

Gender Equality in Employment as a Guarantee of Social Security for Families – Utopian Assumption or Social Necessity?

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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the issue of gender equality within a specific scope, focusing solely on the field of employment. The article examines topics related to the gender equality system in employment that are pertinent to modern societies, using legal regulations in selected European countries as illustrative examples. It highlights events and figures that have contributed to the normalization of equality issues, systematizes existing knowledge, and outlines the key principles of this system. The publication also presents research findings that reflect contemporary European citizens' perspectives on the gender equality system in employment.

The research employed a straightforward theoretical approach, combining analysis with synthesis, as well as methods of classification, generalization, and inference. Additionally, personal interviews were conducted as a research tool. The aim of the study was to determine whether, in the respondents' opinion, the gender equality system is considered important enough to be implemented by employers.

IS GENDER EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT NECESSARY?

The issue of gender equality is an exceedingly broad topic that has attracted the interest of numerous scholars, citizens, states, and international organizations from across the world, particularly from the United States of America, Canada, Asia, and Europe. Due to the need to narrow down the scope of this discussion, the authors have chosen to focus on the functioning of the gender equality system in employment. Furthermore, given the extensive nature of the topic, the authors have decided to concentrate their research on the law of the European Union (EU) and, consequently, on all its member states. In conducting research on European Union law, a simple theoretical method was employed, combining analysis with synthesis, along with the methods of classification, generalization, and inference. Additionally, a research tool in the form of personal interviews was also utilized. In February and March of 2024, research was conducted by asking respondents one open-ended question. A total of 193 individuals between the ages of 30 and 40, living and working in Warsaw (the capital of Poland, which is a member of the European Union), provided responses. The respondents represented various employers and had experience in managing businesses. It is also important to note

that the interviews were conducted anonymously, and respondents were not limited in time when answering the question. No suggested answers were provided, allowing the respondents to express themselves freely. The question posed was: "In your opinion, should employers implement a system within their organization to prevent violations of gender equality principles in employment?" The answers from the respondents were surprising and thought-provoking. As a result, this paper presents a set of reflections and recommendations for entrepreneurs who have yet to implement a system for preventing violations of gender equality principles in their companies.

The issue of gender equality in employment, discussed in this publication, remains relevant for societies around the world. It should be noted that this work does not address gender equality in general, but rather focuses specifically on the area of employment. The research presented here examines a narrow aspect of gender equality, which does not diminish its global significance (Sarah Schmauk & Linda Kridahl, "Who receives most? Gendered consequences of divorce on public pension income in West Germany and Sweden", *Ageing & Society*, 2024). Indeed, this is a current issue worldwide, regardless of the social and legal status of women, as even in countries where women are not granted full rights, they may be in the process of advocating for them. Furthermore, this issue can also be important for men, in terms of the country's economy, economic development and economic policy (Juan Mora-Sanguinetti & Andrés Atienza-Maeso, "How effective is equality regulation in reducing gender gaps in the labor market?", *Journal of Policy Modeling*, 2024, Vol. 46, Issue 5, pp. 823-846), or human rights. Thus, the paper possesses both a universal and global dimension.

It is worth noting that this topic is of interest to states that engage in international treaties, including European and Union agreements, which aim, among other things, to protect human rights. International agreements are subject to modification due to changing values and interests in human rights (Cettina Di Salvo, "Gender Discrimination: Procedural Issues Between Procedural Autonomy, EU Provisions and Effectiveness of Judicial Protection", *Gender Perspectives in Private Law*, 2023, vol. 4 pp 199-220). States are striving to adapt international law to global expectations (e.g., regarding gender reassignment). Hence, this scientific article also has an international and historical dimension (Laura Nuño Gómez & Laura Martínez de Aragón López, "Constitutional provisions on the equality of women and men: A comparative analysis in Latin America and Spain", *Revista De Derecho Politico*, 2024, Issue 120, pp. 263-288). The research conducted indicates that out of the 193 respondents, 189 indicated that the gender equality system in employment should be regulated by generally applicable law (Małgorzata Kochanowicz, "Practical aspects of gender equality in employment in the European Union in the context of information security" [in:] *Intersecting Pathways of Research: The Polydisciplinary Faculty of Taroudant-Ibnou Zohr University & WSB Merito University Poznań's Collaborative Compendium*, (ed.) Pr. El Jazouli Moutiâ & Pr. Gacim Salah, *The Polydisciplinary Faculty of Taroudant-Ibnou Zohr University* 2024, Taroudant, p. 104).

Another strength of this article is its practical relevance, as the conclusions drawn from this publication may benefit entrepreneurs from all over the world, where

governments have introduced gender equality in employment through legal provisions. In cases where this principle has not yet been legally implemented, entrepreneurs can draw upon the recommendations provided here to promote the dignified treatment of women.

