

Gender Equality Index The way forward

Online discussion report





Gender Equality Index A new driver for social change?

Online discussion report



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Introduction

In 2013, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) launched the Gender Equality Index (GEI). The need for the Gender Equality Index was initially introduced by the European Commission in the Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006–10. The EIGE was assigned the task of constructing a composite indicator on gender equality that reflects the multifaceted reality of gender equality, and is specifically tailored towards the policy framework of the European Union (EU) and Member States. The work on the development of the Gender Equality Index for Europe started in 2010 and the results were officially launched at an EU conference in Brussels on 13 June 2013.

The Gender Equality Index relies on a trustworthy statistical methodology. In spite of the scarcity of data, stringent criteria are applied to the gender indicators, requiring that variables are available and comparable across all Member States. The computation of the Gender Equality Index avoided subjective decisions in the way a weighting and aggregation method for the index was selected. The process relied on a computation of more than 3 000 alternatives in order to choose the best and most robust index.

The index report presents scores for each Member State and an EU average, enabling a detailed assessment of how close the EU and Member States have come to achieving gender equality in each of the critical domains (work, money, health, power, time and knowledge), and within the EU policy agenda. With an average score of 54.0 (where 1 stands for absolute gender inequality and 100 for full gender equality), the European Union is only halfway towards a gender-equal society.

The Gender Equality Index is not a static tool. The intention is to build on the current index by exploring potential new indicators, by filling the empty satellite domains, and by researching ways of linking the gender indicators to other economic and social indicators to reveal new information to guide policymaking. With this in mind, on 14 and 15 October 2013, EIGE held an online discussion to engage with experts — researchers, statisticians and those who use statistical indicators in their work — in an open and inclusive exchange of views on the Gender Equality Index and how it might be both broadened and deepened.

Organisation

Invitations were sent to the general database provided by EIGE with around 1 200 contacts.

The online discussion ran for two days, from 14 to 15 October 2013, and was divided into four sessions. Participants were invited to comment on several issues concerning the Gender Equality Index.

- Session 1: Gender-based violence
- Session 2: Intersecting inequalities
- Session 3: Increasing the scope of measuring gender equality
- Session 4: Improvements to the current structure of the index.



Participation

The online discussion platform was visible to all visitors. Participation broadly covered geographical and organisational sectors across the EU. The body of respondents to the online discussion came from academia, civil society organisations, organisers (EIGE and *Cultura Lavoro srl*) and expert networks.

Nearly 50 people registered for this online event and 20 shared comments, documents, examples and experiences related to the topics for discussion. During the discussion, a total of 84 messages were posted by different participants. The discussion was conducted in English. Additional statistics and information concerning the online discussion can be found in Annex II and Annex III.

Background

Gender equality is a value in its own right, not just a means to other ends. Nevertheless, in the last decades, gender equality policies in the European Union (EU) have been motivated by a plethora of political concerns related to increasing participation in the labour market and reducing social costs.

The EU implements a two-pronged approach for gender equality policies on the basis of the specific and often different needs and interests of women and men. On the one hand, the strategy of gender mainstreaming integrates the awareness of these different needs and interests into all policies, programmes, projects and institutional structures and procedures. On the other hand, inequalities are also addressed through gender-specific measures involving women and men, either separately or together or through measures designed explicitly to overcome inequalities. Mainstreaming can include gender-specific actions where necessary.

In the past few years, different actors in the EU have committed to serious efforts to tap into the benefits of gender equality at different levels and in different dimensions as a political advocacy strategy through the economic case for gender equality; the business case for gender equality in private companies; and on a personal level through the work on stereotypes. However, the discussions around the outcomes of gender equality go beyond the economic effects of equal access of women to the labour market, which have tended to dominate policy-thinking in the EU. They are concerned with the broader concept of quality of life of individuals, societies, families and communities. In this area, the Gender Equality Index has an important role to play by providing hard numbers that are harmonised, pan-European and measure a wide range of outcomes.

The Gender Equality Index provides a synthetic measure of gender equality that is both easy to understand and to communicate. This tool should play an important role by supporting decision-makers in assessing how far a given Member State is from reaching gender equality. The use of the index enables meaningful comparisons to be made between different policy areas. Last but not least, it will give visibility to gender equality by making it possible to measure its progress over time. In response to the shortcomings of other gender equality indices, the Gender Equality Index provides a more comprehensive framework. In line with the EU's framework on gender equality for both women and men, it adopts a gender approach rather than focusing on women's empowerment. Moreover, the Gender Equality Index benefited from the consultation process with EU Member States' national statistics offices and with the experts from their national authorities. Their contribution has given important added value to the index.

