

CONSEQUENCES OF GENDER CONCEPTUALISATIONS IN CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Dôsledky rodových konceptualizácií v kontexte kultúry

Abstract: *The paper deals with the issue of gender in/equality and its causes from a cultural perspective. It describes the cultural background of gender differentiation (gender ideology) and defines the key terms based on the relevant documents of global and European institutions. The author identifies and characterises the most important areas of gender inequality that may have detrimental consequences for the economic prosperity of people. The examination of data extracted from the Global Gender Inequality Index Report 2020 provides information about the overall situation in each EU member state concerning gender in/equality and in four sub-areas: Economic Participation and Opportunities, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment. The scores and rankings of the member states are compared and crosschecked with Hofstede's cultural dimension of Masculinity/Femininity and eventually, based on the collected information, the conclusions are drawn.*

Keywords: *gender, culture, gender stratification, gender in/equality, gender inequality index,*

JEL Classification: A12, A13, A19

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1 Introduction

Culture can be characterised as a conceptualisation which incorporates a wide range of sub-domains. It consists of numerous components such as values, beliefs, ethical norms, behavioural patterns, practices, and many other both tangible and intangible elements that influence all aspects of human life (private and/or professional). Looking at a specific culture from the inside, as its member, we usually do not realize its power over our cognitive processes. It is usually in comparison with differences outside our cultural context that we realise that what we consider normal/universal is just one of numerous alternatives worldwide.

Globalisation brings people, economies, and cultures ever closer to each other and the constant pressure on their societal structures leads to certain changes in their specific cultural context. This is a process which has been taking place throughout the history of humanity only nowadays; it is happening more quickly and more visibly due to modern technological advance and interconnectedness of countries, cultures, nations, and individuals.

An equitable society is a goal which most of the democratic countries strive for. Same rights and duties for everybody is a noble goal for both governments and people. But we cannot consider the population as a homogenous group; it is rather an aggregate of various groups (microcultures) tied together by the national – dominant culture. The largest identifiable microculture in any cultural community is the gender group. In our society, there are basically two, quantitatively almost equally large groups of males and females. Narrowing the gap between genders within each cultural community is undoubtedly part of the process of achieving a fair and just society. There exist intensive attempts to cure the most extreme cases of gender stratification worldwide, but humanity is far from achieving a more balanced ground in this respect. Even the most enlightened cultures/societies are still far from full equality of genders despite growing evidence that it can positively influence every aspect of human life including the economic development of the society. In that sense, we strongly agree with Kabeer's statement that "*Macroeconometric studies generally find fairly robust evidence that gender equality has a positive impact on economic growth...*" (2016).

The paper aims to analyse the long and complex process of gradual achievement of gender equality with special attention to the situation within the European

Union and its member states from a cultural perspective. To achieve our goal, we used several research methods. First, we analysed the literature concerning gender research and official documents published by global and European institutions dealing with gender inequality. Then, we used extraction for collecting relevant data concerning the EU member states from the global gender inequality research database. Further, we used a comparison to evaluate the scores and rankings of the member states to search for potential patterns and finally, we applied synthesis for the formulation of conclusions.

2 The cultural mindset

The theoretical framework of the paper is set by defining the key terms. We will start with the definition of gender. Acker defines it as

“patterned, socially produced distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine. Gender is not what we are, in some inherent sense, although we may consciously think of ourselves that way. Rather for the individual and the collective, it is a daily accomplishment... that occurs of participation in work organisations as well as in many other locations and relations.” (1992, p. 250).

The author stresses the impact of cultural expectations that are accepted and taken for granted as norms due to enculturation processes in early childhood. It is a set role each male and female are expected to fulfil. On the other hand, J. Scott considers *gender* to be *“a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between sexes”* (1986, p. 1056). She later pointed out the tendency of covering the originally exclusively feminist researches of female history by a more neutral term of ‘gender’ thus evoking an interpretation of a comparative approach. They both construct their theories on the bio-social foundation of gender differences; the base is set by biological dimorphism of human bodies manifested in the DNA and by different muscular and hormonal construction of a female and male body which divides humanity into two sexes. But it is the culture/society that ascribes certain characteristics and provides behavioural patterns to each sex thus changing them into genders. In consequence, genders are created as an interpretation of normative cultural expectations and accepted relational patterns between sexes (Hrivíková, 2016, p. 153). A number of authors have dealt with the relationship between culture and gender. The scientific community deals with the issue of gender and gender

identity from a philosophical perspective (Porubánová, 2009; Kiczková, 2011; Lukšík, 2016; Jesenková, 2019), sociological and political point of view (Chorvát, 2006; Kulašiková, 2009) both in Slovakia and internationally (Yeganeh, 2011; Reilly, 2012). In addition, the English-based literature approaches the topic from a perspective of both national and organisational cultures. The re-appearing motif of several authors is based on the idea of introducing the gender issues into the top agenda of company strategies and policies (Mills, 1988, p. 352; Barron, 1976; Acker, 1974; Fischer, 2004) to fully utilize the workforce and the market opportunities.