GENDER EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT AS AN ELEMENT OF SOCIAL SECURITY

Gender equality in employment can be classified as an issue of social security. A society will feel secure when there is no employment discrimination, no harassment, and when everyone feels equal to one another, regardless of gender. It is unacceptable that a woman going to work, instead of feeling at ease, feels fear and is forced to create, together with her co-workers, "informal networks for safety" (Belén Martínez Caparrós, "Navigating the city: gendered work experiences in urban spaces", *Gender & Development*, 2024, Vol. 32, p. 303). The implementation of gender equality in employment has been incorporated into the laws of various parts of the world. For example, in Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand, "norms prohibiting gender-based employment discrimination have been implemented. [...] In Vietnamese, Laotian, Thai, and Cambodian legislation, the principle of equal pay for equal work is in force. However, statistics show that [...] a gender pay gap still exists. Men earn, on average, more than women, with the exception of Thailand [...]" (Justyna Gulumak, "Analiza przestrzegania międzynarodowych standardów prawa pracy w zakresie zatrudnienia kobiet w Kambodży, Wietnamie, Laosie i Tajlandii", *International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Journal*, 2023, p. 25).

Gender equality in employment applies to both women and men, making it a social issue specific to each country, though the factual and legal situations in different countries will always vary. The most important factor influencing gender equality in employment is law (Martha Silva, Udochisom Anaba, Nrupa Jani Tulsani, Pooja Sripad, Jonathan Walker & Adolor Aisiri, "Gender-Based Violence Narratives in Internet-Based Conversations in Nigeria: Social Listening Study", *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, 2023, Vol. 25). If a country has not legally implemented gender equality in employment, social security in this area cannot be achieved, as evidenced by the testimonies of women in countries where they are deprived of basic rights. There are regions in the world, for example, South West Asia and North Africa (SWANA), in which "the majority of the formal school education system [...] reproduces and reinforces gender stereotypes [...] feminist pedagogy is almost absent from schools in most countries of the region" (Reny Iskander "Feminist initiatives in the SWANA region: fighting the patriarchal education with feminist knowledge", *Gender & Development*, 2023, Vol. 31, Nos. 2-3, 439-454). A different scenario arises when a country recognizes the need for implementing a gender equality system in employment and works towards that goal (Adoración Guamán Hernández, "The full dignification of salaried domestic work: steps forward and pending tasks. A review of the latest reforms in Spain from the perspective of legal feminism", *Revista Latinoamericana De Derecho Social*, 2024, Vol. 39). Citizens of such a

state are likely to experience a sense of social security. The most favorable situation is found in countries that have already implemented a gender equality system in employment and are actively working to improve it. These countries are equipped with public institutions and a judiciary that assist in enforcing and upholding these rights (Danni Wang & Catherine Cheung, "Decent work in tourism and hospitality - a systematic literature review, classification, and research recommendations", *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 2024, Vol. 36, Issue 7, p. 2194-2213).

Another factor influencing social security in the area of gender equality in employment is the views of people from different nationalities who reside in the same area and constitute a single society (Alexandra Vázquez & Lucía López-Rodríguez, "Self-uniqueness increases women's willingness to participate in collective action for gender justice, but not support for sex quotas", *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 2023, Vol. 62, Issue 3, pp. 1418-1434). In such a mix of nationalities, differing opinions on gender equality in employment can pose a challenge, with even the most extreme views being present, such as the intersection of feminism and phallocentrism - defined as "a binding and oppressive cultural form based on the complex interweaving of religion, politics, and state interests - elements that can be grouped under the umbrella of patriarchal order" (Natalia Lemann "Historie alternatywne i steampunk emancypacja i prawa kobiet. Rozważania wstępne". *Annales Universitatis Paedagogicae Cracoviensis Studia Historicolitteraria*, 2023, pp. 370).

Government-established laws can impose mandates and prohibitions - the most effective form of safeguarding the needs of individuals and social groups is the state (Waldemar Kitler, *Bezpieczeństwo narodowe. Podstawowe kategorie, dylematy pojęciowe i próba systematyzacji*, Towarzystwo Wiedzy Obronnej, Zeszyt Problemowy, 2010, No. 1(61). However, in addition to legal provisions, a crucial challenge lies in convincing all nationalities of the justness of implementing gender equality in employment. There may be cases where formal laws have been introduced to equalize the rights of men and women, yet the socio-cultural patterns within a given society may still discriminate against women in the labor market, viewing them as guardians of the domestic sphere rather than as businesswomen (Dolly Gaur, Kanishka Gupta & Abhinav Pal, "Transformational women leadership: a road to sustainable development goal of women empowerment", *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 2024, Vol. 15, Issue, pp. 193-214).

It would be unjust to overlook the fact that there are differences in professional development between urban and rural areas, which result from fewer opportunities for women to pursue their professional and educational aspirations (Udoka Okpalauwaekwe, Carla Holinaty, Tom Smith-Windsor, James W. Barton & Cathy MacClean, "From field of dreams to back to the future? Exploring barriers to participating in continuing professional development (CPD) programs", *Bmc Medical Education*, 2024, Vol. 24, Issue 1). Additionally, a factor limiting the educational and professional activity of women is the lack of institutional support for women's rights in rural areas, as exemplified by the poorly developed network

of nurseries, kindergartens, and community centers. Residents of small towns also face difficulties in finding care for the elderly, as in traditional gender roles, women are the primary caregivers for older family members (Sylwia Michalska, "Tradycyjne i nowe role kobiet wiejskich", *Wiś i rolnictwo*, 2013, No. 2(159) pp. 124-139).

