Constitutional Affairs

Justice, Freedom and Security

Gender Equality

Legal and Parliamentary Affairs

Petitions

Gender Equality in the Media Sector

STUDY FOR THE FEMM COMMITTEE

EN

2018

Gender Equality in the Media Sector

STUDY

Abstract

This study was commissioned by the European Parliament's Policy Department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality. It examines key elements of the European policy agenda pertaining to gender equality in the media sector. It also reviews existing research on women's representation within media content and the media workforce. The study provides analysis of actions to promote gender equality in the media at both EU and Member State levels. Finally, it presents case studies of gender equality in the media sector in four Member States: Austria, Malta, Sweden, and the UK.

AUTHOR(S)

Katie McCracken, Director, Opcit Research
Dr. Ana FitzSimons, Senior Researcher, Opcit Research
Dr. Sarah Priest, Senior Researcher, Opcit Research
Sylvia Girstmair Researcher, Opcit Research
Professor Brenda Murphy, Professor of Gender Studies, University of Malta

CONTENTS

_____

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AT	Austria
AVMSD	Audiovisual Media Services Directive
BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CD	Council Directive
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
EASA	European Advertising Standards Alliance
EC	European Commission
EFJ	European Federation of Journalists
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
ETUC	European Trade Union Confederation
EU	European Union
EWL	European Women's Lobby
GMMP	Global Media Monitoring Project
ICT	Information and communication technology
IFJ	International Federation of Journalists
IPSO	Independent Press Standards Office
MT	Malta
ÖRF	Österreichischer Rundfunk
SE	Sweden
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

_____

LIST OF TABLES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Over forty years since the first Council Directives on equal pay and equal treatment at work for women and men, European media industries are still characterised by a significant gender pay gap, gender-based discrimination, and sexual harassment. Across Europe, and across media types, women remain significantly under-represented in the media workforce, particularly at decision-making levels. This is, in turn, associated with the production and distribution of media content that reflects and expresses the gender inequality present in the media workforce and wider society. Not only are women less visible overall in media content but, when present, their portrayals too often conform to sexist tropes. Women are, still, commonly framed in stereotypical (home- and family-focused), sexualised, or auxiliary roles, and as less authoritative, capable, and serious than men, which fails to reflect the reality of women's diverse lives and contributions to society.

Aims

This study examines key elements of the European policy agenda as it pertains to gender equality in the media sector. It also reviews existing research on women's representation within media content and the media workforce. The study then provides analysis of action to promote gender equality in the media at both the EU and Member State levels. Finally, it presents case studies of gender equality in the media industries of four Member States: Austria, Malta, Sweden, and the UK.

Findings

The findings of this study are based on desk research and interviews with 37 respondents, including individuals working at the European and Member State levels to promote gender equality, media regulators, and women working within the media industries of the four case study countries.

Achieving gender equality within the media sector is firmly on the European policy agenda, and this is reflected in a wide range of directives, resolutions, charters, conventions and strategies. Current policy priorities include addressing longstanding issues, such as the gender pay gap and gender-based discrimination in employment, but also finding workable solutions to relatively new problems, including how to respond to the dynamics of gender inequality within digital media platforms.

As the European gender equality policy agenda has developed, there has been notable progress toward more expansive conceptions of equality and more specificity in policy prescriptions. For example, in the context of ongoing industry failure to implement directives on pay equality, calls for more demanding requirements on pay transparency are growing. Central policy aims are not, however, limited to leveraging regulation to guarantee women's legal rights, but have increasingly come to focus on bringing change to sociocultural norms, attitudes, and practices, including by proscribing discriminatory media content.

Nonetheless, it is clear that the preponderance of European gender equality policy relates to equal treatment in employment, including employment in the media industry. While discriminatory media content is prohibited, and European bodies frequently condemn the negative social impact of much contemporary media, sanctions for infringements of rules on

_____

media content are limited. This appears to reflect both a strong commitment to freedom of expression, and a hope that improvements to content should follow from increased parity in the media workforce.

Women working in media who were interviewed for this study reported widespread gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunity within their industries, including in pay, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion. They also described the prevalence of working structures, norms and practices that function to disadvantage women relative to men. The most common of these include insufficient provision for parents with childcare responsibilities, competitive rather than cooperative modes of communication, and 'normalisation' of sexual harassment and bullying.

Several women reported that the precarious and competitive nature of many media industry jobs, combined with a prevailing culture of acceptance of rule infringements, mean that in practice women experiencing discrimination and harassment often have no genuine recourse to due process. This was reported to be the case even in companies with clear codes of practice prohibiting discrimination and harassment, and despite the legal requirement in every European Union Member State for equal treatment at work. Some women described the heavy toll discrimination and harassment had taken on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

Our case study research suggests that, at the level of industry, the organisations that are most successful in achieving gender parity in their workforce are those with strong leadership that demonstrates commitment to including women at all levels of media production. Respondents also consistently reported that the content produced or distributed by such organisations tends to portray a more balanced, realistic view of women's diverse lives and contributions to society. Similarly, Member States with the strongest records on gender equality tend to be those that are demonstrably committed to exceeding the minimum EU-level equality requirements.

Key recommendations

In this context, a key priority must be to counteract the discriminatory norms and attitudes, including unconscious biases, that contribute to ongoing failures to address gender inequality effectively. Social campaigns, education programmes, and more targeted training and awareness-raising (including for industry decision-makers) to promote egalitarian values and practices should be supported through funding and promotion at the national and European level. Industry decision-makers should be made aware of the business case for more gender equal and diverse workforces in media industries; namely, that the resulting media content is likely to appeal to a wider variety of consumers.

Action is also required to ensure that existing rules on equal treatment in employment (including rules on pay inequality and harassment) are enforced. Industry-level mechanisms must be identified and put in place to provide women experiencing discrimination with recourse to due process and ensure the pursuit of legal entitlements does not carry undue career risk. Growing calls for more fine-grained pay transparency should be translated into requirements.
The recent #MeToo campaign has raised awareness of the prevalence of harassment, and appears to be facilitating the development of a cultural atmosphere in which women feel

better supported to disclose their experiences.[1] Nonetheless, what constitutes harassment and how media organisations should respond to disclosures remains contested. Industry decision-makers should respond by making efforts to ensure that internal harassment policies reach the highest possible standards of fairness, clarity, and transparency.

While extending access to part time, flexible working is an important part of promoting a better work-life balance, our research suggests it can be difficult to implement fairly unless appropriate systems are set in place and followed by managers. Media organisations should be aware of the need to carefully coordinate workloads to ensure part time workers are not, in practice, compelled to work over their contracted hours to complete allocated work.

Finally, our research suggests that where gender disparities in the media workforce are entrenched, the use of gender quotas in recruitment represents a fast and effective temporary measure to redress workforce gender imbalances. Targeted initiatives providing training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to women can also help mitigate the disadvantages women face in accessing work in media industries, including at senior, decision-making levels. Further investment in funding for such initiatives by national and European authorities is recommended.

---

[1] The #MeToo campaign started on social media in October 2017 and spread virally. The campaign aimed to raise awareness of the prevalence of sexual harassment and assault, by encouraging and supporting women to publicly report their experiences. To date, the phrase has been posted on social media millions of times, including by several high-profile celebrities, to indicate that the poster has experienced sexual harassment and assault. Many people posting the phrase have also included a description of their personal experiences. The activist Tarana Burke originally used the phrase in 2006 in a separate campaign to promote 'empowerment through empathy' among women of colour who have experienced sexual abuse.

_____

2. REVIEW OF THE POLICY CONTEXT

KEY FINDINGS

- Achieving gender equality within the media sector is firmly on the European policy agenda, and this is reflected in a wide range of directives, resolutions, charters, conventions and strategies.

- Current priorities include addressing longstanding issues, such as the gender pay gap and gender-based discrimination in employment, but also finding workable solutions to relatively new problems, including how to respond to the dynamics of gender inequality within digital media platforms.

- Central policy aims are not limited to leveraging legislation and regulation to guarantee women's legal rights, but have increasingly come to focus on bringing change to sociocultural norms, attitudes, and practices, including by prohibiting discriminatory media content.

- Key elements of the European gender equality policy framework pertaining to the media sector include a range of directives, as well as the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (1979), the Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace (1995), The Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000), the European Commission Women's Charter (2010), The European Commission Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 (2010), the European Pillar of Social Rights (2017), and the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 (2013).

As the European gender equality policy agenda has developed, there has been notable progress toward more expansive conceptions of equality and more specificity in policy prescriptions. Central aims are not only limited to leveraging legislation and regulation to guarantee legal rights (in employment, for example), but now also focus on bringing change to sociocultural norms, attitudes and practices (including by prohibiting discriminatory media content).

Nonetheless, there is striking similarity between the objectives of the earliest and most recent policy foci: gender inequalities clearly persist, even as European-level bodies continue to reaffirm their commitment to ending them. Equal pay and equal treatment in employment, for example, have been enshrined in European directives for over forty years, but remain primary challenges within media and other industries.

Below, we set out the main directives, conventions, charters, strategies and resolutions that express and shape the current policy agenda, summarizing the spirit as well as the specifics of these frameworks. Actions to promote gender equality in accordance with this policy agenda, at both Member State and European levels, are discussed later in this study.

It is worth noting that this policy context concerns equality between 'men and women' and often refers to 'sex' as the relevant characteristic. While this study is similarly limited in

scope, its findings suggest a cis-normative focus in the dominant frames of the European gender equality policy agenda.[2]

Since the first Council directive on 'equal pay for men and women' in 1975 (75/117/EEC), a number of **directives of the European Parliament and of the Council** have been enacted to prohibit sex discrimination and require equal treatment of women and men. The central Directives currently in force concern equal treatment in the sphere of self-employment (2010/41/EU), parental leave (2010/18/EU), equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation (2006/54/EC), equal treatment in access to and supply of goods and services (2004/113/EC), health and safety at work for women who are pregnant or have recently given birth (2004/113/EC), and equal treatment in matters of social security (79/7/EEC).[3]

Council Directive 2006/54/EC is particularly relevant to gender equality in the media, given case study respondents' reports of continuing sexual harassment in the media workforce: the directive requires equal pay and employment opportunities, but goes further to explicitly state that 'harassment and sexual harassment are contrary to the principle of equal treatment between men and women and constitute discrimination on grounds of sex […] They should therefore be prohibited and should be subject to effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties'.

Also of significance here is the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (2010/13/EU).[4] This directly addresses gender issues within media content and communications. Article 6 requires Member States to 'ensure by appropriate means that audiovisual content provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction do not contain any incitement to hatred based on race, sex, religion or nationality', while Article 9 requires Member States to 'ensure that audiovisual commercial communications provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction […] shall not […] include or promote any discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, nationality, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation'. A 2016 amendment to the directive (Procedure 2016/0151(COD)) brought a wider range of platforms, including much online video-sharing platforms, into its scope.[5] This reflects growing recognition of the need to respond effectively to discriminatory content within digital media platforms, as the traditional distinction between media production and consumption becomes increasingly ambiguous.

While directives place legal requirements upon all Member States to ensure particular outcomes, they do not dictate the precise mechanisms through which the outcomes are to be achieved, and so there is some variation across Member States in how shared policy goals are pursued. Broadening out from these directives, we review below other key elements of the current gender equality policy framework.

All European Union Member States have signed and ratified, or acceded to, the **United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW).[6]

---

[2] The descriptive term cis, or cisgender, relates to a person whose personal sense of gender identity 'corresponds' with the sex they were assigned at birth (for example, someone who identifies as a woman and was designated female at birth). It is an antonym of the term transgender.
[3] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/law/index_en.htm
[4] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX:32010L0013
[5] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1438652&t=e&l=en
[6] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/text/econvention.htm

While not specific to media, this international treaty, which was adopted in 1979, requires Member States to 'take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women' (Article 11). Further, the Convention requires Member States to 'modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women' (Article 5). In bringing cultural and social norms within its scope, this (arguably more radical) Article can be understood to imply, at least, the need to consider how media content shapes such norms, including prejudices and stereotypes.

The United Nations 4th World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, led to the creation of the **Beijing Platform for Action for Equality, Development and Peace** (BPfA).[7] This sets out an explicit agenda for gender equality, including strategic objectives and actions to be taken by governments, non-governmental organizations, and media professions. The platform was ratified by all EU Member States, which hold primary responsibility for advancing the agenda within the EU region.

Area J of the BPfA concerns 'women and the media', and includes two strategic objectives: 'to increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication', and 'to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media'. Also relevant is Area G, which concerns 'women in power and decision making'. This area includes a further two strategic objectives: 'to take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making', and 'to increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership'.

The Platform emphasises the importance of media to women's advancement, recognises and condemns the continuation of gender inequality in the media workforce and in media content, and calls for further research to understand these issues more thoroughly. It also sets out the need to empower women by supporting education, training and networking, and by developing regulatory mechanisms (including self-regulation within media industries) to 'promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women' in media content and to promote women's access to and participation in the media workforce.

The Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000/C 364/01) outlines the rights, freedoms and principles common to all EU Member States.[8] The Charter sets out a principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and other protected characteristics (Article 21), and also a more thoroughgoing principle explicitly requiring equality between men and women (Article 23). This demands equality in all areas, including employment, while making provision for positive discrimination: 'the principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex'. It thus indicates acknowledgement that achieving equality for consistently disadvantaged groups does not always require that all groups are treated the same: targeted action may be required to mitigate disadvantages.

---

[7] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm
[8] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/charter/pdf/text_en.pdf

The European Commission's Women's Charter was adopted in 2010 on the 15th anniversary of the Beijing World Conference on Women.[9] It 'highlights the necessity to take gender equality into account in all of its policies', reflecting a broader trend toward gender mainstreaming in European policy-making.[10] It focuses on five areas for action at the policy level: economic independence, equal pay, representation of women in decision-making and positions of power, respect for women's dignity and integrity including an end to gender-based violence, and external actions with third countries. The Charter emphasises that gender inequalities have a direct negative impact on 'economic and social cohesion' and on 'sustainable growth and competitiveness', calling for action to address (*inter alia*) the precarious employment conditions and disproportionate care responsibilities often borne by women. As indicated later in this study, case study data suggests these two factors are still key disadvantages for women in the media workforce.

In the same year as the Women's Charter, the European Commission adopted the **Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015**, also known as the Gender Equality Strategy, in order 'to translate the Women's Charter's objectives into reality'.[11] This strategy sets out key actions to achieve progress under each of the five policy areas identified in the Women's Charter, as well as cross-cutting actions. These are focused primarily on monitoring, reporting on, and supporting progress toward gender equality. For example, actions include promoting 'good practice on gender roles in youth, education, culture and sport' and monitoring 'implementation of EU equal treatment laws'. Taken together, the actions represent a 'dual approach' to gender equality, combining gender mainstreaming with specific measures and initiatives.

Following the Women's Charter and the Gender Equality Strategy, the European Parliament passed a **resolution** on 13th March 2012 'on equality between women and men in the European Union' (2011/2244(INI)).[12] This formally calls on the Commission and Member States to take and enforce the actions set out in the Gender Equality Strategy.

Other key resolutions directly address gender equality in the media. The resolution of 28th April 2016 on 'empowering women in the digital age' (2015/2007(INI)), which draws upon the findings of Terry Reintke MEP's 2016 report of the same name, calls for action to address the gender gap in the information and communication technology (ICT) sector, and 'to fully exploit the potential that the information society, ICT and the internet have to promote women's empowerment, women's rights and freedoms and gender equality'.[13]

The Resolution of 12th March 2013 'on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU' (2012/2116(INI)) notes that 'gender discrimination in the media, communication and advertising is still frequent and facilitates the reproduction of gender stereotypes, especially by portraying women as sex objects in order to promote sales'.[14] The 'Honeyball' resolution of 26th February 2014 (2013/2103(INI)) also draws particular attention to the problem of women's objectification in mass-media production, which, it warns, 'which may have the

---

[9] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EL/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:em0033
[10] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm
[11] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/strategy_equality_women_men_en.pdf
[12] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2012-0069+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN
[13] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A8-2016-0048+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN
[14] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0074+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN

_____

effect of encouraging the human personality of women to be disregarded and of presenting them as a commodity'.[15] Both of these resolutions call on Member States and the Commission to enact more rigorous legislation and better enforcement of existing law, and also to campaign more effectively to eliminate inequality, discrimination and exploitation.

