Discrimination Act, which prohibits discrimination and promotes equality in various areas). However, in recent years, it has become a social issue again due to the influx of immigrants from countries where gender issues are not equally acculturated, especially from Muslim countries.



Discussion On Finland With A Focus On Gender Equality And Discrimination

The Finnish case is notable for its gender-equal system stemming from its history as a very poor country.

Historical Context and Government Representation

The picture of the five women of the 5 party-coalition government (2019-2023) is significant because it marks the first time Finland received substantial international attention due to its government. This was a five-party coalition government, all of these parties led by women. These women felt embarrassed by the international focus on their gender rather than their achievements. Li Andersson highlighted this by stating, "The gender analysis is often limited to the question, are there women in places?" This statement questions what women do with the power they are given. This government gained importance as these five women managed the COVID crisis exceptionally well. The Finns were not forced to stay indoors; mask-wearing was recommended but not mandatory, yet people adhered to the advice, and the crisis was handled effectively because of the trust invested in the government.

From a Finnish perspective, discussing gender equality is as awkward as talking about salaries or religious beliefs because it feels unnecessary. This has led to a political consensus where gender equality is not distinguished as a special issue but seen as a given. Historically, Finnish society has faced setbacks but has maintained this perspective.

Gender equality in Finland was a necessity due to the country's poverty in the late 19th century. Harsh agricultural conditions, long winters, and cold summers required men and women to work closely together to survive. Women often performed tasks typically considered « men's jobs. » The Finnish mentality values equal

intelligence between genders and self-reliance for women. It is common for women to change car tires, chop wood, and paint houses themselves. This mentality is encapsulated in the saying, « This is how blonde women do, » reflecting the self-sufficiency expected of Finnish women.

Gender equality was also linked to societal development in Finland's agrarian society, characterized by low hierarchy and geographical and intellectual peripherality from main European standards. The understanding of gender roles was shaped by agrarian necessities and daily work activities rather than European beliefs. Although there was a suffragette movement, it was limited to middle-class and noble women and had little impact on the broader Finnish society.

Since the 18th century, literacy was mandatory before confirmation (baptism), which was required for marriage. Protestant Priests taught reading to both men and women, ensuring equal learning from a young age.

Long-term Consequences

- There is no difference between gender roles, as men and women perform the same activities and collaborate constantly.
- There is no distinction between public and private spheres for women; differentiation is based on class, not gender.
- Boys and girls receive the same quantity and quality of education at all levels.



Discussion On Finland With A Focus On Gender Equality And Discrimination

In the 1730s, Finland, then part of the Swedish Empire and later the Russian Empire, recognized social and economic rights through new laws. Property rights were established, and people married late, maintaining independence and their own money. There was no stigma for having children out of wedlock, and the community accepted this.

Public schools have had mixed classes since the 1860s, influencing universities to open for women early (since the 1870s). Education was crucial for poor families, with girls' education often prioritized to ensure better job opportunities.

In the early 20th century, changes occurred due to wars and demographic shifts. Women became involved in political activities, leading to parliamentary reforms discussing women's right to vote. Finland was among the first countries to grant women the right to vote and the eligibility to be MPs, alongside New Zealand and Australia. Rights related to children and motherhood were established, including free child health clinic services and shelters for women in the 1920s. In 1966, the first state committee to investigate gender equality was formed. Free boxes with necessary items for newborns were provided as a citizen right from health clinic services.

Women progressively appeared in significant political roles, starting with debates in the early 1990s about introducing quotas for local government (40-60%). Finland had its first woman president, Tarja Halonen, from 2000 to 2012, and women in core ministries.

The Finnish ideology promotes the idea that anyone can rise to any role in society. There was a debate about paying mothers at home, arguing that the home is an integral part of society, leading to positive standards of the welfare system.

In the 1960s, an important discussion emerged regarding women's careers and their right to choose between being stay-at-home mothers or participating in societal jobs. This period also saw significant urbanization in Finnish society, with many people, including women and children, moving to cities. This shift made day-care a necessity for families, enabling parents to work. Although day-care had existed since the 1940s, it was primarily for the poorest families. In 1974, day-care became a subjective right, including three meals per day. This system required a certain level of taxation, with 90% of the costs covered by the state. Poor families received day-care for free, while other classes paid about 10% of the cost..

In 1978, paid paternal holidays were introduced, allowing fathers to take three months off, a benefit now extended to same-sex parents. Many cases have been observed where the paternal figure stays at home for three years with the child.

Education in Finland is free from primary school to university, including school books and meals. University students receive stipends for five years and state support for housing. Teachers are university graduates, and the profession is not gendered. Boys and girls receive the same education, but this results in a gendered labor market with salary differences. Market dynamics, such as supply and demand, influence this; for example, most dentists are female and can set their own prices, leading to rising salaries for women.

Discussion On Finland With A Focus On Gender Equality And Discrimination

Disturbing Signs

- Domestic violence affects one-third of women and one-sixth of men.
- Sexual violence impacts 43% of women and 12% of men.
- 50% of teenage girls report experiencing sexual harassment.
- There is an education gap, with men being less qualified, potentially linking to extremism.
- Extremism in Finland targets LGBTQ communities and their rights.
- Finland contributes to global trends that strengthen conservatism, affecting LGBTQ communities.
- Migration from Africa and the Middle East may introduce patriarchal cultures, including controlling women, honor crimes, female genital mutilation, and forced marriages.

These issues highlight that gender equality remains a priority as the world continues to evolve.

Latvia's Similarities

Latvia shares similarities with Finland, such as high education levels and low marriage rates. However, Latvia's Germanic influence implies a more traditional aspect.

Cultural Reflections

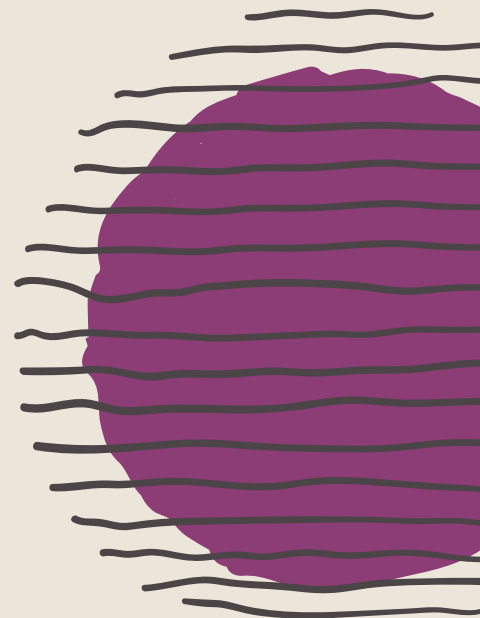
There is interest in films depicting women's experiences, such as a movie about a Pakistani girl growing up in Norway. Films can make these issues more relatable and vivid.

Abortion and Parental Rights

Abortion in Finland is not problematic and is completely free. Schools provide good education on pregnancy prevention, ensuring that the need for abortion is minimized. There is zero tolerance for child abuse; a person can be imprisoned for spanking their child if witnessed. Conversely, if a child is violent towards their parents, the police and social services intervene. The legislation on child abuse is stricter than for rape, which is considered difficult to define and not strict enough.

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Gender Equality in France

Historical Background and Context

In France, the recent report on the state of sexism by the High Council for Equality (HCE) shows that sexist stereotypes are persisting or even strengthening in France, particularly with the rise of masculinism; that gender-based and sexual violence is on the increase; and that inequalities persist in many areas (work, sport, transport, etc.) (Pierre-Brossolette et al., 2024: 9-15). An interplay of cultural, social and political factors has shaped the pursuit of gender equality in France. Historically, France has been a society with deeply entrenched gender roles, influenced by its long-standing patriarchal traditions. However, significant social movements, particularly since the mid-20th century, have challenged these norms, leading to substantial advances in gender equality (1920: Law banning contraception and abortion; 1942: Abortion is considered a crime against the state, punishable by death; 1944: Women gain the right to vote (21 April)).

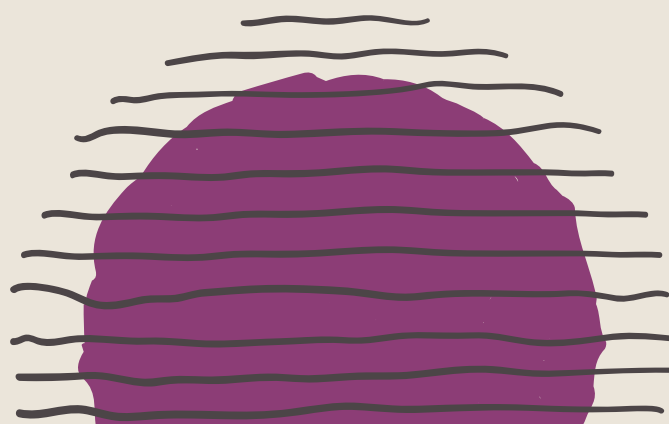
The feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s played a decisive role in pushing through reforms in areas such as reproductive rights, equality in the workplace and education (1965: reform of the 1804 matrimonial regime (women can manage their own property, open a bank account and work without their husband's permission); 1967: Neuwirth Law (18 December) legalising contraception; 1970: the mother became equal to the father in parental authority; late 1974: law on voluntary abortion. These feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s laid the foundations for the development of a more inclusive society in which gender equality became central to public policy. The integration of gender equality into the French education system was one of the strategic areas of progress, reflecting wider societal shifts towards recognising and addressing gender inequalities. In recent decades, France has continued to build on this foundation by aligning its national policies with European Union standards and international conventions on gender equality. The country's commitment to promoting gender equality in education is evident in the various laws, policies and initiatives that have been implemented to create more inclusive learning environments and challenge gender stereotypes.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

France has implemented several legislative and policy measures to promote gender equality in education and to address issues related to sexual identity. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to integrate gender equality into all aspects of the education system, from curriculum design to teacher training and school policies.

One example is the 2013 Law on the Fight Against Gender Stereotypes, which sought to combat gender stereotypes and promote gender equality in education and media. The law prohibits the use of gender stereotypes in textbooks, educational materials and advertisements and requires the inclusion of gender equality education in teacher training. In addition, the 2013 Charter for Equality Between Girls and Boys in School, signed by the Ministry of National Education, specifies actions for schools to integrate gender equality into the curriculum, promote gender-neutral language, and prevent gender-based violence.

Another important initiative is the Education for Gender Equality Program (PEG), launched in 2014 by the Ministry of National Education. This programme provides resources, training and support for teachers to integrate gender equality into their teaching practices and curricula. The 2018 Law Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence further strengthens these initiatives by mandating the implementation of prevention and awareness-raising measures in educational institutions to address sexual harassment, assault, and other forms of violence.



Gender Equality in France

In 2021, the French government launched the National Strategy for Gender Equality, which outlines a comprehensive approach to promoting gender equality in various sectors, including education. The strategy includes measures to strengthen gender education in schools, combat gender-based violence and promote equal opportunities for girls and boys in education and beyond. However, "inclusive writing" has been officially banned from educational institutions following an outcry from the right (Blanquer circular of 7 May 2021), followed by a proposed ban (Gruny - Retailleau bill of October 2023).

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

Over the past decade, France has implemented various institutional and governmental strategies to promote gender equality and address issues related to sexual identity in educational settings. These policies aim to create inclusive and supportive learning environments where all students, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation, can thrive.

A key aspect of these strategies is the integration of gender equality and diversity into national education policies. This includes the inclusion of gender equality, sexual orientation and diversity issues in the curriculum across different subjects and grade levels. The French government has also provided training programmes for educators to raise awareness of gender issues and equip them with the tools to tackle discrimination and promote inclusivity in the classroom.

Anti-discrimination measures are in place to protect students from harassment, bullying and discrimination based on gender identity or sexual orientation. Schools are required to have policies in place to address instances of discrimination and to provide support to affected students. In addition, educational institutions provide support services, such as counselling and peer support groups, for students who may face challenges related to their gender identity or sexual orientation.

Awareness-raising campaigns have been launched to promote acceptance and tolerance of diverse gender

identities and sexual orientations. These campaigns aim to raise awareness among students, educators and parents about the importance of respecting differences and creating an inclusive school environment.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Through various strategies and initiatives aimed at promoting inclusive learning environments and challenging gender stereotypes, France has taken substantive steps towards gender equality in education.

French schools try to design an inclusive curriculum, free from gender bias, after being identified as exhibiting gender stereotypes (Sinigaglia-Amadio, 2011). Gender education is also integrated into the curriculum at different levels of education, from primary school to university. Students learn about gender roles, gender stereotypes and the importance of gender equality through dedicated lessons, discussions and projects. Teachers are trained to be sensitive to gender issues and to facilitate meaningful conversations about gender equality in the classroom. Indeed, teacher training programmes include modules on gender equality and diversity to ensure that future educators are equipped to create inclusive and equitable learning environments. These programmes focus on identifying and challenging gender stereotypes and discrimination in teaching practices.

Schools are also encouraged to develop policies and initiatives to promote gender equality and prevent gender discrimination and harassment. Awareness-raising campaigns (e.g. "Ici on peut être soi" campaigns) and partnerships with local organisations are essential components of the French approach to promoting gender equality in education. However, gender equality has not been achieved in French schools, where gender roles and inequalities tend to persist (Magni, 2022). This has led public actors and scientific researchers to study the issues at stake and to imagine new forms of education that are sensitive and inclusive (Szerdahelyi, 2022).

Gender Equality in France

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence remains a critical issue in France, particularly in educational settings. As mentioned above, sexism is still widespread in French society, according to the latest report of the High Council for Equality (HCE) (Pierre-Brossolette *et al.*, 2024). The legislative and policy measures discussed above, such as the 2018 Law Against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and the National Strategy for Gender Equality, include specific provisions to combat gender-based violence in schools.

However, despite these efforts, challenges remain in fully addressing gender-based violence within the education system. The need for comprehensive prevention strategies, effective enforcement of anti-discrimination policies and widespread awareness-raising campaigns is evident. The controversy surrounding initiatives such as the "ABCD de l'égalité" programme to foster gender equality in schools, which was promoted in 2013 under French Socialist President François Hollande but cancelled due to opposition from conservative groups, highlights the ongoing challenges in achieving gender equality in education. Following this controversy, which was waged by various religious and conservative right-wing movements against an alleged "gender theory", the term "gender" has since been banned from educational materials and replaced with the promotion of "equality of sexes".

Nevertheless, France continues to work towards creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students. Including gender equality in educational curricula, focusing on youth engagement and implementing supportive policies and services are crucial steps to address the root causes of gender-based violence and promote a culture of respect and equality. More recently, in the wake of the #metoo

movement, there has been increased awareness-raising in universities. The inclusion of "inclusive writing" has also come under attack and criticism in the last decade, while its advocates continue to promote it on the basis that social equality between men and women can only be rooted in a balanced treatment and representation of both through language.

Highlights

France has a history of traditional gender roles and an entrenched patriarchy. However, significant progress was made in the 20th century, especially after the Second World War. Various laws and institutional (educational) policies aim to promote gender equality (e.g. the 2013 Law on Combating Gender Stereotypes, which aims to prohibit the use of stereotypes in school textbooks and to integrate gender equality education into teacher training; the 2018 Law on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence). In addition, the 2013 Marriage for All Act allows same-sex marriage, and awareness-raising campaigns aim to promote acceptance of gender diversity and combat harassment and discrimination. Nevertheless, gender-based violence remains a major problem in the French education system. Moreover, a supposed "gender theory" originating in the United States, criticised and attacked by the most conservative parties and religious associations (especially Catholics and Muslims), has made the word "gender" taboo in France, which is paradoxical given that gender studies was born thanks to French researchers (notably Jacques Derrida and Hélène Cixous). As a result, the word "gender" has been erased from institutional texts in favour of "gender equality" / "girls-boys equality".



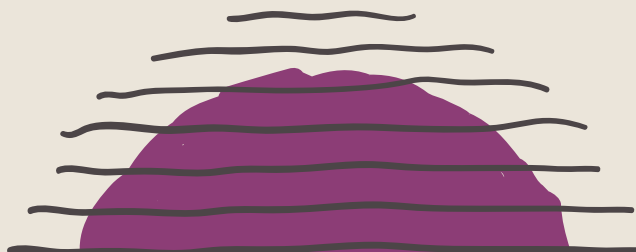
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Gender Equality in Germany

Historical Background and Context

In post-war Germany, Article 3 of the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*) of 1949 enshrined the principle of equality between men and women. For decades, however, social norms and the legal framework continued to reflect traditional gender roles. The feminist movements of the 1970s were instrumental in challenging these norms by advocating legal reforms in areas such as family law, employment and reproductive rights. The reunification of Germany in 1990 brought new challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality, as the integration of East and West Germany required the harmonisation of policies and laws across the newly unified country. In the decades that followed, Germany made strong progress in promoting gender equality, particularly in the areas of employment, education and political representation. In recent years, both the federal and state governments have continued to implement a range of measures to combat discrimination and promote equality, reflecting Germany's commitment to ensuring that all citizens, regardless of gender, have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from all areas of society.

Legislation, policies and government strategies

Germany has a legal and policy framework in place at both state and federal levels. At the state level, each of Germany's 16 federal states has appointed equal opportunity officers in various ministries. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, the Ministry of Culture and Science employs a team of equal opportunities officers who are involved in all personnel, social and organisational measures. Their role includes participating in decision-making processes, providing support and advice on equality issues and ensuring compliance with legal requirements. Similarly, the Ministry of Education in North Rhine-Westphalia focuses on ensuring gender equality among teachers and promoting gender-sensitive education in schools. This includes developing gender-sensitive curricula, promoting

gender equality among teachers and providing resources such as brochures and training materials. These initiatives are being replicated in all federal states.

At the federal level, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) plays a central role in promoting gender equality, with its Equal Opportunities Commissioner actively involved in the implementation of the Federal Equal Opportunities Act (*Bundesgleichstellungsgesetz*). This law ensures equal treatment within the federal administration, especially in leadership positions, where a 30% quota for women on supervisory boards will apply from 2016. This also includes ensuring equal treatment in personnel decisions, promoting the compatibility of family and work, and supporting the development of gender-sensitive policies within the ministry.

