



# PROCEEDINGS



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*Snežana Šerbula*

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## WOMEN IN THE WORKFORCE – A CASE STUDY OF R. MACEDONIA

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### Abstract

*Over the past years, the transformation has occurred in the gender of the workforce in the EU and the Balkan countries. Women have entered in the labor market and increased the range of professions and sectors and have secured high positions within some companies and organizations. However, gender imbalances remain in the relation to the scope and form of employment and within the reward for the work they complete. In many ways, the organization of the workplace and the domestic division of labor retain the imprint of male influence. Despite worries about the progress in segregating employment, the value of women's work and the unequal distribution of domestic labor still persist. This paper made a comparative analysis by revealing the progress and challenges using recent research data and offers specific recommendations with a conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Employment, Female employees, Comparative analysis, Region, Macedonia

### INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, when the world is facing deep shifting in global challenges that affect both men and women, it is necessary to make transformation of their working tasks. Countries, irrelevant whether they have low or middle income, cannot lose social and economic potential on behalf of the gender equality. It takes ambitious policies that will enable transformation of the gender norms and relations in the society and at the work posts, and by that will help efficiently for solving structural inequalities. Gender gaps are present at higher paid jobs also. Female employees in Europe are less active participants in the total labor market force and they are facing inequalities in their economic status when compared to their male colleagues. In 2014 there were only 89 females to every 100 male employees. In many countries women in the workforce work significantly less hours than male labor market participants. Gender gaps are even more significant in the corporative sector positions. Since April 2015, on every 100 member of the corporative board of the big companies that are active on the public stock market, only 23 are females [1].

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender gap in the labor market is an important social and developing aim [2-6]. Although public policies in many countries are showing progress in bigger advances in this area, they are only of partially encouraging nature. Big gender gaps at the work posts still exist combined with the higher rates of the economic growth and lower income inequality. Place in the household of women is partially explaining shorter working hours of female employees at the labor market-which is also manifested with the discrepancy in wages between women - mothers and women that are not mothers, better known as “motherhood wage gap”. On contrary employed father are earning more than their not married counterparts [7]. Women in the labor market are facing higher risk of unemployment compared to men and with higher




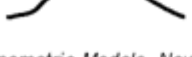

differences in the unemployment throughout the regions. Global unemployment rate estimated for 2015 shows rate of unemployment from 5.5% for males to 6.2% for females. In this respect, Minniti [8] and Minniti *et al.* [9] suggest that the ownership of women's businesses is behind men and why they are untapped "source of entrepreneurial energy." Bardasi *et al.* [10] note that women entrepreneurs are more concentrated in certain sectors such as retail and hospitality, while men are present in all sectors of the economy. Finally, the concentration in the informal sectors is explaining the gender gap in the productivity of the firms, resulting with productivity in different sectors [9,11]. North, South and Western Europe are most struck by the financial turmoil in terms of unemployment [5]. This can be the result of two main factors: financial crisis first struck the male dominated labor market sectors such as construction industry (for example in Ireland, Spain), that resulted in the growth of unemployment rate and narrowed employment gender gaps, and previously inactive married women that could participate directly in the labor force to compensate the loss in the family income, from their unemployed spouses [12]. In the course of the second phase of the adoption of austerity measures in many countries the result was loss or decrease of jobs in the public sector, that were female dominated, which was the reason why females were more struck by the financial crisis than their male counterparts [13,14]. Yet, some authors are emphasizing that this one should not be considered as a sign of improvement of gender equality, but as a fact that there is closing on the gap on these vulnerable positions as a consequence of the deterred labor market conditions [15,16].

### THE SITUATION ON A GLOBAL LEVEL

As a consequence of the weak and insecure economic growth, the pace of improvement of the regional labor market shows certain slow down. Projected unemployment rate in the region is 9.1% for 2017, a decrease of 0.2% is noted compared to the values predicted for 2016 (Table 1).

*Table1 Projected unemployment for 2017/18 year*

#### Unemployment trends and projections, Northern, Southern and Western Europe, 2007–18

Country/region	Unemployment rate, 2007–18 (percentages)				Unemployment, 2016–18 (millions)		
	2007–2015	2016	2017	2018	2016	2017	2018
Northern, Southern and Western Europe		9.3	9.1	8.9	20.2	19.7	19.4
France		10.0	9.8	9.8	3.0	2.9	2.9
Germany		4.3	4.2	4.2	1.8	1.8	1.8
Italy		11.5	11.4	11.1	2.9	2.8	2.8
United Kingdom		4.8	5.0	5.3	1.6	1.7	1.8

Source: ILO Trends Econometric Models, November 2016.

Having in mind that the rate of unemployment decreased for almost 2% between 2013 and 2016, it is a considerable slowdown of the progress of the region towards the average growth rate before crisis that was set around 7.4% in 2008. Considerable decrease of the unemployment rate is expected in only few countries, including Croatia, Ireland, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain. Nevertheless, there are only few countries that could achieve target growth rates in the next couple of years, especially in the United Kingdom [17]. Although



women consist 46.1% from the employees in EU (28) female employment rates vary by country.