Finally, according to the authors, an important factor influencing the form of gender equality in employment is the Internet, including the state's control over the flow of information. A country's laws may prohibit the dissemination of external information to its citizens. Additionally, there may be state-controlled disinformation (Jennifer V. Evans, Swen Steinberg, David Y. Clement & Danielle Carron, "Settler Colonialism, Illiberal Memory, and German-Canadian Hate Networks in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries", *Central European History*, 2023, Vol. 56 Issue 4, pp. 513-534). This leads to limitations in the exchange of information about equality between nations, contributing to a slowdown in the development of human rights.

The introduction of the principle of gender equality in employment has many aspects, which not only affects the sense of security but also contributes to the country's economic development and the improvement of family economic situations (Belén Castro Núñez, Lidia de Castro Romero, Víctor Martín Barroso, Rosa Santero-Sánchez, "Is the glass ceiling more fragile in the Social Economy? A Spanish cooperatives and worker-owned enterprises analysis", *Ciriec-Espana Revista De Economia Publica Social Y Cooperativa*, 2024, Vol. 111). Therefore, gender equality in employment can be considered in the category of social security, as it is understood as ensuring freedom for socio-economic and cultural development, improvement of living conditions, and the achievement of prosperity (Aleksandra Skrabacz, *Bezpieczeństwo społeczne. Podstawy teoretyczne i praktyczne*, Dom Wydawniczy Elipsa, 2012). To this definition of social security, one can also add the improvement of the quality of life in economic and cultural spheres (Janusz Gierszewski, "Bezpieczeństwo społeczne jako dziedzina bezpieczeństwa narodowego", *Historia i Polityka*, 23(30)/2018, p. 22). "Social security is also associated with the protection of national identity, defined as the ability to maintain culture, customs, or language. In this sense, the protected value is not only the prevention of social and economic poverty but also national identity and its threats, such as migration" (Gierszewski 2018, p. 22). Additionally, "social security can be attributed to areas such as work, family, and social security" (Gierszewski 2018, p. 23), which are part of national security and relate to the protection of the existential foundations of life, enabling the fulfillment of life aspirations by creating conditions for work and education, as well as health protection and pension guarantees (Skrabacz, 2012).

Undoubtedly, the main threat to the proper functioning of the gender equality system in employment is human behavior, along with the beliefs shaped by the history and geographical location of the country in which the individual lives, or by international law ratified by the state where the person resides (Lorenzo Escot, María C. Latorre & José A. Fernández-Cornejo, "Tools and data for the analysis of gender policies: A review", *Global Policy*, 2023, Vol. 14, p. 40-49). Another threat

to the system is ignorance of gender equality in employment, resulting in a lack of defense or harm to others (Glória Rebelo, Catarina Delaunay, Alexandre Martins, Maria Fernanda Diamantino, António R. Almeida, "Women's Perceptions of Discrimination at Work: Gender Stereotypes and Overtime-An Exploratory Study in Portugal", *Administrative Sciences*, 2024, Vol. 14, Issue 8).

DOES GENDER EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ONLY EQUAL PAY? ASPECTS OF GENDER EQUALITY IN EMPLOYMENT.

"Nature has made women our slaves" – these are the words attributed to Napoleon Bonaparte during a meeting of the Council of State where changes to family law, included in the French *Civil Code* of 1804, known as the *Napoleonic Code*, were discussed. This code influenced later, and even current, legislation in selected European countries, such as Poland. The French *Civil Code*, the Austrian *Allgemeine Bürgerliche Gesetzbuch* of 1811, and the German *Bürgerliches Gesetzbuch* of 1896 are referred to in historical literature as the *Great Civil Codifications*. They guaranteed the inviolability of individual rights and respect for fundamental human rights, such as equality, the inviolability of private property, and the freedom of individuals to dispose of inheritance rights. Despite these lofty principles, women's rights faced significant limitations. From birth, a woman was dependent on a man - her father, and if she married, her husband. The only actions women could perform independently under the French codifications were signing a marriage contract and signing a will (Article 226, *Code Napoléon*). The other two *Great Civil Codifications* also did not equate women with men, applying what we would now call discrimination. Women had to wait over 100 years for changes and the granting of voting rights. In Europe, women's liberation movements gained strength at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, and the aftermath of World War I necessitated economic development, which, in turn, required women's labor, making gender equality essential. In 1906, Finland granted women the right to vote, followed by Norway in 1913. A prominent advocate for women's suffrage in Norway was Betzy Kielsberg, who was actively involved in the Drammen Women's Association for many years. She founded and led the association from 1896 to 1925. Kielsberg was a proponent of granting women full voting rights immediately, rather than gradually. In 1905, when women were not allowed to participate in the referendum on dissolving the union, she issued what became known as the Women's Petition. That same year, she was elected to the Drammen City Council. As an activist for the Liberal Party, she focused on the living conditions of the merchant class and women's educational opportunities. From 1926 to 1938, she served on the party's central board, becoming the first woman to do so (Store Norske Leksikon, Betzy Kjelsberg, https://snl.no/Betzy_Kjelsberg (2024-09-15)). Subsequently, in 1915, women in Iceland gained the right to vote, and between 1919 and 1928, women in the following European countries were granted full voting rights: Austria, Estonia, the Netherlands, Lithuania, Latvia, Germany, Poland, Russia, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

Today, gender equality is present on various levels, depending on the region of the world, and is the subject of research across many disciplines, including law, economics, management, history, sociology, psychology, and philosophy (Ozge Kilic, Anita Riecher-Rössler, Silvana Galderisi, Sophia Frangou & Mariana Pinto da Costa, "The role of gender as a barrier to the professional development of psychiatrists", *European Psychiatry*, 2023, Vol. 66, Issue 1). Currently, understanding the principles of the gender equality system requires specialized knowledge, familiarity with legal acts, international treaties, statistical data, and, for instance, economic dependencies. When considering further scientific threads, it is essential to address the following research question: How are current generations coping with the gender equality system?