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth also supports these efforts by developing resources and initiatives to promote gender equality in all federal institutions.

A landmark development in Germany's legislative landscape was the enactment of the Self-Determination Law (SBGG) in August 2023. This law allows transgender, intersex and non-binary people to change their gender marker or first name by self-disclosure to the registry office, without the need for medical or psychological certification. This legislation represents a significant extension of gender reassignment rights.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Germany's approach to promoting gender equality in education involves a combination of legal mandates, policy initiatives and practical strategies aimed at fostering an inclusive and equitable learning environment.



Gender Equality in Germany

Gender-responsive education is a key focus of German education strategies. In all federal states, curricula have been revised to incorporate the principles of gender equality, with an emphasis on challenging traditional gender roles and stereotypes. In North Rhine-Westphalia, for example, the educational mandate includes the task of observing the constitutional principle of gender equality and working towards the elimination of gender-based disadvantages. Teachers and education professionals are provided with training and resources to develop the necessary gender competence to support young people's development in the classroom. In Germany, teacher training programmes include modules on gender equality to equip teachers with the skills to address gender issues effectively. These programmes are designed to help teachers identify and challenge gender stereotypes, promote inclusivity and create a supportive learning environment for all students. In addition, government ministries often provide booklets and other resources to support gender-sensitive education. These materials are designed to help educators implement gender equality policies in schools and to raise students' awareness of the importance of respecting diversity.

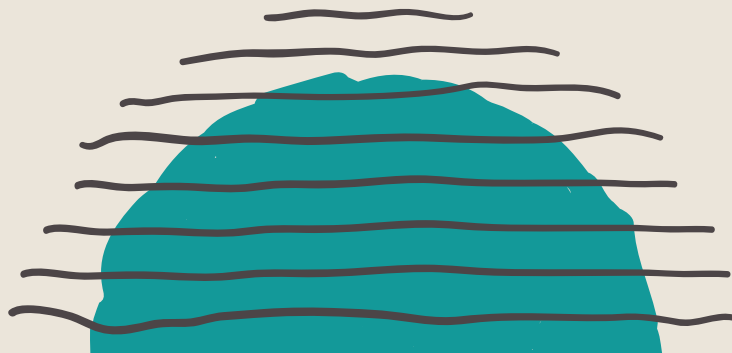
Gender-Based Violence

Germany has also taken significant steps to address gender-based violence, with legislative and policy measures aimed at preventing violence and supporting victims. A key part of these efforts is the Self-Determination Act (SBGG), which provides legal recognition and protection for people who are transgender, intersex or non-binary. A report by GREVIO (2022) also praised "the consent-based definition of rape and sexual violence and the successful operation of a national telephone

helpline". Despite this progress, challenges remain in fully addressing gender-based violence. In 2020, the German authorities even recorded a 4.9% increase in intimate partner violence compared to the previous year. The GREVIO report also highlights a poor level of risk assessment, a lack of protection and support services for victims, and the absence of a national action plan or coordination at the national level as required by the Istanbul Convention. Continued efforts are needed to ensure that policies are effectively implemented and that victims receive the support they need, for example by promoting gender equality through education and legislation, which are crucial to addressing these challenges and creating safer, more inclusive societies.

Highlights

In Germany, gender equality is enshrined in the Basic Law of 1949 (Article 3). The reunification of Germany in 1990 led to the harmonisation of gender equality policies. Legislatively, there is a dual federal and state system, with each state developing its own equality strategies, often overseen by equality officers. School curricula now include gender equality, with the aim of deconstructing traditional roles and stereotypes. Teachers are trained in gender equality to promote inclusiveness in schools. Germany also passed the Self-Determination Act (2023), which allows transgender, intersex and non-binary people to change their legal gender and first name without a medical certificate.



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Gender Equality in Greece (In parallel with Cyprus)

Historical Background and Context

Greece has a deeply rooted patriarchal tradition, with gender roles historically defined by strong family and societal norms. However, significant changes began to emerge in the second half of the 20th century, particularly with the adoption of the Greek Constitution in 1975, which formally recognised the principle of gender equality. Various reforms aimed to improve gender equality, particularly in areas such as employment, family law and education. These changes were often driven by the country's efforts to harmonise its laws with European Union standards following Greece's accession to the EU in 1981. Despite this progress, cultural and societal attitudes to gender roles in Greece remain a challenge.

Legislation, policies and government strategies

Gender equality is enshrined in the Greek Constitution (Article 4(2)), which guarantees equality before the law and equal treatment of men and women, thus providing a constitutional guarantee for subsequent legislation and policies. The General Secretariat for Family Policies and Gender Equality (GSFPG) is the main governmental body responsible for the implementation of gender policies in Greece. The GSFPG oversees the National Action Plan for Gender Equality (NAPGE), which outlines specific measures to promote gender equality, prevent gender-based violence and increase women's representation in decision-making. The NAPGE includes provisions for gender mainstreaming in all areas of public policy, with a particular focus on employment, education and health. At the local level, the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE) provides guidance and resources to help municipalities promote gender equality.

In 2019, Greece introduced the Law on Substantive Gender Equality and Combating Gender-Based Violence (Law 4604/2019). The law strengthens the legal framework for the protection of women and the promotion of gender equality by addressing issues such as domestic violence, discrimination in the workplace and sexual harassment. The law also requires the establishment of gender equality committees in public and private sector organisations to monitor and promote gender equality practices.

More recently, the Law on Parental Leave and Work-Life Balance (Law 4808/2021) was ratified to improve gender equality in the workplace by providing more equitable parental leave arrangements. This law is part of Greece's efforts to comply with the European Union's work-life balance directive.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

The Greek education system has made significant progress in integrating gender equality principles into the national curriculum, with a focus on challenging traditional gender roles and promoting inclusivity. Gender-sensitive education is promoted through various initiatives. The curriculum now includes discussions on human rights, gender equality and sex education, to raise students' awareness of the importance of respecting diversity and promoting equality. Greece also participates in European Union programmes, such as Erasmus+, which support educational exchanges and promote gender equality among students and educators across Europe. These programmes provide valuable opportunities for Greek students and teachers to interact with their peers from other countries and to learn from best practices in gender equality education.



Gender Equality in Greece (In parallel with Cyprus)

Gender-Based Violence

The Law on Substantive Gender Equality and Combating Gender-Based Violence (Law 4604/2019) provides a strong legal framework for protecting victims of gender-based violence and prosecuting perpetrators. Greece has also implemented the National Action Plan on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women, which outlines specific measures to address domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. This plan includes coordinating support services for victims, training law enforcement and judicial personnel, and promoting public awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards violence. However, gender-based violence remains a critical issue in Greece, and the prevalence of all forms of violence against women is still high and increasing, according to a report by the GSFPGE in 2020. Cultural attitudes, economic disparities and gaps in the implementation of legal frameworks remain barriers.

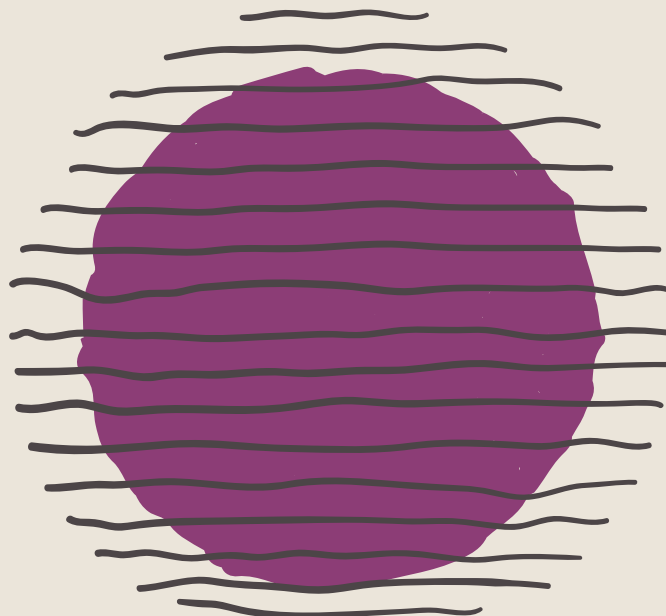
Highlights

In Greece, the Constitution guarantees equality before the law (Article 4(2)). Greece has a deep-rooted patriarchal tradition, but progress towards gender equality has been made since the 1975 Constitution, and accession to the EU in 1981 accelerated reforms – but gender equality remains an important social issue. The fight against gender-based violence is central, and the Law on Substantive Equality and the Fight against Gender Violence (Law 4604/2019) strengthens the protection of women against domestic violence, discrimination in the workplace and sexual harassment.



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Gender Equality in Ireland

Historical Background and Context

The journey towards gender equality in Ireland has been shaped by significant historical events, cultural shifts and social reforms. The impact of the Great Famine, for instance, had a profound effect on traditional gender roles, altering the fabric of Irish society. As the influence of the Catholic Church evolved, it continued to play a substantial role in shaping societal attitudes towards gender, particularly in areas such as reproductive rights and family life.

Throughout the 20th century, Ireland saw a series of pivotal changes that laid the groundwork for gender equality. Key milestones include the introduction of voting rights for women, the Employment Equality Acts and the Maternity Protection Acts. These legislative advancements were crucial in promoting women's rights and ensuring their participation in public and economic life. However, despite these achievements, challenges such as gender pay disparities and the underrepresentation of women in decision-making structures have persisted, necessitating ongoing efforts to address these issues.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Ireland's legislative framework has been instrumental in advancing gender equality and protecting women's rights. Over the years, the country has implemented several important legislative measures designed to promote gender equality and address gender-based violence. The Employment Equality Acts, for example, have played a crucial role in ensuring that women receive equal treatment in the workplace, while the Maternity Protection Acts provide essential support for working mothers.

One of the most significant developments in Ireland's legislative landscape is the passage of reproductive rights legislation. This includes the legalisation of contraception and, more recently, the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, which paved the way for the legalisation of abortion in 2018. These changes have been landmark victories for gender equality, reflecting the evolving views of Irish society

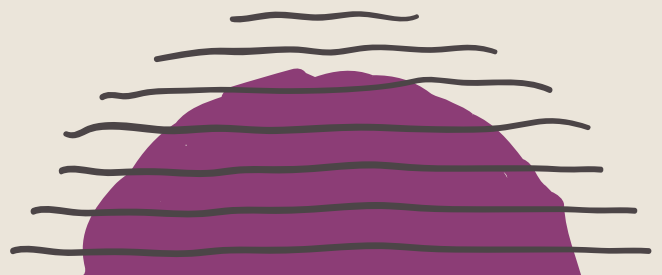
and the increasing recognition of women's autonomy over their bodies.

The legal framework also encompasses measures aimed at addressing domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Act 2018 is a comprehensive piece of legislation that provides victims with various forms of protection, including barring orders, safety orders and protection orders. The Act's recognition of coercive control as a form of domestic abuse marks a significant shift in understanding the dynamics of domestic violence and highlights Ireland's commitment to protecting victims from all forms of abuse.

Despite these legislative advancements, the implementation of these laws remains a challenge. Issues such as limited resources, societal stigma and the complexity of legal proceedings can deter victims from seeking justice. Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the need for further legislative reforms to address gaps in the current legal framework, particularly concerning the protection of vulnerable groups such as migrant women, women with disabilities and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Irish Government has developed and implemented various strategies to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence. Central to these efforts is the National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, which outlines specific actions aimed at preventing violence, protecting victims and prosecuting offenders. This strategy emphasises the importance of multi-agency collaboration, bringing together law enforcement, social services, healthcare providers and non-governmental organisations to deliver a coordinated response to gender-based violence.



Gender Equality in Ireland

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Education plays a crucial role in promoting gender equality and preventing gender-based violence in Ireland. The integration of gender sensitivity into school curricula has been a key focus of educational reforms to challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes from an early age. Comprehensive sex and relationships education (SRE) has been introduced in schools, covering topics such as consent, respectful relationships and the importance of equality and non-discrimination. This curriculum is designed to equip young people with the knowledge and skills necessary to build healthy relationships and recognise and challenge gender-based violence.

Beyond the classroom, youth engagement initiatives have been implemented to promote gender equality. The National Youth Council of Ireland, for example, runs programmes that encourage young people to take an active role in advocating for gender equality and challenging gender-based violence in their communities. These programmes provide young people with a platform to voice their concerns, share their experiences and advocate for social change.

In addition to student-focused initiatives, professional development opportunities for educators are also a major component of Ireland's educational strategies. Teachers are provided with resources and training to help them address gender equality and gender-based violence topics effectively in the classroom. This ongoing professional development is essential for creating an inclusive and supportive learning environment for all students.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence remains a significant challenge in Ireland, with various forms of violence affecting women and vulnerable groups. The Women's Aid Annual Report 2020 highlighted the extent of domestic violence in Ireland, with the organisation responding to 43,472 contacts with

survivors. This figure underscores the widespread nature of domestic violence and the critical role that support services play in assisting survivors.

Sexual violence is another major concern. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) reported receiving 13,867 helpline calls in 2020, reflecting the ongoing prevalence of sexual violence across the country. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) recorded 2,837 sexual offences in the same year, illustrating the scope of the problem and the need for continued efforts to prevent sexual violence and support victims.

Human trafficking and violence against vulnerable groups, such as women with disabilities, are also pressing issues. The Immigrant Council of Ireland reported a 96% increase in cases of trafficking or exploitation of women and girls in 2020, highlighting the growing threat of trafficking in Ireland. Additionally, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWC) has identified that women with disabilities are disproportionately affected by physical abuse, with 23% reporting experiences of abuse compared to 13% of women without disabilities. These statistics underscore the unique vulnerabilities faced by certain groups and the necessity of targeted interventions to protect them.

Highlights

The history of gender equality in Ireland has been shaped, in particular, by the Great Famine and the influence of the Catholic Church. Legislation on occupational equality and the protection of reproductive rights, particularly the legalisation of abortion in 2018 following the repeal of the Eighth Amendment, represent significant progress. The Domestic Violence Act 2018, which recognises coercive control as a form of violence, is an important step towards protecting victims. However, domestic and sexual violence remain a significant problem, with a high number of calls to helplines.



Discussion On Ireland: Focus On Gender Representation Throughout Language, History, Laws And Education

The role of Language in shaping culture and Nation

As we know, language plays a crucial role in shaping reality and identity, and thus, Nation. In Ireland, the interplay between Irish and English, as well as the sensitivity to language in the context of historical and political divisions, highlights the importance of careful language use in promoting inclusivity. In terms of language, Irish is technically the first language in Ireland, although English is predominantly used in daily life and education. Irish is taught in all schools to achieve fluency, though the number of daily speakers is relatively low. There are also schools where Irish is the primary language of instruction, particularly in areas designated as Irish-speaking regions. The influence of Irish on English spoken in Ireland is evident in certain phrases and idioms, reflecting the cultural impact of the Irish language.

This bilingual environment in Ireland may have implications for gender representation, as language can shape perceptions and attitudes. In some regions, such as Alsace in France, the local language and its associated cultural norms can influence how gender and sexual orientation are discussed and perceived. The interplay between Irish and English in Ireland could similarly affect gender representations and societal attitudes. The awareness of language, amplified by the internet and social media, has made consensus on language use both more educated and more challenging.

History and definition of gender as central to the idea of nationhood

The historical influence of British rule and the Irish famine of the 19th century have significantly shaped gender dynamics in Ireland. The famine led to mass emigration and demographic shifts, influencing women's roles and societal structures. The Roman Catholic Church's prominence post-famine further entrenched conservative gender norms, with women occupying both leadership and subservient roles within religious institutions. The Magdalene Laundries, named after Mary Magdalene from the Bible, were institutions where women who were deemed to have transgressed societal norms were

sent to perform menial labor, including laundry work. These institutions have a complex history, with many women experiencing abuse and exploitation. The Irish government has formally apologized for the role of the state and society in supporting these institutions, acknowledging the broader complicity in their operation. The Magdalene Laundries serve as a stark reminder of past injustices, where women deemed to have transgressed societal norms were subjected to harsh labor and abuse. This legacy underscores the importance of addressing historical wrongs and promoting inclusive narratives that acknowledge the experiences of marginalized groups.

Ireland's Constitution, established in 1937, has been a cornerstone in defining gender roles and family structures within the nation. It emphasizes the importance of the family and the central role of women within it, suggesting that work should not interfere with a woman's familial duties. An attempt was made to update this language to reflect modern societal values, but the referendum did not pass, leaving the original wording intact. This outcome highlights the tension between traditional views and contemporary realities. The issue of reproductive rights has also been contentious in Irish society, with significant legal and societal shifts occurring in recent decades. The repeal of the constitutional amendment equating the right to life of the mother and the unborn in 2018 marked a significant change. However, cases such as the X case and the death of Savita Halappanavar highlight the ongoing challenges and controversies surrounding reproductive rights in Ireland. On the other side, a referendum legalized same-sex marriage, marking a significant shift in societal attitudes. The election of Leo Varadkar, an openly gay man, as Prime Minister (2017-2020 and 2022-2024) further underscores the progress made in Ireland regarding LGBTQ+ rights and gender representations.

Discussion On Ireland: Focus On Gender Representation Throughout Language, History, Laws And Education

A specific event was the 100th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. The 1916 Rising holds a special place in Irish history, and traditionally, men have been at the forefront of its narrative. However, one notable woman involved was Countess Markievicz, who is celebrated as a warrior figure for her participation in the uprising. The commemoration of the centenary in 2016 was significant because it made a concerted effort to highlight the roles of women more prominently. In various accounts of the 1916 Rising, women are often portrayed in supportive roles, such as nurses or cooks for the men fighting. However, the dramatizations and commemorations in 2016 depicted women in more active roles, including participating in the fighting itself. This shift reflects a broader movement to recognize and celebrate the contributions of women in historical events, aligning with similar efforts in other countries to promote a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of history. In 2016, Ireland marked, an event where a group attempted to overthrow British rule and establish an independent Irish state. Although the uprising was initially suppressed, it laid the groundwork for Ireland's eventual independence in the following years.