**Table 2** *Percentage of Women in the Workforce at the global level [18,19]*

Country	Percentage of Women in the Workforce (2016)
European Union (28)	46.1
Austria	47.2
Belgium	46.8
Denmark	47.4
Finland	48.4
France	48.2
Germany	46.8
Greece	42.0
Hungary	45.8
Ireland	46.2
Italy	42.3
Netherlands	46.7
Norway	47.9
Spain	45.6
Sweden	48.0
Switzerland	46.9
United Kingdom	47.2

Higher inclusion of women in the higher levels of management can help to strengthen the efficiency of the companies by wider and better presentation of the changing demography of the workforce (OECD, 2012). Also, presence of the women employees of the high positions improves corporate performances and their profitable sectors, and that will help the support of the corporate investment and productivity, and it will help the ease of the potential growth. Such gender equality of the high corporate positions is achieved in the countries where women are related with the workforce with full time work posts. There are different assumptions for the deficit in the presence of women on high leading positions in the corporate world, as well as in politics. These are result from the existing stereotypes and norms about gender issues that are creating some glass ceiling, and for a shorter work time on women's work posts [20,21]. Lack of presence of women on leader's positions can only strengthen the biased perceptions about effectiveness of women on leaders positions. Women also solely do not believe in their capabilities to lead, because they rarely see other women on such positions [15,22]. They also could abandon their carrier road towards higher positions when do childbearing [23].

## NATIONAL SITUATION AND PERSPECTIVES

Although in R. Macedonia gender equality is one of the rare values of the constitutional regime, and accordingly, there exists developed law and institutional framework that should enable realization of the higher gender equality in all domains of the social action. Adopted laws that regulate discrimination on the basis of the gender are: Law on equal possibilities for women and men, Law on prevention of corruption, Labor relations law. From essential importance is the Law on equal possibilities for women and men that gives directions for inclusion of the equal possibilities principle in the main courses of reorganization,

improvement, development and the assessment of the political processes on all levels and phases. This law also sets the institutional framework, for setting up gender “machinery” that is useful to support and obtain all of the necessary processes for achieving full gender equality [24].

This law was changed and amended couple of times with the aim of harmonizing with the European *acquis communitarium*. Gender equality is adopted 2013-2010 with the aim of improvement of the possibilities of women and men in the all aspects of life in R. Macedonia. This strategy is adopted as a document which will provide “total equality framework of men and women as well as cross-sectional, horizontal and universal social and political priority”. Furthermore, this strategy has essential steps and directions towards full realization in R. Macedonia. Following, the international courses, our country has adopted many international documents that are concerned with the gender equality and equal opportunities of men and women, and are adopted by the UN, and EU, Europe council and others [25].

### ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 3 is showing the condition of the employment in R. Macedonia that is characterized with many unfavorable gender structures. This structure has not been changed for a long period of time, because instable socio-economic conditions in the country and non-coordination of the available and required profiles of the labor market. Women employment rate in R. Macedonia in 2016 is 33.8% and is considerably lower than their men counterparts with 52.3%. Unemployment rate in women is 22.7% and for men is 24.4%. Labor market active participation rate is 43.8% in women, and in men is considerably higher and is 69.2% [26].

**Table 3** *Employed by economic status and gender, 2016 (Statistical review 2.4.17.02 /867, 2017:69.)*

Gender	Total	Economic status			
		Employed	Employer	Self-employed	Unpaid family worker
Total	723 550	548 937	32 003	95 364	47 211
Men	439 717	321 427	24 046	75 660	18 584
Women	283 834	227 546	7 957	19 705	28 627
Structure by gender in %					
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Men	60.8	58.6	75.1	79.3	39.4
Women	39.2	41.4	24.9	20.7	60.6
Structure by economic status in %					
Total	100.0	75.9	4.4	13.2	6.5
Men	100.0	73.1	5.5	17.2	4.2
Women	100.0	80.2	28	6.9	10.1

In Macedonia weak movements are registered in making some efforts to raise the awareness about the role of women into the economy and society in general. This is the case of the Association of Women Organizations in Macedonia. Moreover, several non-government organizations take active policy actions aimed to activate and involve women in the economic and political life of the country. Nevertheless, despite women’s available human potential and capabilities for successful development of women entrepreneurship, strong governmental support is indispensable. More precisely, by providing material or non-material

governmental support, women slowly but surely find their place in the Macedonian economy [11,27].

## CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the possibility of strengthening the position of women in the process of employment and their economic status in R. Macedonia. Thus, there were identified main characteristics connected with the legal framework and the slow implementation and analyzed some impediments by which the legal implementation and adoption is facing. Gender equality improvement is of a key importance for the welfare of the society. Yet, women in the 21<sup>st</sup> century are continuing to face discrimination in many areas. International and national legal framework on the gender equality is dynamic and is fully regulating this matter. But in reality, there exists a need of practical implementation of all the documents dedicated to the gender equality and much more action for its effect. It is worth to mention that there are such legal acts that are seeking for the equal treatment of the two genders on ineffective way. Considering that the two genders are not in the same start position equal treatment will not give the expected results.

There exists reflective tendency for the improvement of gender equality through existing laws, strategies and action plans. Slow implementation of the policies for the gender equality and the absence of the political will for serious and responsible promotion of gender equality concept are contributing to the sustainment of gender inequality and discrimination. It is necessary to increase the consciousness of the businessmen for recognition of the gender inequality all with the aim that female employees getting fired in course of pregnancy and less paid labor, mobbing and violence on women to be part of the past. Strengthening of the position of women in every segment of the societal action is a required basis for prosperity and sustainability, because strong women mean strong society.

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