

DISCRIMINATION AT WORK – UNFORTUNATELY NOT ONLY IN THEORY

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Abstract

There are many managers who say that women and men have the same laws in the workplace, but is it really true? Is it not only a theory? What does it show the practice? In many countries of the world, I think that in all countries, most women are treated as the second quality workers, that discrimination because of the gender is a still really very big social problem. Maybe managers are afraid of women? Completely unnecessarily. According to Tom Peters- well known managing guru- "Women are fantastic and so far unused possibility. Ignoring their leading skills is unbelievable stupidity and short-sightedness of men. In opposite to these latter ones, who like to compete, make hierarchies and order, women are the real leaders: ready to co-operate, team work, communication, exchange of ideas. They can be long-sighted and consequent in searching and developing their talents". According to the research enterprises managed by women are more efficient than by man.

Key words : Management , gender , diversity , organisation , discrimination

Discrimination - *Where is it coming from?*

Moving in a contemporary world inevitably we notice, that our civilization has put women aside of social life. Stereotypes, religion and wide-spread for a long time, anachronistic for civilised society habits, limit women's rights and burden them with obligations practically without a possibility of choice. It is visible in both, professional work and family life. Women submissively bear all humiliations connected with many obligations, which seems to arise from definition defined by the society (often underdeveloped and dominated by men for ages) in their competence. Sources of these stereotypes are not hard to mention when analysing the history of societies, in which these were men, who constituted power, were playing war, educating solely themselves. The matter of behaviour and habits is whether given woman can rebel against it or not. If in her family house there were continued old fashioned rules and her mother was a proverbial „homebody“, then she will not go beyond conventions in her behaviour, because she simply thinks this the way it should be.

Where do differences between women and men come from? There are three theories about this subject. The first – diversity of socialisation – assumes, that the differences result from culture standards. In our, until recently andocentric, culture masculinity and femininity are treated as opposite poles in the same dimension. Depending on gender, children get different toys, they are dressed differently, for different things

punished, to different things encouraged. Already 80% of two-year-old can recognise gender in scope of hairstyle and clothes.

According to evolutionary conception, men dealt with hunting, that is why their supremacy in spacious skills, and women dealt with collecting, that is why they have good memory for localizing small items. David Buss's theory explains why men want different things from women than women from men. Gents aim at contacts with several partners „the best if they are young and attractive, because such strategy allows them to spread their genes, and burden of taking care of children lays mainly on a woman anyway.

According to structural-social theory, differences of gender result from different position of women and men in society and from various roles performed. Women give birth to children and take care of them. Men earn money for maintaining family and climb the power ladder [1]. Never-ending propagating the view, that a woman is the weaker one, who should be taken care of (so worse one, because weaker than men, who strengthen this way the feel of own superiority) caused, that for long years women believed it is so. Not many contemporarily remembers, that former societies living in Mediterranean Sea area, in Middle East, in India worshiped the GODDESS not GOD- as the highest creator. From Egyptian papyruses we learn about women, who performed as parties in civil court cases, commercial transactions. Unfortu-

nately, „pushed aside from the mainstream of social life, woman has been sent to kitchen, where she started living her poor existence as exemplary house wife. Everything was announcing that home should be embodiment of dreams, kitchen should be a temple, marriage- the only carrier, cleaning – ritual full of mystic sense. The share of roles was simple: man is manufacturing and earning, wife is the receiver and consumer of manufactured goods” [4].

Ancient rules, apart from passage of hundreds years, seems not to disappear. „Physically stronger, brought up in belief that, masculinity is an attribute, which should be highly appreciated, seemed to be predispositioned to dominance. They were hunters, warriors, prophets and philosophers, legislators and great builders, supporters of the family and husbands of their subordinate wives. They have created civilisation and given it male image and themselves created subjects, shared the roles of gender as they perceived it their own way, and their privileges took in form of social standards” [4].

Woman still underestimated

European Union membership countries, as well as applying countries obliged themselves to practise policy longing for deleting discrimination of women on a labour market. From the last report published in March 2006 („Report on equality between a woman and a man, 2006”) it results, that unemployment in Union is decreasing, however still the problem concerns disproportions in area of salaries. Ladies earn on average 15% less than men, though these differences are changeable in different countries. The biggest differences in both sexes income are found in Estonia (24%), Slovakia (24%) and Cyprus (25%). The smallest differences are found in Portugal (5%) and Malta (4%). Poland has the highest index of unemployed women in UE, which is 19,2%, which means that more than 9% more than Union average, which is 9,8%. The smallest unemployment is found in Ireland (3,9%) and Great Britain (4,3%). The growth of employment among women in UE still concerns feministic professions. Almost 40% of women are employed in public administration, education, health services, social institutions. In private sector women usually work in services.