More recently, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** was jointly signed by the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission in November 2017.[16] This is intended to provide 'new and more effective rights for citizens' based around 20 principles, the second of which concerns gender equality. This principle states that 'equality of treatment and opportunities between women and men must be ensured and fostered in all areas, including regarding participation in the labour market, terms and conditions of employment and career progression', and that 'women and men have the right to equal pay for work of equal value'. As indicated elsewhere in this study, the Pillar is accompanied by a legislative initiative (COM(2017)252) that is intended to increase women's employment opportunities by improving work-life balance for all parents.[17]

Beyond EU institutions, in 2013 the Council of Europe adopted its own **Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017**.[18] The strategy aims to 'achieve the advancement and empowering of women and hence the effective realisation of gender equality in Council of Europe member States by supporting the implementation of existing standards'. This reflects widespread recognition that, while extensive rules on gender equality are in place, they are often inadequately enforced. The strategy focuses on five areas: combating gender stereotypes and sexism, preventing and combating violence against women, guaranteeing equal access of women to justice, achieving balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, and achieving gender mainstreaming in all policies and measures. Importantly, the Council of Europe strategy explicitly states the importance of addressing gender equality through an intersectional lens: it notes that realisation of its objectives will 'integrate the issue of multiple discrimination while taking into account the specific rights and needs of women and men throughout the life cycle'. The Council of Europe has a Gender Equality Commission whose members are appointed by member states and which supports implementation of the five objectives of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017.

---

[15] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2014-0162+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN
[16] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en
[17] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2017%3A252%3AFIN
[18] https://rm.coe.int/16805901cf

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

KEY FINDINGS

- As media forms diversify and become more interactive, increasing attention is being paid by media researchers to the ways in which audiences influence and participate in the creation of media content.

- Across different types of media, women are still portrayed in traditional, sexualised, or auxiliary roles far more often than men. Men are disproportionately portrayed in the role of main executive agent.

- Women are under-represented in the workforce across all media sectors, particularly at senior decision-making levels.

- Barriers to women's participation in the workforce include direct and indirect discrimination, inadequate access to mentors and support networks, and inflexible workplace structures that do not meet the needs of women who have childcare responsibilities.

Research consistently demonstrates misrepresentation and under-representation of women and girls within the media at two levels: the ways in which women are represented in content, and the involvement of women in the production of the media. This literature review explores existing research on the gender role narratives that are represented in different media formats. It also considers the current state of equality between women and men in the media workforce.

For the purposes of this study, the term 'media' is understood in its diversity to include news and information, as well as entertainment (Lalani and London, 2006). It includes 'old' media (print, television, radio), 'new' media (internet, apps, social media), media that is mass-consumed, and media characterised by more specialised production and consumption. The nature of media consumption and production is evolving: there is enormous and growing variety in media products and content, much media production is now globalised (Ross and Nightingale, 2003), and audiences are increasingly active 'participants' in the media that they consume, rather than passive consumers (Interone, 2012).

3.1. Media effects

There is considerable disagreement among media researchers on the extent to which media can influence values, behaviour, and feelings. Much of the debate on media effects is centred around two poles: 'active audience/responsive media' versus 'passive audience/strong media', yet research into this issue has tended to focus on the content of media coverage on different subjects or themes, rather than on how narratives are received (Lalani and London, 2006). This is, not least, because cause and effect between public attitudes and media is extremely difficult to demonstrate (Ross, 2009). Ultimately, however, no conclusive case for either approach has been made, and media researchers increasingly favour approaches that transcend the traditional duality.

Philo (2007), for example, suggests that media researchers focus on the 'totality' of media production, content, and reception, to analyse why particular stories become popular, what

types of underlying narratives get presented, and how audiences receive and interpret content.

Intersectional approaches seek to explore both structure and agency as interdependent, viewing media as part of a system of power that may influence and be influenced by audiences. Media platforms can then be recognised as powerful tools that communicate and affect cultural values and beliefs. Media can legitimise ideas of gender and gender-related cultural values that are shaped by and reinforce gender politics and ideology (Ilchenko, 2012). In the European context, this can be interpreted as explaining some of the interesting and important differences between media content in, for example, post-socialist States such as Poland and Romania, liberal market states such as the UK and Ireland, and socially liberal states such as Sweden and Norway.

Researchers frequently point to a significant lag between gains in gender equality in society, and equality of women and men in the media (Meijer and Van Zoonen, 2002; Ross and Nightingale, 2008). In one sense, the dynamics of media as a 'business' create a 'ratings versus responsibility' conflict (Lalani and London, 2006), in which the need to portray accurate and informative data is often at odds with the need to sell newspapers or entertain viewers.

Studies of media content concerning women and girls consistently conclude that women are often portrayed as sexually available and desirable, linked to nature and natural processes, and associated with tradition and traditional values (Meijer and Van Zoonen, 2002). Some studies suggest that these gender imbalances in media narratives can have damaging effects on women and girls. For example, Grabe *et al* (2008) argue that exposure to mass media depicting the thin-ideal body is linked to body image disturbance in women. Evidence from multiple studies suggests that children (and particularly girls) as young as 6 years old exhibit preferences for body figures thinner than their own (Kostanski and Gullone 1999, Olvera *et al*, 2012). Gardner *et al* (1999) found that, as girls reach and develop through puberty, they report increased dissatisfaction with their bodies, while satisfaction levels remain constant for boys. Further research by Martins *et al* (2011) found that, controlling for age, body satisfaction, and baseline self-esteem, television exposure is significantly related to adolescent children's self-esteem. In particular, television exposure predicts a decrease in self-esteem for white and black girls and black boys, but an increase in self-esteem among white boys. Such findings suggest that media reinforces the dominance of certain cultural groups, as well as genders, in patterns that are already present in wider society.

3.2.   Gender representation in media content

Social media and web-enabled technology increasingly distributes media power, including the means of media production and consumption, to new producers and to more fragmented and active audiences. While new media represents an important means of acquiring information, for example to younger people seeking knowledge about romance and sex (Pinkleton *et al*, 2012), it can also act as a platform for the objectification of women and girls, and the perpetuation of harmful masculinities. This can manifest in hyper-sexualised, one-dimensional images of women and girls, and the use of virtual spaces to perpetrate direct attacks on women and girls, ranging from cyber-stalking to posting images or videos of women and girls (frequently of sexual activity or abuse) without their consent (UN Women, 2012). Violence in the virtual space, and wider issues of how women and girls are objectified in the media, have particular implications for girls and younger women, who are more likely to engage with new media.

Henry and Powell (2015) note that, while harmful digital communications such as non-consensual distribution of sexual images, or use of digital technologies to harass or blackmail, are often framed as a problem of 'user naiveté', it is important to consider such behaviour as gender-based violence. Just as girls and young women may experience violence and harassment at home and in society, this is mirrored in the digital world, as gender norms and inequalities are reflected online. The authors argue that current legal and policy approaches fail to capture adequately the social and psychological harm that results from the use of sexual imagery to harass, coerce and blackmail women.

In their study of young people's engagement with social networking sites in Spain, Tortajada, Araüna and Martínez note that social networking sites are spaces of risk and opportunity that are deeply affected by gender. Self-presentation in social networking sites is often modelled on gendered depictions found in advertising and other media, adapting and reproducing gender stereotypes to yield extreme forms and levels of standardisation, exaggeration and simplification. These representational strategies can contribute to spreading, popularising, and normalising gender stereotypes. Media education should therefore consider the ways in which adolescent practices in social networking sites are being fuelled by the consumption of other media products, including advertising, and how this impacts upon adolescent expression in and self-identity through those (Tortajada, Araüna and Martínez, 2013).

Many recent studies have examined how current systems of marketing and mass communication mirror, express and amplify traditional, patriarchal gender relations and values that still remain in contemporary societies. This research demonstrates that **advertising** often adopts, reshapes and exaggerates stereotypical gender roles. In addition to information regarding services and products, advertising constructs a secondary discourse about society and power relations, including gender. This discourse reflects and enhances the social ideologies that it selectively endorses while simultaneously responding to the shifting power relations between social groups (HajiMohammadi, 2011).

Several categories of performative gender have been identified in advertising displays. These include 'relative size', where women appear to be smaller and shorter than men, and the 'feminine touch', where women are displayed more often than men in scenes in which they touch things (or themselves) with no apparent functional end. Men are frequently portrayed in the main executive role, with women as supporting agents. Women are also often displayed in lying positions (on the floor or on a bed), with their knees folded or their heads bowed more clearly than men's, and smile more frequently and more openly than men (Tortajada, Araüna and Martínez, 2013). Women are also more likely to be depicted cleaning the house or caring for children (Hetsroni, 2012).

Research also demonstrates that, within the context of under-representation of older people in television advertising, the under-representation of older women is more extreme than that of older men. Older men are portrayed more frequently in employment and with more authority than other groups, whereas older women tend to lack clear occupational or familial roles (Baumann and de Laat, 2012).

While there is near-parity between the numbers of women and men who play games – in 2014, the Entertainment Software Association found that women make up 48 percent of all console, PC, and mobile game players – research suggests that aspects of **gaming** culture can function to exclude or discourage women from gaming. Perhaps most notably, Gamergate, a harassment campaign directed toward women in the gaming industry that began in 2014, involved gamers using the hashtag #Gamergate to criticize, accuse, and threaten women, including by issuing rape and death threats. Supporters of the Gamergate

campaign viewed it as an expression of opposition to a perceived increasing influence of feminism and progressivism on gaming culture. More recently, Charles (2016) has argued that women gamers still face high levels of personal abuse and hostility within internet gaming communities, relative to men. Charles also found that women's identities as gamers are more strongly 'policed', in the sense that they are more often assumed to be or treated as 'casual' (rather than dedicated) gamers, and that calls for inclusiveness are frequently ignored by game developers.

Kafai *et al* (2008) argue that top-selling games reinforce gender stereotypes and inequalities embedded in society, with female characters often represented in a hyper-sexualised manner in games that 'overstress young, buxom and beautiful women in their content'. Similarly, female roles in game storylines are often secondary, with underdeveloped personalities and narrative arcs (Miller and Summers 2007; Behm-Morawitz and Mastro 2009; Dill and Thill 2007). This compares unfavourably with male characterisation that is more often complex and developed, reinforcing archetypes of strength, strong will, and independence. These in-game disparities can be viewed as a reflection of perceptions of women's traits, roles, and importance in non-gaming environments. When combined with hyper-sexualised character designs, underdeveloped character personalities and plot-lines reinforce the idea that women's roles are trivial and closely associated with sex (Gonzalez *et al*, 2014).

In this context, there are significant challenges around balancing the right to be protected from discrimination and harm with the right to freedom of expression. Nevertheless, as noted in the Beijing Platform for Action, violent or demeaning depictions of women and girls in the media contribute to the continuation of gendered violence: 'images in the media of violence against women, in particular those that depict rape or sexual slavery as well as the use of women and girls as sex objects, including pornography, are factors contributing to the continued prevalence of such violence, adversely influencing the community at large, in particular children and young people.'[19]

While audiences, as consumers of media, may have some influence on how women are 'treated' by the media, this depends in part upon the capacity of women's voices to affect and challenge the way that media content is developed. This leads to the second consideration for this study.

3.3. Gender representation in the media workforce

Various studies have confirmed horizontal and vertical labour market segregation within media industries. A key overarching finding is that women are under-represented in the media workforce, particularly at senior, decision-making levels. According to a study conducted by Skillset in the UK (2008), which was based on a labour market census, women are a minority in virtually every segment of the media sector in the UK, including mainstream news and television, creative industries, gaming, and other digital media industries. Further, the study found an important driver for this inequality is the loss of women beyond middle age. Despite more women than men entering the sector as graduates, women in the UK media workforce are far less likely than men to have dependent children living with them, suggesting that women who have children are leaving the industry.

---

[19] United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action, adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women, 27 October 1995.

In several countries, women substantially outnumber men in **journalism** training and enter the profession in (slightly) greater numbers, but relatively few rise to senior jobs, and the pay gap between male and female journalists remains wide (Franks, 2013). A 2015 global survey of the International Women's Media Foundation found that women represent only a third of the full-time journalism workforce in the 522 companies surveyed. Research from the European Institute for Gender Equality found that women are under-represented in decision-making roles in European media industries, and also that gender inequality was significantly worse in the private sector than in the public sector.

Research by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP, 2015) suggests that women still make up a minority of reporters and presenters, with very little improvement since 2000. It also found that women are particularly underrepresented in what the researchers describe as the 'most prestigious' category of news reporting: politics and government. Within the EU, Nordic countries were found to have some of the most gender-equal workforces. It is possible that the digital revolution may create new opportunities for female journalists, as non-traditional professional structures enable women to investigate, report and write in new ways and in different formats (Franks, 2013). Nonetheless, the GMMP research suggests that women's representation in digital news delivery platforms is, for now, no better than in traditional news media.

The European Women's Audiovisual Network found that the structures of Europe's **film industries** do not support the EU's and Member States' commitment to gender equality. Rather, inequality is perpetuated by factors including the competitive habits of the marketplace, industry structures, the impact of new technologies, and erroneous beliefs about women's abilities and the 'business risk' of hiring women. While women represent almost half of directors graduating from film schools, the overall proportion of female directors working in the industry is less than one-quarter. The report advocates for pan-European associations, such as the EFAD (European Film Agency Directors) and CineRegio (Association of European Regional Film Funds) to adopt a common approach to data gathering and analysis on gender equality through agreed common indicators and standardised sets of data, and the exchange of best practice. The authors note that any revision of the AVMS Directive attention should seek to improve measures for gender equality, and the visibility of female-directed films and audiovisual works (EWA, 2013).

Research on women and film-making has demonstrated the interconnection between equality behind the camera and women's representation on screen. Edström and Mølster found that Nordic countries were able to narrow the gender gap in the media workforce and have become role models for other change-seeking countries. They note that having more women in directing roles is likely to lead to better female character development on screen (Edström and Mølster, 2014).

Research has highlighted the persistence of gender inequalities within the **video game industry**, despite some shifts in video game design production and almost equal levels of gaming between men and women. Only one-tenth of video game designers are women, and the widespread cyber-harassment of female game designers has drawn renewed attention to the importance of increasing diversity in the gaming industry (Charles, 2016; Rosen, 2015). This under-representation of women in video game production is associated with sexist representations in games, reinforces a masculine culture of gaming, and limits the potential for innovation and creativity. Several explanations for gender inequality in the gaming industry have been suggested by researchers, including perceptions of girls' interest (or disinterest) in gaming, structural inequalities in educational and corporate institutions, lack

of female role models and mentors, and a hostile work environment that has led several female game designers to leave the industry (Cunningham, 2016).

Studies of women's professional representation in the **advertising industry** have found trends of vertical and horizontal segregation in the occupational structure. Ayhan's analysis of the Spanish advertising industry highlights that women not only occupy lower job positions than men, but are also infrequently involved in the advertisement creation process, and face gender discrimination including sexist attitudes and gender biases (Ayhan, 2010). A study of the American advertising industry found that while women make up two-thirds of the advertising workforce, only one in three in creative departments are women, with even fewer in the higher executive ranks. Of the top 33 agencies, only four had flagship offices with female creative directors (Broyles and Grow, 2008).

However, alternative opportunities presented by digital advertising, including on online video games, social media, vlogs or video streaming platforms, have disrupted traditional advertising practices and thereby loosened occupational structures. Research suggests that new, digitally-orientated agencies do not yet seem to have institutionalised the barriers (such as inflexible workplaces structures and processes that do not meet women's needs) that often constrain women in the traditional advertising sector (Mallia and Windels, 2011).

4. REVIEW OF STATISTICS ON GENDER EQUALITY IN THE MEDIA SECTOR

KEY FINDINGS

- In news media, women form a minority of sources and subjects, and are particularly under-represented as experts.
- Women also make up a minority news reporters and presenters, with very little improvement globally since 2000.
- Women's under-representation in the news media workforce worsens at senior decision-making levels, and this form of gender inequality is significantly worse in the private sector than in the public sector.
- Women are less likely than men to have a speaking or leading role in films, and are more likely to be portrayed in sexualised ways.
- Over the last ten years, women have consistently made up less than 10% of directors of top-grossing films.
- Female characters in video games are significantly more likely than male characters to be portrayed in overtly sexualised ways.
- Men disproportionately dominate jobs in the gaming industry, and particularly technical core content creation roles.
- In audiovisual advertisements, women's overall speaking time and screen time is significantly less than men's. Research generally indicates the continued prevalence of traditional female stereotypes in advertising, and of portrayals of women as decorative or sexualised.

This review provides an overview of some key statistics on both representation of women in media content, and the presence and roles of women in the media workforce, within four major media industries: news, film, gaming, and advertising.

4.1. News media (TV, radio, newspapers and online news)

The Global Media Monitoring Project samples a single day of news media. Findings referenced below are taken from samples of TV, radio, newspapers, and online news in 28 European countries, taken every five years since 1995.[20]

Since 1995, women's overall presence in the news has increased, although there has been a slight decrease from 2010 (26%) to 2015 (25%).

In 2015, the proportion sources in twitter/online news stories who were women was the same as that for traditional news media (25%).

---

[20] Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMB Global Report

Table 1: Proportions of subjects/sources in newspapers, radio, and television news who are women (1995 – 2015)

Year	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
Women	16%	19%	21%	26%	25%

Source: Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMP Global Report

Women were most underrepresented as authoritative sources in 2015: only 18% of experts and 23% of spokespeople were women. They were more likely (though still less likely than men) to be sources for popular opinions (42%) or personal experiences (38%).