In line with its policy foundations, the objectives of the Gender Equality Index are not only to measure gender equality throughout the Member States and the EU, but also to allow an analysis of gender equality both over time and geographical areas; to give more visibility to the situation of women and men in the Member States overall and in selected areas of concern for gender equality; and to support the evaluation of the degree of effectiveness between different measures and policies implemented in the field of gender equality at EU level.



Summary of the discussion

Session 1: Gender-based violence

Guiding questions

- *As part of its work programme, the institute needs to develop the area of violence. What indicators related to gender-based violence, norms, attitudes and stereotypes should be included?*
- *How can the empty domain be used as a driver to collect data, produce and disseminate statistics on these forms of gender-based violence?*

Main conclusions

Accurate and comprehensive data on gender-related violence is needed and is crucial for spreading awareness among men and women. International recommendations on gender violence are available, in particular the Istanbul Convention and the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Within the index, both direct and indirect indicators are needed, including those covering norms, stereotypes and attitudes that are at the root of much violence against women. Monitoring of the media by keywords was suggested as one way of measuring attitudes that would be easier than public attitude surveys. As well as the effect on women, it is also important to reveal what gender-related violence is doing to men.

The multidimensional nature of gender-based violence was highlighted, as well as the importance of understanding how young generations are 'educated into it' by their environments. The normalisation of stereotypes and behaviours through the media, and in particular social media, is linking gender-based violence to self-harm, self-objectification and unhealthy ideals. For these reasons among others, much daily gender-based violence will never enter the crime statistics, as it is not considered criminal by much of society. Indicators of well-being were suggested as a possible way of gaining (indirect) insights into the multidimensional nature of violence.

Surveys were proposed as the best way to collect data at present, but they may not be enough, as victims often lack a secure environment in which to speak frankly about their experiences. Much attention must be paid to the safety and security aspects of communications between respondents and questioners. Harmonised indicators are needed and developing these requires the identification of sources as part of a dynamic process involving the Member States.

Session 2: Intersecting inequalities

Guiding questions

The satellite domain of intersecting inequalities provides opportunities to add new perspectives to the overall Gender Equality Index. What areas in this domain should be prioritised?

- *What are the potential indicators?*
- *What data needs to be collected, and what statistics produced and disseminated to capture different intersectional groups?*

Main conclusions

While many Member States are collecting data, this is not an easy task and it has financial costs — so it is a long-term effort. The inter-generational transmission of violence was raised as an example of a current investigation in one Member State, as were social class and overall economic inequalities as indicators that could be informative when related to gender-based ones. Social class is often pushed into the background, however investigations into its interactions with gender indicators might reveal what kinds of policies could benefit the less well-off.

Age and educational attainment influence many other fields and their correlations with economic activity could be an interesting indicator to consider, in particular in combination with other multiple disadvantages, such as being unemployed, being poorly qualified, or having older family members to look after. It was noted that interactions between social class and gender could vary a lot from country to country. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) indicators were mentioned as a good starting point.



Session 3: Increasing the scope of measuring gender equality

Guiding questions

- *Is there scope to add some satellite accounts to the structure of the Gender Equality Index?*
- *What is currently missing in the Gender Equality Index in its measure of gender equality?*
- *What indicators are available and should be considered for measuring the missing aspects?*

Main conclusions

Specific suggestions were made for satellite accounts for health, non-profit institutions, social economy and volunteer work. The existing indicator of access to dental health, being part of the health domain, was criticised for its lack of relevance — given that access to reproductive and sexual health services is more important for gender equality. Some hope was expressed that in the future this will be taken up in the Gender Equality Index, using reproductive health, reproductive rights, sexual health and sexual rights as components. This view was strongly supported by some participants.

Whether men and women regard gender topics from the same viewpoint — such as the value attached to having a job — was raised as an argument for including more subjective, softer indicators. In support of this it was pointed out that the decision to work part-time can either be a deliberate and convenient choice in some cases, or the result of gender discrimination in other cases.

Proposals were made for indicators for two new satellite accounts: social economy and health. For the latter, indicators might include residential care facilities or provision of public health programmes. Contraception, access to abortion and maternal morbidity were also raised as possible indicators for a reproductive and sexual health satellite account. Gender equality in science is also a possible extension for the index — given the EU's reliance on science and technology in the Horizon 2020 initiative to improve well-being and prosperity for all.

