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# GENDER-RELATED CHALLENGES IN EUROPEAN EDUCATION SYSTEMS

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# INTRODUCTION

## COUNTRY REPORTS STATE OF ART

- First draft version (on the basis of literature review and interviews)

HOWEVER

## IT IS POSSIBLE TO DRAW SOME PRELIMINARY INDICATIONS ON

- the legislative and policy framework on gender and education
- main gender-related challenges
- specific initiatives

# MAIN CHALLENGES



## LITHUANIA

- *Women achieve better* in the educational system
- *Gendered choices* in educational programs, occupations and professions
  - Through the whole educational system
  - Leads to a gender pay gap
- *Textbooks* etc show men and women in traditional roles
- *Women in disadvantaged groups* (disabled, Roma, immigrants, older, lower social status etc) experience more discrimination than men in the same groups and more discrimination than other women
- *Feminisation of the teaching profession*
  - However, gender balance among academic staff at university level
    - But men in higher positions in the academic world
  - However, few women leaders of vocational schools and universities

## MAIN CHALLENGES *continued*



## LITHUANIA

- Performance gap
  - at lower levels girls excel in all test subjects (TIMMS, National exams)
  - in yr 8, boys excel or are in par with girls in mathematics, but girls excel in reading and science
- *Gender statistics* of education not sufficiently detailed
- *Bullying in schools* is a considerable problem
  - No gender data on this problem

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



LITHUANIA

## Law on education

- general fairness, not gender specific
- primary, basic and secondary education, access to special education, post-secondary and higher education guaranteed to all permanent or temporary residents

few asylum seekers in the country

## Law on higher education and research

nothing on equal opportunities

parental leave regulations

## Law on vocational training

mentions gender as one ground for non-discrimination

## Law on non-formal education of adults

mentions gender as one ground for non-discrimination

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND *continued*



## LITHUANIA

**Law on equal opportunities for women and men:** Educational and research establishments must

- Ensure equal conditions for women and men in vocational training establishments and schools of higher education
- Ensure equal conditions for women and men when awarding scholarships and granting loans for studies
- Ensure equal conditions for women and men when curricula are selected for them and selected by them
- Ensure equal conditions for women and men when assessing the knowledge
- Take measures to prevent sexual harassment of pupils, students and employees of educational establishments and research and higher education institutions
- Take measures to ensure that pupils, students or employees of educational establishments institutions would be protected from adverse consequences as a reaction to complaints concerning discrimination
- Ensure that curricula and textbooks do not propagate discrimination against women and men



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND *continued*



LITHUANIA

## **State Education Strategy 2013-2022**

addresses feminisation of the education sector  
goal 20% men in the education sector by 2020

## **National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2015-2021**

- encourage choosing studies other than 'traditionally feminine and masculine'
- encourage men to pursue higher education
  - Informational notice to higher education institutions from Ministry of Education and Science in 2017
- promote non-discriminatory attitude to women and men in textbooks and other teaching materials
  - Education Development Centre (EDC) in collaboration with the Office of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson organised a seminar intended for the evaluators of the content of general education textbooks

# **INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES**



**LITHUANIA**

## **2016 General Programme of Health and Sexuality Education and Preparation for Family**

**Starts in first class and gives knowledge on, for example**

- that women and men are equal,
- that at home there is no “female” or “male” work.
- gender stereotypes,
- recognition of manifestations of violence,
- intolerance and resistance to all forms of violence,
- sexual orientation,
- diversity of gender identities

In the learning process it is forbidden to discriminate a person on the grounds of sexual orientation and (or) failure to recognise it; sexual identity, abortion; or to promote dissatisfaction of a body, appearance or a sexual orientation



# MAIN CHALLENGES



**SWEDEN**

- Gendered subject choices in higher education
  - Has improved only marginally during the past ten years
- Gendered choices in vocational education
- Performance gap between boys and girls
- Good policies on paper, but problems in putting policy to practice



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



SWEDEN

**Three major laws** that regulate gender issues in the educational system.

- *The Discrimination Act*
- *The Education Act*
  - School has to counteract traditional gender patterns
  - Free for schools decide how to organize their work with gender equality
- *The Higher Education Act and The Higher Education Ordinance*
- **National curricula** at all school levels stress gender equality
- **Teacher training** has detailed goals in the area of gender equality

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**SWEDEN**

## **Government official reports**

- The delegation for gender equality in schools (2010)
  - gender and learning, gender-segregated education choices, gender differences in school performance, psycho-social health and gender, special educational needs, degrading treatment, violence towards women related to concept of honour, change methods
  - Has had impact in how gender is discussed in schools
- The delegation for gender equality in higher education (2011)
- Men and gender equality (2015)
  - Boys' inferior school performance
- Evaluation of gender equality policy (2015)
  - Gender equality in education should be put forward as a focus area