From the experience and observations of one of the authors, who has been conducting academic courses in Warsaw (Poland) for almost two years, discussing gender equality in employment (attended by more than 400 participants), it is surprising to note that gender equality is not limited solely to equal access to professions and equal pay. At this point, it is necessary to conclude that the scope of gender equality in employment may not be fully understood by society. This is alarming because the proper functioning of the gender equality system in employment directly affects an individual's sense of dignity, income, and quality of life. If those who are currently working or seeking employment in the future are not fully familiar with this topic, it may mean that they will not be able to fully exercise their rights, such as the right to improve their living conditions, achieve prosperity, build better conditions for work and education, or secure pension guarantees.

What does European Union protection of gender equality in employment entail? Does it merely involve equal pay and equal opportunities in applying for jobs?

To answer these questions, the authors, through analysis, synthesis, classification, and generalization, have selected the most important issues regulated by Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on *the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation* (hereinafter "Directive 2006/54/EC"), adopted on 5 July 2006 in Strasbourg. The authors chose Directive 2006/54/EC for this purpose because it can be referred to as the European Union's "queen" of gender equality in employment. The conclusions drawn from the analysis of the Directive indicate that the issue of gender equality in employment in the European Union has three "layers" (Article 1). The first layer is the social security system, which must be equitable for both genders. This layer encompasses equal application and equal conditions of social security systems, equal obligations for contributions and calculation of benefits, additional entitlements for spouses or dependents, and conditions relating to the payment period and retention of rights (Article 5). It should be noted that the realization of these assumptions provides society with pension guarantees, improved quality of life in the economic sphere, and health protection. The second layer involves equal access to employment for both genders. This guarantees equal opportunities for employment, regardless of gender, such as in recruitment conditions. Additionally, the Directive - based on

the location of the relevant provision - places the right to equal promotion opportunities under the category of the right to access employment. Another noteworthy point is that while the Directive does not explicitly mention it, the authors suggest the existence of another aspect of gender equality in employment, namely the right to return from maternity leave on equal terms (Article 15), according to which a woman who has completed maternity leave has the right to return to work, including to an equivalent position, under conditions no less favorable than those she would have been entitled to during her absence (due to maternity leave). Gender equality has also been extended to men - neither women nor men can be deprived of employment for exercising their right to paternity or adoption leave. Upon the completion of paternity or adoption leave, employees have the right to return to work, including to an equivalent position, under conditions no less favorable than those to which they would have been entitled had they not been absent due to taking paternity or adoption leave (Article 16). It is important to note that the implementation of these goals leads to improved living conditions, the achievement of prosperity, and the protection of existential foundations of life. The third layer pertains to working conditions, which must be equal for both genders. While the Directive does not provide specific examples, they include the right to access social rooms or the right to adequately equipped rooms. The realization of these three objectives will give society a sense of justice and security. Moreover, it will encourage people to want to live, develop, and start families in such a country.

In accordance with Directive 2006/54/EC, each European Union member state is obliged to establish laws that ensure the proper implementation of the above provisions. This results in a division of issues into two levels: the state level, where the country acts as both the enforcer of EU law and the creator of national law for citizens and employers, and the employer level, where employers are responsible for implementing both EU and national legal norms. It is worth emphasizing that "introducing a gender equality system into a country's law is not a sufficient factor for success. For the gender equality system in employment to function properly in a given country, individual enterprises must implement it. Therefore, it is crucial to assign the task of implementing the gender equality system within a company to the appropriate person" (Małgorzata Kochanowicz, "Managing the Gender Equality System in Employment in the context of Information Security", *American International Journal of Business Management*, 2024, Vol. 07, Issue 05, pp 15-18).

For example, since 2006, Poland, as a member of the European Union, has been obliged to create legislation that regulates gender equality in employment in the areas mentioned above. Of course, it has done so by introducing a number of regulations, including the main legal act governing employees' rights — the Polish *Labor Code*, which has been in force since 1974. As of February 2, 1996, Article 11(2) mandates equality between women and men in employment and prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of gender (Article 11(3)). Countries that are not part of the European Union, such as Norway, may govern themselves and regulate gender equality as they see fit, provided they are not bound by