Table 2: Proportions of subjects/sources in newspapers, radio, and television news who are women, by function (2015)

Function	Expert or comment-ator	Spokes-person	Subject	Eye witness	Personal experi-ence	Popular opinion
Women	18%	23%	25%	28%	38%	42%

Source: Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMP Global Report

News stories referencing gender topics were relatively rare, with stories referencing women's rights and challenges to gender stereotypes constituting a lower proportion of all stories than in 2010.

Table 3: Proportions of stories in newspapers, radio, and television news referencing gender topics (2005 – 2015)

Year	2005	2010	2015
Stories referencing gender equality, women's rights and/or human rights policy	[no data]	9%	5%
Stories referencing gender equality or inequality	3%	3%	5%
Stories clearly challenging gender stereotypes	2%	4%	3%

Source: Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMP Global Report

Women still make up a minority of reporters and presenters, with very little improvement since 2000.

In 2015, the genders of presenters/reporters were closest to being equal on TV (48% women), followed by radio (40% women), and newspapers (34% women).

Table 4: Proportions of reporters/presenters in newspapers, radio and television news who are women (2000 – 2015)

Year	2000	2005	2010	2015
Reporters	34%	34%	35%	37%
Presenters	45%	49%	46%	47%

Source: Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMP Global Report

Women were found to be particularly underrepresented in what the researchers described as the 'most prestigious' category of news: politics and government.

Analysis of online news demonstrated that the proportions of stories in the different categories of news being reported by women were strikingly similar to those in traditional news media.

Table 5: Proportions of stories in newspapers, radio and television news reported by women and men, by main topic (2015)

Topic	Number of stories	Percentage reported by women	Percentage reported by men
Politics and government	678	30%	70%
Crime and violence	343	34%	66%
Social and legal	1,256	38%	62%
Celebrity, arts and media, sports	341	42%	58%
Economy	403	43%	57%
Science and health	237	44%	56%
Other	26	46%	54%
Total	3,284	38%	62%

Source: Global Media Monitoring Project (2015), GMMP Global Report

The 2012 report of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) on gender equality and decision-making across the European media industry presents analysis of data collected from TV, radio and news agencies, and independent media regulatory authorities, across the 28 EU Member States.[21]

The report suggests there was a slight increase in the proportion of workers in broadcasting and programming jobs who were women between 2011 and 2012, from 40% to 44%, though

---

[21] EIGE (2012) Advancing Gender Equality in Decision-Making in Media Organisations

the figures look particularly disproportionate when considering that in 2010 68% of graduates in journalism and information were women.

The research found that, in 2012, only 16% of Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of media organisations were women. Women also made up only 25% of board members. The proportion of women across all decision-making roles was 30%.

Across all types of decision-making role, gender inequality was significantly worse in the private sector than in the public sector. For example, 22% of CEOs and 29% of board members in the public sector were women, while in the private sector the proportions were lower, at 12% of CEOs and 21% of board members.

Table 6: Proportions of CEOs and board members who are women (2012)

Role and sector	Percentage who are women
Proportion of CEOs who are women	16%
…in the public sector	22%
…in the private sector	12%
Proportion of board members who are women	25%
…in the public sector	29%
…in the private sector	21%

Source: EIGE (2012) Advancing Gender Equality in Decision-Making in Media Organisations

More recent statistics on the gender balance within decision-making roles in European media organisations have been published by EIGE in their Gender Statistics Database, although the organisations are limited to public broadcasters. These figures, for the year 2017, show that women constitute just over one-third of decision-makers in the European public broadcasting sector.

Table 7: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (EU)

Role	Percentage who are women
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	38%
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	36%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

The European Federation of Journalists (EFJ) and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) have conducted three surveys of journalists' unions across Europe since 2001. They provide data on union membership and leadership, though there are some limitations to the completeness and comparability of data across time and place.[22]

---

[22] EFJ and IFJ (2012) Survey Report on Women in Journalists' Unions in Europe

The latest figures, from 2012, show that women made up less than half of journalists' union members across Europe. This represented a slight decrease since 2006 (from 45.3% to 42.1%). A significantly smaller proportion of members of union governing bodies were women (36.2% in 2012), suggesting that men still dominated much decision-making within journalists' unions.

Table 8: Proportions of members of unions and union governing bodies who are women (2001 – 2012)

Year	2001	2006	2012
Union members	>33%	45.3%	42.1%
Members of union governing bodies	<20%	39.3%	36.2%

Source: EFJ and IFJ (2012) Survey Report on Women in Journalists' Unions in Europe

4.2. Film

The data below is taken from a representational analysis of the 100 top-grossing fictional films each year from 2007 to 2016 (excluding 2011). This analysis, conducted by Smith et al., is the most detailed of its type to date.[23]

Women have made up less than one-third of speaking characters in popular films since 2007, with only a meagre 1.5% rise since then.

In 2016, only 34% of the top 100 films depicted a female lead or co lead, representing a very slight rise from 32% in 2015.

Table 9: Proportions of speaking film characters who are women (2007-2016)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Women	29.9	32.8	32.	30.3	28.4	29.2	28.1	31.4	31.4

Source: Smith, S., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2017) Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, & Disability from 2007-2016

Women were far more likely than men to be portrayed in sexualised ways, including being over two and a half times more likely to be portrayed partially or fully nude.

Table 10: Proportions of film characters whose portrayals are sexualised, by gender (2016)

Sexualisation indicator	Sexually revealing clothing	Partial or full nudity	Referenced as attractive
Women	25.9%	25.6%	10.7%
Men	5.7%	9.2%	3.2%

---

[23] Smith, S., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2017) Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, & Disability from 2007-2016

_____

Source: Smith, S., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2017) Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, & Disability from 2007-2016

The vast majority of top-grossing film directors are men. In 2016, just 4.2% of directors were women, and that proportion has remained between 1.9% and 8% since 2007. Over the entire recorded period, only 34 women worked as directors one or more times.

Table 11: Proportions of film directors who are women (2007 – 2016)

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Women	2.7	8	3.6	2.75	4.1	1.9	1.9	7.5	4.2

Source: Smith, S., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2017) Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, & Disability from 2007-2016

Compared to directors, a higher proportion of film writers (13.2%) and film producers (20.7%) were women in 2016.

4.3. Gaming

A recent review of 76 new games showcased at the 2015 Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) found that 32% of games had solo male protagonists compared to just 9% that had solo female protagonists. In 46% of games, gamers could play characters of either gender. The remaining 13% of games did not have gendered characters.[24]

Previously, a 2010 review by Electronic Entertainment Design and Research of 'current-generation' games found that 90% of games had playable male characters, compared to just 51% of games that had playable female characters. 10% of games did not have gendered characters.[25]

Comparing these findings with earlier research suggests there has been some improvement to the gender balance of gaming characters in recent years, with more games allowing players to choose the main character's gender. Dill et al.'s research into the 20 top-selling PC video games of 1999 found that 70% of main characters were male, while just 10% were female, and only 20% could be either.[26]

Table 12: Proportions of games with female and male main characters (1999 and 2015)

Gender of main character	1999	2015
Female main character	10%	9%
Male main character	70%	32%
Either/no gender	20%	59%

Source: Dill, K., Gentile, D., Richter, W., and Dill, J. (2005) 20 Top-Selling PC Video Games of 1999 and Sarkeesian, A. (2015) Gender Breakdown of Games Showcased at E3 2015

---

[24] Sarkeesian, A. (2015) Gender Breakdown of Games Showcased at E3 2015
[25] Entertainment Design and Research (2010) Review of Current Generation Games
[26] Dill, K., Gentile, D., Richter, W., and Dill, J. (2005) 20 Top-Selling PC Video Games of 1999

Dill and Thrill's 2007 research into portrayals of women in video games, based on analysis of images of game characters in Amazon's six best-selling video game magazines in 2006, found that female characters were significantly more likely than male characters to be portrayed as 'sexualised', 'scantily clad', and 'showing a mix of sex and aggression'.[27]

Table 13: Portrayals of female and male gaming characters (2006)

Portrayed as...	Female characters	Male characters
Sexualised	60%	1%
Scantily clad	39%	8%
Showing a mix of sex and aggression	39%	1%

Source: Dill, K., and Thrill, K. (2007) Video Game Characters and the Socialization of Gender Roles: Young People's Perceptions Mirror Sexist Media Depictions

The International Game Developers Association's conducted an international survey of nearly 3,000 workers in the gaming industry in 2015. While results were not broken down by region, Europeans represented 24% of respondents.[28]

The 2015 survey found that three-quarters of workers in the gaming industry identified as 'male'. This compares to 22% identifying as 'female' and 1% identifying as 'male-to-female transgender'.

It also found that workers identifying as male disproportionately dominate technical core content creation roles. Only 11% of female respondents were programmers, software engineers and technical designers in the video game industry, compared with 27% of male respondents.

4.4. Advertising

Eisend et al. conducted a meta-analysis of research on gender roles in TV and radio advertising, based on 64 primary studies. While the data were not limited to European countries, the analysis provides a comprehensive overview of several concerning trends in advertising.[29]

Overall, women were four times more likely than men not to have a speaking role in advertisements, and were three times more likely to be presented as a product user, rather than an authority. Women were also three and a half times more likely to be portrayed at home or in a domestic environment, and twice as likely as men to be associated with domestic products such as body care or home goods.

---

[27] Dill, K., and Thrill, K. (2007) Video Game Characters and the Socialization of Gender Roles: Young People's Perceptions Mirror Sexist Media Depictions
[28] International Game Developers Association (Weststar, J., and Legault, M-J.) (2015) Developer Satisfaction Survey 2014 & 2015: Diversity in the Game Industry Report
[29] Eisend, M (2009) A Meta-Analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising

One of the largest scale gender analyses of televised advertisements considered 2,000 English-speaking advertisements from 2006 to 2016.[30] It found that women had consistently made up around one-third of all characters in advertisements during those ten years: 33.9% of characters in 2006 were women, while in 2016 the proportion was very similar, at 36.9%.

The research also found no statistically significant changes in women's proportion of speaking time and screen time over the ten-year period. Men had around four times as much screen time as women and around seven times as much speaking time. Advertisements were five times more likely to depict only men (25% of all advertisements) than only women (5%), and advertisements with only male voices (18%) were six times more prevalent than advertisements with only female voices (3%).

A wealth of recent studies have conducted gender analyses of advertising content in specific countries in Europe. These studies generally indicate the continued prevalence of traditional female stereotypes in advertising, and of portrayals of women as 'decorative' or 'sexualised'.[31]

Recent EU-wide statistical data on the gender balance within advertising content is extremely limited. However, the European Commission's 2012 report on the application of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive within Member States provides some analysis of broadcast advertising in eight Member States.[32] It states that 'stereotyped representation of gender roles was found in 21%-36% of the [advertising] spots analysed'. The report notes that, while there is certainly variation in the levels of sexism in advertising within different EU countries, 'none of the countries surveyed is immune to such stereotyped representations'.

Interestingly, 7.8% of all complaints about advertisements received by the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA) in 2015 related to gender stereotyping.[33]

---

[30] The Geena Davis Institute and the Innovation Group (2017) Gender Bias in Advertising: Research, Trends and New Visual Language
[31] See, for example, Grau, S. and Zotos, Y. (2016) Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research; Tartaglia, S. and Rollero, C. (2015) Gender Stereotyping in Newspaper Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Study; and Eisend, M., Plagemann, J., and Sollwedel, J. (2014) Gender Roles and Humor in Advertising.
[32] EC (2012) First Report from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on the application of Directive 2010/13/EU 'Audiovisual Media Service Directive'
[33] EASA (2015) European Trends in Advertising Complaints, Copy Advice and Pre-Clearance

5. REVIEW OF ACTIONS BY EU-LEVEL ACTORS

KEY FINDINGS

- Action by the European Commission and European Parliament to promote gender equality in the media and other sectors is currently focused on addressing the gender pay gap, improving work-life balance, and promoting gender mainstreaming.

- The European Institute for Gender Equality plays a key role in monitoring and reporting on gender inequality in European media industries. It also provides a range of resources to disseminate best practice and support gender mainstreaming.

- Increasing attention is being paid to gender inequality in digital and online media spaces, and the European Women's Lobby has recently launched a resource pack and report on online violence against women and girls.

- The European Trade Union Confederation lobbies at the European level to improve gender equality in decision-making, and the quality of and balance between work life and personal life.

This section sets out the main actions being undertaken by EU-level actors in pursuit of the gender equality agenda. It highlights the priorities of the European Commission, the European Parliament, and other relevant European institutions and bodies, with reference to key elements of the policy framework reviewed earlier in this study. Findings are based on a combination of desk-based research and interviews with four respondents working at the EU-level to improve gender equality, including respondents from the European Institute for Gender Equality.

As indicated below, current priorities are focused on tackling both longstanding issues, such as the gender pay gap, and relatively new problems, such as gender inequality and gendered abuse on online platforms. In terms of ending the pay gap, increasing attention is being turned to the potential for transparency requirements to encourage better pay equality. Another important priority is ensuring that research on gender inequality at the European level supports policy needs. This includes gathering and analysing comparable data from each Member State, to aid identification of 'what works' in promoting gender equality.

Most recently, the **European Commission** has been undertaking a number of concrete initiatives to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights.[34] One legislative initiative (COM(2017) 252), which forms part of the Commission Work Programme 2017, proposes new rights to paternal leave and non-transferable parental leave, to improve the '**work-life balance**' for both men and women who have children, and so to help increase women's participation in the labour market.[35]

In accordance with the European Commission's Women's Charter, the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, EP Resolution 2011/2244(INI), and Council Directive 2006/54/EC, the Commission is also undertaking action on **equal pay**.[36] European Equal Pay Day (EEPD), introduced by the Commission in 2011, is intended to enable citizens and policy makers to 'visualise how much longer women need to work than men to earn the same amount', while

---

[34] http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=58273
[35] http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=COM%3A2017%3A252%3AFIN
[36] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-pay-gap/index_en.htm

_____

raising awareness of the underlying causes of pay disparities. As part of EEPD in 2015, the Commission published factsheets outlining figures on the gender pay gap and overall earnings gap in each Member State and across the EU as whole. In 2012 and 2013, it carried out the innovative 'Equality Pays Off' project, which aimed 'to raise companies' awareness of the 'business case' for gender equality and equal pay, that is, better access to the labour force potential of women in a context of demographic changes and skill shortages'. Respondents reported that, in the context of ongoing failure to achieve pay equality across the EU, there is increasing interest within the Commission in understanding whether implementation of more demanding pay transparency requirements would be effective in encouraging companies to choose to equalise pay levels between men and women doing equivalent work.

As part of the Commission's commitment to another key part of the Charter and Strategy – **gender mainstreaming** – it has produced a Manual providing advice to policy makers on how to implement gender mainstreaming in employment, social inclusion and social protection policies. It has also published a Guide to Gender Impact Assessment, to support policy-makers in ensuring policy promotes equality between women and men.[37] The Commission chairs the High Level Group on Gender Mainstreaming, which contributes to annual reports on Progress on Equality between Women and Men.[38] The group is also involved in planning follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action. (Other groups with which the Commission works to promote gender equality include the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The Committee comprises representatives of Members States, EU-level social partners and non-governmental organisations, who advise on and foster exchange of policies and good practice.)

Within the European Parliament, the **Committee for Women's Rights and Gender Equality** (FEMM) provides a hub for coordination of the work of Members of the European Parliament to promote gender equality across Europe and in Europe's dealings with external countries. Committee members work to promote awareness and understanding of gender equality issues in the EU, as well as spearheading action to tackle inequality. Recent activities include work on the gender pay and pension gap, which involved, *inter alia*, tabling propositions and action plans to address the lack of parity in these areas. MEPs also called on the Commission and Member States 'to strike a better balance between working and private lives for women and men including investments in childcare facilities and flexible working hours to combat inequality in career opportunities'.[39] This reflects a commitment to act on two of the most important barriers to participation in the media workforce and progression to senior roles, as reported by Member State case study respondents for this study: inadequate access to childcare and to opportunities for flexible working. The Committee regularly publishes in-depth reports on a wide range of gender equality issues.[40] The Committee's 2011 report on CEDAW provides a review of Member States' implementation of the Convention.[41] The report concludes that 'even those EU Member States with the most advanced gender equality laws and policies' have not yet fully discharged the obligations imposed on them by the Convention, and are still far from achieving substantive gender equality.

---

[37] http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/tools/index_en.htm
[38] http://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/item-detail.cfm?item_id=52696#annual_reports
[39] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20170504IPR73486/women-s-rights-meps-call-for-better-work-life-balance-to-prevent-pension-gaps
[40] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/reports.html
[41] http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2011/453193/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2011)453193_EN.pdf

A key European agency supporting Member States and other European institutions on gender equality issues is the **European Institute for Gender Equality** (EIGE).[42] EIGE has a crucial research and learning function within the EU, collecting and analysing comparable data on gender issues, as well as developing tools for gender mainstreaming and facilitating dissemination of best practice. For example, the agency provides an online hub, EuroGender, to facilitate cooperation and consultation between its members, as well as hosting international conferences and events. A major research output from EIGE is the **Gender Equality Index**.[43] This provides a score out of 100 for each Member State and the EU as a whole, based on analysis of data on gender equality in six domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, and health.