Session 4: Building for the future

Guiding questions

- *In the current structure, work–life balance is not measured as part of quality of work. Furthermore, two sub-domains remain empty — health behaviour and social power. What potential indicators could fill these gaps?*
- *What technical difficulties are there and how can they be overcome?*

Main conclusions

Suggestions for better indicators to measure access to health included health expenditure/gross domestic product (GDP), per capita expenditure, and private expenditure as a proportion of total expenditure, among others. It was emphasised that any improvements should embed flexibility into the Gender Equality Index as the complexity of intersecting inequalities means the index should remain open to development in many directions. The inclusion of well-being indicators based on self-care was suggested — for example, by balancing male prostate cancer figures against breast cancer to investigate possible gaps. The use of free time and statistics and attitudes towards obesity were also suggested as a part of well-being.

There was criticism about the relevance of the Gender Equality Index, and emphasis was placed on including reproductive health — as being at the centre of real development and progress. One comment mentioned that a focus on women in science or women on company boards cannot hope to be transformative. Indicators on 'female entrepreneurship' can be a useful area for investigation — the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has developed opinions on this — possibly as part of a 'social power' domain. Reference was made to an EESC study, Data for the evaluation of the European Semester Process from a gender equality perspective, which proposes a number of new indicators. Another EESC study on women in political decision-making and the role of new media demonstrates that women are just as engaged as men in political activities, but in different areas — this might be interesting to capture in an indicator that would avoid male behaviour being always taken as the norm. Examples of gender violence indicators were also presented as a contribution to a possible new satellite account.



Experts' contributions and key issues

Session 1: Gender-based violence

On the need for direct and indirect indicators

“I suggest identifying all kinds of violence including in gender violence and affecting both women and men: sexual harassment, sexual violence and rape; physical, sexual and psychological abuse at the hands of intimate partners; and forced sterilisation of women, female genital mutilation and forced abortion; and human trafficking.” Maria José Carrilho

“I feel it is very important to look at the multidimensional aspects of gender-based violence and the need to look at it from different angles. We also have to look at how gender-based violence is learned and how specifically the young generation is “educated into it”. This affects both men and women. In this, my experience is that we have to look at the normalisation of violence specifically with youth through the media. Today, violence is very complex and there is not always a clear victim/perpetrator relationship.” INDERA Gender Consultancy

“I also think that it is very important to make the broader public understand that gender-based violence is affecting both men and women, by giving clear examples. So, we need indicators that measure the extent of the phenomenon, as Anne said, about the direct and indirect forms of gender-based violence (not just violence against women), and indicators that measure the EU response to the problem.” INDERA Gender Consultancy

On monitoring the media

“I believe the setting-up of keyword monitoring and relevant data collection for online media is possibly much easier than opinion surveys; for example the correlation of discussing victims' clothing/make-up and other forms of shaming in the articles related to violence.” Dace Kavasa

On the problems with victim surveys

“For me a very important thing is to secure such a condition, which makes the communication between respondents and the questioner possible. And also to find a way to persuade the victim that the conversation is safe. It is a very important step.” Marek Řezanka

“Surveys are not enough. I work with surveys as a Hearing from the Field partner and I have noticed that this frightens the victims. I think it is better with Skype interviews where you directly let the victims speak about their experiences.” Christina Andersson

“In Portugal we are working with administrative sources to collect information on violence based on gender. This information is collected by security forces and it is related to reported cases. We know that perhaps data are under-evaluated or over-evaluated, if the same person reports the crime twice, for instance.” Maria José Carrilho

Session 2: Intersecting inequalities

“Our ministry is starting an investigation on the background and possible prevention of inter-generational transmission of violence. I think this is an aspect that could be considered here as well.” Joella van Rijn

“The main issue is to see how other social factors distinct from gender can exacerbate or ameliorate gender-related inequalities. The index currently looks at migration, age and lone parenthood. I should have thought that social class would also be an important factor to examine. I wonder if there is also a place for building in something that reflects the overall degree of economic inequality in a country, though I am not sure if this counts conceptually as an intersecting inequality.” John Baker

“I think that the most important factors are age and educational attainment. Also very important (if it is possible to collect such sort of data) is the number of dependent children [...] Why? Because the differences by age and educational attainment are mostly basic — they tell us what influences many things.” Marek Řezanka



“I would reiterate the issue of social class because I think this is often pushed to the background. I also expect that the interaction of class and gender varies a lot from country to country depending on the wider set of social arrangements and institutions, in ways that would help to reveal, in particular, what kinds of policy reduce gender inequality for working class people.’ John Baker

“In my opinion age and education are very important factors as Marek infers. However, health, the risk of poverty and immigrant status are also relevant. In Portugal it is not possible to collect data about race and ethnicity.’ Maria José Carrilho

Session 3: Increasing the scope of measuring gender equality

“I suggest adding information provided by the following satellite accounts:

- health satellite account;
- non-profit institutions satellite account
- social economy satellite account
- survey on volunteer work 2012.