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND *continued*



**SWEDEN**

## Practical **organization and responsibility for gender equality work**

- The principal is responsible for gender equality promotion and work in the single school
- Gender equality work can be organized in different ways depending on local circumstances, and the work done does not have to be reported anywhere/anyone specific
- Schools and universities have to have written plans for how to promote gender equality
  - Templates provided by the Equality Ombudsperson office
- The Swedish School Inspectorate takes gender equality into consideration when doing school inspections and quality controls
- The National Agency for Education steers and supports municipalities, preschools and schools in gender equality work



# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



**SWEDEN**

## **GMA – Gender Mainstreaming in Academia**

The government has requested all state universities and university colleges to develop a gender mainstreaming plan 2016–2019, comprising several areas, for example

- equal career opportunities in academia,
- work against gendered education choices
- improvements of women's and men's completion rates
- gender equality integration in management processes

(Mandatory) support for all universities is provided by the Swedish Secretariat for Gender Research



# MAIN CHALLENGES



**CROATIA**

## GENERAL CHALLENGES

- Children from low socio-economic and cultural backgrounds,
  - are under-represented in grammar schools and higher education
  - in particular boys, have lower grades
  - in particular Roma children are more likely to drop out
    - Gender-disaggregated data on drop-out not available
- Migrant students
  - Lack of data on migrant students
  - Weak implementation of integration measures
  - Prejudice by some groups of students (male more than female) towards migrants



# MAIN CHALLENGES *continued*



## CROATIA

### GENDERED CHALLENGES

- Girls over-represented in grammar schools, boys in vocational and industrial schools
- Boys under-represented in higher education
- Gendered subject choices in secondary and higher education
  - Pupils' gender stereotypes about educational domains and occupations
- Lack of gender equality topics in curriculum
- School textbooks reproduce gender stereotypes
  - Over-representation of men in textbooks
  - Gender stereotypical descriptions of occupations
- Teachers' attitudes to educating pupils on gender equality are positive
  - **HOWEVER** very few teachers do it
  - Few teachers enroll in in-service gender training
  - Lack of gender equality topics in pre-service teacher training

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



CROATIA

**National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015: Achieve gender balance in educational choices in secondary schools and in higher education**

- “introduce gender-sensitive education in the entire education system, eliminating gender stereotypes from textbooks and teaching curricula”
- “conduct systematic gender-equality training for education providers”

**Health education** was introduced in primary and secondary schools in 2012/13 and includes module on

“Sex/gender equality and responsible sexual behaviour”. 2.5 lessons a year and includes learning outcomes related to gender equality and sexuality.

HOWEVER

Only 25% of teachers felt competent to teach the module  
a number of teachers disagreed with the content

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



CROATIA

**Civil Education as a mandatory cross-curricular subject** is introduced in school year 2014/2015, and is continued in 2015/2016, in all grades of primarily and secondary schools.

Topic of gender equality is represented

- a) describe and argue the ways fundamental human rights, the equality regarding age, gender, etc. are protected in democracy,
- b) explain why the equality between men and women is the key for the quality of family and social relations,
- c) to examine whether women in Croatia are underrepresented in leadership positions and have lower income than men,
- d) to examine and list examples of discrimination with respect to race, gender, etc., and the causes and consequences of exclusion

# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



CROATIA

## Centre for Education, Counselling and Research: Preventing violence in teen dating relationships.

The initiative includes:

- educational programs in schools, empowerment of young persons and strengthening of peer support against teen dating violence, media campaigns and advocacy for the development and implementation of gender sensitive policies and violence prevention programs for young people.
- More than 1300 students participated in school workshops in 2014.
- National campaign for the prevention of gender based violence "Silence is not golden" was conducted in 60 schools
- Promotional videos aired at national television resulted in 91% of young people who have heard that violence in a relationship should not be tolerated.

# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



CROATIA

## **National Policy for Gender Equality 2011-2015: achieve gender balance in educational choices in secondary schools and in higher education**

1) Career guidance for secondary school, to encourage girls into male-dominated areas:

job fairs, brochures, on-line career guidance

gender sensitive language partly implemented

priority to under-represented gender in admission to secondary school (discontinued)

2) Committees for the Evaluation of School Textbooks, who should not give a positive opinion for textbooks that contain texts and illustrations which promote gender stereotypes and gender discrimination

such material is returned to author/publisher for revision

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**MALTA**

In government policy there is a limited gender perspective, with the main gender reference being to women returning to the labour market.

**2015 Pre-budget document** paid attention to women who are on social welfare and introduced tax incentives and initiatives to encourage them to attend education

**2015 National Reform Programme (NRP)** extended access to stipends to women who are unemployed or working part-time when they follow education and training courses.