EIGE also works to **monitor and report on gender equality in the media**. The agency carries out reviews of Member States' progress on gender equality in the critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, including Area J: Advancing Gender Equality in Decision-Making in Media Organisations.[44] A 2013 report on Area J drew together comparable findings from across the EU.[45] It concluded 'that while women have considerably outnumbered men in university-level and practice-based journalism programmes and that the employment of women in media is increasing, the organisational culture of media remains largely masculine and women are still significantly under-represented at the decision-making level'.

The **European Women's Lobby** (EWL) is a major umbrella organization for women's organisations across Europe.[46] It works closely with EU institutions, to promote women's rights and equality between women and men. A key function of the EWL is 'to position women at the heart of political, social and economic participation and decision-making' through direct lobbying and other activities, including research and campaigning. In November 2017, the EWL launched its **#HerNetHerRights resource pack and report** on online violence against women and girls.[47] The report sets out findings on violence against women and girls in online spaces, highlighting good practice as well as challenges, while the resource pack provides policy recommendations and also an 'activist toolkit', to 'empower women on the internet and combat male cyberviolence, to know one's rights and develop strategies to resist to and combat abusers online and bring structural change'.

The **European Trade Union Confederation** (ETUC) works to promote women's rights and gender equality within the labour market and includes members working within the European media industry.[48] It's Action Programme on Gender Equality 2016-2019 focusses on achieving gender mainstreaming within its own policy-making process, increasing gender parity in decision-making bodies, improving the quality of and balance between work life and personal life, and addressing connections between domestic violence and workplace rights. The ETUC lobbies for legislation and directives in these areas, and participates in EIGE's Experts' Forum as well as the European Women's Lobby. It has also worked with EU-level employers to create a Toolkit for Gender Equality, which provides information on a wide range of initiatives to tackle gender inequality, including initiatives to address the pay gap, improve work-life balance, and encourage women's promotion.

---

[42] http://eige.europa.eu/about-eige
[43] http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-index-2017-measuring-gender-equality-european-union-2005-2015-report
[44] http://eige.europa.eu/beijing-platform-for-action
[45] http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/advancing-gender-equality-decision-making-media-organisations-report
[46] https://www.womenlobby.org/
[47] https://www.womenlobby.org/Launch-of-HerNetHerRights-Resource-Pack-Report
[48] https://www.etuc.org/issue/gender-equality

_____

6. REVIEW OF ACTIONS BY MEMBER STATES

KEY FINDINGS

- Measures taken by individual Member States meet some aims and duties of the Beijing Platform for Action, including duties to address workforce inequality and the portrayal of girls and women in the media. However, concerns about restricting freedom of expression mean that Member State-level legislation rarely imposes legal regulation on what the media can and cannot report or depict, including in relation to gender.

- A number of Member States stipulate that national broadcasters must ensure parity in female and male representation on their governing bodies, but leave commercial organisations to self-regulate.

The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) called for an increase in women's participation in and access to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new communication technologies. This encompasses women creating media products, being present within media content, and having managerial positions in media organisations with responsibility for media policy-making and production.

The BPfA identified several focus areas for addressing the gender imbalance in the media. These include promoting women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research; the need for a balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world; challenging the dominance of programming that reinforces women's traditional roles, and establishing and strengthening self-regulatory mechanisms for the media.

With regard to the BPfA call for women's full and equal participation in the media sector, there are few policies in Member States that address gender equality specifically within the media industry and women's access to the production of media products. This is part of a generalised wariness of media regulation among governments and public institutions. The prevailing narrative pits freedom of expression against the promotion of gender equality, without recognising the more nuanced position that promoting gender equality in the media is a means for women to achieve full access to freedom of expression.[49]

Similarly, interview respondents for this research working at the EU-level to improve gender equality noted that Member States that are demonstrably committed to exceeding the basic EU equality requirements have a stronger record on gender equality than those Member States that pay lip service to EU policy priorities and directives but go no further in their equality ambitions. Respondents advocated the use of quotas as a temporary, fast-acting measure to redress gender workforce imbalances. Nevertheless, it was reported that Member States with the strongest gender equality records (notably the Nordic states) have less need for quotas, as discrimination and inequality on the grounds of gender is less pervasive. More generally across the EU, equal treatment legislation at the Member State level, while not

---

[49] See, for instance, Nyamko Sabuni (Swedish Minister of Gender Equality 2006-2013): "I would rather protect the freedom of speech than legislate against gender discriminatory advertising", in Svensson and Edstrom (2014), 'Freedom of Expression vs. Gender Equality – conflicting values when regulating gender stereotypes in advertising', *Tidsskrift for Rettsvitenskap*, vol. 127, 5, 479–511

making specific reference to the media, does prohibit discrimination in employment and allows positive action on the grounds of gender.

Some examples of good practice in promoting gender equality in the media sector in Member States are given below. Whilst there are examples of individual Member States enacting binding legislation on gender equality in the media, it should be noted that most rely on non-legally-binding industry self-regulation and codes of conduct. Further, as research by EIGE has found, public service broadcasters tend to comply more fully with both industry codes and national legislation on gender equality than private organisations.[50] The examples highlighted below relate to the BPfA's call for the promotion of women's full and equal participation in the media.

In **Germany**, the public service television broadcaster ZDF introduced a Treaty (1991) requiring that 39 of its 77 board members be women. ZDF's equal opportunities commissioner is responsible for realising the company's gender equality objectives. In **Italy**, the Document of the Parliamentary Committee for the General Supervision of Broadcasting (1997) requires the public broadcasting company (RAI) to promote the acquisition of 'power and agency' by its women employees. **French** legislation on audio-visual communication and the new public television service (2009) reinforces the role of the 'Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel' in promoting diversity, including gender equality. It specifies the expectations of the state on diversity in all media, particularly the public broadcaster (France Télévisions). In **Ireland**, the governing board directors of the public service broadcasters, RTE and TG4, are appointed by the Irish government for five-year terms. The 2009 Broadcasting Act states in relation to the 12-person board at RTE and the 11-person board at TG4, 'not less than 5 of the members of the board of a corporation shall be men and not less than 5 of them shall be women.' The Broadcasting Authority of Ireland has a statutory obligation to achieve a gender balance on all of its key decision-making bodies.

Some examples of good practice that address the BPfA's call for a more balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society in a changing world, and challenges to the dominance of programming that reinforces women's traditional roles, are given below.

The **Estonian** Advertising Act (2008) states that an advertisement cannot disregard the principle of gender equality, belittle one sex, or present one gender as prevailing or subordinate. It also prohibits advertisements with pornographic content, advertisements for services provided for satisfaction of sexual desire, including prostitution, and advertisements referring to such services or assisting procurement. **Portugal's** fourth National Plan for Equality, Gender, Citizenship and Non-Discrimination (2011-2013) endows an award, *Women and Men in Media*, with the strategic objective to foster equality by promoting non-stereotypical gender representation in the media and enabling the visibility and expression of women in the media.

Research conducted by EIGE has shown that, in a number of EU Member States (including Italy, Poland, and Slovenia) there are no women on the boards of the main independent media regulatory authorities, and that most Member States have no legislation focused specifically on gender equality in the media, or national organisations monitoring gender

---

[50] http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/advancing-gender-equality-decision-making-media-organisations-report

_____

inequality in the media.[51] Much of this work at the Member State-level is undertaken by NGOs and research institutions.

This review points to possible areas for **further policy action**. Public broadcasters and state-sponsored media companies are often subject to rules about gender parity in governance and production, but commercial companies are free to self-regulate. Given that media content is shaped by those producing it, policy support could be offered to commercial organisations to create more gender-equal leadership and workforces to facilitate a more balanced picture of women's diverse lives and contributions to society. The relationship between freedom of expression and gender equality is subject to ongoing debate. This debate varies between Member States, shaping the extent of media regulation and efforts to promote gender equality in media content. The case could be made more robustly that promoting gender equality in the media is a means for women to achieve full access to freedom of expression.

---

[51] Ibid.

7. SUMMARY OF CASE STUDIES IN FOUR MEMBER STATES

KEY FINDINGS

- Respondents described the ongoing prevalence of sexist tropes in media content, across all types of media. The most common tropes identified by respondents in all case study countries include framing women as less authoritative than men, and portraying them in stereotypical (home- and family-focused), sexualised, or auxiliary roles.

- The majority of respondents reported widespread gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunity within media industries, including in pay, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion.

- Working structures, norms and practices that participants identified as disadvantaging women include insufficient provision for parents with childcare responsibilities, competitive rather than cooperative modes of communication, and 'normalisation' of sexual harassment and bullying.

- The most promising examples of industry-led good practice in promoting gender equality within media content included embedding a mechanism to automatically identify the gender balance of news stories and sections. In terms of wider initiatives, several respondents highlighted the benefit of schemes directly aimed at women who are returning to work in the media sector after having children.

A total of 33 respondents were interviewed for our case studies of four Member States: Austria, Malta, Sweden, and the UK. The majority of respondents (19) were women working within media industries, while other respondents worked in media regulation and in women's organisations or other groups (including campaign groups) aiming to promote gender equality. Media industry respondents included younger women at the early stages of their careers, established mid-career professionals, and women nearing retirement and working freelance after retirement from employment. The sample included a range of junior and senior employees (including CEOs), freelancers, and women who own their own media businesses.

7.1. Media frames

Respondents emphasised the ongoing prevalence of sexist tropes within media content. A key issue identified across media types in all countries was that women are less visible than men and, when visible, their portrayals too often conform to tired stereotypes. Women are disproportionately portrayed as less authoritative, capable, and serious than men, and commonly framed in stereotypical (home- and family-focused), sexualised, or auxiliary roles. News reporting on women in the public eye, including politicians, was consistently criticised by respondents from all countries as frequently focusing on extraneous details about their family lives or appearance. The gender divide in journalism extends to the allocation of work on 'hard' versus 'soft' news to journalists: respondents echoed findings from the GMMP (2015) research discussed earlier in this study, that women are most under-represented in the most prestigious categories of news, including political news, and less under-represented in categories such as celebrity news.

7.2. Women in the media workforce

The European Institute for Gender Equality's 2013 review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in EU Member States found that women were in the minority in almost every decision-making role in media organisations in Austria (AT), Malta (MT), Sweden (SE), and the UK (UK). Sweden fares best on most measures, with 46% of all decision-making roles undertaken by women, while Malta lags well behind the EU average at only 16%.

Table 14: Women in decision-making roles in the media workforce (Austria, Malta, Sweden, and the UK)

Level	Role	% / Numbers	AT	MT	SE	UK	EU
Strategic level	Chief Executive Officers	Percentage of women	33%	0%	25%	25%	16%
		Total positions	3	2	4	4	
	Board Members	Percentage of women	25%	38%	54%	33%	25%
		Total positions	44	8	35	36	
Operational level	Chief Operating Officers	Percentage of women	0%	0%	50%	0%	21%
		Total positions	3	4	4	4	
	Operational Managers	Percentage of women	32%	19%	48%	30%	32%
		Total positions	22	21	27	23	
	Heads of Directorate/ Unit	Percentage of women	41%	0%	41%	22%	36%
		Total positions	27	8	70	32	
	Heads of Department	Percentage of women	33%	N/A	50%	N/A	32%
		Total positions	6	0	10	0	
Total percentage of women at all levels			30%	16%	46%	27%	30%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

EIGE has also published more recent statistics on the gender balance within decision-making roles in European media organisations, although these are limited to public broadcasters. These figures, for the year 2017, show that, unusually for the EU, women make up the majority of decision-makers in the public broadcaster workforce within Sweden. Again, Malta falls well behind the EU average for these measures, with no women at all in the positions of CEO, executive, and non-executive director.

Table 15: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (Austria, Malta, Sweden, and the UK)

Role	AT	MT	SE	UK	EU
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	40%	25%	53%	42%	38%

Role	AT	MT	SE	UK	EU
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	40%	0%	59%	29%	36%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

Case study respondents working within media industries identified a range of explanations for these figures. Almost all respondents, with the exception of a minority of Austria case study respondents, reported widespread gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunity, including in pay, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion. All respondents noted that men continue to dominate senior, decision-making roles across media industries. They also described the prevalence of working structures, norms and practices that function to disadvantage women relative to men. These include, *inter alia*, insufficient provision for parents with childcare responsibilities, competitive rather than cooperative modes of communication, and 'normalisation' of sexual harassment and bullying.

There was strong consensus among respondents, across countries and media industries, that senior managers have an enormous influence on gender parity within their organisations. No particular area of the media industry was consistently identified as more egalitarian than others; rather, different media organisations are more or less gender egalitarian, and this is largely dependent on how actively pro-equality each organisation's leadership is.

Women reported that the best organisations to work for are those in which managers commit to hearing women's voices and using their talents; implement systems that meet women's needs – including, importantly, the need for flexible working felt by many women with children; and actively prevent discrimination, harassment and bullying, including by imposing sanctions for infringements by employees.

While, particularly in Sweden, and also in the UK and Austria, respondents described some progress toward greater equality of treatment at work over the last few decades, this was viewed as insufficient. Several Swedish participants warned of the dangers of complacency, emphasising that constant vigilance was required to ensure recent gains were not lost.

7.3.   Regulations and guidelines

Several women reported, despite the legal requirement in every EU Member State for equal treatment at work, and even where company rules against discrimination and harassment are in place, that the precarious and competitive nature of many media industry jobs, combined with a prevailing culture of acceptance of rule infringements, often mean that in practice women have no genuine recourse to address these wrongs. Some women described the heavy toll discrimination and harassment had taken on their mental health and emotional wellbeing.

While all case study countries have media regulatory bodies tasked with tackling discriminatory media content, sanctions for infringements are notably limited. Respondents generally were either unaware of the function of these bodies in relation to gender equality, or felt they were ineffective in ensuring media content is non-discriminatory. Respondents also noted that professional codes of practice within media industries, including voluntary guidelines, tend to have a similarly limited impact. Several respondents felt more stringent regulation and more effective implementation of existing regulation was required. Nonetheless, many respondents – and particularly those working within journalism – were

_____

reticent about the potential for further regulation to undermine the fundamental right to freedom of expression.

7.4. Action to improve gender equality in the media

A number of examples of best practice in promoting gender equality were identified by respondents. At the level of media content creation, effective practice included embedding gender equality checks into the creative process. An interesting example is a **'Bechdel Filter'**, currently being tested at a national UK news publication.[52] Software is used to analyse the text of stories to identify the proportion of subjects and sources who are women, the proportion of female pronouns, and the gender of the journalist. This produces a gender balance score out of 100 both for individual stories and for all stories within a news section. The intention is to enable journalists and section editors to 'sense-check' the gender balance of their stories and sections quickly and easily, and to thereby identify and redress any inappropriate imbalances. Respondents working in journalism in Sweden and Austria also highlighted the value of having access to lists of experts from whom they can seek comments on stories, which have been created with the express intention of increasing diversity among expert commentators in news media.

Examples of other initiatives identified by respondents as particularly effective included a range of schemes in both Austria and the UK that support women who have previously worked in the sector to return to work. This includes practical guidance on, for example, accounting for gaps in employment. Respondents also discussed the positive impact of quotas on funding allocation in Sweden and the UK, citing funding bodies that commit to allocating a proportion of their funding to films and documentaries directed, produced or written by women.

The vast majority of participants credited the recent #MeToo campaign with catalysing much-needed and long-overdue public debate on the prevalence of sexual harassment and ways to address it more effectively. It was felt that the campaign was contributing to a decrease in the social acceptability of harassment, and an increase in awareness of the need to respond appropriately.

Respondents consistently emphasised the significant benefits that greater gender equality in the media workforce would bring. Given the costs to mental health and emotional wellbeing of experiences of discrimination and harassment, gender equality is not only a fundamental requirement of justice, but would also bring considerable public health benefits. Further, respondents consistently felt that, in the contemporary pluralist social context, increasing diversity within the workforce would lead to increasing diversity in media content. More complex, realistic, varied and non-stereotypical characterisations and portrayals of women could, it was thought, have a range of wider social benefits. Such benefits include helping to mitigate the tendency to conflate women's worth with their perceived attractiveness, and providing positive role models and encouraging women to pursue ambitions in currently male-dominated fields.

_____

[52] The filter borrows its name, but differs from, the 'Bechdel Test' (also known as the 'Bechdel-Wallace test'). The original test was conceived by Liz Wallace, inspired by the work of Virginia Woolf, and first published in a 1985 comic strip by Alison Bechdel. It is a test of gender equality in films (or, in later variants, other works of fiction), and specifically of whether or not women are portrayed solely in their relation to men. To pass the test, a movie must satisfy three requirements: first, it must have at least two women in it; second, they must be shown talking to each other; and third, their discussion must be about something other than a man.