international law through organizations to which they belong. Indeed, according to Section 92 of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway, adopted by the Constitutional Assembly at Eidsvoll on May 17, 1814, "the authorities of the state shall respect and ensure human rights as established by this Constitution and by treaties binding upon Norway". Of course, this is the current wording, as in 1814, when the Norwegian Constitution was adopted, women did not enjoy equal rights with men. At that time, voting rights in Norway were tied to social status, wealth, and gender-specifically male gender. Women were entirely excluded from politics and were treated similarly to farm laborers. Men were regarded as the heads of households and made all decisions, including those regarding their wives' property. Women were first subject to their fathers and, upon marriage, to their husbands. In 1815, only 6.5 percent of the Norwegian population could exercise voting rights, which equated to 40 percent of men (Eirinn Larsen & Lars Fredrik Øksendal, "De glemte kvinne valgene", *Historisk Tidsskrift*, Bd. 12, 2013, p. 568). Currently, Norway does not explicitly incorporate the principle of gender equality in employment into its Constitution. However, §12-8 of the Norwegian *Labor Code* grants breastfeeding women the right to request time off in the form of at least two half-hour breaks during working hours or a reduced workday by up to one hour. Additionally, women are entitled to receive up to one hour's worth of wages during the first year of the child's life on workdays when the agreed working time is at least seven hours. These two entitlements undoubtedly represent the implementation of gender equality in employment. Furthermore, §98 of the Constitution, amended by the Storting on May 13, 2014, states that all people are equal before the law and that no one may be discriminated against. Most importantly, the Kingdom of Norway has guaranteed gender equality in the Gender Equality and Anti-Discrimination Act (Norwegian: *likestilling og diskrimineringsloven*), which aims to promote equality and combat discrimination based on various criteria, including gender and factors related to gender, according to the authors, such as pregnancy, leave due to childbirth, adoption, or gender identity - not only in employment but in all areas of social life. At the very beginning of *Likestilling og diskrimineringsloven*, it is noted that the purpose of this law is to improve the situation of women. It is also worth noting the prohibition of discriminatory treatment based on pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding, and leave associated with childbirth or adoption. This applies to the extension of temporary employment contracts, employment, and dismissal, all of which directly relate to the principle of gender equality in employment (§10). Finally, it is necessary to mention the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement, ratified by Norway, including Annex XVIII on Health and Safety at Work, Labor Law, and Equal Treatment of Men and Women, which directly pertains to gender equality matters that Norway is obligated to uphold.

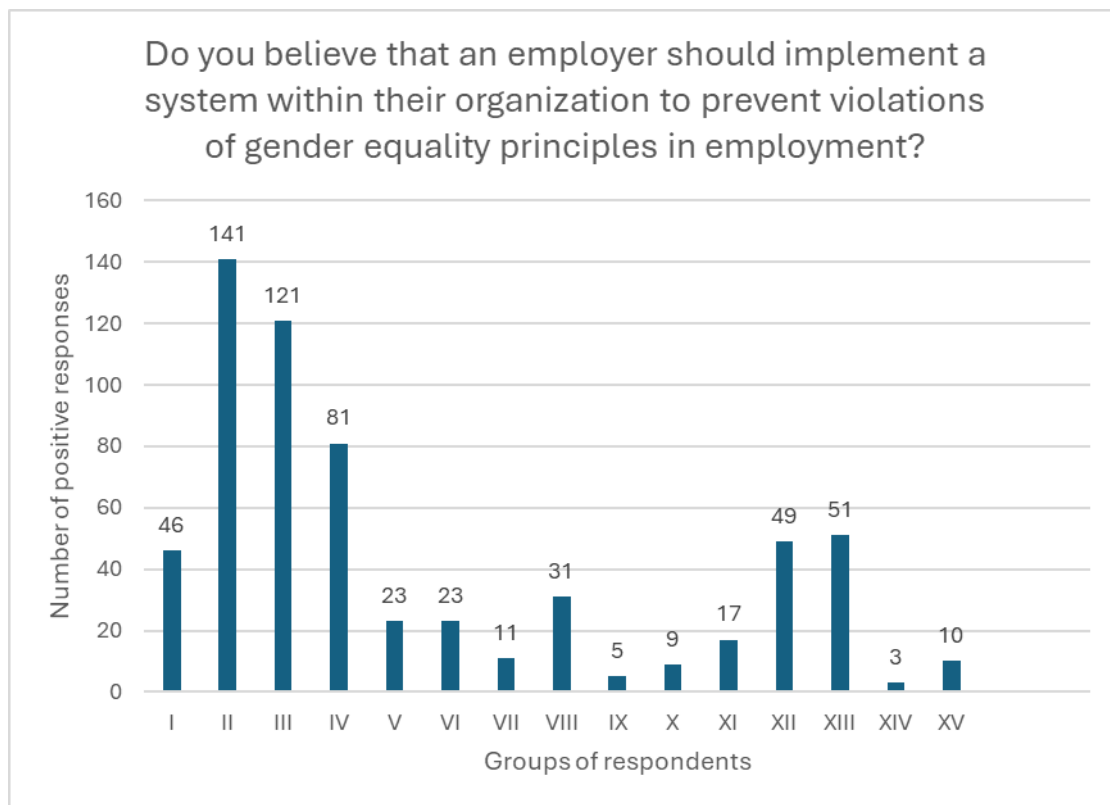
At this point, it is necessary to pose another research question: How are women's earnings compared to men's earnings in Norway? In 2023, the average monthly salary for women employed full-time in all sectors was 52,530 NOK, while for men, it was 59,460 NOK. In 2022, the corresponding salaries were 49,280 NOK for women and 56,250 NOK for men (Statistisk sentralbyrå,

<https://www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/lonn-og-arbeidskraftkostnader/statistikk/lonn> (2024-09-02). Currently, modern societies are examining and highlighting wage disparities between men and women, while also planning ways to close the gap - a prospect that seemed impossible 120 years ago. In 1904, Norwegian Ragna Vilhelmine Nielsen (née Ullmann), when describing the lives of women in the first half of the 19th century, emphasized the unfortunate consequences of patriarchal attitudes for women and pointed out that history was made only by men. She called history "men's history" (Ida Blom, "To women in the year 2000": Norwegians historians of women, c.1900 – c. 1960", *Gender & History*, Vol. 19, 2007, No. 3, pp. 581).

CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE. RESEARCH RESULTS.

At the beginning of 2024, a study was conducted in which respondents were asked an open-ended question: "In your opinion, should an employer implement a system within their organization to prevent violations of gender equality principles in employment?". Respondents were able to answer this question without time constraints and without suggested answers. Their responses were submitted online and varied in length, with some limited to a few sentences and others providing more detailed answers that included side topics but always remained within the scope of gender equality in employment. The question posed was a universal one, not related to the nationality of the respondents, the geographic location of their residence, the laws of the country they live in, or the profession they practice.

Since the respondents provided written answers, expressing their opinions on whether employers should implement a system within their organization to prevent violations of gender equality principles in employment, and often referred to other issues - though always related to gender equality in employment - the authors attempted to systematize the responses. The authors divided the responses into groups and assigned them numbers. Thus, thematic sorting of the responses was conducted. In some cases, a single respondent referred to two or even several issues, so the total number of responses will not equal the number of 193 respondents.



Source: Own analysis based on research results

All respondents indicated that, in their opinion, employers should implement a system within their organization to prevent violations of gender equality principles in employment.

The first group consists of the responses of forty-six individuals who pointed out that the employer should actively work to prevent violations of gender equality principles in employment. Such a system could prevent gender discrimination and eliminate discrimination based on this criterion. An implemented gender equality system in employment would be an expression of the employer's commitment to promoting gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination or unequal treatment. It would help prevent stereotypes and prejudices in the workplace.

The second group comprises the responses of as many as 141 respondents who emphasized the need for equal opportunities among employees in the workplace. This group included responses such as promoting equal opportunities in the workplace, ensuring equal opportunities for all employees, combating social exclusion, providing equal opportunities for all employees regardless of gender, and ensuring equal opportunities for professional and personal development, as well as for promotion. It is important that all employees have equal opportunities and are treated equally. Equal opportunities for professional development should be ensured, and equality should be promoted. Moreover, legal regulations can help build a more balanced and equitable society where everyone has equal

opportunities for professional development and success. Introducing a gender equality system in employment can contribute to improving the situation of women in the labor market, reducing the wage gap, and ensuring equal opportunities for professional development for both genders. A key element in such systems is ensuring equal opportunities for promotion, regardless of gender. Another important aspect is pay equity. This means that the employer should implement a system where wages are based on achievements and acquired professional qualifications, rather than being dependent on the employee's gender. Employers may also introduce a salary verification system that allows for the detection of wage inequalities. Creating an environment that fosters gender equality will ensure fair professional development for all employees. Promoting equal opportunities means actively advocating for equal chances in recruitment, promotions, and access to training and professional development.

The third group of responses, from 121 respondents, focused on the concept of fairness. This group included responses such as: the employer must strive for social justice. It is important that working conditions are fair and that there is a balanced work environment. Justice should be supported, and fair and balanced workplaces should be created. One respondent pointed out that employees who are treated fairly and equally benefit from a healthy work environment. This can help reduce stress and improve the overall mental health of employees. Other respondents emphasized: fair working conditions for all, a more friendly and fair work environment, promoting gender equality as part of contemporary social values that require organizations and society as a whole to actively participate in building a fair and equal reality, a fair and balanced work environment, and a fair and equal workplace. Thanks to the implemented laws, employees can more effectively assert their rights and protect themselves against injustice. Promoting fairness in the workplace and building a more just and balanced society is essential. A significant step that contributes to creating a fair, diversity-respecting work environment is internal organizational law. Other respondents highlighted that fairness matters and that employers should implement a system to counter gender discrimination, which would represent the organization's commitment to creating a safe and fair work environment for all employees to actively combat discrimination. When employees see that their organization cares about equal opportunities and treats them fairly, they are more likely to fully engage in their work. Such actions will promote gender equality in a way that is fair to all parties. It is important to engage in creating a fairer work environment and to establish a work environment that is both fair and inclusive. Transparency in recruitment and promotion processes is key to ensuring objectivity and fairness. Furthermore, it creates a fair and positive work environment. This is a crucial step toward achieving fairness, equality, and efficiency in every workplace. The goal of implementing such a procedure in an organization is to ensure equal participation of women and men, to guarantee social justice, friendly and safe working conditions, equal pay for similar job positions regardless of gender, and to provide education and training for both genders, allowing for the reconciliation of work and personal life. There is no room for inequality, and what matters is a fair and

equal work environment. Efforts should be made to create a fair and equal work environment.