The national accounts are based on the rules defined by the European system of national and regional accounts.’

Maria José Carrilho

“We know that there is no gender equality without access to reproductive and sexual health. This is acknowledged by various indices, like the Gender Empowerment Measure, and the Gender Inequality Index. How come, that in the current hostile political climate towards reproductive health at the EU level (and with the Cairo and Beijing review approaching) you decided not to measure reproductive health? Is there a chance that you will be moving towards including this important area in the future index?’ Barbara

“As regards specific indicators for the area of health, they should cover at least four different components: reproductive health, reproductive rights, sexual health and sexual rights. This would ensure that each aspect of SRHR [sexual and reproductive health and rights] and cross-cutting gender empowerment indicators will be adequately covered.’ Barbara

“I would like to raise a more subjective domain, namely the opinions that men and women have about gender topics. For instance, do men and women attach the same value to having a job/taking care of the household, etc.? I think that not only the “hard” figures (labour participation, education level, etc.) say something about gender equality, but also the “softer” ones. If policy is only based on gender inequalities that are measured in the index, but women still want to work part-time, then equality in, for example, labour participation/income from work will probably not be reached.’ Statistics Netherlands

“I come from the gender equality field, concentrating on social inclusion, and I second Barbara’s point about gender equality depending on full access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.’ Veronika Bartha Toth

“Among the “missing” aspects (as I would call indicators that extend the Gender Equality Index to other domains of gender equality) it is of paramount importance to have indicators on gender equality in science!’ Doina Balahur

“In order to make the index useful, it is necessary to focus on access to SRHR. Measuring progress related to reproductive health and reproductive rights in Member States will contribute to general assessments of the situation. Areas of contraception, pregnancy and childbirth-related mortality and morbidity, abortion and reproductive cancers should be included in the relevant sections of the index (under access to health). Further, sexual health and sexual rights remain critical (especially progress in the key areas of STIs [sexually transmitted infections] and HIV/AIDS [human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immune deficiency syndrome], adolescent sexual rights and sexual rights).’ Veronika Bartha Toth

“First of all, I congratulate EIGE on the elaboration of the Gender Equality Index. The five fields that the index has now allow tracing the portrayal of gender equality in Europe; but in my opinion it is necessary to study the two satellites, primarily with regard to violence against women. The empowerment of women and of their sexual and reproductive rights should also be taken into account in the index.’ Tiago Landreiras

“Maternal mortality and morbidity, pregnancy and childbirth-related, should also be addressed separately (maternal mortality ratio, access to information and services, antenatal and post-natal care, antenatal care coverage, skilled health-attendants at birth) and so on.’ Barbara



Session 4: Improvements to the existing structure of the index

“ *‘For access to health, I would like to suggest a very basic set of indicators encompassing actual access to health in the situation of economic crisis:*

- *total expenditure on health as percentage of gross domestic product,*
- *general government expenditure on health as percentage of total expenditure,*
- *per capita total expenditure on health (PPP international EUR),*
- *general government expenditure on health as percentage of total government expenditure,*
- *private expenditure on health as percentage of total expenditure on health,*
- *out-of-pocket expenditure as percentage of private expenditure on health.’* Barbara

“ *‘I would like to comment on the topic, yesterday, of intersectionalities. I think it is very important to leave their flexibility for indicators as we cannot limit this domain to certain intersectionalities and not to others. Intersectionalities have often a processual character and are acting out in diverse constellations, so it needs to be open to further development. On the other hand, I would like to comment on the sub-domain health behaviour. We do need indicators on well-being based on the level of self-care. If we look at statistics we see for example that in some countries more men die each year from prostate cancer than women from breast cancer and this taking into consideration that prostate cancer is almost 100 % curable if detected at an early stage. So if we look then at the statistics of men going to medical check-ups we can see that a high percentage of men never visit a doctor.’* INDERA Gender Consultancy