8. CASE STUDY OF AUSTRIA

This case study involved interviews with six respondents working within the media (including in journalism, the trade magazine sector, and advertising), and three respondents acting at the national level to improve gender equality (by campaigning, organising initiatives for women in media, and working in government).

8.1. Media frames

All respondents reported ongoing stereotypical and sexist portrayals of women in Austrian media content.

Several respondents emphasised that women are, overall, less visible than men in media content, and particularly in print media. They also noted that visibility is closely correlated with topic: women are less likely to be visible in media content concerning politics, finance, or the military than in content concerning topics that are considered in traditional terms as 'women's topics', such as parenting, fashion, and leisure. Respondents consistently cited the continuing prevalence of sexualised and titillating portrayals of women across all types of media content, exemplified by the publication of pictures of topless women on page 7 of Austria's largest national daily newspaper, Kronen Zeitung.

Another consistent claim was that, where broadcast and print media report on women, such reports are very often accompanied by extraneous details about women's appearance, clothing, and personal life. Relatedly, several respondents noted that women in the public eye, including journalists and politicians who are women, are subject to far harsher scrutiny of their appearance and personal life than men. It was reported that these women also face far higher levels of abuse than men, and receive more serious threats to their personal safety, on social media. This was viewed by some respondents as reducing the appeal of entering public life for women, and thereby contributing to the ongoing dominance of men in the public arena.

All respondents reported significant differences between portrayals of women in the 'yellow' (tabloid) press and 'quality' (broadsheet) press, with tabloids being far more likely to portray women in stereotypical ways, and to publish narratives that attack women in the public eye rather than providing a balanced, analytical view. One respondent working at a national daily print newspaper noted differences in how these two types of print news report on rape and sexual assault, with tabloids being more likely to describe these issues in inappropriate terms (for example, as 'sex affairs').

Differences between public and private broadcast media were also identified by most respondents. These respondents expressed the view that, while the gender balance in media content broadcast by Austria's public broadcaster, ÖRF, left room for improvement, these imbalances were less severe than in content produced in the private sector. This was related to more demanding self-regulation at ÖRF (see below).

8.2. Women in the media workforce

The European Institute for Gender Equality's (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States found that women are in the minority in all decision-making roles in Austrian media organisations.

_____

Table 16: Women in decision-making roles in the Austrian media workforce

Level	Role	% / Numbers	Austria	EU
Strategic level	Chief Executive Officers	Percentage of women	33%	16%
		Total positions	3	
	Board Members	Percentage of women	25%	25%
		Total positions	44	
Operational level	Chief Operating Officers	Percentage of women	0%	21%
		Total positions	3	
	Other Operational Managers	Percentage of women	32%	32%
		Total positions	22	
	Heads of Directorate/ Unit	Percentage of women	41%	36%
		Total positions	27	
	Heads of Department	Percentage of women	33%	32%
		Total positions	6	
Total percentage at all levels			30%	30%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

More recent statistics, drawn from EIGE's research into public broadcasters, demonstrate that women are in the minority within decision-making roles at the public broadcaster ÖRF. These figures do, however, fall just within what EIGE terms the 'gender balance zone', which requires between 40% and 60% of positions to be occupied by women.

Table 17: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (Austria: ÖRF)

Role	AT	EU
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	40%	38%
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	40%	35.8%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

Respondents interviewed for this case study also reported that, while there appears to be a good gender balance, and possibly more women than men, in entry-level and junior positions within the Austrian media workforce, men dominate senior decision-making roles. Several respondents noted that, of over a dozen national newspapers, none currently has a woman in the role of Editor in Chief.

Respondents disagreed about the reasons for this imbalance. Younger respondents, and those who identified their political views as left-leaning, tended to cite both **direct and indirect discrimination** as key barriers to equality of opportunity. They expressed the view that the 'glass ceiling' was still very much in effect within the Austrian media workforce, and that women had to be 'at least twice as good' as men in similar roles to be successful and to be treated with respect. Some reported experiences of being overlooked for promotion, in favour of men who were, in their view, less qualified and experienced, but who (by virtue of being men) 'fitted the traditional mould'. However, some respondents who described themselves as conservative felt that the gender imbalance at the top of the media workforce was not caused by discrimination, or other forms of inequality of opportunity, but by women and men simply making 'different choices'.

Regarding the ways in which gender discrimination intersects with age, those with experience of working within broadcasting media noted that, as presenters who are women get older, they tend to be 'removed from screens'. On the other hand, most media workforce respondents reported that as women in 'behind the scenes' roles gain more experience and confidence, they are more likely to be 'taken seriously' and the discrimination they face decreases. As one explained, 'you no longer have to be the prettiest girl in the room'.

Respondents emphasised that Austrian **parental employment rights** are unusually 'generous' (or extensive), relative to other Members States. Interestingly, however, this was viewed by several respondents, including but not only those who identified as conservative, as bringing its own risks. Respondents noted that working parents are entitled to take parental leave until their child's second birthday, and (on returning to work) to work part time until the child's seventh birthday. This, it was claimed, 'encourages women to withdraw from the workforce', which in turn has the effect of setting those who do 'withdraw' at a disadvantage, as soon as the protected period ends. There was also some evidence of a backlash against women who pursue these legal entitlements, with a small number of media workforce respondents expressing the view that 'they are taking advantage': one respondent claimed to be 'on the side of hard-working women', but not those who 'become lazy' during the protected period.

One respondent also noted that, while part time work is becoming increasingly normalised, in part due to parental entitlements, it can often be 'easier on paper than in practice' to implement. She reported that, while she was contracted to work part time, in practice she was consistently required to work longer than her contracted hours to complete assignments.

Respondents expressed a variety of views of **harassment** at work. Some had experienced sexual harassment, including unwanted and persistent sexual advances, from clients, colleagues, managers, and owners. They emphasised that owners and managers set the tone of an organisation, and that while some ensure harassment is not tolerated, others tacitly permit or themselves engage in harassment of women working in their organisations. Others reported no problems with sexual harassment within the media workforce.

Relatedly, respondents were notably split in their views of the #MeToo campaign, with some viewing it as having a positive effect of opening up serious and important debate about widespread and entrenched sexual harassment, and others expressing concerns about the campaign going 'too far'. The latter respondents did not support treating, for example, unwanted sexual advances at work as harassment. Two of these respondents reported that inappropriate behaviour on the part of men is hard or impossible to change, and that in the vast majority of cases women can stop the behaviour from continuing, with no negative repercussions for their career, by 'firmly saying no'.

At the time of fieldwork, the Editor in Chief of a major Austrian state-owned newspaper had recently been dismissed after a freelance journalist who had applied for a job at the paper revealed that he had sent her a Facebook message offering her the job and simultaneously expressing a sexual interest in her. This was the subject of widespread public debate, and respondents differed in their views of where the threshold for sanctioning inappropriate behaviour should lay. Nonetheless, most respondents claimed the incident had acted as a catalyst for more open and public discussion of (previously often unspoken) issues of sexual harassment at work.

In discussions of the kinds of **working culture** they had experienced, some media workforce respondents reported that, within some organisations at which they had worked, **communication** within groups and meetings was very often dominated by men. Several respondents reported that, unless managers explicitly level the playing field of communication through skilful chairing, men often tend to talk louder and for longer than women. One respondent also expressed the view that women tend to be interrupted in group discussions more often than men and, when interrupted, tend to stop talking more often than men, who may simply raise their voice and carry on in response. A number of respondents also discussed the problem of evening meetings, noting that when managers make a habit of holding important meetings in the evening, this can make it harder for women with childcare responsibilities to engage fully in the professional life of the organisation.

Conversely, one respondent reported having worked under the only female Editor in Chief of a major newspaper in the country at the time (the Editor had recently left that role and been replaced by a man). The respondent noted that having a woman 'at the head of the table', determining which topics come under discussion and how they are discussed, had had an important 'role model effect'. She reported that 'it was very important for the understanding and self-esteem of many women to witness a woman being the leader of a big newspaper. […] Her strength encouraged others'.

Interestingly, journalist respondents reported that, while journalists may go out for drinks together, this is not widespread or an important locus of work-related decision-making, and has reduced in recent years. This reduction was connected to increased intensity of work pressure on journalists, with trends toward increased hours and reduced earnings reported.

8.3. Regulations and guidelines

With regard to regulations and guidelines within the media sector, most respondents were aware of the national media and advertising regulatory bodies. The Presserat issues reporting guidelines to the press, which include reference to reporting on women. However, these are voluntary, with media organisations free to join or not, and respondents noted that tabloids have tended not to sign up to the guidelines. Werberat, Austria's advertising counsel, which encourages self-regulation in advertising, also operates an ethics code, which prohibits advertising 'from directly or indirectly discriminating against persons or promoting discrimination, in particular for reasons of gender [etc.]'.[53] The code also has a set of specific rules on gender discrimination in advertising, and respondents reported that sexist advertisements can be reported to the counsel. Both organisations promote industry self-regulation, but can impose only limited sanctions for transgressions of their codes.

---

[53] https://www.werberat.at/layout/ETHIK_KODEX_6_2012_EN.pdf

Several respondents expressed the view that, while these bodies had not been entirely successful in promoting gender equality within the media, more robust action to control or limit media and advertising content may risk eroding the freedom of expression that is so vital to a functioning democracy. Some respondents also warned that stronger enforcement and harsher sanctions would be likely to be met with a backlash from more conservative sections of the Austrian press. This reflects one of the key issues in media regulation debates: how to promote gender equality (or, indeed, other elements of social justice) in media content without undermining fundamental liberties.

As mentioned above, the national public broadcaster ÖRF has a relatively strong system of self-regulation in place, including extensive guidelines on gender equality in broadcasting content, and (in accordance with legal requirements) a 'gender equality plan'. This plan was singled out by EIGE respondents in interview, and in an EIGE report, as an example of good practice in European media organisations.[54] The plan focuses on promoting women with the organisation, eliminating discrimination, and enabling all staff – including men – to achieve a good work life balance. The EIGE report notes that this 'should lead to a higher proportion of women in leading positions'. All respondents agreed that, in general, content broadcast by ÖRF reaches standards of gender equality unmatched by private broadcasters.

8.4. Action to improve gender equality in the media

A small number of respondents felt that improvements to gender equality in Austrian media would follow from broader, gradual, organic social change. Others, however, felt that more concerted efforts to improve teaching of gender equality in schools were required to speed up this process. Several respondents also offered concrete **suggestions for actions to improve gender equality in the media workforce**.

A key suggestion from several respondents was that, while part time working is becoming increasingly normalised, care must be taken to ensure part time workers are not allocated assignments that require them to work longer than their contracted hours. Allocation of workloads should be planned carefully, on the basis of realistic estimates of how long assignments will take to complete.

Another suggestion was to end the use of unpaid or low paid interns as full time journalists. While it is valuable for aspiring journalists, including students in journalism colleges from which interns are commonly drawn, to participate in short-term work experience placements, one respondent reported that interns are often required to work long hours for extended periods of time, and contribute to the core activities of media organisations. This was viewed as having a worsening effect on employees' pay, working conditions, and job security.

Some respondents also called for further government investment in funding for training programmes and initiatives targeted specifically toward women. As one respondent noted, applying for senior roles or negotiating salary and terms (including arrangements for parental leave and returning to work) are skills and, as such, can be taught. Given the gender pay gap and gender disparities in the distribution of decision-making responsibility in the media, there is reason to target such training at women and other underpaid, underrepresented groups.

---

[54] http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/collection-methods-tools-and-good-practices-field-women-and-media-summary-report

_____

One respondent noted that the EU currently provides funding for programmes encouraging journalists to specialise, particularly in social media, digitalisation, and data journalism. She observed that, while that this is a growing sector and represents the future of much journalism employment, places on courses currently tend to be dominated by men. The sector would benefit from more targeted efforts to increase women's participation in specialist training in this area.

Fewer suggestions for actions to improve media content were made by respondents, reflecting their concerns about the risks of stronger regulation in this area. Nonetheless, one respondent called for increased use of quotas in, for example, televised panel debates or chat shows.

Examples of good practice cited by respondents included consistent effort by a former Editor in Chief of a national newspaper to always include women on the front page of each weekly publication. This paper also instigated, and continues to populate and use, a database of specialists in a range of subjects. The intention is to ensure experts who are women are well-represented in each subject, and to thereby encourage and enable journalists to cite more women as experts in their reporting. It was reported by one respondent that, while journalists often need to interview or quote experts, it is too often 'the same male voices' that are called upon. The database represents a very practical step toward addressing the significant underrepresentation of women as authoritative sources in news reports, which was identified by the Global Media Monitoring Project and discussed earlier in this study.

Key organisations for women working in Austrian journalism include Medienfrauen and Frauennetzwerk Medien. Both aim to support women to advance their careers by providing a professional network and other forms of support. Medienfrauen is involved in organising the Austrian Female Journalists' Congress, which brings together women at all stages of their journalism careers, forging connections between less experienced women and very prominent journalists. Frauennetzwerk Medien also works to raise awareness of and close the gender pay gap in Austrian journalism.

Most respondents expressed the view that, as well as being right and fair, greater **gender equality in the media workforce would have a beneficial impact** on the quality of media and, in turn, wider society. In common with respondents in other case studies in this study, they emphasised the importance of media that reflects and expresses a range of voices and perspectives. In the words of one respondent, 'we would see a wider range of views about how the world works, which helps to make the picture more complete'. Another expressed a similar view: 'it would help to spread awareness of reality, which is different for different people'. One of the key benefits respondents associated with incorporating a wider range of women's voices in media was, then, the contribution it would make to the promotion and maintenance of social pluralism.

9. CASE STUDY OF MALTA

For the Malta case study, interviews were conducted with six women working in the media (in print and television news, gaming, social media, and programme production management), three respondents working in women's organisations, and one respondent working in a media regulatory body.

9.1. Media frames

GMMP (2015) data for Malta corroborates the global data: there are differences in how women and men are portrayed in the news in Malta. All respondents reiterated this, and identified a range of stereotypes in play in Maltese media.

One respondent working for a women's organisation noted that, in general, women appear in soft, 'housewifely' programmes on radio and TV, and that 'even if they are reading the news, there are men above them'. Another respondent talked about the widespread use of the sexualised 'blonde bimbo' trope, and noted sexist headline 'templates', such as 'Russian blonde – beautiful 21 year old woman'. She commented that no similar stereotypical template was used when journalists report on men. One woman, who works with a women's organisation, discussed the persistence of negative stereotypes, and reporting on and portrayals of women in negative frames. She asked why positive stereotypes are not used more: 'instead of calling protesting women 'fluffy harridans', report on them as 'plucky, brave women'. After all, if the report was about men protesting they would be called 'outspoken'. The [women's] bravery is almost a surprise'. A respondent working in a busy newsroom expressed the view that there were 'definitely differences in print news'. As an example, she noted that, 'when a news item reports a successful woman, she will invariably be referred to as 'a mother of 3', before focusing on her expertise. A man would never be described as 'a father of 2'. Women are constantly identified by their family role'.

Another respondent (working in social media) reported that, while stereotypes prevail, there was a positive moment recently amidst the stories announcing and reporting on Prince Harry's engagement. She commented that the reports generally 'focused on Prince Harry, despite the fact that Megan Markle is a successful actress, a humanitarian and a feminist'. She was heartened by 'one of the reports, which gave it a twist and ran with a headline 'successful actress engaged to former soldier', giving prominence to Megan Markle instead'.

One woman working for a women's organisation reported that stereotypes found in Maltese media reflect the national psyche: a combination of the cultural norms of a Mediterranean culture and a strong religious, non-secular culture. She described an example of the prevailing 'macho mind-set': after a group of female activists presented a statement to Government, a media backlash followed, including commentary that 'a man must have been behind it'. The implication, she noted, was that 'women couldn't have produced such a well-written or well-informed political statement'.

Another respondent, who works in the social media sector, commented that, unlike mainstream media, social media can be more careful when it comes to the use of negative stereotypes, given the potential for immediate backlash. She reported, 'the 'quick response' afforded by social media gives a perspective that TV and radio lack'.

_____

9.2. Women in the media workforce

The European Institute for Gender Equality's (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States found that women are in the minority in all decision-making roles in Maltese media organisations. Of the four case study Members States, Malta was found to have the lowest representation of women in decision-making roles.

Table 18: Women in decision-making roles in the Maltese media workforce

Level	Role	% / Numbers	Malta	EU
Strategic level	Chief Executive Officers	Percentage of women	0%	16%
		Total positions	2	
	Board Members	Percentage of women	38%	25%
		Total positions	8	
Operational level	Chief Operating Officers	Percentage of women	0%	21%
		Total positions	4	
	Other Operational Managers	Percentage of women	19%	32%
		Total positions	21	
	Heads of Directorate/ Unit	Percentage of women	0%	36%
		Total positions	8	
	Heads of Department	Percentage of women	N/A	32%
		Total positions	0	
Total percentage at all levels			16%	30%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

Figures for 2017, taken from EIGE's Gender Statistics Database, demonstrate that the proportions of women in decision-making roles in the Maltese public broadcasting company are well below the EU average, and indeed there are no women at all in the positions of CEO, executive, or non-executive directors.