Men earn much more than women in specialistic professions and on managing and clerical positions, on higher rank positions. In industry and services women earn best in Switzerland

and Luxemburg. In Poland women’s salary is 7-8 times less than in Switzerland (5506 EUR).

Differences in salaries due to sex are specifically high on manual positions, in professions seen as typically male. Much less women’s salaries are noticeable in new EU members. Salary disproportions on these positions reach 45%. The level of education is also influential on salaries – men with higher education earn almost 45% more than similarly educated women. In most EU countries more women than men receives minimum salaries. In Poland it concerns 3,9% of women and 4% of men. Women earn most in age of 30 – 39 (average 1923 EUR), men in the age of 50 – 59 (about 46% more than women). In France, Poland, Slovenia and Cyprus mostly exposed to unfair salary differences are women after 60 (acc. to report dated 12.12.2006 Sedlak&Sedlak on)

In most countries women come across many obstacles on their way to employment and promoting to higher positions. Research concerning the way of leading job interviews before hiring to work in Warsaw proved, that in 1/3 of the national state owned companies and ¼ of private companies women were asked different questions than men. These questions concerned their marital status, having children and family obligations, they also influenced decision about employment [Mroczkowski T., 1997, 25]. Discrimination during recruitment process is only a beginning of the hard way women must take in the world of business. If they manage to go through the jungle of difficulties on the selection level and they receive the job, still they are in danger of discrimination. Eurostat research show, that work performed by women and men in Union is not the same. In the researched group of people working full time, 30% of women and only 10% of men do office work. 47% of men work as manual workers or in industrial companies, whereas among women the same work is performed by 18%. On average, manual workers are paid better in EU than office workers or clerks. Moreover, over-hours are usually paid to manual workers, which is mostly men. Women however, constitute majority among low paid retail trade salesmen. Working women usually are generally younger, 44% of them is under the age of 30. Among men under 30, there is 32% of employees [7].

Problem of discrimination in scope of sex is confirmed also by results of research made by World Economic Forum. When implementing the

research in 60 countries of the world, there were taken into considerations five criteria:

1. Do women receive same amount as men on the same positions?
2. Do women have same access to the labour market?
3. Do women have same representatives as men do in authority structure and administration?
4. Do women have identical access to education?
5. Do women have same kind of health and social service?

In scale from 1 to 7, the highest position is taken by Scandinavian ladies– Swedish (>5,5 points), Finnish a bit more than 5 points), Norwegian, Icelanders and Danes, so citizens of countries, with liberal society, protecting the rights of minority and having versatile caring system. Polish ladies got 4,36 points, which gave them 19th position. Closer to Scandinavian countries were Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. In first ten there were also New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Great Britain and Germany. Only on 13th position behind Latvian and Lithuanian women, there were placed French. Far places were taken by countries with consolidated 'patriarchal culture' – Malta (43rd place), Italy (45th place) and Greece (50th place). The list is closed by ladies from Islam countries– Trukese and Egyptians (far below 3 points) [5].

Women in business according to The Catalyst Report

According to the Catalyst report :

1. Women held 14,7 percent of all Fortune 500 board seats , compared with 13,6 percent in 2003 and 9,6 percent in 1995.
2. Women of color held 3,4 percent of board seats.
3. Sixty-four companies had 25 percent or more women board directors, compared with 54 companies in 2003.
4. Women were underrepresented as chairs of auditing, compensation and nominating governance committees.
5. In 2005 women held 16.4 percent of corporate officer positions, compared to 15,7 percent in 2002 , and 8,7 percent in 1995.
6. Women held 6,4 percent of top earner positions up from 5,2 percent in 2002.

7. Women of color held 1,7 percent of corporate officer positions.
8. Women of color were 1,0 percent of Fortune 500 top earners.
9. Women held 9,4 percent of clout titles up from 7,9 percent in 2002 .
10. In 2005 eight Fortune 500 companies were led by a woman CEO up from six in 2002.

The key findings show that in the last ten years growth has averaged just 0,5 percentage points per year for women board directors and 0,8 points per year for women corporate officers. The situation is far worse for women of color. Furthermore, even among the highest levels of leadership , women are segregated into less powerful and prestigious positions – they hold proportionately fewer board committee chairs , clout titles and line positions . Generally we can observe an interesting situation (but still not optimistic for women) on the labour market – the higher business position , the fewer quantity of women [16]!

Management , professional and related occupations	- 50,6 %
F500 corporate officers	- 16,4 %
F500 Board seats	- 14,7 %
F500 highest titles	- 9,4 %
F500 top earners	- 6,4 %
F500 CEOs	- 1,6 %



Equal in work – It is Possible?