Looking at the role of mothers in Ireland, drawing parallels with discussions about the Soviet era in Latvia. During the Soviet period, there was an official stance of complete gender equality, yet women faced significant societal pressure to have children and raise the next generation of Soviet citizens. This pressure persists in Latvia today. In Ireland, the societal expectations regarding family size and the role of mothers have evolved over time. Historically, large families were common in Ireland, but economic pressures and evolving social norms have led to a reduction in family size. The role of mothers has also undergone significant shifts, particularly in light of a recent referendum held in March 2023, which aimed to amend the 1937 Constitution. If we consider parental leave in Ireland, it is primarily unpaid, with provisions for both mothers and fathers to take time off. The system has evolved to include paternity leave, reflecting changing societal norms and the increasing involvement of men in childcare. However, the high cost of childcare and economic pressures on families present ongoing challenges, particularly in balancing work and family responsibilities.

Thus, despite numerous legislative advancements, including equal status and employment equality acts, as well as protections for maternity, parental, and paternal leave, societal practices often lag behind these legal provisions. The rejection of these recent attempts to amend the Constitution to reflect modern gender dynamics, such as the Family Amendment and the Care Amendment, underscores the complexity of aligning legal frameworks with societal values and practices.

Gender in Education

Ireland's educational system has made strides in promoting gender equality through well-being programs and social, personal, and health education. These initiatives aim to foster resilience, respect for diversity, and understanding of gender roles. However, the effectiveness of these programs is often mitigated by historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that influence students' perceptions before they enter the classroom – i.e. previous discourses that influence and underpin current representations. The textbooks used in Irish national schools reveal distinct gender-specific narratives that may influence students' perceptions of roles and identities. For instance, stories about historical figures like Marco Polo often emphasize male achievements, while stories involving female characters may highlight different themes. Stories directed towards girls often emphasize themes of love and emotion, with visual cues such as pink lettering, creating a different atmosphere compared to stories about male figures. These differences in narrative focus are not always discussed in the classroom, potentially reinforcing traditional gender roles without critical analysis.

An analysis of some textbooks used in primary schools that were offered by our partners during the WP5's seminars reveals persistent gender biases, with stories often reinforcing traditional roles. On one page of the textbook, there is a story that appears to be directed towards girls, characterized by pink lettering and themes of love and hate, creating a distinct atmosphere and tone. The question arises as to whether the differing nature of this story and another, which primarily focuses on a male figure, is discussed in the classroom.

Discussion On Ireland: Focus On Gender Representation Throughout Language, History, Laws And Education

For example, a story about Henry VIII, a powerful king, is juxtaposed with a narrative about a new girl in school who performs magic tricks. While the girl's story introduces a creative element, the serious and impactful narrative is reserved for the male figure. This pattern suggests a subtle reinforcement of traditional gender roles, where male stories are often associated with power and achievement, while female stories may emphasize creativity or domestic themes.

Another example features a girl discovering a sea cave, juxtaposed with George Stephenson inventing the steam engine. The latter story is factual and achievement-oriented, potentially appealing more to male interests. The sea cave story, however, reveals a subtle detail: the girl needs her father's help to open a bottle she finds, suggesting a dependency that might not be present if the character were male.

To balance these representations, the textbooks include historical figures like Grace O'Malley, an Irish pirate queen, in an attempt to balance gender representation by showcasing strong female historical figures. However, such examples are less frequent compared to male-centric narratives, indicating a need for more balanced representations. Efforts to balance gender representations include the inclusion of figures like Supergirl and Rosa Parks. However, these attempts can sometimes feel tokenistic, and their effectiveness in challenging traditional gender norms may vary. Female inventors or explorers are less commonly featured, and when present, they often occupy less prominent space within the textbook, both literally and figuratively.

A critical examination of these textbooks reveals patterns that may not be immediately apparent to students or educators engaged in day-to-day learning activities: a particularly striking example is the juxtaposition of a story about Brian Boru, a famous Irish warrior, with one about a "spoiled girl" who needs to be tricked into behaving. This stark contrast raises questions about how gender roles are portrayed and whether these differences are critically examined in the classroom. The visual

representation of characters does play a role in shaping perceptions. Male figures like Brian Boru are often depicted as strong and ready for action, while female figures may be portrayed in a more lighthearted or less serious manner. These visual cues can subtly influence how students perceive gender roles and expectations, whereas often, these stories are presented without discussion of their underlying messages, with students simply perceiving one as funny and another as serious. Engaging students in a discussion about these contrasts can encourage them to think critically about gender roles and representations. However, without such discussions, these patterns may go unnoticed, reinforcing traditional gender norms rather than challenging them.

The visual and narrative elements of these stories contribute to a broader pattern that warrants attention and analysis to foster a more inclusive educational experience. The depiction of Brian Boru shows him standing tall, poised for action, and gazing into the distance. In contrast, a cartoon of Grace O'Malley, the pirate queen, portrays her as serious yet approachable, creating a distinctly different atmosphere. In another example from a different book, the representation of explorers includes figures like Marco Polo and Christopher Columbus. Notably, Amelia Earhart and Christa McAuliffe, who perished in the Challenger disaster, are highlighted, but they occupy less space on the page. This discrepancy in representation raises questions about how gender balance is achieved in educational materials and whether tokenism is avoided.

Culturally, some elements do not align perfectly, indicating areas that require further consideration. Narratives about male historical figures are presented as serious and factual, while those about females often emphasize passivity or domestic roles. This disparity underscores the need for a more balanced representation in educational materials to challenge stereotypes and promote inclusive learning environments.

Discussion On Ireland: Focus On Gender Representation Throughout Language, History, Laws And Education

How the economy may impact gender in education

A closer examination of textbooks reveals persistent issues that need to be thoughtfully reviewed and revised. Changing educational materials is not straightforward, as books can be expensive and are often used for extended periods. In Ireland, students frequently purchase their own books or participate in rental schemes, which can limit the frequency of updates. The usage of textbooks in Ireland is also influenced by the country's relatively small population and the high cost of producing educational materials. This often results in limited choices for textbooks, with many schools using the same materials. While there may be newer or alternative books available, the cost and logistical challenges of replacing textbooks can lead to older materials being used for extended periods. In some cases, schools may have more flexibility in choosing textbooks, while in others, the selection may be more standardized or influenced by regional or national guidelines. This variability can also impact the consistency of educational content and the narratives presented to students across different schools.

For a comparison, in France, where education follows a national programme, there has been a significant movement to promote women writers and composers who have been historically overlooked in textbooks. This initiative aims to address gender imbalances by actively seeking out and including female perspectives in educational materials. Similar efforts in Ireland could help to balance gender representation and provide students with a more inclusive and diverse educational experience.

This situation underscores the complexity of implementing immediate changes in educational content, highlighting the need for ongoing efforts to ensure materials reflect contemporary values and inclusivity.

Well-being, sexuality education and diversity

In parallel, significant developments have also been made in the area of well-being and sexuality education, which now constitute a substantial part of the curriculum. This educational focus is designed to cover a broad spectrum of topics, including physical education, social skills, personal and health education, and civic education. The curriculum aims to foster discussions about the roles of different individuals in society, including minorities and women, promoting an open dialogue within the educational framework. Resources and training for teachers have been developed to support this initiative, with a considerable number of hours dedicated to teacher training. The goal is to equip educators with the tools necessary to facilitate these discussions effectively. While this approach is not without controversy, as it balances the drive for academic success with the need to cultivate resilience and respect for diverse identities, it represents a significant effort to integrate well-being into the educational experience.

Factors such as national and cultural history, family background, and socioeconomic status all play a role in shaping the individual's experience. Moreover, the diversity of the student body, including those from Traveller or refugee backgrounds, adds complexity to the educational landscape. Students from different backgrounds may have varying levels of engagement and understanding, requiring educators to adapt their approaches to meet the diverse needs of their students. These influences, along with present factors like peer and teacher relationships and future aspirations, create a dynamic interplay that affects the student's engagement and outcomes in the educational process. These influences can significantly impact a student's perception and achievement, underscoring the importance of a holistic approach to education that considers these external factors.

Discussion on Ireland with a focus on Gender's representations throughout Language, History, Laws and Education

The influence of culture and religion on the curriculum

The Irish school system is unique, especially in the secondary sector, where many schools operate under a trusteeship model. Historically, the Roman Catholic Church owned school buildings and land, with the state paying teacher salaries. Today, many schools are managed by trustee bodies rather than religious orders, reflecting the decline in the Roman Catholic Church's involvement. Funding for these schools comes partly from the state and partly from fees, with the state covering teacher salaries for a set number of teachers. Truly private schools are rare in Ireland, and most schools operate under this mixed funding model. This system is evolving, with increasing state involvement in education, reflecting broader societal changes and the need for a more secular and inclusive educational approach. Ireland's inspection system aims to ensure consistency, but the subjective nature of well-being education makes it difficult to standardize.

In fact, well-being education, including relationship and sexuality education, is now a significant part of the Irish curriculum, as seen before. However, the implementation varies across schools, influenced by regional and cultural factors. As the principal of a Roman Catholic school, it's observed that while religious education was traditionally expected to cover well-being topics, it has been increasingly marginalized in the curriculum. The secular movement in Ireland has gained strength, partly in reaction to the historical power of the Roman Catholic Church, making it challenging for religious institutions to address sensitive topics like sexuality due to past abuses, such as those associated with the Magdalene Laundries, mentioned above.

For a comparison, in France, workshops on gender and sexuality education are often conducted by external associations rather than teachers themselves. These workshops cover topics such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and health issues, and are led by specialists who come into the schools. This approach ensures that the curriculum is delivered by professionals who can address these sensitive topics effectively.

In Ireland, while external experts may sometimes

lead workshops, the teacher remains responsible for delivering the curriculum. Teachers can incorporate guest speakers into their lessons and justify their inclusion to inspectors, but the ultimate responsibility for covering the curriculum lies with the teacher. This setup ensures that the educational content is aligned with the national standards and that teachers are accountable for the material presented.

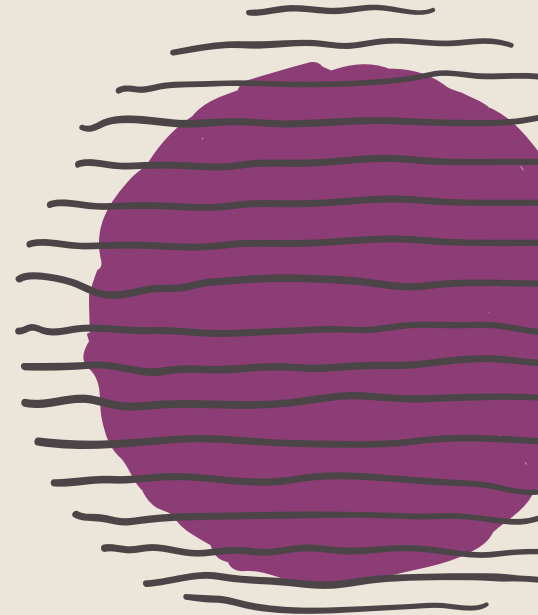
This shows the influence of "cultural Catholicism" remains strong, even as the Roman Catholic Church's direct influence wanes. This reflects in the fact that although much has changed in Irish society, remnants of older ideas about gender roles persist. Today, families are smaller, and both men and women are increasingly involved in the workforce. The notion that someone can stay at home to care for children has become more complex due to high employment rates and the rising cost of living. These economic pressures challenge traditional gender roles, including the conventional idea of the mother's role in the family. Despite these changes, some older perspectives on gender and family dynamics continue to influence societal attitudes.

In terms of family size, Ireland has seen a shift towards smaller families, reflecting broader societal changes.

All this shows that Ireland's societal landscape has evolved, with increasing diversity and a growing secular movement challenging the Roman Catholic Church's historical influence. However, remnants of conservative cultural norms persist, as evidenced by the resistance to recent constitutional amendments. The role of women in Irish society has seen significant shifts, from the election of the first female president Mary Robinson (1990-1997) to ongoing debates about reproductive rights and gender equality. The case of traveller women highlights the unique challenges faced by marginalized groups within Ireland. These women often face discrimination and socioeconomic disadvantages, underscoring the need for inclusive policies that address their specific needs and experiences.

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Gender Equality in Italy

Historical Background and Context

This report provides an analysis of the evolution of gender dynamics and developments in Italy, highlighting key milestones and current challenges. It examines the impact of historical events, cultural changes and educational reforms on gender equality, focussing on legislative progress. Whenever possible, the report highlights not only the social conditions of cisgender women but also those of other gender minorities. Traditionally, Italian society was deeply rooted in patriarchal norms, with distinct gender roles that limited women's participation in public life. However, significant changes began to emerge in the mid-20th century, particularly after the Second World War, when Italy's new republican constitution of 1948 formally recognised the principle of equality between men and women.

The feminist movements of the 1970s played a crucial role in challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for women's rights in Italy. These movements led to significant legal reforms in areas such as family law, divorce and reproductive rights. Since then, Italy has made concerted efforts to address these challenges by implementing new laws and policies to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence. These efforts are part of Italy's broader strategy to harmonise its national policies with European Union standards and to fulfil its international obligations under various human rights conventions.

However, gender inequality persists in various aspects of Italian society, including the labour market, political representation and social attitudes. In this respect, Istat (National Statistics Institute) has recently (2024) provided some statistics on the general conditions of girls and women by age group in comparison with their male counterparts. The data show that the role of girls and women is characterised by violence (higher scores for bullying) and inadequate working conditions (lower employment rate, higher percentage of over-educated and involuntary part-time workers).

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

In Italy, the women's rights movement has deep roots, with significant legislative milestones over time to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, women gained the right to vote through the institutional referendum, enabling them to participate actively in the political life of the country. The Italian Constitution (1947), in particular Article 3, further enshrines the principle of equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on grounds of sex. This constitutional guarantee is the basis for a wide range of laws and policies aimed at promoting gender equality in all areas of society.

Subsequent legislation continued to promote gender equality, such as the Divorce Act (1970) and the Family Law Reform of 1975, which abolished the husband's power as head of the household and recognised the legal independence of wives. Further reforms addressed issues such as discrimination in the workplace (1977), access to state-provided abortion (1978), and the abolition of honour crimes and reparative marriages (1981), marking significant progress towards a fairer and more inclusive society.

Another important legislative measure is the Code of Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (Legislative Decree No. 198/2006). This decree consolidates several laws aimed at promoting gender equality in employment, education and political representation. It also mandates the establishment of Equal Opportunities Councils at the national and regional levels to monitor and promote gender equality practices.

Law No. 120 of 2011, known as the Golfo-Mosca Law, aims to ensure an adequate number of women on the boards of directors and boards of auditors of listed companies and companies controlled by the public administration. The law requires that the bylaws of these companies be amended to reserve at least one-third of the positions for the underrepresented gender.



Gender Equality in Italy

With regard to the rights of sexual minorities, the "Cirinnà Law" (L. 20/05/2016 n. 76) marked an important milestone in Italy's journey towards equality by legalising civil unions for same-sex couples. The main difference between the regulation of civil unions and the institution of marriage remains that of the legal relationship between the partners and their child. In fact, in Italy, only married heterosexual couples can adopt a child, except in some special cases (adoption of a disabled child), and only heterosexual couples can adopt the child's partner (adoption of stepchildren) or have access to assisted reproductive technologies. Surrogacy is illegal (2004), even if it takes place outside the national territory.

As for discrimination based on gender, the Italian Penal Code contains article 604 bis, which criminalises propaganda and incitement to commit crimes on the grounds of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination but does not refer to gender, sex or sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination. Similarly, Law 654/1975 on the ratification and implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, later amended by the Mancino Law in 1993, only covers racial discrimination. To date, Italian national law does not protect against discrimination on the grounds of sex or sexual orientation.

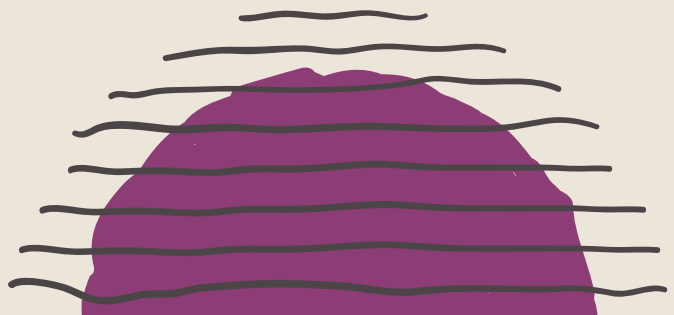
Finally, the Equal Pay Law (Law No. 162/2021) aims to reduce the gender pay gap that persists in various sectors by requiring companies to report on gender pay gaps and take corrective action where necessary. The law also promotes transparency in recruitment and promotion processes to ensure equal opportunities for men and women. At the same time, much remains to be done to ensure gender equality in the workplace: the latest data from Istat (National Statistics Institute, 2024) show that the rate of involuntary part-time work is higher for women (15.6%) than for men (5.3%), that women are more likely to be overqualified workers (32.6%) than men (28.3%) and that the employment rate for women is still high (57% compared to 74.9% for men).

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

Strategies to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence are coordinated by the Department for Equal Opportunities, which operates under the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The Department is responsible for developing and implementing national policies on gender equality and monitoring compliance with national and international obligations. Italy has also established the National Equality Councillor, a government-appointed official responsible for monitoring the implementation of gender equality policies, who works closely with the Regional Equality Councillors and other stakeholders to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed in all areas of public policy.

One of the key strategies is the National Strategic Plan on Male Violence against Women (2021-2023). The plan includes measures to improve the legal framework, strengthen support services for victims and raise public awareness of gender-based violence. It also emphasises the importance of inter-institutional cooperation, involving different government ministries, local authorities and civil society organisations in the implementation of these measures. In addition, Italy has focussed on promoting gender equality through the National Plan for Gender Equality 2021-2026, which is inspired by the European Union's Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, with a long-term perspective.

Policies to reconcile work and family life are another area of interest, with the need for more childcare services and paid parental leave to support working women. According to Istat (2023), in 2022 there will be 350,000 places for children in crèches and infant services, with some differences between the North and the South of Italy: in the South, only 66.4% of them are public.



