
GENDER EQUALITY AS A COMPONENT OF THE EQUALITY PRINCIPLE IN SOCIETY

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Abstract: *In modern international realities, one of the most relevant and at the same time controversial topics remains gender equality between men and women, which means the legal principle and legal status of a person in relations with state authorities, which excludes discrimination based on gender. Gender equality thus reflects political and social changes in society. The relevance of the study is conditioned by the fact that one of the conditions for EU membership is to bring national legislation in line with European law, including compliance with legal procedures in the field of gender equality. Gender policy in society is the activity of numerous bodies and institutions of state power, which is aimed at achieving equality between men and women in all spheres of life, namely in the social, economic, and political spheres. Respect for the equality of all citizens is a mandatory requirement for EU membership. The purpose of the study is to analyse the institutional and regulatory aspect of the development of gender policy in modern society and determine the main trends in the development of the European gender balance policy in the world. Methods: the gender approach allows studying the political component of society and define such basic concepts as "gender policy", and "gender equality". Based on these fundamental concepts, an analysis of the political participation of men and women was conducted, comparing their roles and opportunities within the framework of European and Ukrainian legislation. The materials of the study are of practical value for the Ukrainian state in connection with the country's chosen course towards European integration.*

Keywords: *human rights; women's rights; the principle of equality; gender equality; international equality standards*

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1. Introduction

The Constitution of Ukraine (1996), being the fundamental law, establishes a number of provisions aimed at defining the initial principles for the implementation of human rights in Ukraine. Undoubtedly, one of the human rights is the right for equal opportunities. This right is closely linked to the principle of equality and differentiation, as well as the prohibition of discrimination. It is through the right to equal opportunities that the above principle is implemented. Gender equality is an equal legal status of women and men and equal opportunities for its implementation, which allows people of both genders to participate equally in all spheres of society's life (Law of Ukraine..., 2005). Generally, the Constitution of Ukraine establishes the principle of equality in many components. Equality between women and men implies equal opportunities for participation in all spheres of society. Having established this principle, the Constitution of Ukraine politically and legally defined the gender strategy for the development of Ukrainian society.

The main areas of the state gender policy defined by the legislation are: "ratification of gender equality; preventing gender discrimination; applying affirmative action; preventing and countering gender-based violence, in particular all manifestations of violence against women; ensuring equal participation of women and men in making socially important decisions; ensuring equal opportunities for women and men in combining professional and family responsibilities; supporting the family, forming responsible motherhood and fatherhood; educating and promoting a culture of gender equality among the population, spreading educational activities in this area; protecting society from information aimed at gender discrimination, etc." – is noted in the law of Ukraine (Law of Ukraine..., 2005). Undoubtedly, one of the achievements of the 21st century is the legal consolidation of equality between men and women. Gender equality is linked to social justice, human rights, and democracy. Given this, gender balance in the European Union is considered an integral condition of modern democracy (Shekar, 2017). Most European countries are successful models of achieving gender equality.

The issue of gender equality is becoming relevant since ensuring equal rights for women and men is beneficial for business and economy. This equality also ensures well-being in the family and, in a broader context, in society; it builds mutual respect and strengthens the protection of human rights (Pushchilina, 2016). At the same time, discrimination against women increases poverty, spread of negative stereotypes, and creates violence. Analysis of the labour market from the perspective of gender equality showed the following: the distribution of employed persons by gender indicates that a significant dominance of women compared to men was observed among technical employees (83.2% versus 16.8%); trade and service workers (67.2% versus 32.8%); specialists (64.8% versus 35.2%); professionals (60.7% versus 39.3%). However, men significantly prevailed among skilled workers with tools (85.7% versus 14.3%); workers in the maintenance, operation, and control of technological equipment, assembly of equipment (84.0% versus 16.0%), and skilled workers in agriculture and forestry, fish farming and fishing (63.6% versus 36.4%) (Kotykova et al., 2018).

As is evident, the proclamation and normative consolidation at the highest level of this principle, unfortunately, does not guarantee its practical implementation in the life of

society. At the same time, for example, national legislation establishes the legal obligations of employers to provide a gender-friendly environment, namely: to create conditions that will allow women to combine work and family responsibilities; to guarantee equal salary for women and men of the same qualifications and under the same working conditions; to create safe working conditions for the life and health of employees; to take measures that would make sexual harassment impossible at work etc.

2. Materials and Methods

As the theoretical basis of the research, a feminist approach to the consideration of the system of international relations was chosen, according to which the analysis of events and processes is carried out taking into account the gender characteristics of the behaviour of legal entities. This approach, based on the adoption of gender equality, expands the field for scientific research, as well as offers a new perspective on international relations.

The dialectical method contributed to the characterisation of international legal regulation of issues related to the prevention of violence against women and domestic violence. On this basis, the author highlighted the main international documents adopted in this area at the universal and regional levels. The study presents the experience of the Council of Europe and its member states in combating gender discrimination. The best practices of a number of European states in preventing such discrimination are reflected. Proposals for improving the current legislation in this area are presented.

