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Gender and Socio-economic sciences and the humanities

INTRODUCTION

In this part of the toolkit, we take a closer look at how gender is relevant in the specific field of *Socio-economic sciences and the humanities* in FP7.

A first section briefly points out the broad **relevance of gender within the field**. The toolkit continues with a more specific discussion of the topics which have been put forward by the European Commission in the field's work programme. This is followed by suggestions regarding gender-relevant issues which may be taken up by the research teams.

To illustrate how planned research in the field of *Socio-economic sciences and the humanities* can be made gender-sensitive, **three real-life examples** of projects are included. Each case consists of a short text presenting the project and a discussion of the gender-relevant issues in relation to the planned work, both in terms of equal opportunities and in terms of the content of the work. These examples are based on project summaries as they can be found on the CORDIS FP7 website¹ and relate to different topics within the field's work programme.

Finally, a selection of **useful references** dealing with gender in the field of *Socio-economic sciences and the humanities* is provided.



¹ http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html

GENDER AND THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC SCIENCES AND THE HUMANITIES RESEARCH FIELD

FP7 Socio-economic sciences and the humanities objective

Funding ‘Socio-economic sciences and the humanities’ (SSH) will contribute to an in-depth, shared understanding of the complex and interrelated socio-economic challenges confronting Europe.

Research in this theme will help us study and provide answers to questions related to:

- growth, employment and competitiveness;
- social cohesion, social, cultural and educational challenges in an enlarged EU;
- sustainability, environmental challenges, demographic change, migration and integration, quality of life and global interdependence.

How is gender relevant to this field?

All activities under this theme are directly related to society. The social and economic systems are human constructs. These constructs, their mechanisms and the relations at play within these constructs are the subject of the work. For this reason, there is a gender dimension to all activities and to all research that is undertaken in the ‘Socio-economic sciences and the humanities’ field.

Socio-economic sciences and the humanities work programme

The initiatives undertaken in this field will provide support to:

Growth, employment and competitiveness in a knowledge society – the European case:

- changing role of knowledge throughout the economy
- structural changes in the European knowledge economy and society
- strengthening policy coherence and coordination in Europe

Combining economic, social and environmental objectives in a European perspective:

- paths towards sustainable development
- socio-economic development trajectories
- regional, territorial and social cohesion

Major trends in society and their implications:

- demographic changes
- societal trends and lifestyles
- cultural interactions in an international perspective

Europe in the world:

- interactions and interdependences between world regions
and their implications
- conflicts, peace and human rights

The Citizen in the European Union:

- participation and citizenship in Europe
- diversities and commonalities in Europe

Socio-economic and scientific indicators – the development, use and value of indicators in policy-making at macro and micro levels

Foresight activities – the future implications of global knowledge, key chal- lenges, risk and the emerging domains in research and science

Strategic and horizontal activities – including research for policy support, dis- semination of research results and international cooperation

How is gender relevant to these topics?

- **Growth, employment and competitiveness in a knowledge society:** Equal participation of and equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market are crucial for the attainment of Europe's ambitions in this area. The reconciliation of private and professional life must be accommodated for both sexes. Gender de-stereotyping of educational fields and equal access to education in all fields for boys and girls are prerequisites.
- **Combining economic, social and environmental objectives in a European perspective:** Social, economic and environmental objectives are interlinked and are as a whole highly gender-sensitive. Gender as a relevant variable therefore needs to be addressed in all research addressing this topic.
- **Major trends in society and their implications:** Trends in society result from human (inter-)actions, roles and behaviour, and have therefore by definition a gender dimension.
- **Europe in the world (covering among other things migration, poverty, conflict and human rights):** The role and place of Europe in the world is determined by human interactions, relations and constructs. Both sexes play very distinct roles in society, and 'live' these roles very differently. Women, more than men, are vulnerable to poverty, are victims of gender-related violence and trafficking, and play very different roles in conflict situations. These issues need to be duly considered in all research on these topics.
- **The citizen in the European Union:** There is no such individual as a 'gender-neutral citizen'. Europe's citizens consist of men and women. Research on democracy, citizenship or culture which ignores the gendered dimension is likely to overlook important aspects of the research subject, miss the opportunity to identify structural inequalities, and thus contribute to letting these be reproduced.
- **Socio-economic and scientific indicators:** It is of the utmost importance that sex-disaggregated statistics are collected and published, so that the knowledge base on sex- and gender-relevant issues is enhanced, meaning that gender inequalities can be identified and addressed.
- **Foresight activities, such as working on the future implications of global knowledge, key challenges, risk and the emerging domains in research and science:** In considering emerging issues of potential relevance for policy-making, gender equity concerns require the permanent attention for (possible) sex and gender differences which might need to be addressed as an issue in their own right.