Hierarchical gender relations or *gender stratification* represents a widely accepted form of gender-based discriminatory behaviour, which contradicts the principle of equality, a basic human right in a democratic society. It is manifested in all aspects of life both private and public, in the family, in social customs, in the relative evaluation of men's and women's work, in various cultural institutions and/or religious beliefs. Opportunities accessible for women are more limited in comparison with their male counterparts whether we consider their personal development, educational level, health issues (e.g. limitation of decision-making rights concerning progeny) or economic opportunities. Socially overlooked violence against females is another special area of disparity (Mikkola, 2007). At the same time, an important point is often disregarded within the discourse, that the abovementioned disparity and hierarchy is usually accepted and rarely questioned by both genders within the cultural context, again, as the direct consequence of cultural upbringing. Values are considered to be the core of each culture and they have been developing under the influence of the accepted worldview including religious beliefs.

Most of Europe considers the Judeo-Christian tradition to be one of their cultural and civilizational roots. The Bible, as the holy book of all Christians, paints a clear picture of the two sexes and consequently genders as well. This model forms the basis of the culture's gender ideology. God as the highest power is presented as an elderly male who treats people like naughty children. It is a picture of a strict but loving father who has all the power to punish or reward. The same model is transmitted into the idea of a basic family structure, the father as the undisputed head of the family and the mother following his guidance. On the other hand, the first female figure mentioned in the Bible is Eve who is blamed for the 'original sin'. She is the one who persuaded Adam, the first man, to eat from the prohibited tree of knowledge of good and evil. Due to her, all humanity has been banished from Paradise forever. We can

see a picture of a temptress, a wicked and foolish woman who is therefore condemned to give birth in pain as her punishment. An alternative female figure mentioned in the Bible is represented by the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus. She is set as a paragon of virtue for females in all Christianity-based cultures. A docile, patient, loving and silently suffering woman who never fights back, fulfils her duty as a mother and homemaker and does not demand anything for herself. This is the accepted ideal woman in a society where gender inequality in favour of men is still surviving despite all the social, cultural, and economic changes humanity faced in the last two millennia.

Most of the modern countries claim separation of state from the Church but we cannot ignore the fact that the fundamental values of each culture are strongly related to the dominant worldview which usually involves religious beliefs as well. Therefore, though gender roles have been created and formed by cultural communities in the past under very different conditions, their impact is still visible and perceivable even nowadays.

3 Gender in/equality in the European Union

International institutions such as the United Nations Organisation have formulated their intention to fight any form of breach on human rights including equality of genders. In 1979, the UN adopted the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* which was signed by 189 countries becoming parties to the convention. The document defines *gender inequality* as “...any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” (CEDAW, 1981). Therefore, lack of discrimination can be considered as equality when all people have the same access to power and treat each other with respect and consideration.

3.1 EU policy concerning gender equality

Equality of genders has been one of the key principles since the very beginning of the united Europe project. The establishing the Treaty of Rome of 1957 clearly stated that “each Member State shall ensure that the principle

of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value is applied” (European Community, 1957, p. 6). Ever since the topic of in/equality requires regular revaluation and re-formulation of specific aims. A good example of such practice is shown by the elaboration of a recent document -*Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025* presented by the president of the European Commission Ursula von den Leyen in March 2020. The key strategic objectives for the next five years are chosen as follows:

- *“increasing female labour market participation and economic independence of women and men*
- *reducing the gender pay, earnings and pension gaps and thus fighting poverty among women*
- *promoting equality between women and men in decision-making*
- *combating gender-based violence and protecting and supporting victims*
- *promoting gender equality and women's rights across the world”*

More than thirty concrete actions are proposed to ensure that *“gender equality perspective will be integrated into all EU policies as well as into EU funding programmes”* (European Commission, 2020a, p. 1).

The document challenges the critical manifestations of inequality of genders such as gender-based violence stating that 33% of women in EU have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, 55% have been sexually harassed and are more likely to experience online harassment than men. Further on, according to their findings, women in the EU earn on average 16% less than men per hour, and their pensions are on average 30.1% lower than men's pensions. Further, only 67% of women in the EU are employed, compared to 78% of men, and 75% of unpaid care and domestic work is documented as being done by women. As for equal participation in leading positions and participation in modern society, the document affirms that only 7.5% of board chairs, 7.7% of CEOs, and only 39% of Members of the European Parliament are women (European Commission (b), 2020).

But gender stratification is not only a part of the official agenda of the EU institutions, as the latest special Eurobarometer 465 proves. The citizens of the EU are equally interested, and they consider gender equality an on-

going process which needs the support of both genders. Only 15% of the male respondents compared with 9% of women believe that equality has been ‘definitely achieved’ in their country in politics, 14% of males and 8% of females perceive equality at work, while 20% of women think that in leadership positions in companies and other organisations, equality has not been achieved at all (Eurobarometer, 2017).

3.2 Gender Gap Index

To describe the current state of gender in/equality in the European Union and partly worldwide, we can utilise gender equality indices provided by global organisations like the UNO, World Economic Forum and Eurostat focusing on in/equality both in general and its key sub-areas. We demonstrate the consequences of gender disparity on the member states of the European Union and in the world based on the four major domains where inequality manifests itself clearly: labour market and economic power, healthcare, education, and politics and policymaking. All the above-mentioned areas have a strong impact on and are closely related to the overall economic development of the country. While the link between the formation and development of the labour market and the degree of economic power is quite obvious, we believe that high standard of education for all citizens (including women), excellent healthcare for all, and access to political power are equally decisive in the formation of future economic strategies and potential economic success.