Table 19: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (Malta: Public Broadcasting Services Ltd.)

Role	MT	EU
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	25%	38%
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	0%	35.8%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

This and other existing research consistently describes a media industry in Malta in which women face systematic obstacles to advancement into decision-making roles within media organisations. Respondents for this case study reiterated and illustrated these findings, describing entrenched discrimination, harassment, and sexist cultural norms. One respondent described these norms as 'systematically supporting stereotypically masculine values and practices'.

Five respondents working in newsrooms, social media, and gaming commented on issues with **discrimination** in recruitment, promotion, and allocation of work. They reported that they had not personally encountered discrimination at the point of recruitment, but one voiced concerns that such discrimination did exist. One respondent working in a key position in a gaming company reported having only witnessed equitable recruitment practices in the gaming industry, stating that 'if applicants are skilled they will be employed'. Another respondent commented that discrimination is more likely to occur in promotions. There was agreement among respondents working in newsrooms that discrimination existed around the allocation of work in this setting. One respondent working in a print newsroom described a scenario where a male colleague was promoted to decision-making positions despite the presence of capable women; and another woman working in a newsroom reported discriminatory practices in the allocation of 'hard news' versus 'soft news' stories: 'my male colleagues were allocated hard news items, while the women were sent out to do the 'human interest' pieces'. One respondent voiced a concern around equal pay as she believed or suspected that salaries were not equal and that her male colleagues were earning more for equivalent work.

A large degree of variance was reported by different respondents in terms of family friendly policies in the workplace. This variance suggests that 'good' and 'poor' practice in **meeting the needs of women with childcare responsibilities** may be ascribed in large part to specific organisational cultures. This, in turn, suggests that further efforts could be made at governmental or institutional levels to make such practices more consistent. One respondent, who worked in a newspaper newsroom, described the family-friendly, flexible attitudes that she encountered in a newsroom she had worked in when her daughter was younger. The hours assigned to her accommodated her parental commitments, she reported. This prevailing positive environment was, according to the same respondent, due to the news editor (who was a man), and the editor (who was a woman). In her opinion, both had positive, family-friendly attitudes. The measures were practiced on a case-by-case, *ad hoc* basis, depending on journalists' needs and commitments. However, in sharp contrast, another respondent, who worked in gaming, described how she was 'asked to leave' her job because she was pregnant with her second daughter and had been in hospital.

Harassment and bullying are symptomatic of particular working cultures, poor enforcement of safeguards, and an environment that does not facilitate agency and voice amongst the staff. One respondent described her 'shocking initiation' into a now defunct newspaper's newsroom, when she was young and starting out in journalism: 'the men stood around watching porn, and the news editor would call to and refer to the female journalists in derogatory sexual terms". In contrast, another woman working in a newsroom in different news organisation, described a 'healthier' working environment: 'when female employees reported sexual harassment, a disciplinary board was immediately set up'.

Most respondents had experienced sexual harassment at some point in their career. Respondents' comment on sexual harassment included that it is 'accepted that women accept sexual harassment as a 'joke', because it is a 'friendly gesture'', and that 'it happens all the time'. To combat this, one respondent working in social media explained that, as women

working in industry, 'we have learnt to put up barriers and at the same time keep it light'. This suggests that women have to navigate working cultures and locate coping skills, beyond reasonable expectations.

Respondents did not report having experienced violence in the workplace. However, shortly before fieldwork for this case study was conducted, Daphne Caruana Galizia, an investigative journalist and author of a popular blog that reported on high-level political corruption and organised crime in Malta, was killed in a car bomb attack. At the time of writing, three suspects have been charged with her murder.

Describing **working cultures** within their sectors, some respondents stated that the newsroom can be a very sexist environment: a site for crude jokes and porn on the computer. One female news journalist reported that 'it is a very macho environment. If you survive it, you'll survive anything'.

Another respondent working in the gaming sector described the prevalence of a boys' club mentality, reporting that sexism and sexist practices were especially problematic in practices around decision-making. She described how 'deals and major decision-making are made in nightclubs and strip clubs. It is normal for heads of departments to bring their clients there to make them happy'.

Nine respondents identified other examples of sexism in working cultures: ranging from witnessing comments from members of recruitment boards about the age and appearance of women applying for jobs, to the lack of family-friendly timing for meetings. One respondent working in the social media sector described her frustration with 'lunch meetings' that were, for her, primarily 'a waste of valuable time'. She observed that, while many men could 'stay on in the office later to catch up', she could not stay on till seven or eight o'clock in the evening, as she needed and wanted to go home to her children.

The same respondent also described a situation when, during a strategy meeting, she forcefully expressed her view of the direction her company should take. She reported overhearing the CRO comment 'I think she is on her period'. For her, this was an example of a male colleague diminishing her opinion, and devaluing her and her decision-making power. She described this archetypal put-down mechanism clearly: 'I was being assertive, but he implied that I was being aggressive and difficult, to diminish me in front of the others'.

9.3. Regulations and guidelines

When asked about the operation and efficacy of regulatory frameworks, respondents described a lack of legislation and absence of self-regulation and codes of practice.

Respondents were asked about gender equality policies or codes of practice within the media sector. Eight women reported that there were no formal documents in place, and one participant working in a large newsroom commented that 'employees are governed by their collective agreement and by national legislation'.

Another journalist respondent stated that, while there were no codes of practice with regard to gender equality and the development of media content in the news production sector, direction is more likely to come from editors. In some print newsrooms, she reported, editors can be quite active in 'stamping out stereotypes'.

She argued that, while there is a need for codes of practice, 'it might help women in the workforce more if there was additional training for new journalists, in order to instil a professional approach to gender balances in reporting. In house training and mentoring happens on an *ad hoc* basis, but a more structured system would have a positive impact'.

Among the participants there was a lack of awareness of existing regulations and guidelines. There are two regulatory bodies in Malta: the Broadcasting Authority Malta, which was set up in 1961 with a remit to monitor and regulate all radio and television broadcasts originating from the Maltese Islands; and the Malta Communications Authority, which was set up on 1st January 2001. Its remit is to regulate communications services, including fixed and mobile telephony, internet and television distribution services. It also regulates the postal sector and eCommerce services and Malta's radio spectrum resources. In 2014, the Authority's mandate was extended to include responsibility for developing Malta's information and communications technology potential through innovation. This broadened the remit to include social media.

While the participants in this study were not aware of any gender guidelines for radio and television broadcasts or social media, the Broadcasting Authority does have guidelines on gender portrayal and representation in radio and television. When the authority was asked how effective existing regulations are in addressing gender inequality and promoting gender equality in media content, the response was that 'they are not so effective', but that 'the authority is working on a new, updated set of guidelines to reflect different gender identities'. The strongest statement on regulation came from a respondent representing a women's organisation. She noted that 'if we truly wish to have a media workforce that is gender equal, there is a need for better legislation; and there is no point in having legislation without enforcement'.

9.4. Action to improve gender equality in the media

Respondents were asked their views on current action to improve gender equality in the media, as well as on what further action might be effective in promoting gender equality.

Respondents repeatedly talked about the need for a fundamental cultural shift. One respondent summed up her view: 'to achieve a culture shift, we have to start with 'awareness and language, then legislation and enforcement'. Respondents talked about 'a need to generate awareness', and explained the various ways this would bring about a change in culture. One woman suggested that 'NGO's and prominent people need to speak out to help this awareness raising', while another noted that 'policies and mechanisms are needed to support equality and this will also support a culture shift'. A respondent working with a Women's Organisation reiterated that 'there is a need for a greater critical mass of women in the media industry and in media management', explaining that this would, in turn, bring culture change with it.

Several respondents talked about the importance of *bringing about wider culture change through education:* 'kids will show their parents'; 'we need to go in to schools and teach that it is not right and it makes no sense'. Nine respondents talked about going back to basics, to the education system, to schools and children. They maintained that there was a need for better, broader education, and more in-house, continuous training for journalists. They shared the view that this would facilitate a much-needed culture change.

All respondents talked about the enormous beneficial consequences greater equality would bring. One participant working in a women's organisation commented that 'women bring to

every area; they bring fresh ideas, emotion, a fresh perspective. And if gender balance is achieved in the media, women can aspire to become media workers, journalists, and so [there would be a] ripple effect'. For one respondent, the working world would be 'a kinder, softer place, and more efficient'. She continued, 'I don't mean softer as in la la land, but for example with regard to mental health issues. In the last five to six years there has been a rise in talk about mental health and stress. There needs to be another way of doing work'.

In summary, respondents expressed that an equitable industry would address childcare provision and flexible working; the working culture; good codes of practice; and the pay gap. One commented that 'if we address that, we will all be happier'. Respondents from newsrooms, social media, women's organisations and a media regulatory body noted that a balanced media workforce would also likely result in improved content. This in turn would mean that media consumers would be 'better educated'. To bring better content we need to strive for more women in decision-making positions. As one newsroom journalist noted, 'different genders bring different viewpoints and different ways of being. She continued, 'a female editor in a media organisation would also be a good reflection or mirror of society; and the stories tackled would be different, maybe even more human-oriented'. A participant working for a women's organisation commented that, 'if greater equality in media content is achieved, viewers will have positive portrayals of gender and gender issues, and this would reflect a better understanding of broader gender issues'.

Recurring themes in respondents' view of the broader consequences of achieving greater equality in the media workforce were that this would produce happier people and better media messages, which would affect the viewers in a more positive way, and aid a decrease in stereotypes within wider society.

10. CASE STUDY OF SWEDEN

For the Sweden case study, interviews were conducted with five respondents working in media production, one respondent who works for an institute responsible for media funding and policy, one expert academic, and one respondent involved in campaigns to promote gender equality within the media.

10.1. Media frames

Sweden case study respondents highlighted a number of ways in which the framing of women in media content remains problematic, despite a number of advances and initiatives.

Respondents in print and audiovisual media noted the 'daily struggle' of working to present women in media as more than victims or objects. The speed of the news-cycle creates pressure to provide constant content and experts or commentators to speak to emerging stories. The ubiquity of men across the labour market and at all levels, particularly in senior roles, often means that it is easier to identify men to comment or be interviewed, compounding the under-representation of women and their framing as non-expert or without agency in a story or news item. A confidence gap for women as experts or commentators was highlighted, which impacts upon how women are framed more generally. Several respondents observed that women often respond to requests to be interviewed or to write by saying that they do not feel sufficiently qualified or confident and, at times, suggest male colleagues that could be approached instead. Respondents attributed this to a lack of confidence rather than skill, viewing it as a symptom of the generalised lower visibility of women in media. It was felt that even despite, for example, the higher numbers of female politicians in Sweden, the media is still failing to portray women as powerful, with agency, and in all their diversity as much as they do for men. Indeed, even when female politicians are the focus of media reports or commentary, a dominant frame is often their motherhood, with questions posited about their ability to balance parenting and political responsibilities.[55]

Respondents in different media sectors emphasised the ways in which what audiences view is profoundly shaped by the person behind the camera. They offered examples from film, television and gaming in which content developed under the creative control of women re-framed the presentation of girls and women. In film, since the implementation of an initiative to fund male- and female-led films equally, the numbers of female protagonists has increased notably, while 100 per cent of Swedish films directed by women have since passed the Bechdel Wallace test.[56] Similarly, in the gaming industry, efforts to increase gender equality in creative and technical roles has been seen to have resulted in more female characters in general, and more specifically, female characters that have leading roles, are characterised as more than simply sex objects and have agency in the story.

---

[55] See, for instance, Minister for EU Affairs Birgitta Ohlsson: 'Many commentators claimed it would be impossible for me to combine parenthood with such a high-powered job and that I was irresponsible and selfish for accepting. My pregnancy was outed — before I'd gotten the chance to inform my extended family — in the largest Swedish morning paper.' Huffington Post (15 September 2013), https://www.huffingtonpost.com/natalia-lopatniuk-brzezinski/empowering-women-for-a-be_b_3930000.html

[56] See section 10.5 below for further details.

10.2. Women in the media workforce

The European Institute for Gender Equality's (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States found that women are in the minority in all decision-making roles in Swedish media organisations. Of the four case study Members States, Sweden was found to have the highest representation of women in decision-making roles.

Table 20: Women in decision-making roles in the Swedish media workforce

Level	Role	% / Numbers	Sweden	EU
Strategic level	Chief Executive Officers	Percentage of women	25%	16%
		Total positions	4	
	Board Members	Percentage of women	54%	25%
		Total positions	35	
Operational level	Chief Operating Officers	Percentage of women	50%	21%
		Total positions	4	
	Other Operational Managers	Percentage of women	48%	32%
		Total positions	27	
	Heads of Directorate/ Unit	Percentage of women	41%	36%
		Total positions	70	
	Heads of Department	Percentage of women	50%	32%
		Total positions	10	
Total percentage at all levels			46%	30%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

Data for 2017, drawn from EIGE's Gender Statistics Database, show that Sweden is the only case study country to exceed the EU average on both measures of gender equality in decision-making roles within public broadcasting organisations.

Table 21: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (Sweden: Sveriges Radio, Sveriges Television AB, Sveriges Utbildningsradi)

Role	SE	EU
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	53.1%	38%
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	58.6%	35.8%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

Respondents described a correspondingly nuanced picture in discussions about the media workforce in Sweden. There was a sense of optimism about increasing numbers of female leaders across the media sector, and about leaders in some sectors adopting a broadly pro-gender equality position, resulting in more active recruitment of women into male-dominated industries (such as gaming). It was believed that this related to organisational and company leaders understanding the business-case for more gender equal and diverse workforces in the media; that is, a belief that the resulting content appeals to a wider variety of consumers.

However, a common view amongst respondents was that while progress has been and continues to be made, the media workforce remains dominated by men, particularly at the highest levels of seniority. There was no consensus amongst respondents about whether any sectors were more gender egalitarian than others; they reflected both on the positive measures being undertaken in their industries, and on areas of inequality for women in the workforce related to professional opportunity, workplace culture and leadership opportunities. However, some common themes emerged from interview data.

A common theme was the **importance of leadership** in embedding gender equal practices in the workplace, and several respondents highlighted initiatives in their companies which were having a positive impact for women. One respondent from an industry in which men significantly outnumber women in all roles and at all levels noted that her company's directors had introduced a policy whereby, if two job candidates have the same qualifications and scores, the individual from an under-represented community would be hired (i.e. if a male and a female candidate were being considered, the female candidate would be hired). This policy had generated some disquiet amongst some staff, but the respondent noted the importance of this policy for demonstrating the company's commitment to diversity and recognition of structural barriers to equality of opportunity in the industry. Another stressed the importance of **women's professional networks** as structures of support and to facilitate professional advancement.

However, despite examples of good practice from different media sectors, respondents were cautious about attesting to a long-term cultural change in the Swedish media sector. While in some sectors women are in leadership positions, and in others male leaders are working to create greater gender equality, respondents cautioned both that many industry leaders are not pro-actively working to this end, and that there has not been sufficient 'trickle down' through the workforce more generally. As such, respondents noted the need for continuing vigilance with regard to gender equality in workplace culture and practices, expressing a concern that prevailing habits that favour men could easily return if pressure did not continue to be applied.

Discriminatory and harassing behaviour was felt to be an endemic problem in the Swedish media sector, and the #MeToo campaign has had a notable impact for the Swedish media sector, according to respondents. Several noted the ways in which #MeToo has generated debate on and scrutiny of discriminatory practice against women in different media sectors, with stories being reported of women feeling increasingly empowered to report abuse and harassment. Women in one media industry shared stories of harassment and abuse with one another on social media, and took their stories public in the wake of the campaign. In response to #MeToo, female journalists created their own campaign, #deadline, to share stories of discrimination and harassment. It was felt that there is now a great deal more discussion and awareness about sexual harassment experienced by women in the media sector, which respondents hoped would be capitalised on to support a more gender equal workforce.

Respondents noted the strong **protection provided by Swedish law** for women (and men) returning to work after having a child. It was felt that, for example, the law stating that parents can take parental leave until their child turns eight and are entitled to almost 80 per cent of their pay offers a safeguard for women in the media sector against discrimination or unfair demotion. Similarly, the obligation on companies with more than 15 employees to report salary statistics was felt to be a positive measure for supporting more gender equal workplace practice. Respondents did, however, note the importance of enforcement of this legislation, which some felt was not always done effectively.

10.3. Regulations and guidelines

The Discrimination Act entered into force in 2009, bringing together seven previous pieces of legislation. The Act combats discrimination on the grounds of sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnic origin, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. The Act stipulates that discrimination is prohibited in working life, labour market policy activities and employment services not under public contract, professional recognition and public employment. An Equality Ombudsman supervises compliance with the Act.