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THREE EXAMPLES

Case 1

The acquisition and loss of nationality

Project outline

The project will provide a comprehensive comparison of rules regulating the acquisition and loss of nationality in the EU Member States.

This will be achieved by collecting information on current legislation and the development of nationality law since 1985, by analysing statistical data on naturalisation, acquisition of nationality at birth, and loss or renunciation of nationality, and by investigating administrative practices in the implementation of nationality laws.

The project will also examine statuses of quasi-citizenship for third country nationals that are granted in several Member States on the basis of long-term residence or to nationals of certain countries or people with certain ethnic backgrounds.

Apart from providing country reports on these questions, the project's main goal is to develop a systematic framework for comparing specific aspects in the regulation of nationality and citizenship across countries. The goal is to find out in which areas there are trends of long-term convergence or persistent divergence between Member States.

This will serve as the basis for a broad evaluation of Member State policies in this area and for policy recommendations addressed to both Member State governments and the EU.

The main focus for the evaluative part will be on the question of how policies concerning access to citizenship and nationality contribute to or hinder the integration of immigrants.

Special emphasis will be placed on dual nationality and the assessment of the impact of recent policy changes towards broader toleration or restrictions in this matter.



Identification of relevant gender issues

Equal opportunities for women and men in research

Given the gender relevance of the subject considered, involving a researcher with gender expertise would undoubtedly add value.

The composition of the research team is not mentioned, but the project would benefit from having a multidisciplinary and mixed team, in terms of sex, ethnicity and age. It would help to understand the different realities and experiences of people subjected to the different rules regulating the acquisition and loss of nationality. To improve its performance, the project might look into the working conditions and culture it favours and whether those are equitable to all its members and inductive to a satisfying work/life balance.

Gender in research content

Immigration, integration and legislation concerning nationality acquisition have different impacts on men and women, because of the different roles they still play in society and because of the difference in these roles from one country to the next.

Legislation can lead to a de facto different situation in rights between women and men, and it is highly relevant to verify whether this is the case. For example, in countries where obtaining nationality is conditional on successfully passing a (language or other) test, this might prevent some groups of women from obtaining nationality because they have less access to classes or courses.

As the project aims to assess how citizenship and nationality policies ease or hinder the integration of immigrants, covering the whole population of migrants should be a clear concern. Conditions under which migration is authorised and nationality can be attributed can have important gender aspects, for instance marriage as a ground for migration or having a formal diploma to get a work permit (women are less literate than men as they have less access to education). Checking whether the legislation explicitly defines specific rules applying to (certain groups of) men or women is valuable.

Any statistical data collection should seek to provide sex breakdowns: sex-disaggregated data analysis allows the identification of gender differences and gender inequalities. Where sex-disaggregated data are not available, it is very useful to indicate such gaps in data availability. Identifying such gaps is the first step towards solving the problem of missing data. In particular, the analysis should pay attention to possible gender differences in:

- the burdens of ‘administrative practices’, which may be significantly different between women and men
- the policies, which may have significantly different impacts between men and women

The results of the gender analysis should be reported upon: the gender differences and inequalities should be highlighted and the mechanisms explained. Where no gender differences are identified, this should be reported too. In the policy recommendations that will be produced, it would be useful to formulate corrective measures that may be required where gender inequalities exist.