The latest report of the World Economic Forum on Gender Gap was published in 2020. As the preface states: *“None of us will see gender parity in our lifetimes, and nor likely will many of our children. That’s the sobering finding of the Global Gender Gap Report 2020, which reveals that gender parity will not be attained for 99.5 years”* (WEF, 2020, p.1). This remarkable statement is based on the measurements carried out to establish the Gender Gap Index for the 153 participating countries. The report informs that globally, the process of closing the gender gap is still quite slow with an average score of 68.6% meaning that there is still 31.4% gap that remains to be closed though, 149 countries which participated in the previous survey slightly increased their score and reduced the gap. The largest one remains in the political empowerment of genders as only 25% of parliamentary seats are occupied by women meaning that the gap stands at 75%, and women in ministerial positions count for 21% of all appointments, i.e. there is a 79% gap. Equally, only 36% of top managerial

posts are filled by women, i.e. 64% gap, and there are still 85 among the studied countries where there has never been any female head of state (WEF, 2019, p. 5).

The situation on the labour market has slightly deteriorated; the average global wage gap stands at 40%, meaning that women earn 60% of men's wage. In addition, women are strongly disadvantaged in obtaining loans or accessing other financial products. The area of education shows the best results as there are 35 countries where gender parity has been achieved in education. Though, some developing countries still face a 20% gap to be closed (WEF, 2019, p. 10). The Global Gender Gap Report 2020 provides data for each of the abovementioned 153 countries for further study. The World Economic Forum (WEF) studied 153 countries on all continents to identify the gender disparity within each country. The authors assigned the value 1.00 to the local position of men and then established the situation of women relative to men. On an ideally equal footing, the score of the women should be 1.00 as well though, this value appears only rarely and just in some sub-indices as shown below.

3.3 Gender Inequality Index for the EU states

The following tables and graphs show the scores and rankings of the EU member states only. For the purpose of this paper, we focused our attention and extracted the data only for the positions of the EU member states since membership and participation in the EU initiatives for achieving gender parity means that all states envisage and strive for similar outcomes. The first table presents the overall scores of the 27 countries with their ranking among the 153 studied cultures/countries. For a cultural perspective, we combined the data retrieved from the Gender Inequality Gap research with Hofstede's cultural dimensions study. We added his dimension of Masculinity/Femininity as the most relevant one concerning the gender roles assigned to males and females by their cultures. According to Hofstede, masculine cultures differentiate the gender roles of men and women as opposed to feminine cultures where gender roles tend to overlap to a certain degree (Hofstede, 1991, p. 82). Among the 27 member states, there are 15 predominantly feminine cultures, 11 masculine cultures and 1 which stands exactly between them.

Table 1: EU member states - Gender Gap Index- overall results

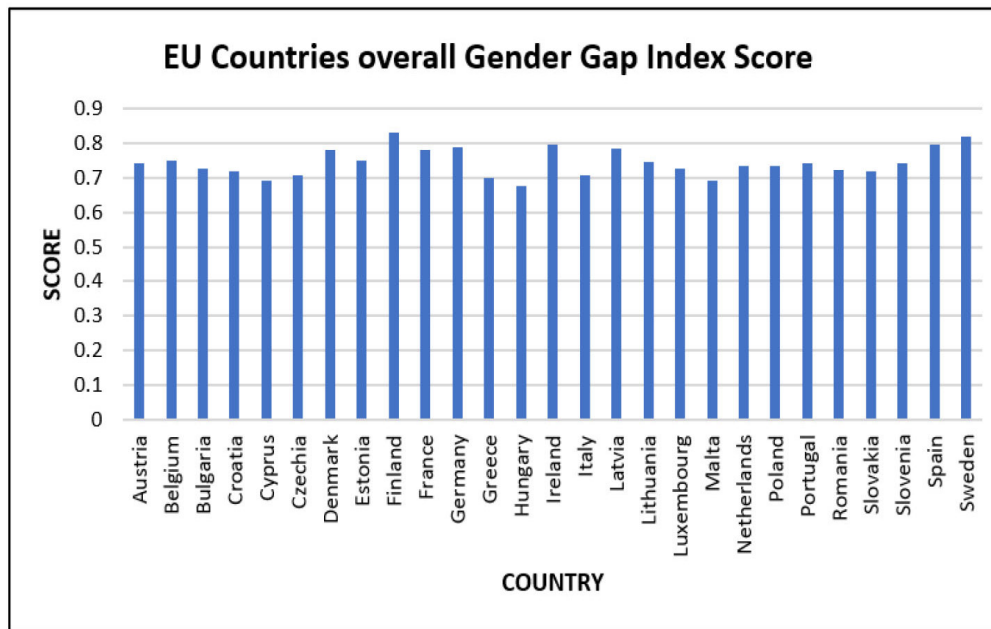
Country	Score	Rank	M/F
Austria	0.744	34	M
Belgium	0.750	27	M
Bulgaria	0.727	49	F
Croatia	0.720	60	F
Cyprus	0.692	91	M ²
Czechia	0.706	78	M
Denmark	0.782	14	F
Estonia	0.751	26	F
Finland	0.832	3* ³	F
France	0.781	15	F
Germany	0.787	10	M
Greece	0.701	84	M
Hungary	0.677	105	M
Ireland	0.798	7*	M
Italy	0.707	76	M
Latvia	0.785	11	F
Lithuania	0.745	33	F
Luxembourg	0.725	51	M/F
Malta	0.693	90	F
Netherlands	0.736	38	F
Poland	0.736	40	M
Portugal	0.744	35	F
Romania	0.724	55	F
Slovakia	0.718	63	M
Slovenia	0.743	36	F
Spain	0.795	8*	F
Sweden	0.820	4*	F

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Insight Report (WEF, 2019) and (Hofstede, 1994, p. 79)

² Cyprus does not have its own dimension score, based on cultural similarity; usually, the Greek characteristics are used (Stylianou et al., 2012).