Gender Equality in Italy

The representation of women in political and decision-making institutions remains an area of concern. In April 2002, a special study group was set up within the Department for Equal Opportunities of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The group, composed of nine university professors of Constitutional Law, Principles of Public Law and Comparative Public Law, developed proposals for the full participation of women in institutions, in leading positions at all levels of decision-making and in all aspects of social, economic and political life.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

In Italy, gender sensitive education is still under discussion. While Civic Education programmes may include topics such as gender equality, teachers are free to choose their topic from a wide range of subjects and develop it as they wish. Teachers are rarely provided with the necessary materials or training, except in some schools.

At the same time, some programmes in Italy focus on youth engagement, especially EU initiatives that aim to empower young people to become advocates for gender equality and social justice.

For example, the EU initiative Youth Guarantee Programme includes measures to support young women entering the labour market and to promote gender equality in vocational education and training.

Gender-based violence

As part of its efforts to achieve gender equality, Italy has implemented several measures to combat gender-based violence in recent decades.

The "Stalking Law" (Law No. 38/2009), to provide a more concrete response to the fight against violence against women, introduced the crime of persecutory acts, also known as stalking, into the legal system by inserting Article 612-bis into the Criminal Code. The Stalking Law criminalised stalking behaviour and imposed penalties on perpetrators, thus providing greater protection for victims, many of whom are

women.

The Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive international human rights treaty on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Italy signed the Convention in September 2012 and ratified it in September 2013. Since the ratification of the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Law No. 77 of 2013), Italy has adopted a series of interventions aimed at establishing an integrated strategy to combat gender-based violence under the guidelines set out in the Convention. The first intervention in this regard was Decree-Law No. 93 of 2013, which was adopted a few months after the ratification of the Convention and subsequently became the so-called "Femicide Law" (Law No. 119/2013). This law introduced the crime of voluntary manslaughter, aggravated by the relationship of kinship or cohabitation with the female victim. It also increased the penalties for the crimes of family abuse, stalking and sexual violence.

A provision that also had an impact on the fight against gender-based violence was Law No. 69 of 2019 (the so-called "Red Code"), which strengthened procedural guarantees for victims of violent crimes, especially sexual and domestic violence, introduced some new offences in the Criminal Code and increased penalties for the offences most frequently committed against female victims.

As part of the reform of the criminal procedure, Law No. 134 of 2021 extended protection to victims of domestic and gender-based violence, while Law No. 53 of 2022 strengthened the collection of statistical data on gender-based violence through greater coordination among all stakeholders.

Challenges to fully addressing gender-based violence in Italy remain, despite these efforts. Cultural attitudes, economic disparities and gaps in the implementation of legal frameworks continue to be obstacles.



Gender Equality in Italy

In 2023, a press report by the Italian CNR (National Centre for Research) indicated that 12,500,000 women (18-84) had been victims of gender-based violence (psychological/physical harm) at least once in their lives, that is, one in two Italian women. Only 5% of them reported it. The report also shows that in 2022, 22,500,000 women had experienced psychological violence, and 800,000 women had experienced physical violence at least once. The average biographical data of women who have experienced violence is that they are younger than 60, have a medium or high level of education, work in the middle class, and are married or live with their partner. More than 50% have children. A study (2022) by Vox - Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (Italian Rights Observatory) shows that women are the most frequent target of online hate speech, with peaks of hate occurring immediately after femicides.

As highlighted in the EU-funded network ILGA-Europe's 2023 Annual Report, Italy ranks 34th out of 49 European and Central Asian countries on a general index of LGBTQ+ rights. Reproductive and parental rights are particularly poor: while same-sex registered partnerships are legal in Italy, with rights similar to marriage, same-sex adoption is not possible. According to Istat and Unar (National Office against Racial Discrimination) (2022), LGBTQ+ people also face discrimination in the workplace: A report for 2020/2021 highlights that 26% of respondents say they have been discriminated against at work.

However, Italy's commitment to international standards and its ongoing efforts to strengthen its legal and institutional framework reflect a determination to address these issues.

Italian society is traditionally patriarchal, with clearly defined gender roles. Article 3 of the Italian Constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex. The feminist movements of the 1970s brought about significant reforms, but inequalities remain in the labour market, political representation and social attitudes. The "Femicide Law" (2013) increased penalties for domestic abuse, harassment and sexual violence, and the Code Red Law (2019) improved protection for victims of sexual and domestic violence. Italian women face high rates of violence, overqualification in the workplace and involuntary part-time work. For example, 12.5 million women have been victims of gender-based violence, but only 5 per cent report it (2023). Italy ranks 34th out of 49 European countries in terms of LGBTQ+ rights. The law on civil unions (2016) has led to the recognition of same-sex couples, but these couples do not enjoy the same parental rights as heterosexual couples and adoption remains prohibited.

Highlights



Discussion On Italy With A Focus On Gender Equality And Rights

Introduction

Deciding which aspects of gender equality to address in Italy is challenging due to the breadth of topics, from historical milestones to contemporary issues. This discussion provides a general overview of the conditions for women and minorities in Italy, followed by a historical perspective from the 1970s to the 2000s. It then focuses on three key topics: gender-based violence, reproductive rights, and gender equality in schools.

Data from the National Institute for Statistics (see the following factsheets) reveals significant gender disparities in Italy. Women and girls often face mental health challenges and are more frequently subjected to bullying compared to their male counterparts. While women generally achieve higher educational qualifications, they are underrepresented in STEM fields. Employment rates for women are lower, and they often hold jobs that do not match their educational qualifications. Women are more likely to work part-time involuntarily, often due to childcare responsibilities, exacerbated by a lack of adequate childcare services. Single-parent households are predominantly led by women, highlighting the gender disparities in caregiving roles.

LGBTIQ+ Gender Rights and Recognition

In Italy, the practice of consciousness-raising groups, known as "out of Kosenza," emerged as part of an international movement advocating for economic rights and wages for housework. This movement was initiated in 1974 by activists such as Alisa Del Re, a Marxist feminist economist, and it gained significant traction. The 1970s also saw a strong transgender and LGBTIQ+ movement in Italy. One notable event was the public protest by transgender women in 1979, where they wore only the lower part of a bikini with the message: "You want us to be women, but you still see us as men. So we will go out in public as men." This act was a bold statement against societal norms and sparked significant attention and debate. In 1988, the Trans Identity Movement was established in Bologna, marking a pivotal moment for transgender rights in Italy. Bologna became a hub for transgender activism, with milestones such as the election of the first transgender woman to a neighborhood council and

the establishment of the first health clinic for transgender individuals, known as a "consultorio," similar to Planned Parenthood clinics in other countries.

Italy has also seen innovative representations of transgender individuals in city councils and parliament. The first transgender woman Member of Parliament in Europe was elected in Italy, and in 2018, further advancements were made in recognizing and supporting transgender rights. Schools and universities in Italy now allow students to use their chosen name on official documents if they are transitioning, a policy known as the "alias school pathway" or "alias scolastico." This policy respects the gender identity of students, even if they are minors, and is a significant step towards inclusivity in the educational system.

Italy ranks low on LGBTIQ+ rights, placing 34th out of 49 European countries, with only 25% of the criteria concerning LGBTIQ+ human rights being met. Civil unions are recognized, but they differ from traditional marriages in terms of obligations like fidelity, reflecting societal constructions of marriage. Legal gender recognition procedures exist for both adults and minors, but intersex individuals face significant challenges, as surgical interventions on children are not prohibited.

Gender-Based Violence

Turning to contemporary issues, gender-based violence remains a critical concern in Italy. Data from the National Institute for Statistics reveals that more than 12 million women aged 18 to 84 have experienced some form of gender-based violence in their lifetime, highlighting the pervasiveness of this issue. Only 5% of these incidents are reported, often due to a lack of support services and societal stigma. Psychological violence is more commonly reported than physical violence, with 12 million women experiencing psychological violence and 2 million reporting physical violence.

The demographic most affected by violence includes women under 60 with middle to higher education and professional jobs, who are often married or cohabiting with a partner and have children. This raises concerns about the intergenerational impact of violence, as children exposed to violent behavior may internalize it as normal, particularly boys.

Discussion On Italy With A Focus On Gender Equality And Rights

Extreme violence statistics from 2023 (see factsheets) show that women are most likely to be killed by their partners or former partners, followed by their sons. For men, violent deaths are most often at the hands of strangers. The National Observatory on Femicide (NUDM) records femicides, including those of lesbian and transgender individuals, underscoring the vulnerability of these groups

The age range of victims is wide, indicating that no age group is immune to this violence. In 2024, the trend continues with both young and old women being affected. Notably, two of the victims were sex workers, highlighting the additional risks faced by marginalized groups.

This overview underscores the ongoing challenges and the need for continued advocacy and policy reforms to address gender-based violence and promote inclusivity and equality in Italy.

In Italy, the topic of sex work is complex and multifaceted, but due to time constraints and the breadth of issues to cover, it was not discussed in the presentation that gave rise to this written discussion. Sex work is legal in Italy, but soliciting in public spaces is illegal. However, sex workers can operate legally in private spaces.

The Abortion Issue

Moving on to reproductive rights, the scenario in Italy is far from ideal. While abortion is legal, it remains a contentious issue that is frequently debated. The history of abortion rights in Italy is deeply intertwined with the feminist movement of the 1970s. During this period, Italian feminists engaged with international movements, including organizing trips to London where abortion was accessible, similar to efforts in France. Additionally, there were grassroots initiatives for the self-management of abortion practices using methods like aspiration, which are still taught in feminist circles today.

The feminist movement in Italy has been vocal about reclaiming control over abortion, advocating for it to be framed as a matter of personal freedom and choice rather than merely a health right. This perspective is evident in the ongoing debates and the structural challenges within the healthcare system. The year 1978 was pivotal for health rights in Italy, marking the establishment of a universal and free national healthcare system. It was also the year when the Basaglia Law, named after Franco Basaglia, a psychiatrist who advocated for the deinstitutionalization of mental health care, was implemented. Basaglia's work led to the closure of psychiatric hospitals and the integration of patients into community-based care. However, the current legal framework for abortion in Italy is not without its challenges.

Abortion is permitted within the first 90 days of pregnancy, but beyond this period, it becomes significantly more difficult to access. Women seeking an abortion must obtain a prescription from a doctor, and there is a mandatory seven-day waiting period, known as the "seven-day meditation," during which women are presumed to potentially change their minds. Access to abortion services is further complicated by the prevalence of conscientious objectors among medical professionals. A map illustrating the distribution of conscientious objectors across Italy shows that in many regions, particularly in the central and southern parts of the country, it is extremely difficult to find a healthcare provider willing to perform an abortion. In some areas, all gynecologists are conscientious objectors, necessitating travel to other regions for the procedure. Recent political developments have added further complexity to the issue of reproductive rights. A proposal submitted to the Italian Parliament aims to introduce "maternity support experts" in Planned Parenthood centers, which has been interpreted by some as an attempt to insert pro-life activists into these spaces. This proposal has sparked debate and highlights the ongoing tension between pro-life and pro-choice advocates in Italy.

Discussion On Italy With A Focus On Gender Equality And Rights

Starting a family

Becoming a parent in Italy is fraught with challenges. Mandatory paternity leave is only 10 days, and while voluntary paternity leave is available for up to three months, it is often underutilized. Access to childcare services is limited, particularly in the southern regions, where public daycare facilities are scarce. This often forces parents to rely on private childcare or family support or to work part-time involuntarily. Moreover, access to assisted reproductive technologies is restricted to heterosexual couples, with additional limitations for same-sex couples and single individuals.

Surrogacy is illegal in Italy, and recent government directives have further complicated the legal status of children born via surrogacy abroad, potentially leaving them without official recognition.

During a research conference in Pisa with other participants on the ARENAS project, questions arose about the impact of religion on the perception of families. Discussions revealed that religion has a strong influence on gender and family, especially because of the Vatican. Heterosexuality is seen as evident, and having children is considered natural. It is complicated to say one does not want children. Does religion influence this? As an Italian, colleagues said there is a belief in a strong influence, especially on abortion, surrogacy, and reproductive rights. Italian society is very patriarchal, with traditional ideas of masculinity and femininity. This can be problematic for lesbian and gay people, who often face homophobia. This might be linked to the Roman Catholic Church but is perhaps deeper. April 8th, 2024, the Vatican issued a declaration prohibiting surrogacy, connecting it to human dignity. Radical Roman Catholic Christian groups can have more conservative positions than the Pope. The Roman Catholic Church is complex and has a powerful influence, but it is hard to answer this question definitively. The Vatican Declaration was issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith (September 11th, 2023), an ancient institution involved in the witch hunt and responsible for the list of censored books. They dictate what is

legitimate according to the doctrine. As a matter of fact, in Italy, there is a special relationship with the Roman Catholic Church due to the presence of the Vatican and then the Pope.

Gender in Education

In the realm of education, Italy faces the challenge of a highly feminized teaching profession, with women making up the majority of teachers in primary and maternal schools. However, this representation decreases significantly at higher educational levels. The government has introduced quotas for male headmasters to address gender imbalances in school leadership.

Sexual and affective education is not mandatory in Italian schools, and when it is offered, it often requires parental approval. This has led to opposition from pro-life and conservative groups, who view such education as an attempt to introduce "gender ideology" and confuse children's sexual identities. These groups actively protest against sexual education, framing it as a threat to traditional gender roles and family values. Homophobia remains a significant issue in Italy, and the political and media debates surrounding sexual education are frequent and contentious. The lack of mandatory sexual education in schools means that discussions about gender and sexuality are often left to the discretion of individual schools and teachers, leading to inconsistent and sometimes inadequate coverage of these important topics. In the national guidelines of 2017, written by a group of experts including linguists, anthropologists, and psychologists, the linguist proposed guidelines for non-sexist language. This group had expertise in actions and research against sexism, and the guidelines contain many references to gender ideologies. For example, one quote states that it must be confirmed that among the rights, duties, and knowledge conveyed, neither gender ideologies nor practices outside the education domain are concerned. This strongly affirms the need to separate gender ideologies from sexual and affective education.

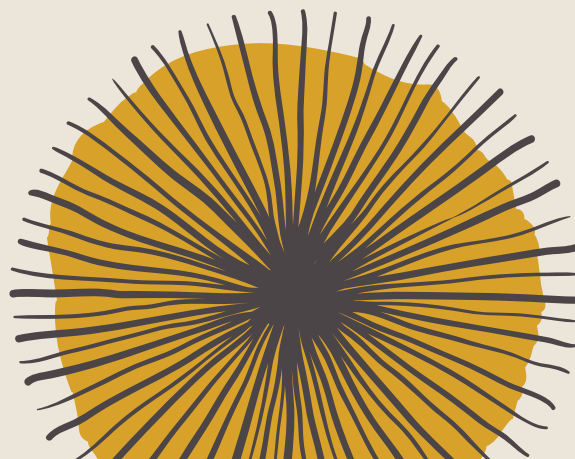
Discussion On Italy With A Focus On Gender Equality And Rights

The role of the state and its institutions in achieving equal human rights (i.e. for all Humans, without distinction)

These national guidelines against discrimination primarily address diversity management. This is because, in the data, gender discrimination is often categorized under the broader umbrella of cyberbullying or diversity management. This is interesting for our general reflection. For instance, if gender discrimination is seen only as cyberbullying, it is perceived as something that happens in students' private lives, outside the school environment. Consequently, it is not addressed within schools, and gender discrimination is not recognized as a specific form of discrimination and oppression. This dilutes the issue of gender discrimination within the broader context of diversity management.

To conclude, the timeline of gender equality in Italy includes milestones such as the first woman receiving a university degree in the 17th century and the first female professor in the 18th century. Significant legal changes occurred in the 20th century, including the legalization of abortion in 1978 and the decriminalization of rape in 1981.

The feminist movement in the 1970s and 1980s was strong, with initiatives like consciousness-raising groups and advocacy for wages for housework. The transgender movement also gained visibility with public protests and the establishment of health clinics for transgender individuals. The gender-based violence remains an issue. It includes various types of violence, such as micro-violence like controlling or checking a partner's phone, which is common among teenagers and often considered normal or a sign of concern and love. Reproductive rights, such as access to abortion, cannot be taken for granted. LGBTQ+ rights are also rarely addressed, with only 25% of criteria concerning human rights for LGBTQ+ people being met, and homophobic insults targeting gay men are common. Italy has a divided public opinion, with a strong pro-life movement and many conservative citizens, but also an increasing feminist consciousness. In the end, there is still a long way to go. Italy needs to improve economic, civil, and health rights for gender minorities, including cis women, but not only cis women. This is something that can hopefully be tackled together.



Factsheets on Gender Focus in Italy

Gender Dynamics and Developments in Italy

Introduction

This report provides an analysis of the evolution of gender dynamics and developments in Italy, highlighting significant milestones and current challenges. It examines the impact of historical events, cultural changes, and educational reforms on gender equality, focusing on legislative advancements. In our report and when this is possible, we will highlight not only the social conditions of cisgender women but of other gender minorities.

Some Data about Women's Social Condition in Italy

Istat (National Institute for Statistics) has recently (2024) provided some statistics concerning the general conditions of girls and women according to the age range, as compared to their male counterparts. From the data, we see the role of girls and women is characterized by violence (higher scores for bullying), and inadequate conditions in the workplace (lower employment rate, higher percentage of overeducated and involuntary part-time workers)¹.

Item	(cis) Women	(cis) Men
Mental health (SF36) (11-17)	69.8	75.4
Bullying (11-17)	55.6%	49.9%
STEM degree (18-24)	17.6%	33.7%
Tertiary education (25-34)	33.8%	21.0%
Employment rate (25-34)	57.0%	74.9%
Overeducated workers (35-54)	32.6%	28.3%
Involuntary part-time job (35-54)	15.6%	5.3%
Single-parent households (35-54)	1.000.000	171.000

Table 1, Social conditions according to gender and age range (Istat, 2024).

¹ <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2024/03/Infografica-8Marzo2024.pdf> (last access: 12/05/2024).