Case 2

European social model

Project outline

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the emerging European social model (ESM) by contributing to the development of policies for the public and private sectors, based on a scientific assessment of the impact of privatisation and liberalisation in the EU upon the functioning of this social model.

Sub-objectives of the project are:

- to advance knowledge on the configuration of private and public services that is most conducive to the sustainable development of European societies;
- to organise interdisciplinary communication between different scientific centres, social groups and political actors;
- to contribute to the ongoing discussion about the role of the public sector in the development of the ESM.

These objectives will be pursued in three phases.

- In phase 1, a state of the art stocktaking of the literature on the history and theory of liberalisation and privatisation and the European social model takes place;
- In phase 2, interdisciplinary analyses of the impact of liberalisation and privatisation on economic performance, social cohesion and political structures will be undertaken;
- In phase 3, conclusions from the results of the previous work will be drawn and policy proposals will be formulated.

To do so the project envisages organising ten workshops and five international conferences and participating in several joint conferences with other partners as well as in other events. This should result in a substantial contribution to the scientific and political debates about strategies to enhance and strengthen the European social model.

Participants in the project consortium come from different disciplines and from countries with different social and political traditions. The project involves 14 partners from Austria, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia and the United Kingdom, including 23 male and three female experts. They will, throughout the duration of the project, organise discussions with external experts from the scientific community and from political actors and other stakeholder groups.



Identification of relevant gender issues

Equal opportunities for women and men in research

It is positive that participants in the project consortium come from different disciplines and from countries with different social and political traditions. This diversity will reflect positively in the planned work. However, given the significant underrepresentation of women in the team (only three out of 26 experts are female), the team can still be considered as insufficiently diverse. Achieving an equal balance between women and men can be a key point in choosing and communicating with partner organisations: the project could make a point of the importance of equal opportunities by requesting the partners, as far as possible, to establish well-balanced teams to work on the project.

Social models have a very different impact on men and women owing to the different roles they play in society. As the planned work is highly gender-relevant, it seems indispensable to ensure the availability of gender expertise within the project. If gender expertise is not present in the partner organisations, involving an external expert could be considered.

Gender in research content

Women and men (still) play different roles in society, and their respective participation rates in the economic sectors most affected by privatisation and liberalisation differs significantly. It is therefore more than likely that women and men will be affected differently by the changes in the European social model that come about as a consequence of liberalisation and privatisation.

For example, the effects of public transport liberalisation on service delivery are likely to affect women more than men as women are more frequent users of public transport, whereas men are more likely to be affected by company restructuring.

It is positive that the project will start with a literature review. However, the project team should keep in mind that any research might have been gender-biased or gender-blind. Equally, it cannot be assumed that the European social model is a gender-neutral system. The literature review should explicitly identify existing knowledge on gender differences in relation to liberalisation, privatisation and their effects on the social model. It is also important to look at the mechanisms that include or exclude some groups from this social system/model.

Especially in the light of the current economic and financial crisis, an encompassing analysis is needed, taking a gender perspective and making full use of available gender knowledge. While the crisis has a serious direct impact on employment in some large male-dominated industries, it also has a severe impact on women in economic activities linked to these large industries, notably in the service sector and in small and medium-sized companies.

More than half of the population consists of women, and their views, concerns and situations must be addressed in the (re-)construction of a sustainable European social model. For their views to be reflected, their participation and contribution is paramount. The project must therefore ensure women's participation in and contribution to the debates and planned activities – in the workshops and in the international conferences alike.

The policy proposals that will follow from the planned debates and exchanges should address structural inequalities and include suggestions on remedial measures relating to both the public and private sectors.

Case 3

Corporate social responsibility

Project outline

The research project aims to improve understanding of the role of corporate social responsibility (CSR) instruments, their effect on the practices of companies and the benefits for society.