³ Countries with TOP10 ranking

Figure 1: Overall scores of the EU member states



Source: Author’s elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019)

As visible from the Table 1, even the best-placed Finland scored only 0.832 meaning that in comparison with the position of men (score 1.00), women of Finland still lag by nearly 17% in the overall results. Out of the 27 member states, only 4 achieved the Top10 position, namely Finland 3rd, Sweden – 4th (0.820), Ireland 7th (0.798) and Spain 8th (0.795) position. Hungary, the worst placed member state earned only 105th place with a score of 0.677, which is only a little more than 2/3 (or 67%) of the men’s position in the country. The difference between the best and the worst score among the member states is 0.155 that is approximately 15.5%. Comparing the average score of the 153 countries standing at 0.69 meaning that there is an average gap of 31% between the overall situation of women compared to men globally, the average score of all EU member countries standing at 0.745 indicating that the position of women of the European Union is 25% behind their male counterparts is more advantageous but it still requires many structural and cultural adjustments to reach parity in less than the predicted 100 years. Figure 1 visualizes the mutual relative stance of the member states. Only the TOP 10 countries scored better than the average represented by Lithuania (0.745) while 16 EU member

states scored below the average. As for the cultural perspective of the overall results, among the first 10 best scoring member countries there are 7 feminine and only 3 masculine cultures. Among the next ten best scoring countries, there are again 7 feminine, 2 masculine cultures and Luxembourg standing in the middle of the Masculinity – Femininity scale. The last seven countries are strongly dominated by masculine cultures, there are 6 masculine and only 1 feminine culture. We can draw a conclusion based on the distribution of the EU countries on the M – F scale according to Hofstede that cultures preferring feminine values with overlapping gender roles are more successful and probably more active as well in their effort to achieve gender parity.

Next, we will consider the four sub-indices which can better demonstrate the areas where special attention and effort are required.

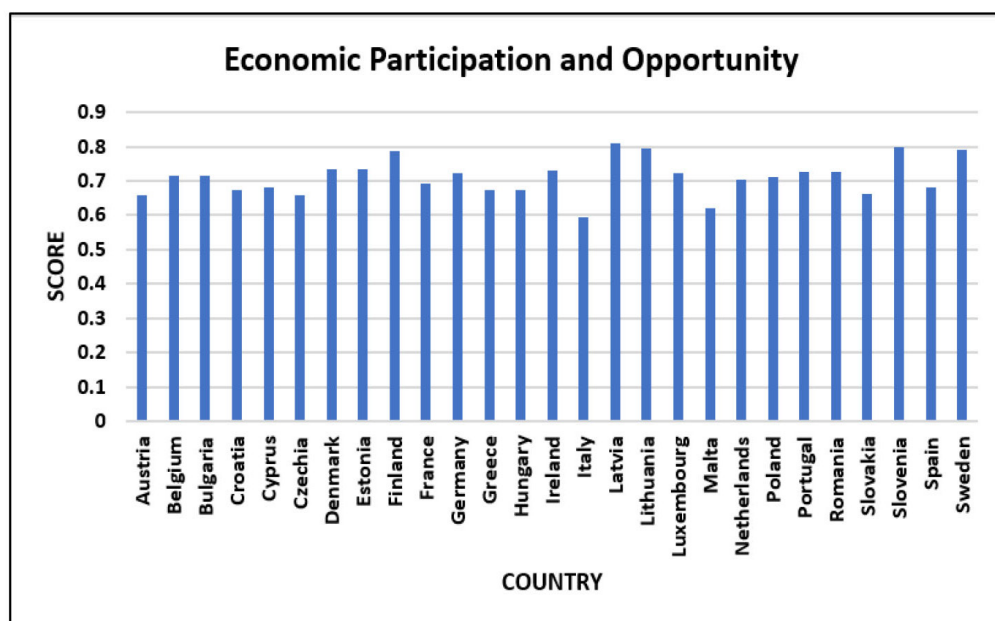
Table 2: EU Countries Gender Gap Sub-Index -Economic Participation and Opportunity

Country	Score	Rank	M/F
Austria	0.659	86	M
Belgium	0.714	54	M
Bulgaria	0.715	52	F
Croatia	0.674	77	F
Cyprus	0.681	73	M
Czechia	0.657	87	M
Denmark	0.735	41	F
Estonia	0.736	40	F
Finland	0.788	18	F
France	0.691	65	F
Germany	0.723	48	M
Greece	0.675	76	M
Hungary	0.672	80	M
Ireland	0.732	43	M
Italy	0.595	117	M
Latvia	0.810	8*	F
Lithuania	0.795	13	F
Luxembourg	0.721	50	M/F

Malta	0.621	106	F
Netherlands	0.702	60	F
Poland	0.711	57	M
Portugal	0.726	46	F
Romania	0.728	44	F
Slovakia	0.663	83	M
Slovenia	0.797	12	F
Spain	0.681	72	F
Sweden	0.790	16	F

Source: Author’s elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019) and (Hofstede, 1994, p. 79)

Figure 2: Participation and Opportunity sub-index of EU countries



Source: Author’s elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019)

Table 2 and Figure 2 provide information about the 1st sub-index dealing with the degree of economic participation and opportunities of women compared to men. This includes the participation gap, the remuneration gap, and the advancement gap. As for the participation gap, there is still a relatively large proportion of women who do not enter the labour market or if they do, then only as part-time workers. Another important contributor to the existing gender

gap is the remuneration gap which is the ratio of women's wages to those of men in the same position, including the income gap which represents the ratio between the wage and non-wage income of women compared to men's total income. The gap widens, even more, when seniority is considered because they are strongly underrepresented in top managerial positions (advancement gap). The same sub-index also covers the extent of household and caring burden of genders. Women are mostly responsible for the household and childcare and therefore have fewer opportunities and time for income-creating activities. As seen in Table 2, out of the 27 member states only Latvia (8) achieved a position in the top 10. Its score 0.81 shows that even in that country there is still a 19% gap to close. The worst-scoring country Italy (117) scored only 0.595 showing more than 40% gap in that area.