The fourth group of responses relates to fundamental values of individuals, identified by eighty-one respondents. Respondents pointed out dignity and treating employees with respect. Every employee should feel respected and valued. Employers should ensure a sense of safety and make employees feel protected, with the employer demonstrating care for them. Such actions make employees feel more appreciated and perform better, which can result in increased productivity, both individually and for the organization as a whole. Employees should feel more confident knowing that there is a gender equality system in place, and that the company respects it. Employers should build trust between employees and the organization, allowing for better use of their potential. Investing in a healthy work environment fosters employee efficiency and engagement. It is important to build an organizational culture based on respect and dignity. Employers should cultivate a positive culture founded on respect, cooperation, and tolerance. As a result, all of these actions enhance the attractiveness of the workplace. A healthy work environment is crucial. Employers should aim to create an organizational culture based on respect and equal opportunities for all employees. In such an organization, employees are more likely to trust their employer, be more engaged, and remain loyal. This also serves to develop a culture of diversity within the organization, leading to greater innovation and creativity. In a gender equality system, moral responsibility matters most. The introduction of a gender equality system improves the work atmosphere. One respondent noted that unnecessary conflicts at work destabilize productivity and destroy the positive atmosphere among colleagues. The introduction of such a system, with particular emphasis on gender equality in employment, shows that the employer respects and upholds the protection of employee rights as outlined in the Labor Code. This elevates the employer in the hierarchy compared to employers who have not implemented such an anti-abuse system.

The fifth group of responses, consisting of twenty-three respondents, emphasized that the existence of a gender equality system in employment leads to increased work efficiency at companies. Fair treatment of employees regardless of gender contributes to increased motivation and engagement at work, which can enhance team efficiency.

The sixth group of responses, also consisting of twenty-three respondents, highlighted that a gender equality system helps build a positive company image, contributes to organizational success, and increases its innovation and efficiency. Diversity is a key value for a company's success. Implementing a system to prevent violations of gender equality principles can also benefit the company's reputation and attract talent. As a result, the company may be seen as a fair employer, which helps build a positive brand image. An employer with such a system can also protect the company from legal and financial issues related to discrimination. The system helps build a positive company image and attracts top employees. Employers can avoid unwanted legal and reputational consequences,

and instead, the organization can achieve success on many levels. A company with a gender equality system in employment would certainly benefit, according to one respondent. Employers should therefore create more effective, diverse, and inclusive workplaces. Such a system could improve the organization's image as a place that actively cares about fair treatment of employees, regardless of gender, which could attract qualified candidates. Implementing the system, according to some respondents, would reduce the risk of conflicts and lawsuits related to gender equality violations, positively impacting the company's stability and reputation. This system would reduce the risk of employee claims. By implementing such a system, the company could significantly improve its image. By promoting equality, the employer would gain support from both customers and business partners. Such a workplace would be perceived positively, which would attract potential customers and employees. It could also contribute to organizational efficiency and the employer's good reputation.

The seventh group of responses, representing eleven respondents, emphasized that a gender equality system implemented in an organization attracts talented individuals and clients. According to other respondents, such an employer creates a more attractive work environment that will attract diverse talents and skills, regardless of gender. Furthermore, it provides stability and strengthens employee confidence, contributing to increased productivity and accuracy in the work performed. Other respondents noted that a gender equality system attracts talent because organizations that promote gender equality are more appealing to job seekers, which helps in attracting and retaining talented professionals.

The eighth group of responses, represented by thirty-one respondents, indicated that a written equality policy should be introduced in employment, clearly outlining the commitments to prevent discrimination, bullying, and other forms of inequality in the workplace. Such a policy would protect employees from gender discrimination. It should include procedures for responding to incidents of discrimination. One respondent mentioned that, in their opinion, an organizational system for preventing violations of the equality principle is a key step toward change and building a workplace free from discrimination. Transparent and fair recruitment and promotion procedures that eliminate discriminatory factors are important. Employers should establish grievance procedures-setting up effective grievance procedures and promoting them is key to ensuring that employees feel comfortable reporting any violations. The aim of the anti-discrimination policy is to proactively address issues. Procedures, grievances, and reports should provide the employer with a comprehensive view of the current situation. The established rules must be clear. Policies should specify the investigative procedures and the consequences that may result from inappropriate behavior. According to one respondent, all these rules should be written down so that each subordinate knows exactly what stance to take on gender equality and what behavior is expected of them. The employer should define clear and transparent rules for the operation of the system. Clear and accessible procedures for employees within the organization enable them to quickly access guidelines when they have doubts or need to report positive or negative aspects of their work. With these procedures in place,

employees know who to turn to and for what issues. When developing an anti-discrimination policy, it is important to focus on the key features it should have, namely that the policy should be clear, accessible to employees, free from legal jargon, communicated simply, as concise as possible, and include examples of undesirable behavior. Additionally, the policy should guarantee confidentiality in proceedings and care for personal rights. It is crucial to create a policy that ensures swift proceedings and the resolution of cases. After drafting the policy, respondents suggested it is worth organizing mandatory training for all employees to convey the main information and familiarize them with the topic. Moreover, the document must be regularly reviewed, adapted, supplemented, and updated to achieve its goals.

The employer should develop and implement a gender equality policy that clearly defines the principles and values related to equality, prohibits discrimination, and outlines the actions aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all employees.

The employer should also establish clear procedures for filing complaints about gender equality violations and ensure a safe and confidential environment for employees who wish to report such cases. The procedures introduced for reporting incidents of discrimination or sexual harassment allow employees to safely report incidents and ensure an effective organizational response when violations occur.

The ninth group of responses, represented by five respondents, highlighted the importance of safe communication channels in the gender equality system in employment, which would allow employees to report potential cases of discrimination without fear of retaliation. Such channels would ensure the ability to anonymously report conduct that contradicts the company's values.