Factsheets on Gender Focus in Italy

Violence and Extreme Violence against Women

In 2023, the Italian CNR (National Centre for Research) has communicated in a press report the following data concerning violence against cisgender women²:

- 12.500.000 women (18-84) have experienced gender-based violence (psychological/bodily harm) at least once. This means one in two women. 5% of them filed a report.
- Psychological violence: 22.500.000 women declare having experienced psychological violence in 2022. 12.000.000 women report having experienced psychological violence at least once in their life.
- Physical violence: 800.000 women declare having experienced physical violence in 2022. 2.000.000 report having experienced physical violence at least once.

The average biographic data of women having experienced violence is a woman younger than 60 years, with middle or higher education, a middle-class job, married, cohabiting with their partner. More than 50% have children.

Femicides

The latest Istat study on violent deaths shows how women are more likely to be killed by a partner or former partner, while men are more likely to be killed by a stranger³.

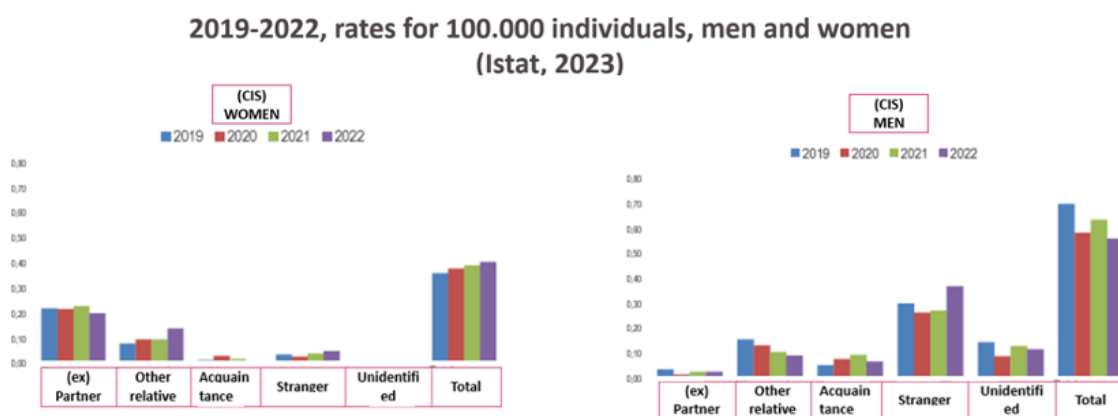


Figure 1, Homicides according to the responsible for the killing, men and women, 2019-2022 (Istat).

Some Data about the Social Condition of Gender Minorities in Italy

As highlighted by the 2023 Annual Review by the EU-funded network ILGA-Europe, Italy is ranked 34th in a list of 49 European and Central Asian Countries on a general index of LGBTQ+ rights⁴. Reproductive and parenting rights are especially poor: while same-sex registered partnerships are legal in Italy, with similar rights to marriage, same-sex adoption is not possible.

² <https://www.cnr.it/it/comunicato-stampa/12373/i-dati-sulla-violenza-di-genere-in-italia> (last access: 12/05/2024).

³ <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/11/Vittime-di-omicidio-2022.pdf> (last access: 12/05/2024, translated from Italian).

⁴ https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2023/full_annual_review.pdf (last access: 12/05/2024).

Factsheets on Gender Focus in Italy

According to Istat and Unar (National Office against Racial Discrimination), LGBTQ+ people also experience discrimination at work: a report for the year 2020/2021 underlines that 26% of the respondents declare having been discriminated in the workplace⁵.

Gender Equality Index 2023

The Gender Equality Index is a tool for monitoring progress in gender equality across the EU over time⁶. It measures gender gaps between women and men in six core domains – work, money, knowledge, time, power and health – and is composed of 31 indicators. Progress in achieving gender equality is tracked through the Gender Equality Index, which assigns scores from 1 to 100, with 100 indicating full equality between men and women. Italy's score of 68.2 places it 13th among EU countries, slightly below the EU average.

Since 2010, Italy's score has increased by 14.9 points, the largest increase among all EU countries, leading to an eight-place rise in the ranking. This improvement is mainly attributed to progress in the domain of power, with a notable increase of 37.5 points. Since 2020, Italy's overall score has risen by 3.2 points, primarily driven by advancements in the domains of time (increased by 8.1 points) and power (up by 5.8 points), resulting in a one-place improvement in the ranking to 13th position.

Italy's best performance (9th out of all Member States) is in the domain of health, in which it scores 89.2 points. However, progress in this domain has slowed since 2020. In terms of health status, Italy ranks 5th with 94.6 points, while its highest score of 98.6 points is in health access, placing it 9th in the EU.

Gender inequalities are strongly pronounced in the domain of work (65.0 points), in which the country has consistently ranked last among all Member States since 2010. Since 2020, Italy's score for this domain has increased by 1.8 points. Within this domain, Italy ranks lowest (27th) in the sub-domain of participation, for which it scores 68.9 points. The country's lowest score (61.4 points) is in the sub-domain of segregation and quality of work, in which Italy has registered a drop in ranking from 19th to 22nd place since 2020, due to making slower progress than other EU countries.

The most notable improvement since 2020 has been in the domain of time, with Italy's score increasing by 8.1 points, leading to a rise in the ranking from 16th to 12th place. This improvement is primarily driven by advancements in the sub-domain of care activities, which increased by 13.0 points. Additionally, Italy has shown progress in social activities, with an improvement of 3.8 points since 2020, moving from 15th to 5th place.

However, Italy's progress has stalled in the domain of money (– 0.2 points) since 2020, scoring 80.3 points and maintaining its ranking at the 14th place. The lack of progress towards gender equality in this domain is due to a decrease in score in the sub-domain of economic situation (– 0.6 points) since last year's Index. As a result, Italy's ranking in this sub-domain remains in 21st place in the EU. In the sub-domain of financial resources, the country scores 76.7 points and ranks 12th.

Legal Framework and Women's rights

In Italy, the women's rights movement has deep roots, with significant legislative milestones over time. In 1945, at the end of the Second World War, women gained the right to vote through the institutional referendum, enabling them to actively participate in the country's political life. Subsequent laws continued to promote gender equality, such as the Divorce Law (1970) and the Family Law reform of 1975, which abolished the husband's power as head of the household and recognized the legal independence of wives. Further reforms addressed issues such as workplace discrimination (1977) access to national healthcare-provided abortion (1978), abolition of honour

⁵ https://www.istat.it/it/files//2022/03/REPORTDISCRIMINAZIONILGBT_2022_rev.pdf (last access: 12/05/2024).

⁶ https://eige.europa.eu/modules/custom/eige_gei/app/content/downloads/factsheets/IT_2023_factsheet.pdf

Factsheets on Gender Focus in Italy

crime and reparatory marriages (1981), marking significant progress towards a more equitable and inclusive society⁷.

Gender Equality Legislation in Italy in the last years (2009 – 2024)

The "**Stalking Law**" (Law No. 38/2009) in order to provide a more concrete response in the fight against violence against women, introduced the crime of persecutory acts, also known as stalking, into our legal system by inserting Article 612-bis into the criminal code. The Stalking Law criminalized stalking behavior and imposed penalties on perpetrators, providing greater protection for victims, many of whom are women.

Law No. 120 of 2011, known as **the Golfo-Mosca Law**, aims to ensure an adequate number of women on the boards of directors and boards of auditors of listed companies and companies controlled by the public administration. The law requires that the by-laws of these companies be amended to reserve at least one-third of the positions for the under-represented gender.

The Istanbul Convention is the most comprehensive international human rights treaty on preventing and combatting violence against women and domestic violence. Italy signed it in September 2012, and ratified it in September 2013. From the **ratification of the Istanbul Convention** on the prevention and fight against violence against women and domestic violence (Law No. 77 of 2013), Italy adopted a series of interventions aimed at establishing an integrated strategy to combat violence following the guidelines outlined in the Convention. The first intervention in this regard was made with Decree-Law No. 93 of 2013, adopted a few months after the ratification of the Convention, which then became the so-called '**Femicide Law**' law (Law No. 119/2013): This law introduced the crime of voluntary manslaughter aggravated by the relationship of kinship or cohabitation with the female victim. It also strengthened penalties for the crimes of family abuse, stalking and sexual violence.

The "**Cirinnà Law**" (L. 20/05/2016 n. 76) marked a significant milestone in Italy's journey towards equality by legalizing civil unions for same-sex couples. The main difference between the regulation of civil unions and the institution of marriage remains that relating to the legal relationship about partners and their child.

Only married heterosexual couples can adopt a child except for some special conditions (adoption of a disabled child). Only heterosexual couples can adopt the child's partner (step-child adoption). Only heterosexual couples can have access to assisted reproductive technology. Surrogacy is illegal (2004), even whenever performed outside the national territory.

A provision that also had an impact in the fight against gender-based violence was Law No. 69 of 2019 (so-called "**red code**"), which strengthened the procedural safeguards for victims of violent crimes, particularly regarding sexual and domestic violence, introduced some new offenses in the penal code, and increased penalties for offenses most frequently committed against female victims.

An extension of protections for victims of domestic and gender-based violence was provided for by Law No. 134 of 2021, as part of the **criminal trial reform**, while Law No. 53 of 2022 strengthened the collection of statistical data on gender-based violence through greater coordination among all involved parties.

Nevertheless, the latest data show that 12.500.000 women (18-84) have been victim to gender-based violence (psychological/bodily harm) at least once. This means one in two women. Only 5% of them filed a report.

In April 2024 a law has been approved by the Italian Parliament introducing "**third-party experts in maternity support**" (i.e., pro-life activists) in family planning centres, which is causing some alarm

⁷ <https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/timeline-on-the-evolution-of-italian-women-s-rights>

Factsheets on Gender Focus in Italy

in society. The risk that a literal application of the law, more than 40 years after its conception, could turn the freedom to have an abortion into a real odyssey for so many Italians is most clearly illustrated by the broad interpretation given to Article 9 on conscientious objection. Originally intended to respect the possible ethical dilemmas of gynaecologists and health workers called upon to intervene in a hospital abortion, by 2021 conscientious objection had come to affect 63.6 per cent of gynaecologists and 40.5 per cent of anaesthetists in Italy, according to the Ministry of Health's latest annual report on the implementation of Law 194.

According to the ministry, around 60,000 abortions are performed in Italy every year (63,653 in 2021) and 42.8 per cent of women who want to have an abortion go to health centres to obtain the mandatory medical certificate.

Regulations on incitement to hatred

The Italian Criminal code has an Article 604 bis that punish propaganda and incitement to commit crimes for reasons of racial, ethnic and religious discrimination, but makes no reference to gender, sex or sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination. And there is a Law 654/1975 on the Ratification and Execution of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, later amended by the Mancino law, in 1993, but it concerns only racial discrimination.

There was an attempt to extend protection in 2020 with the so-called ddl Zan, 'Measures to Prevent and Combat Discrimination and Violence on the Basis of Sex, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Disability', but the text was not approved in the Senate.

Italian national law does not include protection from discrimination on grounds of gender or sexual orientation.

Reproductive rights

Abortion is legal and provided by the universal Italian healthcare service, but the high percentage of conscientious objectors among hospital staff puts this right at risk.

An investigation carried out by the Associazione Luca Coscioni (2021) has underlined that of around 1.000 hospitals in Italy, 112 violate in some way the right to a safe abortion: in 72 hospitals, 80-100% staff are conscientious objectors; in 22 hospitals: 100% staff are conscientious objectors, and in 18 hospitals: 100% gynaecologists are conscientious objectors⁸.

Only heterosexual couples can have access to assisted reproductive technology.

Only married heterosexual couples can adopt a child except for some special conditions (adoption of a disabled child). Only heterosexual couples can adopt the child's partner (step-child adoption).

Surrogacy is illegal (2004), even whenever performed outside the national territory (2023). Children born via surrogacy abroad can be denied recording in the birth register (2023).

Parenthood

Maternity and paternity leaves are still very different. The mandatory maternity leave, at least for some categories of workers⁹, is 2 months (before the birth), while the mandatory paternity leave is 10 days (before or after the birth). The voluntary maternity leave is 3 months (before or after the birth), and can be prolonged until 5 months with salary reduction. The voluntary paternity leave can

⁸ https://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/cosa-facciamo/aborto-e-contraccezione/legge-194-mai-dati?_gl=1*peam1w*_up*MO.*_ga*MjQ1NTU1ODE4LjE3MTU0OTg0Mjc.*_ga_OQMZLR1HRV*MTcxNTQ5ODQyNi4xLjAuMTcxNTQ5ODQyNi4wLjAuMA (last access: 12/05/2024).
<https://www.associazionelucacoscioni.it/notizie/comunicati/135292> (last access: 12/05/2024).

⁹ CORTÉS, I. F. (2015). «Congedi genitoriali, politiche del diritto e diseguaglianze di genere. Riflessioni sul caso italiano nel quadro europeo».

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be of up to 6 months: 3 months for the paternity leave as such, plus 3 months that are allocated to the mother and can be used by the father only in case of death, serious illness, or rejection of the child by the mother¹⁰.

Work-life balance policies are another area of interest, with the need for increased childcare services and paid parental leave to support working women. According to Istat (2023), in 2022 there were 350.000 places for children in crèches and services catering to infants, with some differences between the North and the South of Italy: in the South of Italy, only 66.4% of them are public¹¹.

Role of Language and Media

Language and media play a crucial role in shaping gender perceptions. At the same time, they allow to observe gender representations and discrimination circulating in a given society. The latest Intolerance

Map (2022) by Vox – Osservatorio Italiano sui Diritti (Italian Observatory on Rights) highlights how women are the most frequent target of hate speech, with peaks of hate directly following femicides¹².

		Tweet totali	Tweet negativi rilevati	Tweet positivi	Tweet negativi geolocalizzati
Migrant people	Migranti	53.962 (8,58%)*	42.762 (79,2%)**	11.200 (20,8%)**	16.925
Women	Donne	280.332 (44,56%)*	251.950 (89,9%)**	28.382 (10,1%)**	90.924
Muslim people	Islamici	855 (0,13%)*	854 (99,9%)**	1 (0,1%)**	284
Disabled people	Disabili	200.339 (31,84%)*	197.957 (98,8%)**	2.382 (1,2%)**	68.632
Jewish people	Ebrei	39.236 (6,24%)*	38.329 (97,7%)**	907 (2,3%)**	13.573
Homosexual people	Omosessuali	54.427 (8,65%)*	51.215 (94,1%)**	3.212 (5,9%)**	19.745
	TOTALI	629.151	583.067 (93%)*	46.084 (7%)*	210.083

* Rispetto al totale dei tweet rilevati ** Rispetto al totale dei tweet rilevati per il cluster in oggetto

2022 (January-October): 629.151 tweets, of which 583.067 negative tweets (93% ca).

Table 2, Targets of violent speech on X (Vox, 2022).

Conclusions

The under-representation of women in the 'outside' work is one of the major challenges in Italy. Many women are still forced to choose between motherhood and work, both for cultural reasons (lack of sharing of care work within the couple) and for welfare reasons (lack of public services to support parenthood: the reconciliation of care work and outside work is still treated as a women's problem and entrusted to the welfare facilitation and leave system, but several studies show how long and compulsory maternity leave (only) can be a double-edged sword for women, discouraging female employment). Despite some progress on the gender pay gap, women continue to be disadvantaged in terms of wages compared to men, with the gap persisting in different sectors. Not only are women paid less than men for the same work, but they are not granted the same career opportunities.

¹⁰ <https://famiglia.governo.it/it/politiche-e-attivita/famiglia/conciliazione-famiglia-lavoro/il-congedo-di-paternita-1/> (last access: 12/05/2024).

¹¹ <https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/11/REPORT-ASILI2021-2022.pdf> (last access: 12/05/2024).

¹² <https://www.retecontroloodio.org/cmswp/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Mappa-dellIntolleranza-7.pdf> (last access: 12/05/2024, translated from Italian).

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Women's earnings are lower because well-paid jobs are predominantly male-dominated, and because women more frequently work part-time, as family care responsibilities largely fall on them. When women retire, the wage gap follows them in the form of a pension gap: women earn less even during retirement, making them more vulnerable to old-age poverty.

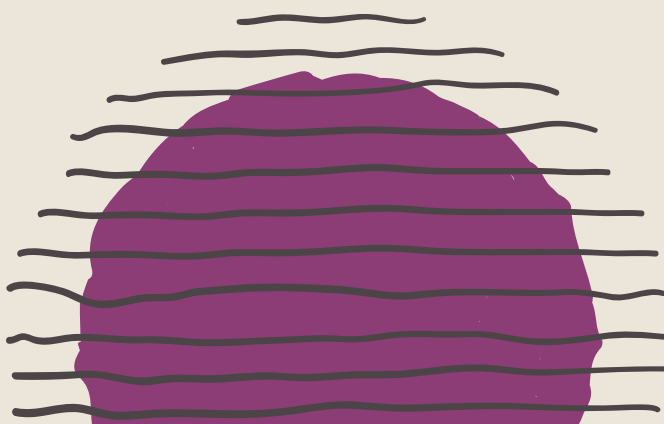
Women's representation in political and decision-making institutions remains another area of concern. Despite efforts to increase female participation in politics, women are still underrepresented in leadership roles at both national and local levels.

The concept of convergence in gender equality describes the trend towards reducing disparities between EU Member States. Italy is catching up with the other Member States, as shown by the fact that the initial score on the Gender Equality Index was below the EU average, but over time it has risen rapidly, narrowing the gap. However, much work remains to be done towards achieving a society in which all individuals, regardless of gender and sexual orientation, enjoy equal rights and opportunities in Italy.

Continued efforts are needed to overcome gender inequalities in all sectors of society. Gender-sensitive policies, inclusive education and equal representation in institutions are essential to create a more equal and inclusive society for all.

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Gender Equality in Latvia

Historical Background and Context

Traditionally, Latvian society was characterised by conservative gender roles, influenced by its rural economy and patriarchal norms. However, the social and political changes that accompanied Latvia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and its subsequent accession to the European Union in 2004 have played a significant role in advancing gender equality.