The global average of the sub-index stands at 0.58 showing a 42% gap between men and women. In comparison, the average of the EU member states stands at 0.711 which means that the gap in the EU countries stands for nearly 29%. Again, the gap in this sub-index is considerably smaller than the global average but at the same time, it is a very strong argument for further structural changes in the economies of the EU member states. There is a great pool of unused potential to be utilised for the benefit of the economic prosperity of the population. Figure 2 visualizes the mutual relative stance of the member countries in the Economic Participation and Opportunities sub-index.

If we compare the average score (0.711) with the individual scores of the member states, we find out that 14 countries did better than Poland representing the average score and 12 scored worse than the average. From the cultural perspective, in this sub-index, the tendency is quite visible, among the 10 highest-scoring countries only 1 is a predominantly masculine culture and 9 are feminine ones. Among the next 10, there are 4 feminine cultures 1 in between masculinity and femininity and 5 masculine cultures. In the final group of 7 cultures, there are 5 masculine and only two feminine cultures. The tendency is quite clear; the feminine cultures are grouped at the top of the list.

Table 3: EU Countries Gender Gap Sub-Index - Educational Attainment

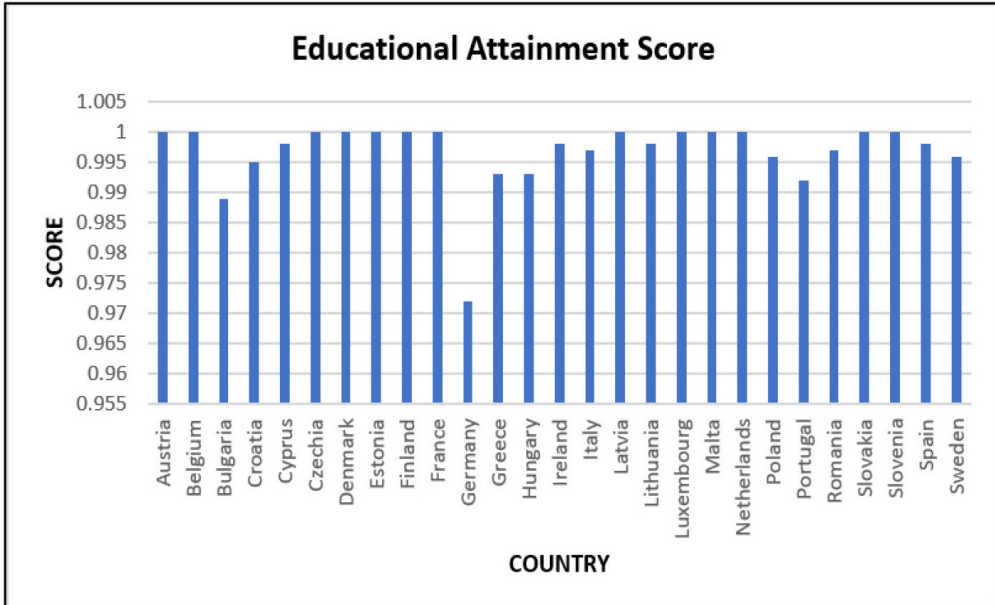
Country	Score	Rank	M/F
Austria	1.000	1*	M
Belgium	1.000	1*	M
Bulgaria	0.989	85	F

Croatia	0.995	62	F
Cyprus	0.998	48	M
Czechia	1.000	1*	M
Denmark	1.000	1*	F
Estonia	1.000	1*	F
Finland	1.000	1*	F
France	1.000	1*	F
Germany	0.972	103	M
Greece	0.993	69	M
Hungary	0.993	70	M
Ireland	0.998	47	M
Italy	0.997	55	M
Latvia	1.000	1*	F
Lithuania	0.998	13	F
Luxembourg	1.000	1*	M/F
Malta	1.000	1*	F
Netherlands	1.000	1*	F
Poland	0.996	58	M
Portugal	0.992	73	F
Romania	0.997	58	F
Slovakia	1.000	1*	M
Slovenia	1.000	27	F
Spain	0.998	43	F
Sweden	0.996	59	F

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019) and (Hofstede, 1994, p. 79)

The 2nd sub-index compares the availability of education for both genders. It covers access to education through ratios of women to men in primary-, secondary- and tertiary-level education and the ratio of female literacy rate to the male literacy rate. The results in this area are the 2nd best globally as 96% of the gap has been closed. Out of the 153 countries, only 23 have a worse score than 0.9, and there are 35 countries where the score stands at 1.0 (full parity).

