

Women's equal opportunity in Hungary

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For more information see the project website: www.hull.ac.uk/ewsi

Large numbers of women in Europe undertake Women's Studies training, but we have no systematic data on the impact of that training on their subsequent employment and quality of life. The project as an EC 5th Framework Project therefore seeks to analyse how Women's Studies training affects women's opportunities and interventions in the labour market. Since Women's Studies training differs greatly between countries, a further objective is to examine how these differences relate to individual women's subsequent employment achievements, including changes in the balance between family and work, and changing and managing relationships within the family. As women's employment opportunities vary greatly between partner countries we need to understand what women, once trained in Women's Studies, do given the structuring of their employment opportunities. Finally, we intend to analyse the impact Women's Studies training has on the changes women seek to generate in the workplace, and how it impacts on women's professional and other duties are undertaken in the workplace.

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Abstracts of the Articles

Harriet Silius: Women's Employment, Equal Opportunities and Women's Studies in Nine European Countries. A Summary

The noted Finnish feminist sociologist wrote a comparative summary of a European research on women's studies graduates in ten countries: Hungary, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Slovenia, Spain, and the United Kingdom. She takes a three-faceted approach, by giving an overview of the development of the women's labour market and its general trends; the different types of equality legislation and their institutionalisation; and the process of establishing and institutionalizing women's studies in higher education. She aims to show similarities and specificities by means of a contrastive method, and to show that the processes are very similar, although not identical, in each country. The usual phases for the insitutionalization of women's studies as a discipline, for example, are (at different times): activism, establishment, professionalisation, and integration or autonomy.

The comparison highlights the differences between northern countries (UK, the Netherlands and Finland), where women's studies are well-established, since these countries were pioneers in the studies' institutionalisation, and the other countries, where it still struggles for wider recognition. Equal-opportunities employment, however, does not follow this pattern, on account of the fact that, for historic reasons, former socialist countries have a

higher female employment rate, although the transition period has somewhat modified these figures. Equal opportunities as principle and as practice is an important part of the EU legislation and mode of thinking, but translates differently in different institutions in each country; its national, regional and local agencies were created at different times (from the 1960s in Finland to the mid-1990s in Spain, or to this very day in Hungary).

This study fulfils a long-felt want, since comparative studies of equal opportunities and Women's Studies are rare, even in the rich context of Western feminist gender studies publications.

Ágnes Hárs: The Effect of Women's Studies on Women's Situation at the Workplace

After presenting demographic and other data of the sample the article investigates how women's studies have a very limited impact on women's situation on the labour market, and reveals that these women did not expect their studies to bring about significant change. The author concludes that the completion of a course in Women's Studies had no effect on the workplace relationships or achievable income of these women. They did not expect to use their knowledge on the labour market.

Borbála Juhász: Young Hungarian Women and Women's Studies – an Interview Analysis

The same European comparative research consisted of two phases: a quantitative analysis based on the survey method, and a qualitative analysis based on interviews. Twenty semi-structured interviews were conducted with former Women's Studies students and ten interviews with present students. This study evaluates and analyses the Hungarian sample.

After a general introduction to the methodology and the sample, the following key issues are explored: the institutionalization of gender equality in a European perspective and in Hungary, the level and process of institutionalization of Women's Studies in Europe and in Hungary; the employment options of young female graduates in Hungary; the relationship of educational migration and employment options; and finally, the professionalization of Women's Studies graduates. The paper, which uses ample quotations from the interviews, reveals that the institutionalization of Women's Studies in Hungary is very low, it is basically at an activist or self-educational level. Western influence, educational migration, reading, and feminist NGOs play an important role in the education of Hungarian women's studies experts.

On the employment market, young women are aware of how much the world has changed since their mothers were young, and view their situation very pessimistically, especially when it comes to work-life balance. The professionalization of graduates follows the traditional course of Hungarian intellectuals (many leave their profession, others go on to academic careers abroad), but their case is doubly problematic, as there are still few jobs that call for Women's Studies, gender or equal opportunities expertise. These pioneer graduates, however, lead the way to recognition and create a space – so far only within their own respective disciplines (sociology, English literature, history, psychology, etc.) or in activism – which later on can create proper job opportunities and strengthen the process of institutionalization of Women's Studies.

Andrea Petó: »In Hungary You Simply Cannot Be Anything Else but a Feminist.« The Structure of Feminism and Collective Identity of Women's Studies Graduates in Hungary

This paper analyses the interviews Women's Studies graduates, as the first educated professionals in Hungary in the field of gender equality, regarding their views on »feminism«. Their opinion is important since Hungary will soon enter the European Union, and the »norm definers« of gender equality will become professionals. The experience of discrimination in the family, in education and in the employment context contributes to the formation of a feminist identity. The article identifies the three courses of feminism: idealist, realist and careerist.

Selected Bibliography on Feminism, Education, Women's Employment in Hungarian, compiled by Judit Rózsa