The post-independence period saw Latvia adopting a range of legal and policy measures aimed at promoting equality between men and women. The influence of European Union norms and standards has been particularly important in shaping Latvia's approach to gender equality, leading to the implementation of progressive laws and policies designed to address discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and combat gender-based violence. Despite these advancements, Latvia continues to face challenges related to gender inequality, particularly in areas such as employment, political representation, and social attitudes. For example, in 2022, women's average gross hourly earnings were 17.1% lower than men's, according to calculations based on preliminary data from the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB). The gap between women's and men's average hourly earnings increased by 2.5 percentage points compared to the previous year. According to the 2021 statistics, Latvia has a higher gender pay gap than the European Union average (12.7%), despite a better employment rate. The reasons for the gender pay gap include gender segregation in education, training and employment, gender segregation in occupations, gender imbalances in management and decision-making, higher rates of part-time work for women, higher rates of interruptions in employment and longer interruptions in employment due to unequal sharing of domestic, family and care responsibilities between women and men, and the undervaluing of work by women. However, the country's commitment to aligning with EU standards and its participation in international initiatives reflect a strong dedication to furthering gender equality.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

The Latvian Constitution guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on gender, providing a foundational principle that underpins the country's legal and policy efforts in this area. One of the key legislative measures is the Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination of Natural Persons – Participants to a Legal Transaction (2012), which prohibits differential treatment of the participant to a legal transaction due to his or her gender, age, religious, political, or other conviction, sexual orientation, disability, race, or ethnic origin concerning his or her access to economic activity, access to goods and services, supply of goods and provision of services.

The Labour Law of Latvia (2001) is another important piece of legislation addressing gender equality, particularly in the workplace. The law requires equal pay for equal work, prohibits gender discrimination in recruitment and employment practices, and provides protection for pregnant women and new mothers. Additionally, the law includes provisions for parental leave, which can be taken by either parent, thereby promoting a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities. In 2016 and 2018, there were amendments to the Labour Law, strengthening the equal treatment of women and men in employment, including amendments in the Labour Law regarding non-discrimination, which includes sexual harassment in the workplace. Since 2023, at least two months of parental leave should be used by both parents to promote gender equality and work-life balance for parents.



Gender Equality in Latvia

In recent years, Latvia has introduced specific policies to address gender-based violence and support victims. The Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (1998) includes provisions to protect children from domestic violence, and amendments to this law have strengthened protections for victims of gender-based violence. Latvia's signing of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence) by the Government in 2018 further demonstrates the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence. However, the National Parliament ratified Istanbul Convention only in 2023. This was a major setback for Latvia as a democratic EU state, and the political polarisation on this issue is worrying, especially considering that the arguments on the other side are largely based on prejudice rather than factual legal implications.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Latvian government has implemented a range of institutional and governmental strategies to promote gender equality and address gender-based violence. These strategies are coordinated by the Ministry of Welfare, which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of gender equality policies and ensuring compliance with national and international obligations.

The Plan for the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men (2024-2027) aims to provide an integrated and targeted policy that promotes the implementation of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The plan focusses on three directions: equal rights and opportunities for women and men in the labour market and education, reducing negative gender stereotypes and integration of the principle of gender equality in policy planning processes. This plan continues the directions set in the previous policy documents: a plan to promote equal rights and opportunities for women and men for the period 2021-2023 (2021) and a Plan for the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men for the period 2018–2020 (2017).

The Gender Equality Committee (previously - Gender Equality Council) has been set up to promote cooperation and participation of ministries, NGOs, social partners, municipalities and other relevant stakeholders, as well as to promote the implementation, monitoring and development of gender equality policies. The Committee plays a key role in defining the priorities of gender equality policy and in monitoring the implementation of the principle of gender equality in other sectoral areas. The Gender Equality Committee meets on average three times a year.

In addition, there are at least two institutional bodies dedicated to gender equality in Latvia: at the Latvian Parliament with the Parliamentary Group for the Promotion of Gender Equality, Reproductive Health and Healthy Sexuality (2019) (13th Saeima) – now the Subcommittee on Reducing Inequalities of the Commission for Social and Labour Affairs and the Parliamentary Women's interest group (2023) (14th Saeima) – and the Ombudsperson's Office of Latvia. The Ombudsperson's Office of Latvia is the independent body for the promotion of gender equality. Its mandate includes gender equality as well as human rights and non-discrimination in a broader sense.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Education is a central component of Latvia's efforts to promote gender equality. The Latvian education system has made significant strides in integrating gender equality principles into the national curriculum, with a focus on challenging traditional gender roles and promoting inclusivity.

Gender-sensitive education is promoted through various initiatives, including the revision of school curricula to incorporate gender equality topics across subjects. The curriculum includes discussions on human rights, gender equality, and sexual education, aiming to raise awareness among students about the importance of respecting diversity and promoting equality. Teachers are provided with training and resources to address gender issues in the classroom and to create a supportive learning environment for all students.



Gender Equality in Latvia

Youth engagement is another important aspect of Latvia's educational strategies. Various programmes and initiatives are designed to empower young people to become advocates for gender equality and social justice. For example, the Youth Guarantee Programme includes measures to support young women entering the labour market and to promote gender equality in vocational education and training.

Latvia also participates in European Union programmes, such as Erasmus+, which support educational exchanges and promote gender equality among students and educators across Europe. These programmes provide valuable opportunities for Latvian students and teachers to engage with their peers from other countries and to learn from best practices in gender equality education.

Gender-Based Violence

The Law on Prevention of Discrimination (2004) and the Istanbul Convention provide a strong legal framework for the protection of victims of gender-based violence and the prosecution of perpetrators. These laws include provisions for the establishment of shelters, crisis centres, and helplines for victims, as well as the development of prevention and awareness-raising campaigns. In addition to these two legal frameworks, Latvia has implemented several laws to combat gender-based violence and support victims. According to a report by the MARTA Centre, a prominent Latvian non-profit organisation that has been working for gender equality and against gender-based violence since 2000, Latvia's legal framework on the prohibition of violence has been significantly strengthened between 2012 and 2022.

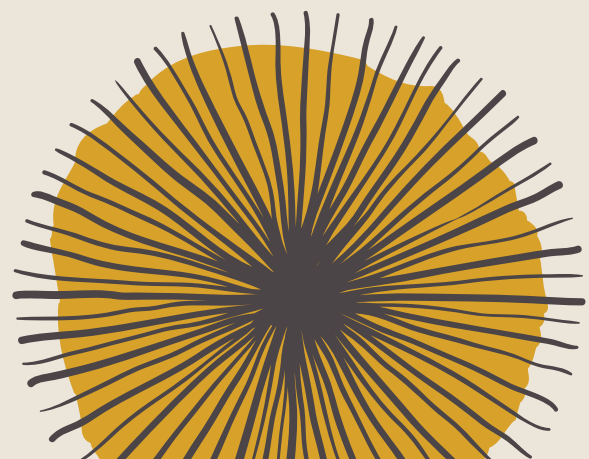
In particular, a National Strategic Plan on human trafficking was adopted in 2013 for the period 2014-2020. In addition, several legal measures have been implemented in Latvia since 2013 to prohibit gender-based violence (not only against women, but also against children), to define sanctions and rehabilitation procedures for perpetrators, and to support victims (forced marriage (2013), intimate partner violence (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2020, 2021, 2022), sexual violence (2015, 2017, 2018), emotional and psychological violence (2017, 2018), and human trafficking (2020)).

Latvia has also implemented the National Program for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (2008-2011), which outlines specific measures to address domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence. This programme includes coordinating support services for victims, training law enforcement and judicial personnel, and promoting public awareness campaigns to change social attitudes towards violence.

Despite these endeavours, challenges remain in tackling gender violence comprehensively in Latvia. Cultural attitudes, economic disparities and gaps in the implementation of legal frameworks continue to pose obstacles. However, Latvia's commitment to international standards and ongoing efforts to strengthen its legal and institutional frameworks reflect a determination to address these challenges and protect the rights of all individuals.

Highlights

Latvia became independent from the Soviet regime in 1991 after being occupied since 1940. Its constitution was adopted on 15 February 1922. It is one of the oldest constitutions still in force in Europe and guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination based on gender. The Ministry of Welfare is responsible for gender equality policies, and the Labour Act (2001) guarantees equal pay and protects against discrimination in the workplace; it includes amendments on sexual harassment. It joined the European Union in 2004.



Discussion On Latvia With A Focus On Women And Languages As Foundations Of The Nation

Introduction

Prior to Christianization in the 12th century, Latvia was predominantly pagan. Elements of pre-Christian traditions persist in modern cultural movements that seek to revive historical beliefs centered around nature and seasonal cycles. Christianity, introduced through Germanic influence, gradually replaced indigenous religious practices.

Latvia's historical trajectory has been shaped by various ruling powers, including the German, Swedish, Polish-Lithuanian, and Russian empires. The German presence from the 12th century onwards resulted in the emergence of the Baltic German elite, significantly influencing local governance and societal structures. The impact of these ruling classes is still evident in language, traditions, and cultural norms.

The Swedish period brought advancements in education and peasant rights, contributing to high literacy rates by the late 19th century. Under the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, regional differences in mentality and openness to discourse were observed, particularly in southeastern Latvia. Later, as part of the Russian Empire and, subsequently, the Soviet Union, Latvia experienced shifts in governance, including efforts to integrate women into the workforce.

Women in Latvia through History

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the emergence of feminist activism in Latvia. A prominent figure in this movement was a poet and activist who emphasized women's right to education and gender equality. Although initial attempts to access higher education were unsuccessful, Latvia later became one of the early adopters of women's access to higher education.

Following Latvia's independence in 1918, significant progress was made in gender equality. Women gained political rights in 1919, including the right to vote and stand for election. The first parliamentary representation included six women out of 164 members. Additionally, Latvia introduced progressive marriage laws, enabling women to divorce more easily. Despite these advancements, societal expectations continued to frame women's primary roles around household and childcare responsibilities, and wage disparities persisted.

During the Soviet era, gender equality was characterized by significant female participation in the workforce. Women held managerial positions

and were depicted in propaganda materials as active contributors to industrial labor. However, despite official narratives promoting gender parity, political leadership remained predominantly male. Women were expected to balance employment with domestic responsibilities, aligning with the Soviet ideal of women as both workers and caretakers.

The post-Soviet transition led to economic restructuring, resulting in increased unemployment and financial instability. Women often faced greater challenges during this period, assuming flexible employment roles to support their families. Many women, including highly educated professionals, took on multiple jobs to sustain household incomes. The economic difficulties of the 1990s also contributed to an increase in single-parent households and a heightened risk of poverty among women.

Currently, Latvia exhibits high female education and employment rates. A significant proportion of women attain bachelor's and master's degrees and participate actively in the workforce. Despite these advancements, gender segregation persists across professions, with women dominating fields such as education while technical and managerial positions remain male-dominated.

The gender wage gap remains a concern, driven by occupational segregation and limited female representation in top corporate positions. Although Latvia has witnessed improvements in gender representation within government ministries, decision-making roles are still primarily held by men. Moreover, women continue to bear a disproportionate burden of caregiving responsibilities. The lack of sufficient public childcare facilities further exacerbates this issue, placing additional pressure on working mothers. Similarly, elder care responsibilities frequently fall on women, adding to their overall workload.

Recent surveys indicate that traditional gender roles remain prevalent in Latvia. One-third of respondents still believe that a woman's primary role is to manage the household and family, while men are expected to be the primary earners. However, empirical data suggests a contradiction to this stereotype, as high employment rates among women reveal that many are, in fact, the main breadwinners. Despite these shifts in economic roles, entrenched societal norms persist.

Discussion On Latvia With A Focus On Women And Languages As Foundations Of The Nation

Women's rights in Latvia

Domestic violence remains a critical issue in Latvia, with one in three women reporting experiences of violence, including psychological, physical, and sexual abuse. While physical violence accounts for just over 10% of cases, psychological and sexual violence are significant concerns. Historically, inadequate response mechanisms have hindered victim protection, but legal reforms have improved intervention processes. Previously, victims had to request police intervention to remove perpetrators from their homes. Recent legal changes now allow law enforcement officers to act without victim initiation, thereby enhancing protective measures.

The Istanbul Convention was ratified after prolonged political debates influenced by traditionalist viewpoints. This ratification marks a shift in legislative priorities toward combating domestic violence more effectively. The Resource Center MARTA has played a significant role in these legal advancements, advocating for improved police training and establishing shelters for victims. Despite these improvements, challenges remain in law enforcement's ability to adequately handle domestic violence cases.

Research indicates stagnation in the progress of sexual education over the past 15 years. In some schools, sexual education has been removed as a standalone subject, integrated instead into biology curricula. This reduction in comprehensive sexual education has resulted in knowledge gaps among young people regarding HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

Latvia has one of the highest HIV infection rates in Europe, second only to Estonia. The primary mode of transmission has shifted from same-sex encounters to heterosexual relations, often linked to travel and insufficient condom use. The absence of structured sexual education in schools has exacerbated misconceptions and risky behaviors.

Organizations like the Family Planning Association continue efforts to promote sexual education, but they face resistance from conservative political groups. Some organizations have been barred from school curricula, limiting their outreach. The ideological divide between liberal and conservative factions continues to impact the implementation of comprehensive sexual education

Abortion remains legally accessible in Latvia. However, political discussions have occasionally veered toward restrictive measures rather than educational and preventative approaches, such as improved access to contraception. Although no significant legal changes have occurred, the discourse reflects underlying ideological tensions regarding reproductive rights.

Latvia has made strides in gender representation in politics, with women occupying key leadership positions, including the Speaker of Parliament and the Prime Minister. Additionally, 51% of scientists in Latvia are women, surpassing global averages. Despite this progress, gender pay disparities persist, with many women serving as primary household earners yet facing economic disadvantages.

Internationally, Latvian organizations, including MARTA Center, have expanded their advocacy efforts to countries with significant gender inequality, such as Uzbekistan and Kurdistan. These initiatives provide training and support for women's rights activism beyond Latvia's borders.

Latvia's societal structure is heavily influenced by social expectations surrounding relationships and family life. Individuals in relationships frequently face pressure regarding marriage and childbearing, with societal norms dictating specific milestones such as marriage, first child, and subsequent children. Wedding rings remain an important symbol, reinforcing these societal expectations. However, this pressure is not exclusive to women; men increasingly experience similar societal demands.

Latvia maintains traditional naming conventions, with most women adopting their husband's last name upon marriage. Some opt for a hyphenated surname, though it remains rare for women to retain their maiden names. However, this trend appears to be shifting, particularly among younger generations. There is limited statistical data on the prevalence of these choices.

Men adopting their wife's surname is an uncommon practice but occurs under specific circumstances, such as when a Russian-sounding surname is replaced with a Latvian one for cultural or political reasons.

Discussion On Latvia With A Focus On Women And Languages As Foundations Of The Nation

Despite these traditions, marriage as an institution is losing significance. Approximately 50% of couples in Latvia remain unmarried, reflecting broader societal shifts. Cohabitation is widely accepted, though societal pressure regarding marriage persists. Latvia's legal stance on marriage has been a topic of ongoing debate. The country's constitution defines marriage strictly as a union between a man and a woman, creating resistance toward legal recognition of same-sex couples. However, as of July 1st, a new partnership agreement law allows both heterosexual and homosexual couples to formalize their unions through a legal contract, granting them rights related to inheritance, hospital visitation, and other legal matters. This law faced significant political opposition, as some lawmakers viewed it as an alternative form of marriage.

The legal framework has also evolved to simplify divorce proceedings. If a couple has no disputes over property or children, they can legally separate through a notary instead of undergoing lengthy court processes.

Latvia has historically held biases and traditions that have shaped gender perceptions. For instance, remnants of Soviet-era attitudes persisted, including outdated notions such as a husband demonstrating love through physical discipline. While these perceptions have evolved, ingrained biases still affect modern family and gender dynamics.

Gender Equality Initiatives and MARTA Center's Role

MARTA Center, an organization dedicated to gender equality, has faced criticism for its perceived feminist stance. However, it actively promotes gender equity for both men and women, including initiatives focused on male emotional well-being and rehabilitation programs for individuals who have committed domestic violence. These programs aim to shift traditional perspectives on masculinity and emotional expression.

One of the center's core activities includes promoting female participation in political life. During the 2022 elections, MARTA Center facilitated discussions in rural areas on the importance of electing women. While Latvia has a highly educated female population, self-esteem and societal expectations sometimes hinder women's professional and political participation.

MARTA Center's efforts have been internationally recognized, leading to consultative status and participation in global projects such as ARENAS. These initiatives allow Latvia to contribute to and benefit from broader European discussions on gender issues.

Latvia has a lower reported gender pay gap compared to the EU average. While EU data suggests a gap of approximately 22%, national research places Latvia's gap at around 8%. However, discrepancies persist in high-paying industries such as finance and technology. Some major companies have acknowledged these disparities and committed to addressing them over time.

Language and Cultural Dynamics

Latvia remains a multilingual society. Many Latvians speak multiple languages, often including Latvian, Russian, English, and either German or another foreign language. English has become increasingly influential among younger generations, while Russian remains prevalent in certain regions. Educational institutions typically offer German or Russian as secondary language options, with French available in specialized schools.

Culturally, Latvia has been shaped by a diverse range of ethnic groups, including Belarusians and Russians. While tensions sometimes arise regarding linguistic and national identity, many Russian-speaking individuals in Latvia are loyal to the country. Efforts to frame Russian-speaking individuals in a negative light are discouraged, as Latvia's historical development has been influenced by multiple ethnic groups.

Latvia officially recognizes only the Latvian language in government institutions and public administration. However, Russian remains widely spoken, particularly in private-sector services. While Latvian is required for official documentation, many private businesses accommodate Russian-speaking clients.

Latvian began to be systematically written in the 18th century, with early texts predating the 19th century. Historically, educated Latvians primarily wrote in German, as it was the dominant language of governance and scholarship. This situation persisted until the rise of nationalist movements, which promoted the use of Latvian as a literary and administrative language.

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The Latvian language differentiates between masculine and feminine forms in both first and last names. While there is no grammatical neutral form, certain job titles and other words are sometimes used in a gender-neutral way. Large companies are increasingly adopting inclusive language practices, such as ensuring job advertisements explicitly address both genders.