Studying the results of the EU member states, we can count 13 countries with no gender gap in the area of education, while the other 15 states register a

Figure 3: Educational attainment sub-index of EU countries

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019)

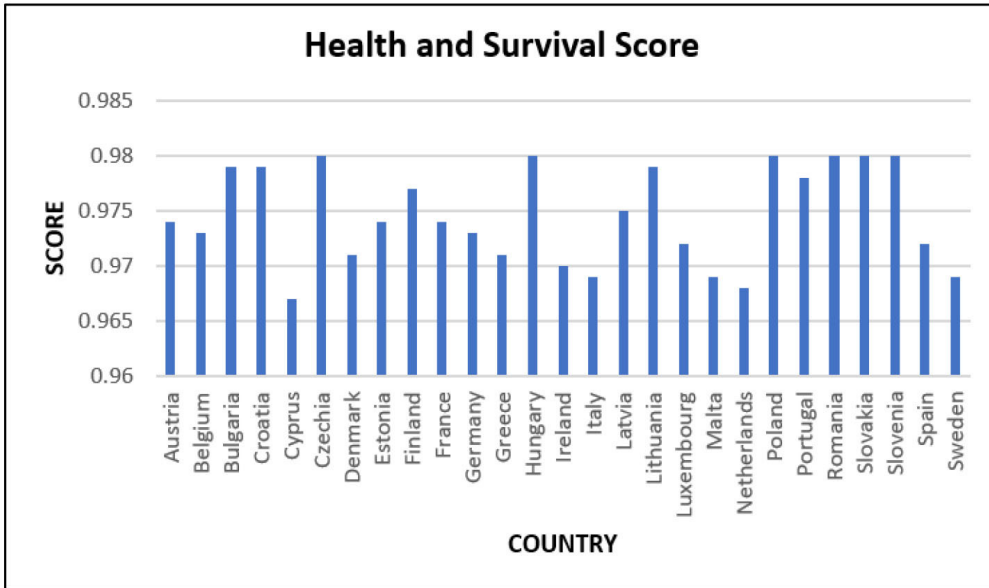
minimal gap. The worst score achieved by Germany 0.972 means that there is a 3% gap between women and men in the area of educational opportunities. This sub-index is very important for the future of the cultures/countries. Equally well-educated women can claim a better position in the society, become more vocal about their rights and more independent from their male counterparts driving the wheel of change in the right direction. Figure 3 visualizes the relative stance of the member states in the area of education.

The cultural dimension of masculinity or femininity has limited impact in this sub-index because out of the 11 countries without gender gap 3 are masculine, 1 stands in between, and 6 feminine as we could expect based on statistical probability. The average score within this sub-index stands at 0.997 represented by Italy and Romania while only 6 countries scored below the average. Among those, there are 3 masculine and three feminine cultures. The European civilisation with a long tradition in the area of education provides an equally strong motivational impact in both forms of culture, masculine and feminine.

Table 4: EU Countries Gender Gap Sub-Index - Health and Survival

Country	Score	Rank	M/F
Austria	0.974	82	M
Belgium	0.973	86	M
Bulgaria	0.979	41	F
Croatia	0.979	48	F
Cyprus	0.967	127	M
Czechia	0.980	1*	M
Denmark	0.971	101	F
Estonia	0.974	81	F
Finland	0.977	56	F
France	0.974	78	F
Germany	0.973	86	M
Greece	0.971	100	M
Hungary	0.980	1*	M
Ireland	0.970	113	M
Italy	0.969	118	M
Latvia	0.975	74	F
Lithuania	0.979	41	F
Luxembourg	0.972	91	M/F
Malta	0.969	116	F
Netherlands	0.968	122	F
Poland	0.980	1*	M
Portugal	0.978	50	F
Romania	0.980	1*	F
Slovakia	0.980	1*	M
Slovenia	0.980	1*	F
Spain	0.972	93	F
Sweden	0.969	117	F

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019) and (Hofstede, 1994, p. 79)

Figure 4: Health and Survival sub-index for EU countries

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019)

The 3rd sub-index deals with the health issues of genders and their relative expectations. The two measured aspects of this sub-index are gender birth-rate and healthy life expectancy. This area registered some improvements since the previous studies and the global gap stands at 95.7% which means a 4% gap to be filled. Not one country out of the 153 managed to completely fill the gap but even the last on the list, China achieved a score of 0.926 which means that there is not much difference between the healthcare of men and women. Nevertheless, we must not forget that the comparison is carried out within each country and does not compare the countries with each other; neither measure the overall standard of healthcare within the country. The still occurring problem of differentiated care in some countries starts with the birth ratios. China is a good example of distorted birth rate with girls' birth ratio standing at only 88.5% while in most other countries it is minimally around 92%. The healthy life expectancy of women compared to men in most countries does not register gaps between genders meaning that they have relatively similar chances for a healthy life.

The health-and-survival sub-index shows relatively good results among the EU member states. Out of the 27 countries 6 (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland,

Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) belong among the top-performing countries (rank 1) but even there, there is still a 2% gap to be closed. The difference between the best score 0.98 and the worst one within the EU Cyprus 0.967 is only 1.3% and proves that this gap could be closed relatively soon. Figure 4 shows the relative stance of the member states in consideration of healthcare and survival expectations.

From the cultural perspective, similarly as in the case of the previous sub-index (Educational Attainment), among the 10 best-scoring cultures there are 6 feminine and 4 masculine cultures though the top 3 ranks are filled by masculine cultures (Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland). Another interesting fact is that the top 8 countries belong to the formal post-communist states. The average score within this sub-index stands at 0.974 represented by three countries (France, Estonia, and Austria), all three belonging to feminine cultures. 11 countries scored better than the average out of which 7 are feminine cultures and 4 masculine ones while 12 scored below the EU average out of which 6 were masculine, 1 in the middle of the scale and 5 feminine cultures. We can state again that feminine cultures are listed in the first half of the list though all the states are quite successful within the measured sub-index.