According to the European Committee report [17] – 85% of respondents – in companies using diversity management – confirmed its positive influence on both, personal and financial politics. Over 80% of them noticed changes for better in work organisation rules and in recruitment process. As many – over 75% of surveyed companies noticed positive influence of considering diversity in the management process aimed at professional development, raising qualification and promoting employees (women and men). The quality of services increased according to respondents for about 40%, sale over 25%. There were also measured such arguments as, relations with the local society and inside the teams, marketing strategies and internal procedures of management. It turned out, that in each area diversity management improved the company image and increased its income. Definite leaders in European Union in scope of introduc-

ing diversity in company are Great Britain, Belgium, Germany and Switzerland.

Women on managing positions is a better economical effectiveness for the company. Employing women on decision-making positions contribute to strengthening the company position on the market. For the purpose of showing dependencies between variety of managing personnel in scope of gender and financial results, American organisation, Catalyst has implemented research covering 353 American companies from the list of 500 firms mentioned in Fortune magazine. To define the financial results of the companies, the authors of the research used two kinds of measurements:

1. ROE (return on equity).
2. TRS (total return on shares).

The research confirmed the thesis about the above mentioned dependency. The group of companies with the largest percentage of women in managing team of the highest rank proved better financial results than the group with the lowest percentage of women. It concerns both used in research factors – ROE (higher in 35,1%) and TRS (higher in 34%). Catalyst analysed also connections between managers diversity in scope of gender and financial results in particular sectors of economy. Among five analysed branches of economy, companies with the highest percentage of women among highest rank managers reached the highest return on equity than companies with the smallest percentage.

Companies taking care of diversity are characterized by clear connection between developing and using women's talents and reaching by them profit. In USA women constitute almost half of the employees (46,5 %) , and their percentage in managers' group is constantly increasing (at present it is about 45,9 %). As the authors of the report think, simultaneously with increasing the presence of women among managers, they have increased same time their influence and participation in decision-making processes. In 2001, women in USA earned almost 2 billions dollars, which indicates growth of their economic power. We can then state that using and developing talents of women taking high manager positions via introducing them into teams dealing with decision-making processes in the companies, is a perfect, profitable idea [15].

Women are still not popular as managers in the European Union. The full information about it shows Table 1.

Women's situation on the labour market in spite of the fact that it is all the time getting better, still it leaves a lot to be desired. Specially problematic seems to be in case of making decision to grow family.

Table 1. Woman and man as managers in the European Union

No	Country	Women as managers in %	Men as managers in %
1	UE 27	32,2	67,8
2	BELGIUM	32,9	67,1
3	CZECH REPUBLIC	30,3	69,7
4	DENMARK	23,0	77,0
5	GERMANY	26,3	73,7
6	ESTONIA	37,5	62,5
7	GREECE	25,8	74,2
8	SPAIN	32,3	67,7
9	FRANCE	38,0	62,0
10	IRELAND	30,2	69,8
11	ITALY	31,9	68,1
12	CYPRUS	13,6	86,4
13	LATVIA	44,3	55,7
14	LITHUANIA	42,7	57,3
15	LUKSEMBURG	23,8	76,2
16	HUNGARY	34,3	65,7
17	MALTA	14,5	85,5
18	NETHERLANDS	25,6	74,4
19	AUSTRIA	27,0	73,0
20	POLAND	32,5	67,5
21	PORTUGAL	34,2	65,8
22	SLOWENIA	32,8	67,2
23	SLOVAKIA	31,2	68,8
24	FINLAND	29,7	70,3
25	SWEDEN	29,8	70,2
26	GREAT BRITAIN	34,5	65,5
27	BULGARIA	34,3	65,7
28	ROMANIA	30,7	69,3

Source: own laboration based on the UE data- Brussel , February 2007

Parenthood still solely woman's problem

Life in the world of stereotypes, never ending looking after the thesis, that a woman is happiest home among children, waiting patiently with dinner for hardly working man to come home, has given rise to strongly rooted belief, that it is so. The fact is, that pregnancy and birth is a matter solely female (which may generate conviction about discriminating by men's nature), but all this what happens after child's birth, is a completely different issue to be considered, which is forgotten completely. Some people do not even consider to put a small child

under father's care. Their reluctance for diapers, soups, child's cry, walks, and what is impossible to omit, not so ambitious house works, men craftily explain that women have much better competence in this area. Certainly it is extremely comfortable. They leave home early in the morning and they do not have to worry about anything. First of all they are not touched by stress (so common among women at present), connected with fear of losing job or taking holiday, in case of child's sickness. Full comfort of life. Meanwhile, this is exactly sign of discrimination. Many women quite late, but realised that and took fight against equality of rights. Unfortunately, no one knows why, all trials of searching for the ways of liberalising labour codes, in relation to work time, concern only women, not both parents. Speaking about flexible work time. In EU countries, where flexible work time has been promoted for a long time, they have started to perceive alarming tendencies, which concern women again. In part-time job there are working 32,6% women in EU and only 7,4% men. [14] Definitely work time is a leading category, which should be taken into consideration when searching for effective methods of reconciling temporarily family life with work life. It is important however that these methods concern parents of both gender, so that they are chosen not imposed, because it is comfortable for someone. The point is that women themselves decide what is best for them, not men! So far legal standards – law was favouring men. Why? The answer is simple – because these were men who dominated in bodies, which have established them, that is Parliament for example. Well, actually they still dominate.