Bilingualism and Language Policies

Latvia historically maintained a bilingual environment, particularly before recent geopolitical developments. In the 1990s, after gaining independence, the country adopted a relatively lenient approach toward Russian-speaking residents, allowing for the continuation of separate Russian and Latvian school systems. However, in recent years, there has been a shift in policy, moving toward a unified Latvian-language education system. A significant debate has emerged regarding language certification requirements, compelling all residents to pass a Latvian language proficiency exam. This has sparked social movements, some of which actively monitor and critique the presence of Cyrillic script in public spaces.

Despite these policies, many Latvians continue to switch to Russian in daily interactions, even when their Russian-speaking counterparts are fluent in Latvian. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has intensified discussions on language and identity, leading to heightened political sensitivity regarding the use of Russian in both public and private spheres. Nonetheless, there are also movements advocating for the inclusion of Russian-speaking communities, demonstrating that the issue is not strictly binary.

Despite political tensions, Russian remains a practical means of communication in Latvia, especially in contexts involving Ukrainian refugees, many of whom do not speak English. For instance, language courses for Ukrainian refugees are often conducted in Russian, as it is the only common language between instructors and students.

The debate over Russian cultural symbols extends beyond language to monuments and public spaces. Some statues and landmarks associated with Russian historical figures have been removed, reflecting a broader effort to redefine national identity. However, there are ongoing discussions about how to separate cultural appreciation from political

implications, with concerns raised about erasing historical and artistic contributions solely due to their Russian origins.

A significant debate exists regarding whether young people in Latvia should continue learning Russian. Historically, Russian was widely taught, but its popularity has declined. Despite this, Russian proficiency remains a sought-after skill in the job market, particularly in businesses with Russian-speaking clients. Employers frequently ask potential employees about their Russian language skills, leading to frustration among younger generations who feel pressured to learn a language they may not otherwise choose.

The issue remains complex, as language needs depend on industry and business reliance on Russian-speaking clientele. There is no single correct answer to whether Russian should remain part of education, as it varies based on practical, economic, and political factors.

Russian is becoming less popular in schools, partially due to a shortage of qualified teachers. If alternative languages such as German or French were introduced as replacements, there would still be insufficient educators to support widespread implementation. A recent policy proposal suggested allowing Russian language teachers two years to retrain in another language; however, acquiring fluency within this timeframe poses a significant challenge.

Language learning is influenced by various factors, including grammatical complexity and familiarity with linguistic structures. Latvian, considered one of the oldest European languages, has seven grammatical cases, making it particularly challenging for non-native speakers. Comparatively, learners often find it easier to acquire languages with structures similar to their own; for example, French speakers tend to learn Spanish or Italian more readily due to shared linguistic roots.

Foreigners often struggle with Latvian due to its case system and lack of definite articles. The complexity of Latvian grammar has led some language learners to opt for more familiar languages, such as German or French. Meanwhile, Russian remains a practical choice for some due to regional history and shared linguistic elements with other Slavic languages.

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Multilingualism and Language Preferences

Latvia's linguistic landscape is diverse, with many residents speaking multiple languages. Historically, German was widely used among educated Latvians, while Russian became dominant during the Soviet era. Today, English has gained prominence, particularly among younger generations. Schools generally offer German or Russian as secondary language options, with French available in select institutions.

The broader European context also influences language education. In some French regions, German is a compulsory language alongside English, while Russian remains an uncommon choice. In contrast, in Latvia, Russian is still prevalent in certain professions and communities, contributing to the ongoing debate about its place in education. The discussion around Russian language education is closely tied to geopolitical considerations. Prior to recent political shifts, diplomatic relations influenced language policies, but current tensions have led to a reassessment of Russian language promotion. Additionally, there are concerns regarding the removal of Russian cultural monuments and historical markers, highlighting the intersection of language, politics, and national identity.

Impact of the Ukraine Conflict and Refugee Integration

The war in Ukraine has directly affected Latvia, with approximately 30,000 to 49,000 Ukrainian refugees, predominantly women and children, seeking asylum. The male refugee population remains minimal due to Ukraine's restrictions on men leaving the country during the conflict.

Key challenges for refugees include housing, employment, and childcare. Initially, many women struggle to find work as their children are not yet enrolled in schools. Civil society organizations have stepped in to provide various support programs, including creative initiatives, to help refugees integrate into Latvian society.



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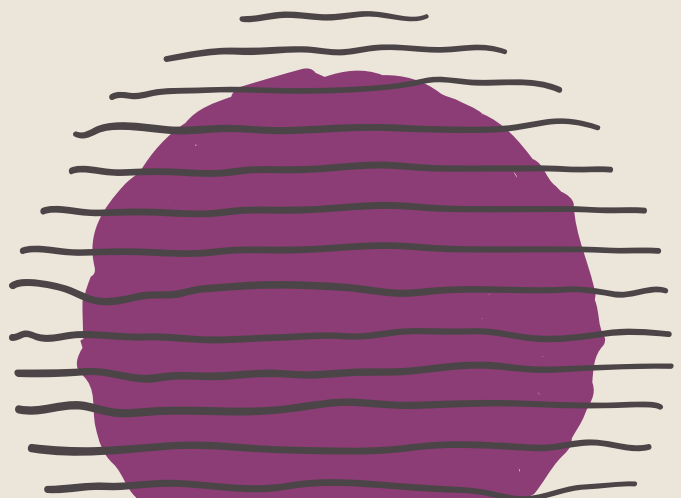


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Gender Equality in Poland

Historical Background and Context

Poland has a long history of strong gender roles, deeply rooted in its Catholic traditions and patriarchal norms. However, significant changes began to emerge in the 20th century, particularly after World War II, when Poland became a socialist state under Soviet influence. During this period, women were encouraged to participate in the workforce, and legal reforms were introduced to promote gender equality in areas such as employment and education.

However, the fall of communism in 1989 marked a significant setback in Poland's history, with a 'conservative backlash' from both the political sphere and the Catholic Church encouraging the removal of women from the labour market, where they had entered during the communist era to strengthen economic life, in order to concentrate on family life and domestic duties (Zok, 2022).

Despite these advancements, gender equality in Poland remains a contentious issue, particularly in the areas of reproductive rights, political representation, and gender-based violence. The influence of conservative social attitudes and the strong presence of the Catholic Church continue to shape public discourse and policy decisions related to gender equality.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Poland has established a legal framework aimed at promoting gender equality and preventing discrimination. The Polish Constitution, adopted in 1997, guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Article 33 of the Constitution specifically addresses gender equality, stating that women and men shall have equal rights in family life, education, employment, and public life.

One of the most important legislative measures is the Act on the Implementation of Certain EU Regulations in the Field of Equal Treatment (2010), which was enacted to comply with European Union anti-discrimination directives. This law prohibits discrimination based on gender in various areas,

including employment, education, and access to goods and services. It also established the position of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, responsible for overseeing the implementation of gender equality policies.

Another important piece of legislation is the Polish Labour Code, which includes provisions to ensure equal pay for equal work, prohibit gender discrimination in recruitment and employment practices, and provide protection for pregnant women and new mothers. The Labour Code also includes provisions on parental leave, which can be taken by either parent, thus promoting a more balanced sharing of family responsibilities.

In recent years, Poland has introduced specific legislation to combat gender-based violence. The Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence (2005) provides legal protection for victims of domestic violence, including the establishment of crisis centres and shelters. Poland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence) in 2015 further demonstrates the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence, although its implementation has been met with significant political and social challenges.

It should be noted that although Poland joined the EU and complied with EU regulations, gender equality and anti-discrimination values have not really been integrated into Polish politics (Gaweda, 2021: 632-633). In fact, since 2015, Poland has even experienced an "ultra-conservative and nationalist backlash" with the election of the Nationalist-Catholic Party (PiS) to the government, which has openly adopted anti-equality rhetoric and policies, resulting in a kind of "democratic regression" on issues of equality and women's rights (Gaweda, 2021).



Gender Equality in Poland

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Polish government has implemented various institutional and governmental strategies to promote gender equality and address gender-based violence. These efforts are coordinated by the Office of the Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment (2008), which is responsible for developing and overseeing the implementation of gender equality policies and ensuring compliance with national and international obligations. This office later became part of the renamed Government Plenipotentiary for Civil Society and Equal Treatment (2016), shifting its focus from solely gender issues to broader civil issues, reflecting the government's position on gender equality (Gaweda 2021: 642-50).

One of the key strategies is the National Action Plan for Equal Treatment (2021-2030), which outlines specific measures to promote gender equality in areas such as employment, education, health, and political participation. The plan includes initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap, increase women's representation in leadership positions, and combat gender-based violence. It also stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming, which ensures that gender equality is taken into account in all areas of public policy.

The Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment works closely with other government ministries, local authorities, and civil society organisations to promote gender equality and address issues related to discrimination and violence. At the local level, municipalities play a crucial role in implementing gender equality policies, with some establishing gender equality committees or appointing gender equality officers to oversee the implementation of local initiatives.

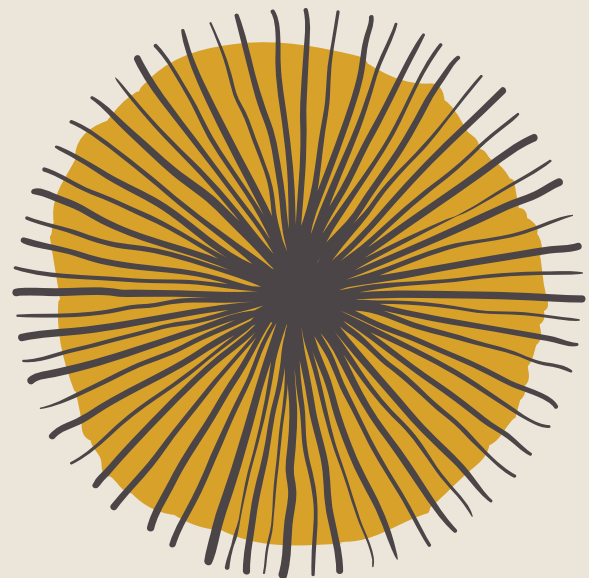
The Polish government has also focussed on promoting gender equality in the workplace through initiatives such as the National Programme for Gender Equality in Employment. This programme includes measures to support women's career advancement, promote work-life balance and reduce gender gaps in management positions. The programme encourages companies to adopt gender equality policies and practices, with financial

incentives for those that meet certain targets.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Education is a central component of Poland's efforts to promote gender equality. The Polish education system has made progress in integrating gender equality principles into the national curriculum, with a focus on challenging traditional gender roles and promoting inclusivity.

Gender-sensitive education is promoted through a number of initiatives, including the revision of school curricula to integrate gender issues across subjects, with the aim of raising students' awareness of the importance of promoting equality. However, gender equality education in Poland faces challenges due to the influence of conservative social attitudes and political pressures. Some initiatives aimed at promoting gender equality in education have been met with resistance, particularly from conservative groups and the Catholic Church.



Gender Equality in Poland

As a country where religious education and the Catholic Church are both core constituents of education, Poland has indeed faced opposition to the implementation of a gender-sensitive approach in school systems, especially since the beginning and intensification of anti-gender campaigns in 2013 (Odrowąż-Coates, 2015), either because it is interpreted as going against traditional gender roles and family values, or as a threat to both the system and students (i.e. "gender theory" sometimes presented as a kind of conspiracy theory) (Kuhar & Zobec, 2017, 34-39). The appointment of Przemysław Czarnek as Minister of Education in 2020, known for his mysoginistic, homophobic and Eurosceptic views, reinforces the national tendency to return to nationalist and conservative values (Ciobanu, 2021). In terms of educational impact, Polish core curricula have been reviewed and revealed an exclusion of European recommendations on key educational issues in school materials (Kopińska, 2021). This includes gender equality and anti-discrimination education, which has been largely excluded from Polish curricula to be replaced by learning aimed at strengthening national identity (Kopińska, 2021: 532-533) and spreading traditional and conservative views on gender roles, family and women (Klatt, 2024). It thus reflects the Polish government's current vision of education, which must include national and moral values, implemented through compulsory textbooks with nationalist and Catholic themes and by limiting local autonomy in teaching and school activities (Klatt, 2024). Despite these challenges, efforts to promote gender equality in education continue, supported by European Union programmes.

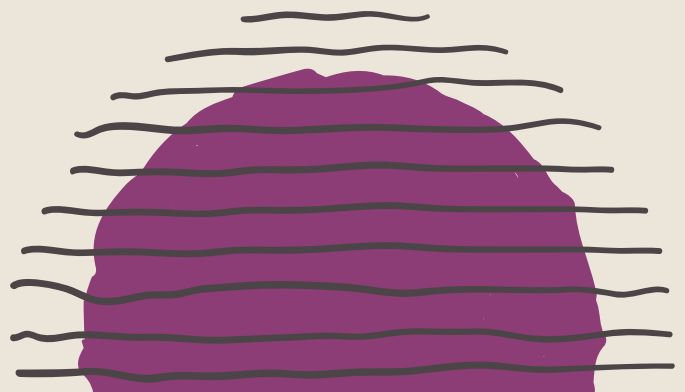
Youth engagement is another important aspect of Poland's education strategies. Various programmes and initiatives aim to empower young people to become advocates for gender equality and social justice. For example, Poland participates in European Union programmes such as Erasmus+, which support educational exchanges and promote gender equality among students and educators across Europe. These programmes provide valuable opportunities for Polish students and teachers to engage with their peers from other countries and learn from best practices in gender equality education.

Gender-Based Violence

Addressing gender-based violence is a central focus of Poland's gender equality efforts. The Act on Counteracting Domestic Violence (2005) provides a legal framework for protecting victims of domestic violence and prosecuting offenders. The law includes provisions for the establishment of crisis centres, shelters and helplines for victims, as well as for the development of prevention and awareness-raising campaigns.

Poland's ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015 marked an important step in the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence. However, implementation of the Convention has faced political and social challenges, particularly from conservative groups and the Catholic Church, which have raised concerns about its potential impact on traditional family values.

Nevertheless, Poland continues to address gender-based violence through various initiatives and programmes. The National Action Plan for Equal Treatment includes specific measures to combat gender-based violence, such as training law enforcement and judicial personnel, coordinating support services for victims, and promoting public awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards violence.



Gender Equality in Poland

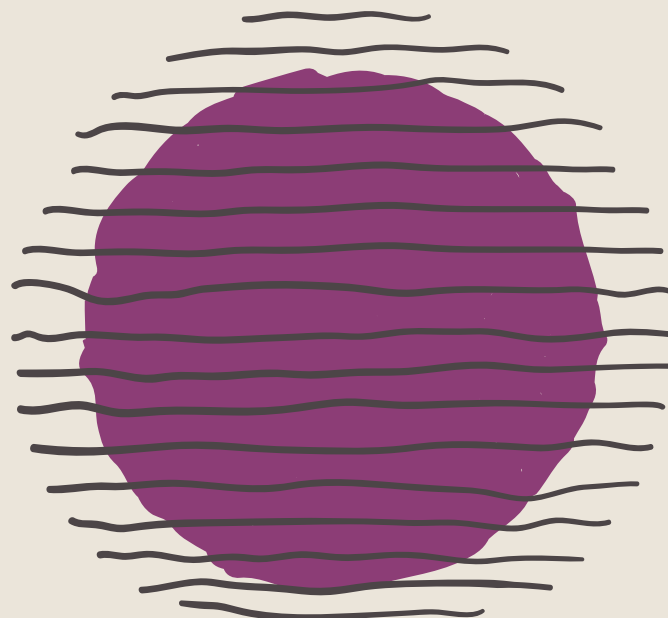
Highlights

Poland is strongly influenced by Catholic and patriarchal traditions. The Polish constitution (1997) guarantees equality between men and women. Nevertheless, Poland experienced a setback in gender equality after the fall of communism in 1989, with a return to traditional roles encouraged by the political sphere and the Catholic Church. Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004 gave a new impetus to gender equality efforts. However, the shift towards conservative and nationalist policies since 2015 under the PiS party has slowed progress on equality. In October 2020, Poland's Constitutional Tribunal ruled that abortion is unconstitutional in cases of foetal malformation. This decision effectively made access to abortion almost impossible, complicating women's access to safe care (clandestine abortions, travelling abroad) and sparking significant protests across the country.



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Gender Equality in Slovenia

Historical Background and Context

Slovenia's path toward gender equality has been shaped by its historical and socio-political context, particularly its transition from a socialist republic within the former Yugoslavia to an independent state in 1991. Under the socialist regime, gender equality was promoted as part of broader social policies, with women encouraged to participate in the workforce and public life. However, traditional gender roles persisted, and women continued to face discrimination in various areas.

Following its independence, Slovenia embarked on a process of aligning its laws and policies with European Union standards, particularly after joining the EU in 2004. This period saw significant advancements in gender equality, supported by the adoption of progressive legislation and the establishment of institutions dedicated to promoting equality and combating discrimination. However, problems persist, particularly in areas like gender-based violence, the pay gap and political representation.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

The Slovenian Constitution lays down the principle of equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Article 14 specifically guarantees equality before the law for all persons regardless of gender, and Article 43 guarantees equal voting rights for men and women.

The Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2002), which provides the legal basis for the promotion of gender equality in Slovenia, is one of the most noteworthy legislative measures. This Act mandates equal treatment in employment, education, and public life, and requires public authorities to take proactive measures to promote gender equality. It also established the Office for Equal Opportunities, responsible for monitoring the implementation of gender equality policies and providing support to victims of discrimination.

Another notable piece of legislation dealing with gender equality in the workplace is the Employment Relationships Act (2002). The Act prohibits gender

discrimination in recruitment, employment practices and pay. It also includes provisions on maternity and paternity leave and protection for pregnant women and new mothers. The Act aims to promote work-life balance and ensure equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market.

In recent years, Slovenia has introduced additional policies to address gender-based violence. The Family Violence Prevention Act (2008) provides a comprehensive framework for the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims. It also provides for measures to increase public awareness about gender-based violence. Slovenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence) in 2015 further demonstrates the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

In order to promote gender equality and combat gender-based violence, the Slovenian government has implemented various institutional and governmental strategies. These efforts are coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, which is responsible for developing and monitoring the implementation of gender equality policies and ensuring compliance with national and international requirements.