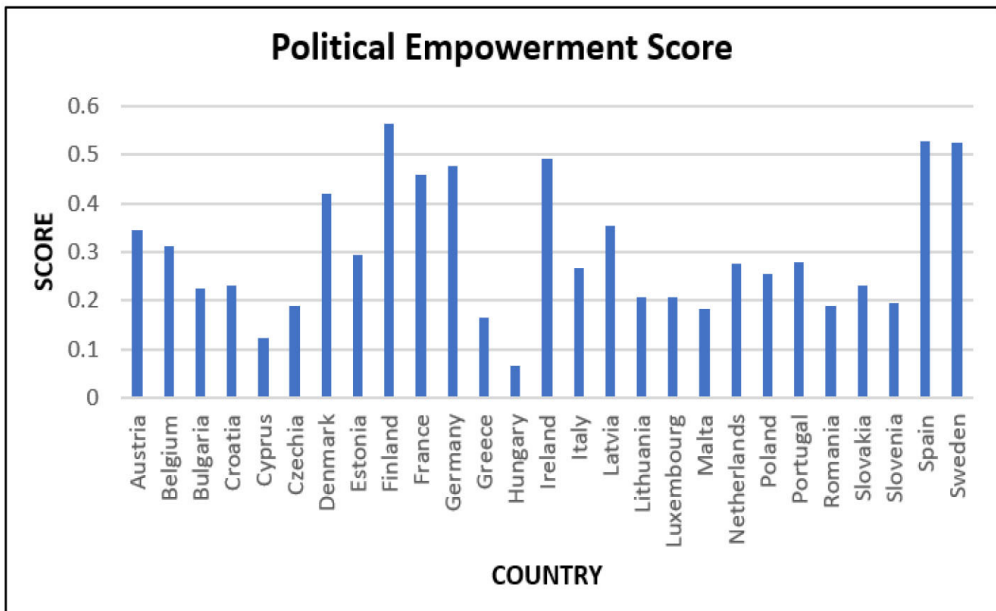
Table 5: EU Countries Gender Gap Sub-Index – Political Empowerment

Country	Score	Rank	M/F
Austria	0.344	30	M
Belgium	0.313	34	M
Bulgaria	0.225	60	F
Croatia	0.232	55	F
Cyprus	0.122	111	M
Czechia	0.189	77	M
Denmark	0.421	17	F
Estonia	0.294	37	F
Finland	0.563	5*	F
France	0.459	15	F
Germany	0.477	12	M
Greece	0.164	87	M
Hungary	0.065	139	M
Ireland	0.493	11	M

Italy	0.267	44	M
Latvia	0.355	28	F
Lithuania	0.207	65	F
Luxembourg	0.206	66	M/F
Malta	0.184	78	F
Netherlands	0.276	40	F
Poland	0.256	49	M
Portugal	0.278	39	F
Romania	0.190	76	F
Slovakia	0.231	58	M
Slovenia	0.196	71	F
Spain	0.527	8*	F
Sweden	0.525	9*	F

Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019) and (Hofstede, 1994, p. 79)

Figure 5: Political Empowerment sub-index for EU countries



Source: Author's elaboration based on the Global Gender Gap Report (WEF, 2019)

The last sub-index deals with the access of genders to political power. It measures the gap between men and women at the highest levels of political decision-making through the ratio of women to men in ministerial positions, as heads of state, and the ratio in parliamentary positions. In addition, the researchers included the ratio of women to men in terms of years in executive office (prime minister or president) for the last 50 years. There are still many countries where there has never been a female head of state (president or prime minister). The drawback of this sub-index is the fact that it does not consider the representation of women on lower levels of political power such as local and regional authorities. Those figures could change the acquired scores.

The domain shows both globally and within the EU the worst results. The gap is huge, globally; the value of the index is only 25% meaning that there is a gap of 75% to be filled before full parity can be ensured. Iceland, as the global leader stands at 0.701 which represents a nearly 30% gap between the genders in the country while the 2nd best Norway stands at only 0.598 with 40% gap to fill. The differences between countries are notably large, the last two countries on the rank list, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu being scored 0.0. That means that in those two countries, there is a 100% gap between genders in the accessibility of political power.

The member states of the EU do not show much better results either. Only 3 out of the 27 member states (Finland, Spain and Sweden) earned a TOP10 position as 5th, 8th, and 9th respectively. The top score of Finland 0.563 shows that even the best-placed country still needs to fill a 44% gap. The worst placed Hungary with a score of 0.065 has a staggering 94% gap to be filled. The collected data confirms that this area should become a top priority of both the European and state agenda. The average score of the member states stands at 0.298. Estonia with 0.294 is the closest to the average while 10 countries scored above and 16 below the average.

From the cultural perspective, the distribution of masculine or feminine cultures among the 10 best-scoring countries is the same as in the previous two sub-indices, 6 feminine and 4 masculine cultures. The next 10 countries are placed similarly on the scale between masculinity and femininity. There are 6 feminine cultures, 1 in the middle of the scale and 3 masculine cultures. Among the last 7 countries, 3 belong to feminine and 4 to masculine cultures. But the overall huge gaps in all member states prove that the disparity in political power cuts across both types of culture.

