

# The problems of gender inequality in the printed media of Ukraine, Poland and Hungary

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**Abstract – The problem of gender inequality have been existed during centuries and nowadays it is not less important. It becomes one of the values that are of top priority for many developed countries. The main role in decreasing the level of gender inequality plays awareness of society, that can not be achieved without the help of mass media. The paper describes the situation concerning the gender inequality problem in the printed media of Ukraine and its neighborhoods – Poland and Hungary.**

Key words – gender inequality, media, men, woman, problems.

Gender equality means an equal visibility, empowerment, responsibility and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Achieving gender equality is central to the protection of human rights, the functioning of democracy, respect for the rule of law and economic growth and competitiveness. Gender stereotypes are generalised views or preconceived ideas, according to which individuals are categorised into particular gender groups, typically defined as “women” and “men”, and are arbitrarily assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex. Stereotyping becomes problematic when it is used as a vehicle to degrade and discriminate women[1].

It is not a secret that achieving gender equality is a long process. One month is not enough for changing the thoughts of the millions people. Mass media plays a key role in both preserving and transforming behavioural models and social stereotypes in Ukraine. According to the sociological survey, that was organized by the research institutes The Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation (DIF) and Razumkov Centre in July 2015 the media is among those social institutes which have the greatest trust of Ukrainians. Despite the fact that the last three years were characterised by decline of the trust to mass media the balance of trust-distrust is still positive.

Ukraine ranks 59th (out of 140 countries) on GDI, compared to its neighbours Hungary (31), Poland (33)[2].

The media plays a key role in maintaining the societal attitudes that keep women out of public life and public management in Ukraine. Nearly 70% of all print and TV news are dedicated to men and executed by men. About 85% of the names mentioned in the print media overall are male. That figure increases to 96% in articles about politics or economics. Men predominate in media coverage of politics and culture, as well as in traditionally feminine areas of public life such as health and education. Even in seemingly “gender neutral” areas such as sports where men and women are both professionally present, men get three times as much publicity as women. Almost half of the scant references to women are related to family life, which only accounts for 6% of total media coverage.

Although readers are both women and men, print media focus on areas of interest to men. According to surveys, 52% of men consider politics the most important issue to cover, compared to 5% of women, so it comprises 46% of total print media coverage.

Few journalists are aware of, or interested in, gender topics, while editors often oppose the publication of reports on “women’s” issues. Even though about 40% of journalists are female, they do not necessarily work from a gender perspective. For example, women editors dedicated less space for women and gender issues in their newspapers/magazines than their male counterparts. Men and women are portrayed differently in Ukrainian media. In over 80% of cases, men appear as experts and interview subjects. Female specialists or professionals are rarely interviewed. This is particularly notable in political stories quoting legislators and parliamentarians. While the majority of decision-makers in Ukraine are men, the number of media references to women in politics is much lower than their actual representation. Most media references to women are stories about actresses or singers, not decision-makers. While men are presented with their full name, position and professional background, women are often introduced as the “wife” or “mother” of prominent men[3].

Many people do not think that there are any “gender equality” problems to address in Ukraine, or they consider “women’s issues” related to family welfare, as predicated during the Soviet period. They think that after the government solves other priority social and economic issues, it can deal with “women’s problems”. Most media do not report on gender equality issues or women’s organizations, so many Ukrainians are not even aware that they exist. The public needs more information and a better understanding of gender equality issues and activities[4].

The problems related to gender inequality are conveyed in Polish media. 50% of the population of Poland and 41% of Hungarians trust journalists and so results of their work. Though indications are similar to Ukrainian the situation in aforementioned countries is not the same. People are more aware about their rights and there is a tendency in covering some aspects of the problem[5][6].

The claims that depict unequal position of female in printed media of Hungary and Poland covered the three topics:

1. Roles at home: claims that state that different household chores (such as repairing things, do-it-yourself activities, daily cooking, cleaning, looking after children etc.) are mainly done by one of the sexes, or these duties are shared in marriages or relationships.

2. Roles at work: claims that state that certain professions or positions are more suitable for one of the sexes, or the opposite of it (women and men are equally skilled). Claims about gender discrimination (or lack thereof) at the workplace, e.g. in salaries or during promotion, also belong here.

3. Conflict of work/household roles: claims that state that there is a trade-off between career/financial well-being and being a ‘good’ parent, from the employers’,

employees' or the state's point of view, or statements mentioning parental leave from work.

There are existing differences between the perception of attitudes in the countries in both the topics and the occurrence of traditional views. In Poland, the most frequently made claims concerned gender discrimination at work and skills differences between men and women, i.e. the discourse was dominated by work related issues. In Hungary, the single most frequent claim was also discrimination at work, but claims around the family, and especially the conflict between having a career and having children also got considerable attention.

In general household-related topics arise more frequently in the media than work-related topics. While the Hungarian discourse tends to be relatively conservative in all related subtopics, the Polish discourse is more ambivalent: having children and a career are rarely portrayed as incompatible, while the early return of mothers to work is most often depicted in negative (conservative) terms.

In Hungary media coverage reflect a dominance of conservative gender roles attitudes and a preference for public services as opposed to market-based childcare. Yet, there are a few signs suggesting a slow move towards less conservative views: the incompatibility of child-rearing and having a career appears relatively frequently and is portrayed as a controversial issue in the media.

In Poland the media suggest a move towards less conservative gender roles, especially regarding the involvement of fathers in childcare. Though the division of care in the household is not often discussed in the media, when it is, men are often portrayed in non-traditional roles (such as looking after a child or taking parental leave) and statements about future trends are also significantly less traditional than the descriptions of the past or present.

According to international comparisons Poles are not significantly more conservative with regard to gender roles than other nations in Eastern Europe. Though in comparison to other EU countries, gender stereotypes and a conservative view of the family seem to prevail, attitudes of younger age

groups tend to reflect more gender balanced relations at home and in the workplace[7].

The prevalence of traditional attitudes towards gender roles points to the need for more action on the part of agencies promoting equal opportunities, in monitoring the media and other channels that may reinforce gender stereotypes, raise awareness about them among journalists and experts who may, often unwittingly, contribute to the process[8].

It will take a long-term approach to changing gender relations, stereotypes and attitudes. People must remember about this target because the situation could be only changed due to understanding and participation of wide range of the public in the process. As Tarja Halonen, Former President of the Republic of Finland, said: "All nations have their own traditions, and gender stereotypes are part of it. But it is good to remember that they are made by people and can be reformed by people".

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