**2016 NRP** did not refer specifically to gender aspects in education, but to the employment of women.



# MAIN CHALLENGES



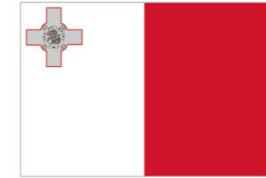
**MALTA**

- Gender gap in *achievement*
  - Girls perform better in most subjects and tests and in regard to school-leaving certificates
  - Boys perform slightly better in mathematics

## HOWEVER

- There is a large group of low achieving boys even in mathematics
- Gender gap in *absenteeism*
  - Boys are absent from compulsory schooling more often than girls
- Gender gap in *early school leaving*
  - More boys than girls drop out from school
- Gender-related violence
  - gender identity has been motivation or target for bullying, violence and harassment
- No gender perspective provided on the problems of schooling of immigrants

## MAIN CHALLENGES *continued*



### MALTA

- More women than men attend higher education
  - HOWEVER relatively *few women are active on the labour market*
  - More men do PhDs
- Gendered choices in higher education  
HOWEVER
  - Changes have taken place in some courses
- More men than women attend vocational education and training, as well as apprenticeship training
- Feminisation of the teaching profession
-

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**MALTA**

**National Curriculum Framework** commits to respecting diversity in all its forms, does not address gender specifically

## **Framework for Education Strategy 2014-20**

learning should not be hindered by differences in socio-economic, cultural, racial, ethnic, religious, gender and sexual status

aims to reduce the gaps in educational outcomes between boys and girls among other differences such as school type and overall number of low achievers

## **The National Literacy Strategy for All**

promotes collection of gender segregated data and acknowledges gender differences, but does not provide measures to target boys' reading

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**MALTA**

## ***Combating Early School Leaving***

Particular focus on teenage mothers

## ***National Vocation and Training Policy***

Identifies gendered choices of occupations and endorses encouraging women into male dominated areas. No particular measures put forward.

## ***Addressing Bullying Behaviour in Schools Policy***

Includes gender identity as one cause of bullying

## ***Respect for All: Trans, Gender Variant and Intersex Students in Schools Policy***

# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



**MALTA**

## ***National Lifelong Learning Strategy, Ministry of Education and Employment***

- Both women's and men's views to be considered in organization of training
- Promotes education and training provision for women in workplaces
- Suggests logistic support for women with caring obligations
- Lifelong learning made accessible at times convenient for women with young children
- Suggests flexible career change models for women
- Training for women in communication, assertiveness and leadership
- Grants and other financial help for women who take part in vocational education and training
- Financial incentives to employers who support women's training in sectors where women are under-represented

# MAIN CHALLENGES *continued*



**SLOVAKIA**

## GENDERED CHALLENGES

- Gender issues have not been discussed until very lately
- Low awareness or resistance to gender equality issues in society
  - State authorities do not have gender equality training for their staff
- Low awareness of gender equality in the Ministry of Education
  - For example, only male grammatical forms used on webpage
- Educational sector feminised and low paid
- Low awareness of gender equality issues among teachers
  - Very little in-service training on gender equality for teachers
    - Only 2 courses among 500 electives
  - Very little interest for such training





## MAIN CHALLENGES *continued*



# SLOVAKIA

- No mandatory education on sexuality in schools
  - No curriculum or accredited material for sex education
  - The sex education that exists reproduces traditional gender stereotypes
- Hardly any gender courses at university level
  - in particular for pre-service teachers
  - gender even at university level seen according to traditional roles
- No gender training of university staff



# MAIN CHALLENGES



**SLOVAKIA**

## GENERAL CHALLENGES

- Placement of Roma children in "special schools"
  - On basis of presumed intellectual inferiority
- Vocational schools for mainly Roma communities
  - Poorer employment prospects
  - Reproduction of gender stereotypes
  - Reproduction of stereotypes about the Roma people



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**SLOVAKIA**

Centrally organised school system decentralised 2002

this has resulted in a number of private schools, notably many schools run by religious denominations

2008 The Schools Act:

- 'equal access to education, taking into account the special educational needs of the individual and her/his responsibility for her/his education',
- 'prohibition of all forms of discrimination, and especially segregation'



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**SLOVAKIA**

- 2010 Sex education becomes a non-compulsory subject and marriage and parenthood a compulsory subject
- 2011: The Government Council for Human Rights, National Minorities and Gender Equality: Permanent, coordination and consultative body for areas including promotion of the principle of gender equality
- 2014: National Strategy for Gender Equality in the Slovak Republic 2014 – 2019.

Based on the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy  
2014 – 2017 and the recommendations of CEDAW Committee

- 2015, The National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights in the Slovak Republic



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



**SLOVAKIA**

## **Current gender action plan:**

- support and motivate higher education institutions in accrediting gender equality courses,
- sustain systemic education in human rights of women and gender equality for teachers of primary and secondary schools,
- implement education programs on gender equality in the framework of life long learning,
- consider human rights and gender optics more efficiently in the process of preparation and approval of textbooks,
- promote elimination of vertical segregation in (especially technical) education, etc.



# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



**SLOVAKIA**

The Institute for Gender Equality under the Operational Programme Employment and Social Inclusion with financial support from the European Social Fund, national programme

- development of the standards of quality for gender education (followed by the accreditation of 4 courses on gender equality),
- gender analysis of selected curricula,
- the issues of gender sensitive career consulting
- manuals for implementation of study programmes of gender equality for different types of public schools





# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



**SLOVAKIA**

- Gender sensitive language mandated in internal rules of Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences, Comenius University

Centre for the Research of Ethnicity and Culture: Equal Opportunities:

- Focuses on Roma education at university level: The first affirmative action pilot program “You also have a chance!”
- Roma students (most of them young women) are supported in their study at the University of Economics in Bratislava, before and under their studies
  - additional courses of maths, English, etc.
  - close cooperation with parents



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND



ROMANIA

**The main policy framework is Europe 2020 strategy**

For most of the headline targets of ET2020 Romania has adopted several **national strategies of reform**.

HOWEVER

Gender is often not mentioned or is peripheral in these

For example:

**Policy measures aiming to increase the participation in education** focused mainly on social assistance programmes to support disadvantaged groups

e.g. “School for all”, 2016

HOWEVER

These are “gender-blind”, not catering to boys’ and girls’ different situations

# MAIN CHALLENGES



ROMANIA

## General challenges

- Decline in population because of aging and migration
- Rural – urban gap in educational opportunities
- Low tertiary education attainment
- Low performance levels in schools (e.g. PISA)
- Few individuals in lifelong learning (but gender parity)

# MAIN CHALLENGES

*continued*



## ROMANIA

### GENDERED CHALLENGES

- **Gendered enrollment in education**
  - from the upper secondary education onward the *gender disparities are steadily growing* in the favor of women
  - declining number of enrolled males in education and training generally after completing the compulsory education
  - male student's higher dropout rate (except for vocational education, where women drop out more often)
- **Gender gaps in performance**
  - Boys perform better in maths, but much worse in reading
- **Gender differences in educational choices**
  - Men choose STEM and similar subjects while women choose humanities and social sciences, secondary and tertiary level
- **High levels of gender-based violence in schools**

# MAIN CHALLENGES

*continued*



## ROMANIA

- **Gender disparity in school-work transition**
  - More men than women find employment after school
- **Many women in teaching profession**
  - Teaching profession has low status and low salaries
- **Few women in educational management boards**
- **Poor statistical data on gender in education**
- **Roma people are particularly affected by challenges**
  - Early school leaving
  - Percentage of women never enrolled in formal education

# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND *continued*



## ROMANIA

### **Law concerning equality of opportunities between women and men, 2002:**

Ministry of Education has the responsibility to promote “those school textbooks, academic courses, guidelines for applying curricula that do not contain aspects of discrimination between sexes, and negative patterns and stereotyped behaviors concerning the role of women and men in public and familial life”

### **Teacher training**

- Gender studies have been introduced in a number of programmes at a number of universities and can reach teachers in pre-service training
- Gender perspectives are included in teachers’ in-service professional training
  - As this is an elective, opinions vary on how effective this measure has been



# LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND *continued*



ROMANIA

**”Strategies for equal opportunities between women and men”, a program under Ministry of Labour, states:**

- Promoting gender perspective in the educational process and evaluating the level of implementation through surveys applied to teachers and students
- Combating gender stereotypes in the educational system, by critical analysis of textbooks and other teaching materials;
- Developing activities for teachers’ continuous formation in the domain of equal opportunities for women and men;
- Introducing criteria related to gender equal opportunities in the complementary set of criteria for external evaluation of quality assurance for educational units

## **HOWEVER**

As this does not lie under the Ministry of Education,  
little progress is made

# INTERESTING POLICY INITIATIVES



ROMANIA

Research into gender and schools has been conducted by **the Institute of Education Sciences (IES)** since 2004. Based on this the Institute has produced:

- a set of *guidelines* and other tools for the *training of teachers* in order to stimulate introduction of gender dimension in the school practice and to make teachers able to appreciate the benefits of this perspective.
- training programme for local educational coordinators
- courses for teachers and parents both face-to-face and online
- a compendium for gender dimension in education containing a specific grid for *evaluation and self-evaluation* of educational institutions from the perspective of gender dimension
- a set of evaluation indicators to be applied in *textbooks analysis* from a gender perspective
- a *glossary of terms* which presents a series of basic concepts to understand the gender perspective in education, such as: gender identity, gender socialization, stereotypes, models, prejudices, gender partnership...