The European parliament is another proof of the existing gender gap in access to power. In 2019⁴, out of the 751 members, there were 273 (36.4%) female in comparison to 478 (63.6%) male members of the parliament. It means that there was a 39% gender gap to be filled in one of the key institutions of the European Union. Figure 6 provides information about the female representation in the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the member states. In the majority of states (18 out of 28⁴), the relative representation of women in the European parliament is higher than in the national ones. The largest differences can be found in the representation of Finland where women take around 40% in the national but 70% in the European Parliament and in Ireland where women in the national parliament constitute around 20% but nearly 65% on the EU level. One of the possible reasons of such differences could be the realisation of women that the European Union can support their struggle for equality with more vigour, and that the common policies and regulations could bring some change into the stagnant waters of domestic politics still showing resistance in the cultural mindset of people.

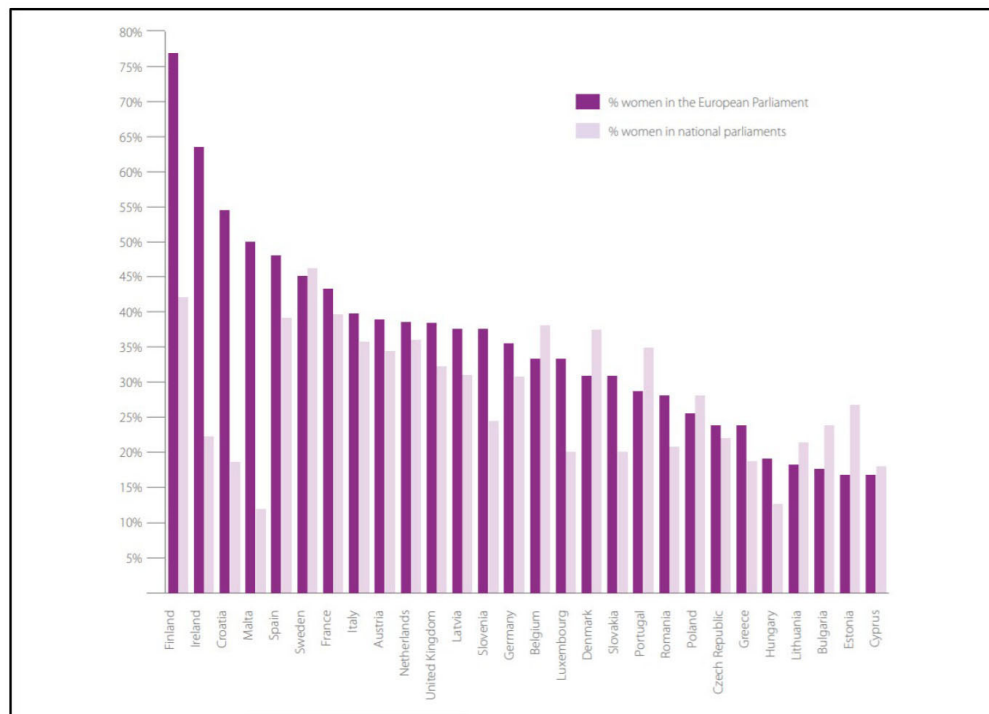
4 Conclusion

The paper attempted to facilitate the understanding of a relationship between cultural conceptualisations about genders and their impact on the overall process of achieving gender equality. Based on the predictions of renowned international institutions, we can expect full equality of genders in nearly one hundred years. This pessimistic forecast is based on a regular evaluation of gender parity in a large number of states which indicates the speed of changes and possibly, improvements. We analysed the official documents of global and European institutions to identify the relevance of the topic of gender in/equality for the main decision-making bodies. We could confirm that both the United Nations Organisation and the top institutions of the European Union treat the issue as a key component of basic human rights. The European Commission proposed a new strategy for the upcoming five years on how to accelerate the process of filling up the gender gap in each country.

Further, we evaluated the data extracted from the Gender Inequality Index Report 2020 concerning the member states of the EU and cross-examined the overall results and the four sub-indexes with the cultural dimension of

⁴Election results for 28 member states including the UK.

Figure 6: Representation of women in the European Parliament and national parliaments, by member states⁵



Source: European Parliament, 2019, p. 7

Masculinity/Femininity according to Hofstede. Based on the results we can formulate the following conclusions:

- none of the 153 countries participating in the Gender Inequality research has achieved full equality
- the inequality gap is expected to be closed in nearly one hundred years
- the four sub-indices show different pace of closing the gaps
- only five out of twenty-seven EU member states ranked in the lower half of the list
- there is an integrated effort of the top EU institutions to facilitate full gender equality
- feminine cultures are more successful in closing the gender gap due to their overlapping gender roles

⁵ Document published in 2019 before Brexit.

The cultural dimension of Masculinity proposed by G. Hofstede was proven as relevant for the prediction of filling the gender inequality gap in the individual countries of the European Union. The accepted separation of gender roles prescribed by masculine types of cultures creates a natural obstacle to the achievement of gender equality. These cultures have deeply ingrained interpretations of what is and is not appropriate for men and women in the society. Their values, norms and standards are built on persuasions concerning the quality, quantity, and value of male and female contribution for the cultural community. Therefore, any change takes time and changes in the people's mindset, even exchange of several generations.

Cultures/countries can and do change, but usually based on impulses coming from their wider environment. Therefore, a common European agenda on gender parity and strategies for its achievement could be the initiating stimulus for speeding up the changes in this domain at least within the European Union.

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