“ *‘Hopefully, with two important anniversaries (Beijing and Cairo) EIGE will get inspired to use its wonderful potential to concentrate on research that is relevant for EU citizens. Additional impulse will be hopefully provided by a new post-2015 development agenda [...] SO my wish, for EIGE and myself as researcher and activist, and woman, so a potential beneficiary of gender equality, would be a new RELEVANT index for Europe and beyond.’* Veronika Bartha Toth

“ *‘There is a glass ceiling in the academia, but overall women are better educated, starting from primary to tertiary level of education. Of course, it may be the case that, for a political tool, like the index there is a need to show off the good results. But again, this should not be a topic for research hoping to be transformative. For that it is necessary to start with access to health (especially reproductive), decision-making (political especially) and later move to women on boards.’* Veronika Bartha Toth

“ *‘Under the domain “work”, it would be useful to develop an indicator to measure “female entrepreneurship”’* Judite

“ *‘I am just jumping in at the very last moment to refer to a study that we produced on request of the FEMM committee of the European Parliament on “Data for the Evaluation of the European Semester process from a gender equality perspective”. In this study, the experts are proposing a number of indicators which still have to be built, either from scratch or by combining existing data which could be interesting for developing the Gender Equality Index further.’* Erika Schuze



Annex I — Resources

List of resources made available on the EuroGender platform during the discussion

Written materials

1. The Gender Equality Index Report
The Report gives the background, structure, methodology and results of EIGE research. The Gender Equality Index gives a comprehensive map of gender gaps in the EU and across Member States based on the EU policy framework.
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-equality-index-report>
2. Gender Equality Index Country Profiles
The Country Profiles is a complementary publication to the main Gender Equality Index Report. It provides the Gender Equality Index scores and gives supplemental comparable information on each Member State and the EU-27 overall, offering a snapshot of national contexts.
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-equality-index-country-profiles>
3. Gender Equality Index — Leaflet
The Gender Equality Index in a nutshell
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-equality-index-leaflet>
4. Gender Equality Index — Main findings
This publication summarises in an easy-to-comprehend manner the main results of EIGE's work of the past 3 years on a synthetic measure of gender equality.
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/document/gender-equality-index-main-findings>
5. Gender Equality Index Video
The Gender Equality Index explained in five minutes
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/activities/gender-equality-index>
6. The Gender Equality Index Interface
The interactive, online presentation of the results of the Gender Equality Index – in graphics and tables, including by country and domain.
<http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index>

Additional references provided by participants

1. The Council of Europe: the Istanbul Convention
http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/convention-violence/about_en.asp
2. Eurostat: EU labour force survey
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/EU_labour_force_survey_-_methodology
3. EESC opinion: Female entrepreneurs
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.25254>
4. EESC opinion: Gender balance on company boards
<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.soc-opinions.25244>
5. European Parliament: Data for the Evaluation of the European Semester Process from a Gender Equality Perspective
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/studies.html?action=3&tab=last#menuzone>

Annex II — Transcript

Link to the online discussion transcript

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/documents/gender-equality-index-way-forward-transcript>



Annex III — List of participants

Name	Organisation	Country
Anna Rita Manca	EIGE	Lithuania
Anne Laure Humbert	EIGE	Lithuania
Barbara Finta	Researcher and activist on women's human rights	Hungary
Buddha Dharma	Buddha Dharma	Slovenia
Caroline Bouquerel	Committee of the Regions (CoR)	Belgium
Christina Andersson	World Peace and Spirituality conference in association with World Peace Foundation and VoWW Voices of Women	Belgium
Dace Kavasa	Independent expert	Latvia
Doina Balahur	Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Romania, Centre for Social Management and Community Development	Romania
Erika Schulze	European Parliament	Belgium
Gada Ezat Azam	Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs	Norway
Joella van Rijn	Direction on Gender and LHBT Equality, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science	Netherlands
John Baker	University College Dublin Equality Studies Centre	Ireland
Katarzyna Pabijanek	EIGE	Lithuania
Marek Řezanka	Independent expert	Czech Republic
Maria José Carrilho	Instituto Nacional de Estatística (INE)	Portugal
Maria Judite Berkemeier	EESC	Belgium
Marion van den Brakel-Hofmans	Statistics Netherlands	Netherlands
Rachel Andras	INDERA Consultoría de Género	Spain
Richard Colston	ESN	Belgium
Sieglinde Stockinger	Federal chancellery	Austria
Tiago Landreiras	Independent expert	Portugal
Veronika Bartha Toth	Researcher and lecturer	Hungary

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<https://youtube.com/user/eurogender>

<http://eige.europa.eu/newsletter>

<http://eurogender.eige.europa.eu/>





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