While addressing gender stereotyping is encompassed in the work of the Equality Ombudsman's mandate to tackle gender discrimination, there are no mandatory rules against gender discrimination in advertising. The Swedish Advertising Ombudsman is a self-regulatory organisation founded by the industry. It receives complaints about advertising and assesses whether advertisements follow the necessary industry guidance. A complaint can be lodged by anyone from the general public, but there are no sanctions beyond 'blame and shame'. This was a source of frustration for some respondents, who believed that legislation is the most effective means of addressing the endemic objectification of girls and women in Swedish media. While there has been cross-party political will to legislate, the argument that legislation against sexist advertising may contravene the Fundamental Law on Freedom of Expression and the Freedom of the Press Act has succeeded in stalling regulatory action.

Respondents noted that there are areas of best practice in regulation in particular industries. For instance, Swedish public service broadcasting permits must make reference to gender equality. The Swedish Media Council was established in 2011, as a government agency to promote the empowerment of children and young people as conscious media users and to protect them from harmful media influences. The Swedish Association of Communication Agencies has created a committee for human resources focused on to creating a 'balanced' industry by 2020, including a gender equal workforce.

However, respondents working in broadcast or print media maintained the primary importance of freedom of expression, and believed that regulation on what can and cannot be reported or depicted risked undermining this. It was felt that self-regulation and ethical codes of conduct are sufficient to ensure and promote fairness and gender equality. Other respondents noted that this position is in opposition to the serious concerns raised by the CEDAW Committee about gender stereotyping in Sweden, including the statement that industry self-regulation does not sufficiently address the problem.[57]

---

[57] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (2016), *Concluding observations on the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of Sweden*

10.4. Action to improve gender equality in the media

Respondents emphasised the importance of keeping the issue about gender equality in the media alive. It was felt that although progress has been made (particularly in some industries), the entrenched culture favouring men could mean that positive measures could be undone if vigilance is not maintained. Respondents noted that this is an effort that must be made every day.

However, respondents highlighted that change cannot occur through awareness-raising alone. For some, the key to change is legislation to give the owners of Swedish media platforms more power to control what advertisers are able to show; for others, it is encouraging those in decision-making roles to change their recruitment policies to attract women and encourage greater awareness amongst all employees about gender equality and best practice in content development.

One respondent noted the importance of sex-disaggregated data about the gender divide in the media industry. This would enable a greater degree of comparative work to be undertaken, and provide more detailed insight into the reality of gender inequality in the media workforce.

Examples of best practice highlighted by respondents included the work of the Svenska Filminstitutet (The Swedish Film Institute). This is a foundation established by the Swedish state and the various professional bodies of the film industry. Its task is to support the production of new films, the distribution and screening of worthwhile films and to preserve and promote Sweden's film heritage. In 2011, the CEO announced that the Institute would seek to fund all film productions equally by gender. At the time, 26 percent of film funding in Sweden went to women filmmakers. By 2014, the goal had been achieved – of the Swedish films receiving funding, half had women directors, 55 percent had women writers and 65 percent had women producers. Another initiative in film, a campaign using the Bechdel Wallace test, was initiated by Ellen Tejle, Women in Film and Television, and four Swedish cinemas in 2013. Based on a 1985 cartoon by Alison Bechdel, the test dictates that to pass, a film must have at least two named female characters who talk to each other about something other than a man. Films that pass receive an A-Rating label.

Respondents noted that there is a well-established and active NGO sector working to push forward the agenda on gender equality in the Swedish media sector. Equalisters was established by Lina Thomsgård in March 2010, and is an equality project that uses crowd-sourcing to create long lists of alternative experts from whom organisations, companies, and journalists can seek comment and expertise. The aim is to create more equal and diverse representation in the media, to address the dominance of white male commentators on Swedish media and create a more heterogeneous pool of experts. Equalisters also collates data on who speaks in Swedish media, and provides tools for other organisations to undertake similar crowd-sourcing for social change work. Ad Watch is a campaign that targets sexist advertising, to encourage members of the public to report sexist advertising directly to the campaign by uploading examples of bad practice. The Swedish Women's Lobby reports the advertisement to the Swedish Advertising Ombudsman and contacts the company behind the advertising. The campaign also advocates for stronger regulation against sexist advertising.

The Swedish Association of Communication Agencies and Berghs School of Communication have stipulated in their charter that they should actively support their members in creating a gender equal work environment. In recognition of the relative homogeneity of the

communications industry (including advertising and marketing) with regard to, for instance, gender, class and socio-economic background and ethnicity, these two bodies have created a scholarship to attract people who would otherwise not see a future in the sector, and create a more equal and heterogeneous sector.

Respondents reflected on the **notable benefits of improving the representation of girls and women** in the Swedish media. The objectification of girls and women reinforces the idea that men are subjects and women are objects. It was felt that this internalisation of objectification and sexualisation by girls and women can and does contribute to poor body image and impacts negatively on mental health, as well as contributing to the myriad gender inequalities which women can experience.

Respondents noted the benefits for their industries of greater gender equality in the media sector. Across different industries, respondents highlighted the enriching effect of more women in the workforce and more diverse representation of women, both to reflect Swedish society more effectively, and to create better content that holds more appeal to women as media 'consumers'. As one respondent noted, there is a fundamental link between the two: unequal gender structures in the production of media will likely lead to sexist content. As described above, action taken by industry leaders can have a notable impact both on gender equality in the workforce and on how girls and women are framed in content, but this must be accompanied by culture change within media organisations and across the sector more broadly.

11.   CASE STUDY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

For the UK case study, interviews were conducted with one respondent involved in campaigns to promote gender equality within the media, and five respondents working in media production (including in film and television script development, television production, digital content production, photo journalism, and advertising).

11.1. Media frames

UK case study respondents noted that some of the ways in which women are commonly framed in media content are, still, problematic.

Most notably, respondents emphasised that women's visibility in media often depends on perceived attractiveness and, relatedly, youth: 'sex sells' and titillating portrayals of women were viewed as particularly common in audiovisual and print media. This extends to framing sexual assault in titillating ways in both news and fiction, with news stories of sexual assault sometimes placed next to sexualised pictures of women in print media. Across media types, older women were seen to be most often framed as sexless.

Respondents noted that portrayals of women at work also often frame women as incompetent, particularly in male-dominated fields. Relatedly, portrayals of women as housewives and mothers were perceived as common tropes. 'Celebrity culture' was cited as portraying women as attractive but often unintelligent, while characters and presenters who are women are more often giggly, fun, and inoffensive, than serious or authoritative. Respondents noted that within TV and film, men are more likely than women to be given 'the best lines': to be portrayed as witty, pithy, and smart. Some groups of women were viewed as the subjects of demonisation in media content: working class single mothers, for example, were viewed as being blamed for a plethora of social ills.

Respondents noted that media content varies greatly in its portrayals of women. In news media, tabloid news was viewed as portraying women within these frames more frequently than quality news. In TV, it was emphasised that women's media frames vary from show to show, though it was noted that public broadcasters are a little more inclined to show diverse portrayals of women than private broadcasters. Advertising was also viewed as very varied in its portrayals of women: though it was cited as producing sexualised or stereotypical portrayals of women, several respondents felt it was often better in this respect than entertainment or news. Some connected this to more robust regulation within the advertising sector (see below).

11.2. Women in the media workforce

The European Institute for Gender Equality's (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States provides evidence that women are in the minority in all decision-making roles in UK media organisations.

Table 22: Women in decision-making roles in the UK media workforce

Level	Role	% / Numbers	UK	EU
Strategic level	Chief Executive Officers	Percentage of women	25%	16%
		Total positions	4	
	Board Members	Percentage of women	33%	25%
		Total positions	36	
Operational level	Chief Operating Officers	Percentage of women	0%	21%
		Total positions	4	
	Other Operational Managers	Percentage of women	30%	32%
		Total positions	23	
	Heads of Directorate/ Unit	Percentage of women	22%	36%
		Total positions	32	
	Heads of Department	Percentage of women	N/A	32%
		Total positions	0	
Total percentage at all levels			27%	30%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2013) Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States

Statistics drawn from EIGE's research into public broadcasters demonstrate that women are in the minority within decision-making roles at the public broadcaster, the British Broadcasting Corporation, though the proportion of Presidents and Board Members is above the EU average, and falls within EIGE's 'gender balance zone'.

Table 23: Women in decision-making roles in public broadcasting organisations (UK: British Broadcasting Corporation)

Role	UK	EU
Presidents and Members of Board/Council	41.7%	38%
CEOs, Executives and Non-Executive Directors	28.6%	35.8%

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality (2017) Gender Statistics Database

Respondents consistently viewed the media workforce as disproportionately dominated by men and characterised by gender-based inequality of opportunity. This was the case for all sectors and at all levels, though respondents noted that barriers to equal participation worsen at the highest levels of seniority.

Respondents emphasised that the disadvantages faced by women working in the media workforce are very much affected by which companies they work for or with: organisations' owners and senior managers were viewed as having enormous influence on working practices

and culture, as well as output. Thus, no particular sector was viewed as being more gender egalitarian than others; rather, there are better and worse organisations within each sector. Nonetheless, some common themes emerged from interview data.

All respondents reported that **discrimination against women** – both direct and indirect – is still very much a significant problem within the media sector. They felt that women need to fight harder and be better at their jobs than men to reach similar levels of success in the industry. One respondent reported that while working for a public broadcaster she had struggled for over a year to get equal pay to a man with the same job title and job specification who was doing equivalent work to her own, and after achieving this was passed over for promotion.

Importantly, class, age, perceived attractiveness, ethnicity, and disability were viewed as intersecting factors that compound the disadvantages and discrimination women face in the workforce: women with working class backgrounds, older women, women who are not perceived as attractive, women of colour, and women with disabilities were viewed as facing particularly intense disadvantages. Some older women reported having claimed that they were younger than they are and dying their naturally greying hair (or being advised to dye their hair), to improve their chances of getting work. They expressed that, once over the age of 35, work becomes harder to find, as though decision-makers feel that women lose their creativity and talent as they get older, rather than developing more extensive experience and skill, or as though they prefer to have younger women who they perceive as attractive surrounding them at work. Women who had experience working abroad noted that class was far more of an issue in the UK, with snobbish attitudes still prevalent among decision-makers in UK media. Some respondents noted that discrimination could sometimes be mitigated through remote working, as gender being less visible and communicating through writing can have a levelling effect.

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that participation in the UK media workforce is particularly difficult for women who have children: too often, **media organisations do not meet mothers' needs**. Few companies were considered to make provision for childcare, though some larger companies make some provision. Freelance workers have no employer to provide them with guaranteed, paid maternity leave. Further, when women do take an extended break from their careers to have and raise children, they often face severe disadvantages upon returning to the workforce. The speed of technological development in the media sector was cited as a key factor here: every year, the technology moves on (including camera technology and editing practices), while social and online media becomes ever more embedded in media sectors, from news to entertainment and advertising. Those outside of the workforce may be less able to 'keep up' with current trends.

Additionally, respondents emphasised that the very long hours demanded in many media roles – up to 18 hours per day – make it extremely difficult to spend adequate time with family. This leaves many women, and especially those who are responsible for the majority of child-rearing and other household labour, facing a choice between pursuing family life and a fulfilling career. For some respondents, the subsequent necessary sacrifices in either or both areas of life had a profound negative effect on their mental health.

Much sexist treatment towards women in the media was described by several respondents as 'insidious' rather than overt. Women reported that men of all ages, but particularly older men, were more dismissive of women than men, quick to criticise, condescending, and patronising. Nonetheless, all respondents were in agreement that more extreme **aggression, bullying, and harassment at work** are also commonplace: an established

_____

part of the culture within many organisations. Sexual harassment was reported by all respondents to be a significant problem: from being sexually propositioned to being touched inappropriately by clients, colleagues and managers. Bullying was cited as a normalised part of the working culture within many media organisation. Aggressive and even threatening comments were encountered by some respondents on an almost-daily basis. As many roles in the media workforce often involve facing rejection, being 'thick-skinned', 'macho', and 'able to take it' is viewed by many members of the workforce as a point of pride, several respondents claimed. However, harassment and bullying can take a heavy toll on emotional and mental wellbeing: some respondents reported that their mental health had suffered, and some had felt compelled to leave jobs. One reported joining with others in her company to file a lawsuit for gender-based discrimination – a process that, though ultimately successful, was itself emotionally draining.

In addition to reporting discrimination, widespread failure to meet mothers' needs, harassment and bullying, respondents noted a range of other features of the **working culture** within the media workforce that can disadvantage women.

All respondents noted that, where those at senior levels do not take steps to ensure the playing field is levelled, **communication** within groups and meetings is very often dominated by men. Several respondents described a gender difference in communication styles, noting that the voices that were loudest and listened to for longest were most often men's, and that these most often 'won out' by virtue of being most prominent. A number of respondents related this to what they described as a 'confidence gap' between men and women, with men both being more assertive in pushing their creative ideas and more forcefully putting themselves forward for work. A small number of women expressed the view that louder and more assertive women could win out on these terms, but were often treated as 'honorary men'. They identified a need to change the terms of communication to ensure that quieter women's voices – and ideas and talents – are not crowded out and overlooked.

All respondents noted that most sectors of the media are highly 'sociable'; colleagues and professional networks often socialise and go drinking together. Notably, important decisions about work are taken and networks forged outside of working hours. Engagement in this socialisation was therefore reported as being key to successful professional development. However, respondents also noted that, given discrepancies between men and women's responsibilities and interests outside of work (with women often bearing greater responsibility for childcare and household work), women are often less able than men to take up opportunities for 'professional socialising'. Some respondents also noted feeling expected to 'schmooze' and flatter senior male colleagues – and above all to 'be womanly'.

Importantly, several respondents described the 'freewheeling', informal drinking culture as being linked to a blurring of the line between banter and sexism: at night, after drinking, the 'professional veil' can slip, and respect for professional boundaries becomes more mercurial, in ways that would be more readily recognised as inappropriate earlier in the day.

11.3. Regulations and guidelines

Within the UK, the Equality Act (2010) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex at all workplaces. The Communications Act (2003) requires the UK's main media regulatory body (Ofcom) to ensure equality of opportunity between men and women in the media workforce. Ofcom is the communications regulator in the UK, regulating TV, radio and video-on-demand sectors, and the airwaves over which wireless devices operate. In addition, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) sets out the Editors' Code of Practice, which newspapers

and magazines regulated by IPSO have agreed to follow. The code provides rules on press media content and journalistic practice, including a prohibition on intimidation and harassment and 'on prejudicial or pejorative reference to an individual's sex' in stories. The Advertising Standards Authority is the UK's advertising regulator, which implements Advertising Codes within broadcast and other media. These codes states that advertising 'must not condone or encourage harmful discriminatory behaviour or treatment'.

Most respondents were unaware of any regulations within journalism or entertainment media relating directly to portrayals of women. While the 'watershed' in the UK sets the hours at which portrayals of sex and violence are allowed on television, no respondents could cite any rules regulating depictions of women. They contrasted this with the prevalence of guidance on portrayals of ethnicity on TV. The Advertising Standards Authority was viewed by some respondents as taking a stronger line on portrayals of women, resulting in improvements to the framing of women within advertising content in recent years.

It was notable that respondents felt regulations and guidelines were inadequate to the task of addressing the issues within the media workforce described above. While workplaces are subject to the Acts detailed above and may also have internal policies around professional behaviour, these rules often do not extend to more insidious forms of sexism and, even where behaviour clearly contravenes the rules, they may not be implemented. One respondent noted, 'where bullying is the norm, no one does anything about it'. Respondents who had been subject to unacceptable behaviour reported feeling they had no recourse.

This was directly related to the precarious, competitive nature of work in the UK media. If women are perceived as troublesome – 'a trouble-maker' – or challenge the status quo, there will always be someone to replace them.

Thus, even where rules are in place, women often felt that asking for them to be applied would cost them their careers. A broader cultural shift is required to remove the risks to women's careers engendered by taking action to protect their rights. At the time of fieldwork, the #MeToo campaign had very recently taken off, and several women expressed considerable admiration and respect for the bravery of women coming forward to talk about their experiences of harassment, assault and rape: this was credited with making it easier for other women to join in breaking the silence, or amplifying the volume of conversation, around these issues in the media industry.

11.1. Action to improve gender equality in the media

Respondents expressed the view that part of the solution the problem of continuing gender inequality in both media content and the media workforce is to ensure more women fill the most senior positions in the industry. They noted that it is far more often men than women who create and commission sexist or stereotypical portrayals of women, and that better, more realistic, more varied portrayals that express and reflect women's experiences in all their diversity is more likely to be achieved if women from all backgrounds can get their creative work heard and supported. Better gender equality at the top of the workforce hierarchy was not viewed as sufficient for better content, however: respondents noted that women at the top do not always want to support other women who may become 'rivals' within a male-dominated sphere, or to be seen to be directly and purposively supporting other women. It can be risky, as detailed above, to be identified as a potentially 'troublesome' feminist who wants to shake up the status quo. Nonetheless, most respondents expressed the view that change may come from women supporting each other, and feeling confident to support each other's successes.