One of the main strategies is the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2015-2020), which has set out measures to promote gender equality in various sectors, including employment, education, health and political participation. The programme focusses on reducing the gender pay gap, increasing women's representation in decision-making and combating gender-based violence. It also stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming, which ensures that gender equality is taken into account in all areas of public policy.



Gender Equality in Slovenia

The Government Office for Gender Equality also has a central role in the monitoring of the implementation of gender equality policies and the provision of support to other government ministries and agencies. To promote gender equality and address issues of discrimination and violence, the office works closely with civil society organisations, local authorities and international partners.

At the local level, municipalities play a crucial role in the implementation of gender equality policies. Many municipalities have established gender equality councils or appointed gender equality officers to oversee the implementation of local initiatives. These efforts are supported by the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS), which provides guidance and resources to help municipalities promote gender equality.

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Education is a key component of Slovenia's efforts to promote gender equality. The Slovenian education system has made significant strides in integrating gender equality principles into the national curriculum, with a focus on challenging traditional gender roles and promoting inclusivity.

Gender sensitive education is promoted through various initiatives. For example, to raise students' awareness of the importance of respecting diversity and promoting equality, the curriculum includes discussions on human rights, gender equality and sex education. Teachers receive training and resources to address gender in the classroom and create favourable learning environments for all students.

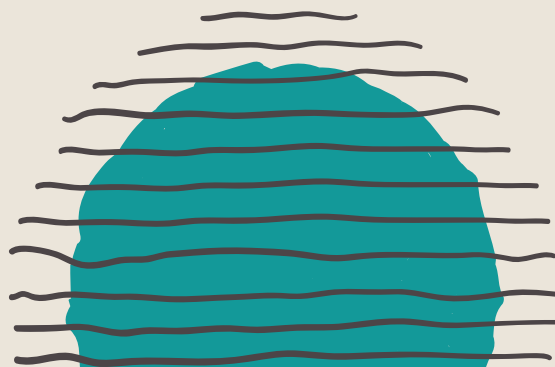
Slovenia also takes part in European Union programmes, such as Erasmus+, which support educational exchanges and the promotion of gender equality among students and educators from all over Europe. These programmes offer Slovenian students and teachers valuable opportunities to interact with peers from other countries and learn from best practices in gender education.

Gender-Based Violence

Tackling gender-based violence is a key focus of Slovenia's gender equality efforts. The Family Violence Prevention Act (2008) provides a legal framework for the protection of victims of domestic violence and the prosecution of perpetrators. The Act includes provisions for the establishment of shelters, crisis centres and helplines for victims, as well as for the development of prevention and awareness-raising campaigns.

Slovenia's ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015 marked a significant step in the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence. The implementation of the Convention has led to the strengthening of legal protection for victims and the establishment of additional support services. However, challenges remain to fully address gender-based violence, particularly in terms of changing societal attitudes and ensuring effective enforcement of laws.

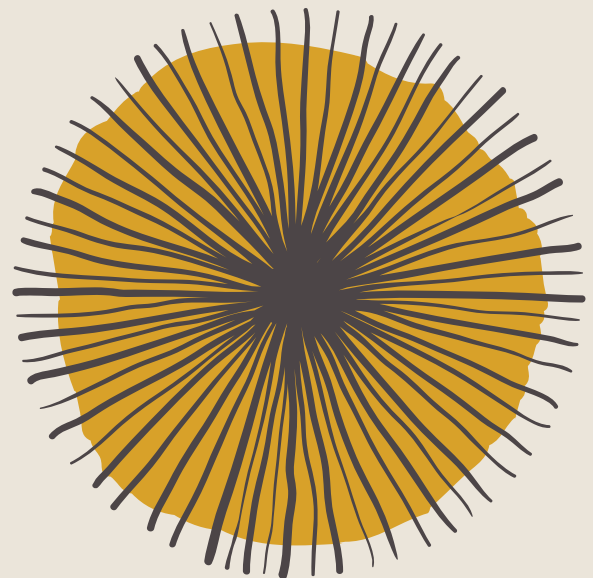
The National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men includes targeted initiatives to combat gender-based violence, such as training law enforcement and judicial personnel, coordinating support services for victims, and promoting public awareness campaigns to change societal attitudes towards violence.



Gender Equality in Slovenia

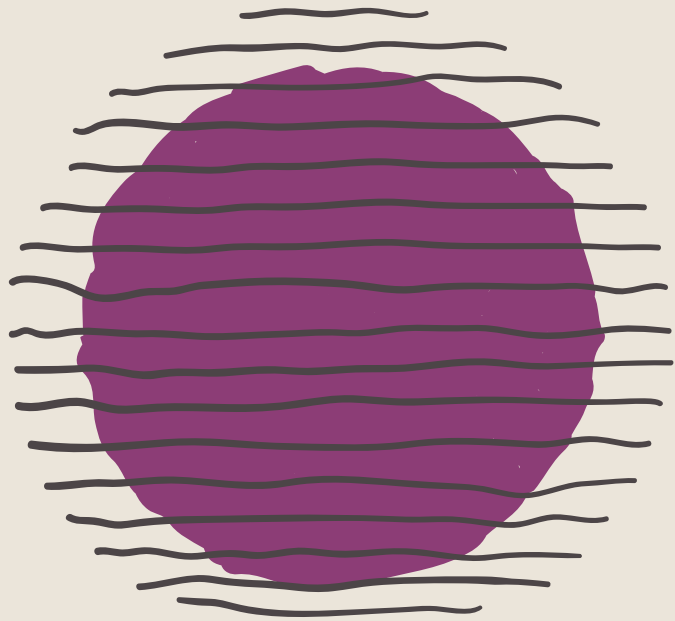
Highlights

The Slovenian constitution prohibits discrimination based on sex. Under the socialist regime of the former Yugoslavia, of which it was one of the federal republics, gender equality was promoted, but traditional roles persisted. Slovenia became independent in 1991 and joined the EU in 2004. Since then, the country has sought to align its legislation and policies with EU standards. The Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (2002) provides a legal basis for gender equality in employment, education and public life. The Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2008) provides a framework for the prevention of domestic violence and the protection of victims, supported by the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in 2015. The role of municipalities is central to the implementation of gender equality policies (establishment of gender equality councils; appointment of specialised staff). Special efforts will be made to educate young people to challenge traditional roles.



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Gender Equality in Spain

Historical Background and Context

Spain's transition from dictatorship under General Francisco Franco (1939-1975) to a democratic state marked a significant turning point for women's rights and gender equality. During the Francoist regime, strict gender roles were enforced, with women largely relegated to the domestic sphere. However, the Spanish Constitution of 1978, adopted after Franco's death, enshrined the principle of equality before the law and laid the foundation for progressive reforms in gender equality.

The feminist movement in Spain gained momentum in the 1980s and 1990s, advocating for legal and social changes to improve women's rights. These efforts led to significant advancements in areas such as reproductive rights, employment equality, and political representation. Spain's accession to the European Union in 1986 further accelerated these developments, as the country aligned its laws and policies with EU standards.

In recent decades, Spain has emerged as a leader in gender equality within Europe, implementing comprehensive legislation and policies aimed at promoting equality and combating gender-based violence. While progress has been made, there are still challenges to be overcome, including the gender pay gradient, leadership and cultural perceptions of gender roles.

Legislative and Policy Frameworks

Spain has developed a strong legal framework to promote gender equality and prevent discrimination. The Spanish Constitution of 1978 guarantees equality before the law and prohibits discrimination on various grounds, including gender. Article 14 explicitly states the principle of gender equality, providing a constitutional basis for subsequent laws and policies to promote equality, such as the 1981 Divorce Law, which was the first significant reform in terms of women's rights.

One of the most significant legislative measures is Organic Law 3/2007 on the Effective Equality of Women and Men, which provides a comprehensive framework for the promotion of gender equality in all areas of society, mandating equal treatment in employment, education and public life and requiring public authorities to take proactive measures to eliminate gender discrimination. The law also established the State Observatory on Violence against Women, which monitors the implementation of policies related to gender-based violence.

The Organic Law 1/2004 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence is another cornerstone of Spain's gender equality framework. This law provides a comprehensive approach to combating gender-based violence, including legal protection for victims, the establishment of specialised courts and the development of prevention and awareness-raising campaigns. This law is based on a definition of gender violence that includes structural dimensions and views it through the prism of power and domination, as stated in the report "Les politiques publiques de lutte contre les violences conjugales en Espagne: regards croisés avec la France" (2020) prepared by the Centre Hubertine Auclert. The law is considered one of the most advanced in Europe and reflects Spain's strong commitment to combating gender-based violence.



Gender Equality in Spain

In recent years, Spain has introduced additional legislative measures to address specific aspects of gender inequality. Royal Decree-Law 6/2019 on Urgent Measures to Guarantee Equal Treatment and Opportunities for Women and Men in Employment and Occupation includes provisions to reduce the gender pay gap, promote work-life balance and increase the representation of women in leadership positions. This decree also introduced mandatory gender equality plans for companies with more than 50 employees. This law paved the way for further legislation aimed at ensuring equal status, treatment and pay for women, such as the Gender Equality Law (2021), which introduced quotas to ensure women's representation in company boards and political positions and strengthened measures against gender-based violence, or the Equal Parental Leave Law (2022), which introduced equal parental leave of 16 weeks for both parents and promoted a balanced sharing of parental responsibilities. The latter enshrines the principles previously addressed by the Parental Responsibility Act (1989) and the extension of paternity leave (2017), both of which promoted shared parental responsibilities.

With regard to the rights of sexual minorities, several laws have been implemented, such as the 2005 same-sex marriage law, which made Spain one of the first countries (after the Netherlands) to grant LGBTQ+ couples the same legal rights as heterosexual couples, including adoption rights; the 2010 Gender Identity Law, which allows transgender people to change their gender on official documents without surgery or hormone therapy; the 2020 Non-Binary Identities Recognition Law, which extends legal recognition to non-binary people and allows them to identify as a third gender on official documents; and the 2021 Transgender Rights Law, which facilitates legal gender reassignment and provides greater protection against discrimination for transgender people.

Institutional and Governmental Strategies

The Spanish government has implemented various institutional and governmental strategies to promote gender equality and address gender-based violence. The first is the Institute of Women, created by Law 16/1983 of 24 October, published in the Spanish Official Journal on 26 October. It is an independent

body, attached to the Ministry of Culture, whose main objective is to ensure compliance with, and development of the constitutional principles set out in articles 9.2 and 14, which detail the promotion of conditions that facilitate social equality between the sexes and the participation of women in political, cultural, economic and social life. These efforts are coordinated by the Ministry of Equality, which was established in 2008 to oversee the development and implementation of gender equality policies. The Ministry works closely with other government departments, local authorities and civil society organisations to ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed into all areas of public policy.

The Strategic Plan for Equal Opportunities (2010), which outlines specific measures to advance gender equality in areas such as employment, education, health, and political participation, is central. The plan includes initiatives to reduce the gender pay gap, increase women's representation in decision-making processes, and combat gender-based violence. It also stresses the importance of gender mainstreaming, ensuring that gender equality is a cross-cutting priority in all government policies.

The Government Delegation for Gender Violence plays a central role in the implementation of Spain's strategies to combat gender-based violence. It is responsible for coordinating the implementation of Organic Law 1/2004 and other related policies, providing support to victims and raising public awareness of gender-based violence. It also works to ensure the effective functioning of specialised gender violence courts and collaborates with law enforcement agencies to improve the protection of victims.

At the local level, municipalities and regional governments play a crucial role in implementing gender equality policies. Many have established gender equality councils or appointed gender equality officers to oversee the implementation of local initiatives. These efforts are supported by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), which provides guidance and resources to help local governments promote gender equality.

Gender Equality in Spain

Educational Strategies and Youth Engagement

Education is an essential part of Spain's efforts to promote gender equality. One of the first steps towards gender equality in schools was the Education Law (1985), which aimed to provide equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. A few years later, the Organic Law on the General Organisation of the Education System (LOGSE) (1990) introduced a coeducational system and aimed to eliminate gender bias in school curricula and teaching practices. This was later reinforced by the Organic Law on Education (LOE) (2006), which emphasises the importance of coeducation and gender equality in schools, promotes inclusive educational practices and aims to eliminate gender stereotypes. It should be noted that with the LOMCE (Organic Law for the Improvement of Educational Quality) of 2018, provisions for the protection of LGBTQ+ students and the promotion of diversity in school environments have been included. This legal framework underlines Spain's commitment to implementing gender-sensitive education in its territory.

Gender-sensitive education is promoted through various initiatives. For example, schools are expected to implement comprehensive programmes to prevent and address bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity. These programmes include training for education professionals, support services for students and awareness campaigns to promote inclusivity. Schools are also expected to promote inclusive policies on gender equality and anti-discrimination, with the introduction of safe spaces in schools or the installation of gender-neutral toilets. Mental health services should also be accessible and sensitive to gender issues.

Youth engagement is another important aspect of Spain's education strategies. Various programmes and initiatives aim to empower young people to become advocates for gender equality and social justice. For example, the Youth Guarantee Programme includes measures to help young women enter the labour market and to promote gender equality in vocational training. Other awareness-raising campaigns involve a wider audience (parents, teachers, students, etc.) to challenge gender

stereotypes and change traditional perceptions and gender roles in order to promote equality.

Gender-Based Violence

Addressing gender-based violence is a central focus of Spain's gender equality efforts. The Organic Law 1/2004 on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence provides a comprehensive legal framework for protecting victims of gender-based violence and prosecuting offenders. This law includes provisions for the establishment of shelters, crisis centres, and helplines for victims, as well as the development of prevention and awareness-raising campaigns. It also provides legal and social assistance to victims of gender-based violence, as well as economic aid and adjustments of working time and contracts (Centre Hubertine Auclert, 2020).

Spain's approach to gender-based violence is considered one of the most comprehensive in Europe, with specialised gender violence courts, mandatory restraining orders and a network of services for victims. For example, the VioGén platform of the Secretary of State for Security of the Ministry of the Interior records all incidents of domestic violence reported to the police, provides forms for assessing the danger of a given situation and applying appropriate measures (updated every 7 to 60 days, depending on the seriousness of the situation), and enables the judicial authorities to monitor domestic violence by referencing and accessing the platform (Centre Hubertine Auclert, 2020).

In addition, the Government Delegation for Gender Violence (part of the Ministry of Equality) coordinates efforts to tackle gender-based violence, ensuring that victims receive the support they need and that perpetrators are held to account.



Gender Equality in Spain

Regarding the rights of sexual minorities, two pieces of legislation have been introduced to protect LGBTQ+ people from gender-based violence: the 2014 Comprehensive Protection Law, which protects LGBTQ+ people from discrimination and violence and guarantees their rights in various areas, including employment, health care and education, and the 2019 Anti-Discrimination Law, which aims to strengthen protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and improve legal recourse for victims.

Despite this progress, there are still challenges to the full elimination of gender violence in Spain. Cultural attitudes, economic disparities and gaps in the implementation of legal frameworks continue to be obstacles. However, Spain's commitment to international standards and its ongoing efforts to strengthen its legal and institutional frameworks (see, for example, the Action Plan for a Feminist Foreign Policy 2023-2024) reflect a determination to address these challenges and protect the rights of all individuals.

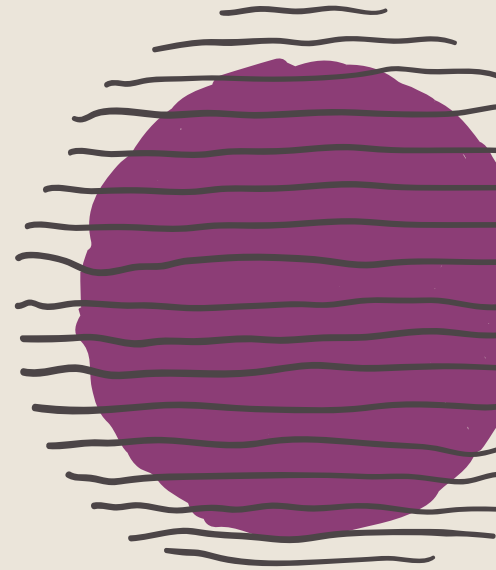
Highlights

Spain's transition from Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975) to democracy marked a turning point for women's rights. The 1978 Constitution established equality before the law and outlawed discrimination. In 1986, Spain joined the European Union. In the years 1980-1990, Feminist movements campaigned for legislative and social change, leading to advances in reproductive rights, equal employment and political representation. Recent legislation has strengthened the promotion of gender equality (Law 1/2004 on gender-based violence; Law of 30 June 2005 legalising same-sex marriage, which allows same-sex couples to enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples, including the right to adopt children; Organic Law 3/2007, which establishes a comprehensive framework for the promotion of gender equality in all sectors). Nevertheless, the pay gap between women and men persists, as does the lack of representation in key positions and behaviours that reproduce gender roles.



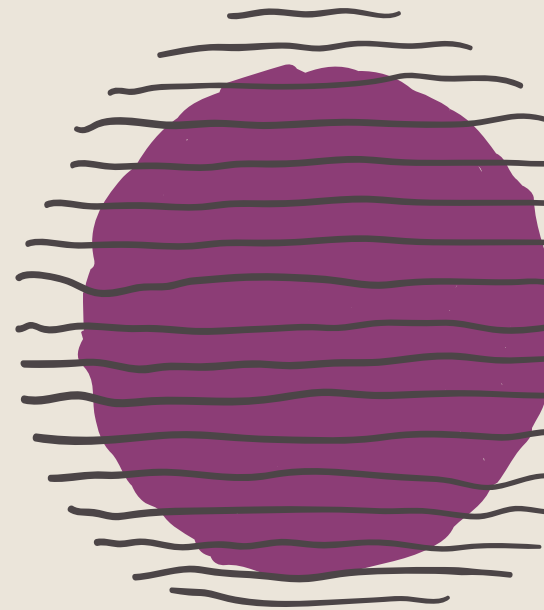
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Additional resources (cf. Spain's annexes)

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