The tenth group of responses, consisting of nine respondents, noted that in cases where violations of the equality principle are identified, employers should take swift and effective corrective actions. Such an anti-violation system would facilitate the identification of problems and the creation of corrective measures.

The eleventh group of responses, representing seventeen respondents, emphasized the need for engaging leadership and employees at all levels of the organization in building the gender equality system. This is a key element in creating a healthy and sustainable work environment and a strategic step toward building a healthy workplace.

The twelfth group of responses, representing forty-nine respondents, pointed to the necessity of training in the gender equality system. In their view, the training should cover gender equality and anti-discrimination and aim to educate both employees and management. Respondents indicated that introducing educational programs to raise awareness of discrimination and teach employees how to respond to threats, prejudices, and stereotypes would be an effective solution. Training should be tailored to managers and employees at all organizational levels. According to respondents, education is key to raising awareness and building a culture that respects differences and promotes equality. Programs aimed at increasing employees' awareness of gender equality principles could also be developed. These processes would raise employee awareness of the system, help avoid biases, and counter undesirable behaviors.

The thirteenth group of responses, representing fifty-one respondents, identified monitoring as an important element of the gender equality system in employment, related to various areas of monitoring. Respondents pointed out that continuous monitoring is a very important tool that affects the system's effectiveness. Employment and promotions should be monitored. It is crucial that such a system be consistently implemented and monitored to ensure effective actions. Progress in the maturity of employers should be tracked. Organizations should monitor and analyze data regarding pay differences to identify areas for improvement. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of actions taken to promote gender equality are necessary. Employment, wages, and promotions should be monitored with a focus on pay gaps. Regular reporting allows progress to be tracked and areas needing improvement to be identified.

Apart from the groups mentioned above, three respondents highlighted that the gender equality system is a beneficial initiative in terms of employees' mental health. These individuals represent the fourteenth group.

The fifteenth group consists of ten respondents who pointed out that the gender equality system should be promoted in the workplace. Supporting gender equality may also involve promoting work-life balance, flexible working hours, and support programs for parents.

One respondent noted that a system to prevent gender equality violations is an essential tool in today's era of globalization, where the importance of tolerance in business ethics is emphasized at every turn.

One respondent suggested appointing a gender discrimination ombudsman. In their view, this person should be responsible for overseeing the system in detail.

As one European citizen, Ragna Vilhelmine Nielsen, once said, "history was the history of men". At present, "by integrating feminist critiques, we can substantially enrich historical narratives, challenging the traditionally male-dominated perspectives and foregrounding the significant contributions and experiences of women" (Nargizakhan Alimova & Makhfuzakhon Shamsieva, "Evolving Narratives: Intersection of Gender and History", *International Journal of Religion*, 2024, Vol. 5, Number 9, p. 867). Exactly 120 years after this statement, the women of Europe no longer wonder if they will ever have equal rights with men. Today, the subject of discussion is which gender earns more, how to close the pay gap, and, finally, ensuring men are provided with employment rights that protect their fatherhood.

CONCLUSION

The system of gender equality in employment serves as a fundamental guarantor of social security for families. It provides essential protections against discrimination and harassment, while ensuring equal opportunities for both women and men to access employment and receive equitable pay. As a result, citizens experience a heightened sense of security and maintain their dignity.

The implementation of gender equality in the workforce not only accelerates economic growth but also improves the overall economic stability of families. This system safeguards the essential foundations of livelihood, facilitates the

creation of equitable working conditions, and serves as a cornerstone for securing pension rights.

European societies have made considerable strides in establishing gender parity in the labour market. These advancements have been shaped by factors such as geographical context, historical developments, the imperative of economic growth, international agreements, and, most notably, the unwavering determination of women to secure their full rights. While the gender equality system in employment has been successfully implemented across Europe, it continues to undergo rigorous examination and modification in the pursuit of perfection—particularly in closing the gender wage gap, ensuring equal pay for equal work.

The incorporation of gender equality principles into the constitutions and legal frameworks of European nations underscores the profound significance of this issue. As demonstrated by this research, the system of gender equality in employment is not only a key driver of social equity but also a critical safeguard for the well-being and security of families.

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SUMMARY

This publication presents the topic of gender equality with a focus on employment. First, attention is drawn to the impact of gender equality in employment on family security. An attempt is made to place this issue in contemporary realities. A review of the key legislation of the European Union and Norway regulating gender equality in employment is conducted, which provides an opportunity to identify differences in legal regulation and allows for the thematic grouping of issues regulated by these provisions. The historical context of gender equality in Europe is also examined. The paper employs simple theoretical methods, including analysis, synthesis, inference, classification, and generalization. The results of interviews conducted among residents of a selected EU member state are also presented. These individuals responded to an open-ended question, providing insight into how European citizens perceive the gender equality system in employment. The use of an open-ended question allowed respondents to express themselves freely, without time constraints or suggested answers. This scientific article is a universal study that can be utilized by people regardless of their place of residence. It addresses a global and timely issue. The article has a practical aspect, as it serves employers, a historical aspect by recalling figures and events that have influenced the gender equality system, and an international aspect, as it references the legal regulations of a selected international organization. According to the authors, the article encourages reflection on the issue of gender equality and could serve as a prompt for further changes in this area.

Keywords: social security, family, gender equality, challenges, social justice.