The project will thus address two key questions:

- How effective are CSR instruments in making companies and societies more sustainable?
- To what extent do CSR instruments really contribute to sustainable development, and especially to public policy goals that pertain to sustainable development?

Systematic CSR knowledge is limited and mainly specific, i.e. it does not combine and analyse evidence from different policy fields and sectors. The project will improve knowledge by combining theoretical and practical analysis to result in new high-quality research.

The theoretical analysis will cover different conceptions and instruments of CSR and develop a sound theoretical and methodological foundation for 'measuring' and explaining the rhetorical and real impacts of CSR instruments, such as codes of conduct and reporting standards, on corporate strategies and behaviour.

The empirical analysis tackles the impact of CSR on the company, societal and political levels:

- On the company level this will include impacts of CSR instruments on business development, competitiveness and accountability;
- On the societal and political levels it will focus on the contribution of CSR to achieving political goals defined at the EU level in the policy fields of resources management, gender equality and countering bribery.

The project programme thus includes:

- understanding and researching CSR
- developing a CSR impact assessment tool
- analysing and researching CSR regarding three areas of concern, each falling within the remit of a different policy field: environment and resources management, gender equality and countering bribery
- surveying CSR in three business sectors: the oil industry, the banking sector and the fisheries and fish processing industries
- researching and developing four in-depth case studies on CSR impact: for each of the 'sustainability areas of concern'

- carrying out an SME study
- assessing the political and public policy dimensions of CSR

Outputs of the project will include policy recommendations for companies, national governments and the EU. A book with the core results of the project will also be published.

The project will be carried out by a multidisciplinary team of researchers, scientists and consultants from seven leading research institutions from across the EU and is composed of seven women and nine men.



Identification of relevant gender issues

Equal opportunities for women and men in research

The diversity within the project team is a strength: the team is multidisciplinary and shows a good gender balance.

It is not clear from the project description whether there is gender expertise available in the team. However, given the different positions of women and men in most companies and society at large, the planned work has an important gender relevance, and such expertise will be indispensable.

Gender in research content

Companies and societies are human constructs, in which the role and rate of participation of men and women differ, as underpinned by structural and historical inequalities. The relations between the sexes and their respective roles thus show gendered patterns and it is indeed appropriate for CSR efforts to aim to redress inequalities where these exist.

It is positive that the project will focus on how CSR contributes to gender equality. However, the fact that the project will do so in a case study seems to suggest that the cross-cutting nature of the gender dimension is overlooked. Gender issues permeate all aspects of the functioning of society and are relevant also for the other sustainability concerns that will be studied: resources management and bribery. These other case studies should therefore also look into gender issues in relation to their respective topics. The project would benefit from a clear articulation of which aspects of gender equality will be examined, to guarantee a sound methodological approach and delineation between the cases.

It is positive that the project will undertake a comparative analysis of the impact of CSR in three different economic sectors. However, a number of comments can be made in relation to this analysis:

- The project does not seem to include a baseline assessment, while such analysis is likely to reveal that the various concerns, including gender equality, apply differently in the different sectors. Such a baseline assessment would help to explain differentiated impacts of CSR in the various sectors. Indeed, where the situation is worse, there is more to redress and more impacts can be realised.
- All three sectors chosen have a gendered architecture, either because they are male-dominated (fisheries, oil) or because the top positions are nearly exclusively held by men (banking). For comparative purposes, it would be very interesting to include in the analysis a sector with a higher women's participation rate, so that the differential impact of CSR caused by the rate of women's participation in the respective sectors can also be revealed.

Given the overall gender relevance of the work, it is important to produce gender-specific policy recommendations. Apart from that, all policy recommendations that will be produced should address the gender dimension systematically.

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USEFUL READING

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For further information and useful links, please consult the Gender in Research Toolkit and Training website under www.yellowwindow.com/genderinresearch.