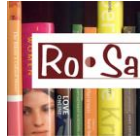




THE TAVISTOCK INSTITUTE



CEET
CENTRO DE ESTUDIOS
ECONÓMICOS TOMILLO



b-tu
Brandenburgische
Technische Universität
Cottbus - Senftenberg



**FINAL CONFERENCE “Strategies against Gender Pay Gapping”,
of the project “ Gender Pay Gap: New Solutions to an old problem”**

June 8th 2016, in Zagreb, Croatia

Introduction speech of Ombudsperson for Gender Equality

Gender Pay Gap

I am honored to participate at the closing conference and to meet with all these diverse partners from different parts of Europe who worked on the same or similar projects and who can therefore provide us with useful insights and proposals of „*new solutions for an old problem*“.

You have probably already heard this sentence: *‘You better pay me or I’m going to go public’*. This is the sentence that actress Robin Wright told the producers of the Netflix series ‘House of Cards’. Her aim was simple: she wanted to be paid the same amount as her male co-star Kevin Spacey. Also, many of you recall the speech of another actress, Patricia Arquette who spoke of gender equality and the wage gap between men and women while accepting her award at the Oscars on Sunday. She said: *“To every woman who gave birth to every taxpayer and citizen of this nation, we have fought for everybody else’s equal rights, it’s our time to have wage equality once and for all and equal rights for women in the United States of America.”*

Now, it is clear that we are not actresses and that our salaries are much lower than salaries of actresses in Hollywood. So, what is the situation on average labor market?

For example, *The Wall Street Journal* reported earlier this year that the pay gap is so dangerous that **women earn less than men in 439 major occupations**.

Pay gap is an important issue that must not be neglected because, once it exists on the labor market, it is later transferred into the gap in pensions of women and men. On May 26th, the European Parliament passed a resolution on poverty: a gender perspective in which it clearly stated that Eurostat data show that the number of women in poverty remains permanently higher than that of men, with currently some 64,6 million women as against 57,6 million men and that poverty has impacts differently on women and on men. It also states that the pension gap averages 39 % as a result of the imbalances created by persistent inequalities in terms of wages and access to employment, discrimination, and the pay gap between men and women in the labor market. This pension gap represents an obstacle to women's economic independence and is one of the reasons why women find themselves falling below the poverty line as they grow older.

The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality receives citizens' complaints about discrimination on the basis of sex, marital and family status, maternity and sexual orientation. It acts in an independent manner and monitors the enforcement of the Gender Equality Act and other regulations on gender equality. We investigate the cases of violation of the principles of gender equality, among other fields also in the field of labor and employment.

Therefore, on the basis of thousands of complaints received in the past few years, year after year, the majority of complaints are related to the field of employment and social security. In 2015 the percentage of complaints related to labor, employment and social security was 51.5%, most of them were submitted by women (79.7%) who complained about sexual harassment at work, fixed-term contracts, discrimination based on motherhood, family status, unequal pay and the like.

Our analysis of the data published in 2015 by the Croatian Bureau for Statistics showed that the average gross salary in Croatia was 7.926 HRK. The share of an average salary of women was 89.8% in an average salary of men, which means that the pay gap slightly increased in comparison with the previous year when the share of an average salary of women in an average salary of men was 90.2%. Regarding the pay gap shown by the newest available data, on average men annually earn gross of 10.382 HRK (in 2014 - 9.708 HRK) more than women,

i.e. 1.3 average Croatian gross salary more. **The pay gap in 2015 between men and women was 10.2%.**

Although women are the majority of Croatian population and around 60% of highly educated people are **women**, they **receive higher average wages in only 3 labor market areas (health and social care, education, finance and insurance)**.

The main reasons for gender pay gap can be found in persistent sex-based horizontal and vertical segregation of manpower in the labor market. Jobs on the labor market are still divided as *male* or *female*. Out of 19 industry branches, women were extremely or significantly under-represented in 8 areas and slightly under-represented in other 8.

Trends which additionally contribute to gender inequality in the labor market are: (1) An increase of the number of the fixed-term contracts and (2) An increase of the number of the contracts with partial (incomplete) working hours.

The Ombudsperson for Gender Equality continuously issues warnings about the fixed-term contracts becoming a rule instead of an exception as the law sees it. We also conducted researches concerning the status of pregnant women and women with small children in the labor market. We fought and won against institutionalized discrimination of pregnant women by the Croatian Institute for Health Insurance. We point out the importance of shared responsibilities for children and family between men and women and we speak against gender stereotypes which contribute and perpetuate sex divided professions in the labor market.

Allow me to say that in the past two years we succeeded to acquire funds in the amount of 700.000 Euro from two EU programmes: (1) Progress and (2) Rights Equality and Citizenship Programme. Within the EU Progress project “Dismantling the Glass Labyrinth – Equal opportunity Access to Economic Decision-making in Croatia” we conducted four studies. One of them was the study of employers' perception of benefits entailed by gender balance in business decision-making. Study results showed that 98.25% participants thought that gender disbalance existed in Croatia on managerial positions (boards, managing boards, supervisory boards).

Another study, about businesswomen's perception of the barriers to career advancement to top-level positions in Croatia, showed that 33.33% of women

found themselves in situations in which they were asked who was taking care of their children and families if they had to work, or worked longer hours or were promoted. Also, 26.67% of the participants met with the situation in which the position was reserved for men, while 8.33% faced the disapproval of the superiors when they told them they were pregnant, or were degraded when they came back from maternity leave.

One of the most significant tasks within the project was to create the Database of Business Women in Croatia, the database of women qualified for top-level decision-making positions, the first of its kind in the region. We have had a great response from a number of businesses and the database with the first members was publicly presented in March 2016. With this database, we have made a powerful source of information for Croatian employers and employers from the surrounding region looking for women candidates for top-level positions.

Our new project men „In Pursuit of Full Equality between Men and Women: Reconciliation of Private and Family Life“ includes a set of raising awareness and training activities designed to increase the capacity of the local governments to plan, budget and promote policies increasing support to women and men pursuing more effective balance between their professional and private lives.

It is important to emphasize that gender pay gap reflects ongoing discrimination and inequalities in the labor market which, in practice, mainly affect women.

Therefore, allow me to say that I fully support this project in which the institution of the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality also participated recognizing its importance and hoping that new solutions to an old problem can and will be found.

Thank you.



GENDER WAGE WATCHERS

The EU informal Network - Gender Wage Watchers is formed by partners on the project from Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Germany, Spain and Sweden who are trying to find solutions to close the gender pay gap, one of the most known discriminatory practices in the labour world.



This project is funded by the PROGRESS Programme of the European Union