Flexible work forms – How to increase effectiveness of diversity management

There are many proven practises, which are supposed to adjust the labour market to social expectations and reconcile woman with a man. It is enough to have at least good will on employer's side and getting rid of egoism by husband and wife, and „ everyone will be happy“. The problem is that, so that a woman and a man can realise themselves in work, so that no one has to scarify anything for the partner (this leads solely to constant excuses, bad atmosphere and feeling guilty). We can try to use new forms of work. Some of them are as follow:

1. **Flexi-time** – allows employees to choose the time of work beyond contract ar-

rangements. Employees may start, finish and use break in a chosen moment of the day.

2. **Staggered hours** – means, that employers may begin and finish work in agreed time. It enables employers to lengthen time of company operating, and employees have a possibility of adjusting the moment of beginning and finishing work to other terminal obligations. For example to the partner's time work.
3. **Compressed working hours** – creates possibility of limiting working days per week, in cost of lengthening daily work time. Such solution enables employer to lengthen time of operating machinery, even to 24/7.
4. **Shift swapping** – allows employees for choosing shifts and time of work between each other, considering the needs of company functioning in a given period. It gives a chance for adjusting to partner's work time and organising child care system.
5. **Time off lieu** – in cooperation with the manager, employee is using free time in scope of performed over-hours.
6. **Self-rostering** – enables adjusting the number of employees with particular qualifications and skills to daily needs. The need is confronted with the team preferences and on its basis there is created the work schedule.
7. **Annualised hours** – means accounting work time not in a week or month scale but in a year scale. It gives possibility of lengthening work time in critical periods and shortening in lower need periods.
8. **Job-sharing** – means, that two people share obligations and work time, usually performed by one person. Partners share the work, salary, free time and work time.
9. **Working from home** – enables performing work outside company, for example assembling, sewing, etc. It is a way of working using new technologies, such as internet, where work may be realized at home and sent to company.
10. **Tele-working** – means work outside company using information and telecommunication technology. It gives possibility of connecting work with taking care of children or older people and

avoiding everyday traveling to the company.

11. **Time accounts** – system of registering and accounting work time in different time frames. Gives possibility of gathering and free use of time save.
12. **Part-time working** – offered by the employer, possibility of work in shorter time [Materials from scientific conference: „Equal at work – it is profitable” , Warszawa 2007]

Above mentioned solutions become contemporary more and more fashionable and popular. Unfortunately not in demanded scale. Many employers are skeptic about them, but also not all employees are astonished by them. We can find below couple of disadvantages of flexible work forms:

1. Inefficient safety of employment.
2. Fear of loosing livelihood.
3. Lack of enough legal norms.
4. Lack of efficient legal protection connected with salaries (salary is often negotiated by the employer and employee each time separately and is not regulated either by labour code or company salary system).
5. Huge difficulties in assuring continuity of performed work.
6. Small possibility of uniting employees.
7. Lack of social connection important for professional development and helping in performing work and eliminating difficulties with it associated.
8. Large load of employers connected with their own professional development, trainings and gaining crucial skills.
9. Difficulties in management, connected with substantial and time coordination of the performed work.
10. Misusing private house for performing professional work, limiting family freedom.
11. Risk of low level identification of an employee with the company.
12. Increasing requirements in relation to the performer (knowledge of a job, self-dependence, internal discipline, responsibility, etc.)
13. Inability of controlling employee's work during its performance at home.

Apart from some disadvantages, which can be attributed to flexible work time, we should perceive them as an alternative for the present

offer on a labour market. Actually, their effectiveness depends solely on a human being, on both employer and an employee. With lack of employer's goodwill and lack of honesty and reliability on employee side, no method will ever be effective.

Summarizing family –friendly employment brings profits for both, employers and employees.

Arguments for treating variety managing seriously [own elaboration based on [11]]:

1. Profits for an employer

- employment stabilisation
- limiting costs of hiring new employees
- reduction of stress
- improvement of motivation to work
- improvement of productivity
- reduction of absence
- soothing difficulties resulting from break in work on family reasons
- bigger loyalty towards employer

2. Profits for an employee

- enabling reconciling family obligations with professional.
- limiting threats of loosing job
- greater motivation to work
- soothing conflict work – family life
- better creativity
- future-like thinking, strategic
- smaller competition between employees
- focusing attention on the quality of work and not threats and problems

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