In practical terms, one respondent noted the importance of building up evidence of discrimination, harassment or bullying. Immediately recording each instance of inappropriate behaviour is important if the need arises to provide contemporaneous evidence to support an account of wrongdoing.

Given the importance of key senior staff – owners, editors, commissioners – in setting the tone of working practice and culture within each organisation, respondents also noted that firm and demonstrative expression by these individuals of what is and what is not acceptable can also make a difference. Top decision-makers should be aware of how their organisation works in this respect, and take steps to ensure they understand and insist on gender equality. In particular, senior staff should make clear that where unacceptable behaviour has occurred it will not be tolerated and 'whistleblowers' will be protected.

This kind of change is also likely to require much wider social change, bringing the importance of gender equality to people's consciousness without alienating them. As one respondent noted, it will be hard to achieve gender equality in the media sector until we change wider societal norms about the value of women.

Respondents cited several **examples of good practice** in media industries, as well as a range of initiatives to promote gender equality and support women working in the media sector. Last year, Sheffield Documentary Festival was run by a woman who introduced a crèche for the first time, to encourage working mothers to attend the festival. The Guardian, a national publication producing print and online news, has created a 'Bechdel Filter' to support analysis of the gender balance of its news stories. This approach, which is currently being tested internally, uses software to analyse news stories and produce a 'gender balance score' out of 100, both for individual stories and for all stories within a news section. It analyses the text of stories to identify the proportion of subjects and sources who are women (weighted at 40% of the overall score), the proportion of female pronouns used in the text (30%), and the gender of the journalist (30%). This enables journalists and section editors to 'sense-check' the gender balance of their stories and sections quickly and easily, and to thereby identify and redress any inappropriate imbalances. Respondents reported that the use of Silvermouth, a diversity quota designed for media production and distribution companies, is becoming increasingly common, but is primarily focused on promoting ethnic and religious diversity rather than gender equality.

Initiatives to support women in documentary-making include Chicken and Egg, which was set up and is run by women who became frustrated that the documentary landscape was so male dominated. The initiative provides funding to documentary projects, and only considers projects that have a woman working as the producer or director. Northern Ireland Screen also offers funding programmes for various under-represented groups, including women. Its initiatives include programmes providing support in developing effective job applications (including accounting for career gaps) to women who have had children and are returning to work in the media, confidence building, training in self-promotion and own-brand building, networking, and skills building (including technological skills). TRC media runs a special edition scheme for women in digital sector, while Women Make Movies seeks to improve education around gender equality in film-making by running workshops and engaging in public debates. Creative Skillset runs a range of initiatives to build up women's skills and support their career progression. These include a New Directors Scheme, supporting development of directing skills, and a Return to Work Scheme, which placed participants in 'returnship' roles across development, production, post production and marketing. These schemes are specifically targeted at women, who make up over 80% of recent participants.

Respondents noted that, greater **gender equality in the media workforce would bring a range of benefits**. First, at the most fundamental level, a great injustice would be abated. It is right to recognise and respect women's working achievements, and wrong for women to be held back, overlooked, and underappreciated due to their gender. In addition to addressing a fundamental unfairness, however, there would also be a number of very tangible benefits. Respondents noted that a more egalitarian, inclusive culture at work would likely enable them to enjoy their jobs more, and feel more confident and optimistic about their working lives. As one respondent noted 'you never get the best out of people when you bully them'.

As described above, better representation of women in decision-making roles may be associated with improvements to gender portrayals in media content. Mitigating negative stereotypes and diversifying portrayals of women would be a welcome consequence. The potential social benefits of more egalitarian media content – including potential mental health and role-model benefits – are discussed in the literature review above.

Finally, the #MeToo campaign is shining new light on a very dark side of the media: exploitation and harassment, as well as assault and rape, were identified by respondents as longstanding problems that have caused untold suffering and stand in most urgent need of redress.

12. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Sexism in media content is an ongoing problem. Women are less visible than men across media types and, when visible, their portrayals too often conform to tired clichés. Women are disproportionately portrayed as less authoritative, capable, and serious than men, and commonly framed in stereotypical (home- and family-focused), sexualised, or auxiliary roles. While new media platforms often function to break down traditional distinctions between media production and consumption, these more interactive fora also provide a digital setting for the reproduction of long-established patterns of gendered abuse, exploitation, and discrimination.

These problems with media content are strongly associated with gender inequalities within the media industry workforce. Research consistently finds evidence of horizontal and vertical labour market segregation: women are in the minority across media sectors, particularly in creative roles, and are severely underrepresented at senior, decision-making levels. Studies of women's participation in journalism suggest that, while there is a relatively good gender balance among entrants into the journalism profession, the distribution of decision-making responsibility is characterised by significant gender disparity.

Women working in media who were interviewed for this study reported widespread gender-based discrimination and inequality of opportunity within media industries, including in pay, hiring, allocation of work, and promotion. They also described the prevalence of working structures, norms and practices that function to disadvantage women relative to men. These include, *inter alia*, insufficient provision for parents with childcare responsibilities, competitive rather than cooperative modes of communication, and 'normalisation' of sexual harassment and bullying. Several women reported that, even where rules against discrimination and harassment exist, the precarious and competitive nature of media industry jobs, combined with a prevailing culture of acceptance of rule infringements, often mean that women have no genuine recourse to address these wrongs.

Gender inequalities in media content and production clearly persist despite the very clear focus on these issues within the European policy agenda. A range of directives place legal requirements upon all Member States to prohibit gender-based discrimination and ensure equal treatment of women and men. However, they do not dictate the precise mechanisms through which the outcomes are to be achieved, and there is considerable variation across Member States in how shared policy goals are pursued.

The greatest successes have been seen in those Member States with leadership willing to go over and above these minimum requirements, acting in accordance with a genuine commitment to address the injustice of gender inequality (and, indeed, consequent economic inefficiencies).

Similarly, our case study research suggests that, at the level of industry, organisations with strong leadership that demonstrates commitment to including women at all levels of media production are the most successful in achieving a more equal workforce. Respondents consistently reported that the content produced or distributed by such organisations tends to portray a more balanced, realistic view of women's diverse lives and contributions to society.

A key priority must, then, be to counteract the discriminatory norms and attitudes, including unconscious biases, that contribute to ongoing failures to address gender inequality effectively. Social campaigns, education programmes, and more targeted training and awareness-raising (including for industry decision-makers) to promote egalitarian values and practices should be supported through funding and promotion at the European and national levels. Industry decision-makers should be made aware of the business case for more gender

equal and diverse workforces in media industries; namely, that the resulting media content is likely to appeal to a wider variety of consumers

Further research into gender inequality in the media would support this work to promote social change. In particular, ongoing analysis of comparable data on gender inequality across Member States, and of 'what works' in promoting equality, is key to raising awareness not only of the scale of the problem (in different countries and different parts of media industries), but also of how to address it.

Our findings suggest an urgent need to take action to ensure existing rules on equal treatment in employment (including rules on pay inequality and harassment) are enforceable. Mechanisms must be identified and put in place that genuinely provide women with due process and ensure the pursuit of legal entitlements does not carry undue career risk.

Recent public debate on sexual harassment within the media industry is to be welcomed. While significant disagreements on thresholds and sanctions for harassment persist, most respondents who were working in media or at the EU-level to promote gender equality lauded the recent #MeToo campaign for raising awareness of the prevalence of harassment and opening up the debate. This in turn appears to be facilitating the development of a cultural atmosphere in which women feel better supported to disclose their experiences as sexual harassment becomes less socially acceptable. Industry decision-makers should respond by ensuring that internal harassment policies achieve the highest standards of fairness, clarity, and transparency, including taking steps to mitigate the career risks of disclosure.

While the principle of equal pay has been enshrined in EU directives for over forty years, we are far from achieving it and, recently, progress has slowed. We need to go further. Growing calls for more fine-grained pay transparency should be translated into requirements. To be effective, this transparency should extend to terms of reference for gradations within pay bands, and to criteria for promotion.

In the context of a growing focus on work-life balance, we offer a word of caution about part-time working. Increased availability and normalisation of part-time work is to be welcomed, but our case study research suggests it can be difficult to implement fairly unless appropriate systems are set in place and followed by managers: careful coordination of workloads is required to ensure part time workers are not, in practice, compelled to work over their contracted hours to complete allocated work.

Targeted initiatives providing training, mentoring, and networking opportunities to women should be expanded. These should focus on developing skills required for career progression, including the skills necessary to negotiate successfully for improvements to pay, working conditions, and entitlements (including parental pay and leave). Given the expansion of digital media, training that encourages and enables women to specialise in this area is particularly important for the future of gender equality in media industries.

Portrayals of gender within media content and the dynamics of gender inequality as they play out on digital platforms are areas that have proved particularly difficult to regulate effectively. There is an imperative in any democracy to uphold a plausible conception of freedom of expression, as well as a risk that introducing new rules will generate reactionary backlash to egalitarian ideals. Nonetheless, even where media content is found to be clearly discriminatory and prohibited by established regulations or codes of practice, sanctions are often limited. Media industry regulators and leaders should be informed of how their counterparts across Europe respond to infringements of established rules, considering how the most successful approaches might play out in their national context.

_____

REFERENCES

- Ayhan, N.P. (2010). 'Sex structure of occupations in the advertising industry: Where are the female ad practitioners?' *Observatorio (OBS*) Journal*, 4:3, 243-267

- Baumann, S. and de Laat, K. (2012). 'Socially defunct: A comparative analysis of the underrepresentation of older women in advertising' *Poetics* 40:6, 514-541

- Behm-Morawitz, E. and Mastro, D. (2009). 'The effects of the sexualization of female video game characters on gender stereotyping and female self-concept' *Sex Roles* 61:11-12, 808–823

- Broyles, S.J. and Grow, J.M. (2008). 'Creative Women in Advertising Agencies: Why So Few "Babes in Boyland"?' *Journal of Consumer Marketing* 25:1, 4-6

- Charles, C. (2016). 'Keeping Quiet: Investigating the Maintenance and Policing of Male-dominated Gaming Space'

- Cunningham, C.M. (2016). 'She Designs Therefore She Is?: Evolving Understandings of Video Game Design' *Examining the Evolution of Gaming and Its Impact on Social, Cultural, and Political Perspectives*

- Dill, K.E., Gentile, D., Richter, W., and Dill, J. (2005). *20 Top-Selling PC Video Games of 1999*

- Dill, K.E. and Thill, K.P. (2007). 'Video Game Characters and the Socialization of Gender Roles: Young People's Perceptions Mirror Sexist Media Depictions' *Sex Roles* 57: 11-12

- Edström, M. & Mølster, R. (2014). *Making Change- Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media*

- Eisend, M (2009). 'A Meta-Analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising' *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 38:4, 418–440

- Eisend, M., Plagemann, J., and Sollwedel, J. (2014). 'Gender Roles and Humor in Advertising' *Journal of Advertising* 43:3, 256-273

- Electronic Entertainment Design and Research (2010). *Review of Current Generation Games*

- European Advertising Standards Alliance (2015). *European Trends in Advertising Complaints, Copy Advice and Pre-Clearance*

- European Federation of Journalists and International Federation of Journalists (2012) *Survey Report on Women in Journalists' Unions in Europe*

- European Institute for Gender Equality (2012). *Advancing Gender Equality in Decision-Making in Media Organisations*

- European Institute for Gender Equality (2013). *Review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*

- Franks, S. (2013). *Women and Journalism.* London: Tauris and co.

- Gardner *et al* (1999). 'Development and Validation of Two New Scales for Assessment of Body-Image' *Perceptual and Motor Skills* 89:3

- Global Media Monitoring Project (2015). *GMMB Global Report*

- Gonzalez, A., Gomez, E., Orozco, R., and Jacobs, S. (2014). 'Entering the Boys' Club: An Analysis of Female Representation in Game Industry, Culture, and Design', *iConference 2014 Proceedings*, 950-953

- Grau, S. and Zotos, Y. (2016). 'Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research' *International Journal of Advertising* 35:5, 761-770

- HajiMohammadi, A. (2011). 'Critical Analysis of Women's Representation in TV Advertisements from a Cultural Studies Perspective', *International Journal of Women's Research* 1, 107-122

- Henry, N. and Powell, A. (2015). 'Beyond the 'sext': Technology-facilitated sexual violence and harassment against adult women.' *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology* 48:1, 104-118

- Hetsroni, A. (2012). *Advertising and Reality: A Global Study of Representation and Content*. Bloomsbury Academic

- International Game Developers Association (Weststar, J., and Legault, M-J.) (2015). *Developer Satisfaction Survey 2014 & 2015: Diversity in the Game Industry Report*

- Kafai, Y.B., Heeter, C., Denner, J., and Sun, J.Y. (2008). *Beyond Barbie and Mortal Kombat: New Perspectives on Gender and Gaming*. MIT Press

- Kostanski, M. and Gullone, E. (1999). 'Dieting and body image in the child's world: Conceptualization and behavior' *The Journal of Genetic Psychology* 160:4

- Lalani, N. and London, C. (2006). 'The Media: Agents of social exclusion for people with a mental illness?' *UK Health Watch 2006*

- Mallia, K.L. and Windels, K. (2011). 'Will changing media change the world? An exploratory investigation of the impact of digital advertising on opportunities for creative women' *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 11:2

- Martins, N., Williams, D.C., Ratan, R.A., and Harrison, K. (2011). 'Virtual muscularity: A content analysis of male video game characters' *Body Image* 8:1, 43-51

- Meijer, I.C. and Van Zoonen, L. (2002). 'Gender' in Briggs, A. and Cobley, P. eds., *The Media: An Introduction*. Essex: Pearson Education

- Miller, M.K. and Summers, A. (2007). 'Gender differences in video game characters' roles, appearances, and attire as portrayed in video game magazines' *Sex Roles* 57:9, 733–742

- Olvera, N., Hernández-Valero, M.A., Bustamante-Montes, L.P, Hernández, M., Halley-Castillo, E., Wilkinson, A.V., and Melissa L. Bondy, M.L. (2012). 'Higher risk for obesity among Mexican–American and Mexican immigrant children and adolescents than among peers in Mexico' *Journal of immigrant and minority health* 14:4

- Philo, G. (2007). 'Can discourse analysis successfully explain the content of media and journalistic practice?' *Journalism Studies* 8:2

- Pinkleton, B.E., Austin, E.W., Zhou, Y., Fitts Willoughby, J, and Reiser, M. (2012) 'Perceptions of news media, external efficacy, and public affairs apathy in political decision making and disaffection' *Journal of Health Communication* 17:4, 460-476

- Ross, K. (2009). *Gendered Media: Women, Men and Identity Politics.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

- Ross, K. and Nightingale, V. (2003). *Media and Audiences: New Perspectives*. Bell and Bain: Glasgow

- Sarkeesian, A. (2015). *Gender Breakdown of Games Showcased at E3 2015*

- Smith, S., Choueiti, M. and Pieper, K. (2017). 'Inequality in 900 Popular Films: Gender, Race/Ethnicity, LGBT, & Disability from 2007-2016' *Media Diversity and Social Change Initiative*

_____

- Tartaglia, S. and Rollero, C. (2015). 'Gender Stereotyping in Newspaper Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Study' *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 46: 8, 1103 - 1109

- The Geena Davis Institute and the Innovation Group (2017). *Gender Bias in Advertising: Research, Trends and New Visual Language*

- Tortajada-Giménez, I., Araüna-Baró, N., and Martínez-Martínez, I.J. (2013). 'Advertising Stereotypes and Gender Representation in Social Networking Sites' *Comunicar* 21:41, 177-186

- UN Women (2012). *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls*

- Wiles, J., Wiles, C., and Tjernlund, A. (1995). 'A comparison of gender role portrayals in magazine advertising: The Netherlands, Sweden and the USA' *European Journal of Marketing* 29:11, 35-49

DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT C
CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Role

Policy departments are research units that provide specialised advice
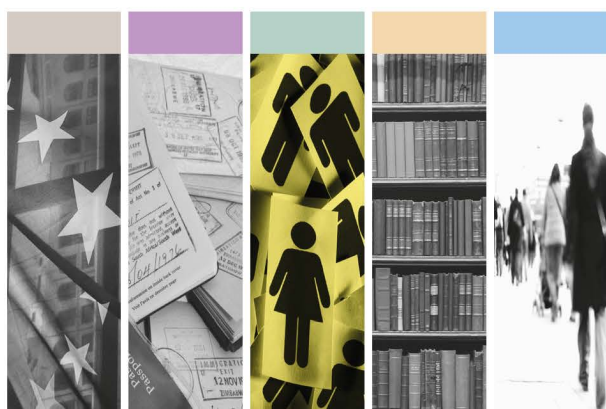to committees, inter-parliamentary delegations and other parliamentary bodies.

Policy Areas

- Constitutional Affairs
- Justice, Freedom and Security
- Gender Equality
- Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
- Petitions

Documents

Visit the European Parliament website:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

PHOTO CREDIT: iStock International Inc.

Publications Office