Equality between women and men is enshrined in many international legal acts and is recognised by many states at the constitutional level. Equality between women and men is a central element of gender equality since most people still consider themselves either men or women. The main purpose of consolidating this principle in international legal and constitutional acts is to strengthen the legal position of women in the most important areas of public life – in politics, electoral relations, labour relations, providing women with benefits and privileges that ensure the performance of her maternal function for the benefit of the whole society, within the framework of social statehood, which is often underestimated in studies on gender equality. The principle of gender equality requires the protection not only of women's rights, but also of other gender categories, in particular men since in its normative content it excludes discrimination against women to the same extent as it excludes discrimination against men. This is the reason why gender approach allowed studying the political component of society and define such basic concepts as "gender policy", and "gender equality". Based on these fundamental concepts, an analysis of the political participation of men and women was conducted, comparing their roles and opportunities within the framework of European and Ukrainian legislation.

Based on the analysis method, the author identifies the following principles applied as special principles of the institute for international protection of women's rights: the principle of equality and non-discrimination based on gender, the principle of special protection and the application of special measures for rights protection. The

fundamental principle is the principle of non-discrimination and equality between men and women. This principle is closely linked to the imperative norm of respect for human rights and freedoms for all, regardless of race, gender, language, and religion. The provision on equality and non-discrimination based on gender, enshrined in the UN Charter in a general form, subsequently began to develop in two areas: within the framework of the human rights doctrine (general norms) and within the framework of the doctrine on the protection of rights of certain social groups (special norms).

3. Results

Equality of labour rights and the prohibition of discrimination in the sphere of work based on gender are guaranteed by national legislation, in particular the Constitution of Ukraine (1996) (Articles 21, 24, 43), the Labour Code of Ukraine (1971) (Articles 2-1, 22), Law of Ukraine No. 5207-VI "On the Principles of Prevention and Counteracting Discrimination in Ukraine" (2012), etc. In addition, Law of Ukraine No. 2866-IV "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" (2005) came into force in Ukraine back in 2005. However, even after many years, there is still an unequal representation of women and men in the labour market as a whole and in certain industries and positions, unequal salary, and so on.

Moreover, the signing of the association agreement with the EU in 2015 requires bringing individual programmes at the national level in line with EU programme documents, such as Council Directive 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin (2000), Council Directive 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation (2000), Council Directive 2010/18/EU implementing the revised Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded (2010).

To improve the mechanism for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of society and implement European standards of equality, the Resolution of Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 273 of April 11, 2018 approved the state social programme for ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men for the period up to 2021 (Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers..., 2018).

Despite the fact that this practice is still developing, the number of cases resolved based on norms and precedents of international law is growing. The foundation of such law enforcement was Article 9 of the Constitution of Ukraine, according to Part 1 of which the existing international treaties, the consent to be bound by which was granted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, are part of the national legislation of Ukraine. Ukraine is a party to such international treaties:

- International Covenant on civil and political rights;
- European Convention for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

According to them, persons under the jurisdiction of Ukraine can apply to international human rights bodies for protection of their rights.

M. Baimuratov (2002) states: "The basic principles of public international law are guiding rules of Conduct for its subjects that arise as a result of Public Practice; enforceable principles of public international law. They represent the most common expression and practice of established behaviour and interaction of subjects of international law in the international arena within the framework of international relations". The fundamental principles of international law today are enshrined in such international acts as the United Nations Charter (1941), United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2625 (1970) concerning friendly relations and cooperation between states in accordance with the UN Charter of 24.10.1970, Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969), etc. The Supreme Court also notes that the principle of universal respect for Human Rights also belongs to the generally recognised principles of international law.

Notably, taking into account the generally recognised principles and norms of international law and in accordance with the Constitution of Ukraine, the principle of equal opportunities for men and women belongs to the basic principles of international law. For example, the right to equal opportunities in the field of work (in particular, men and women) is enshrined in the Convention concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities (No. 156) (1981) (adopted in Geneva on 23.06.1981 at the 67th Session of the International Labour Conference) (hereinafter referred to as Convention No. 156) (1981). This right is also enshrined in the Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation No. 111 (1958) (adopted in Geneva 25.06.1958 at the 42nd session of the International Labour Conference) (hereinafter referred to as Convention No. 111) (1958). These conventions are an international source for establishing the right to equal opportunities in the field of work. Of particular importance in the field of consolidating this right is also played by international acts that prescribe the general principle of equality. Such acts include: Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) (adopted by the UN General Assembly on 10.12.1948), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (p. 1 of Article 2), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (p. 2 of Article 2). The right to equal opportunities (equal approach to labour assessment and equal working conditions) is also enshrined in Article 14 of the CIS Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1995).

The purpose of the Convention is to eliminate discrimination against women, which is defined as follows: any distinction, exclusion, or restriction based on gender that is aimed at weakening their status, regardless of their marital status, based on gender equality, human rights and fundamental freedoms in political, economic, social, cultural, social, or any other field. The most important part of this provision is that it applies to both intentional discrimination and actions that have discriminatory consequences. Unlike other treaties, it provides for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, not simply the elimination of "gender discrimination". Thus, the Convention prohibits any activity that contributes to the preservation of women's inequality (UN Convention..., 1979).

In general, this refers to the fact that the introduction of a gender component required a review of the entire structure of society and the structural basis of inequality. Therefore, the focus was no longer on women and their position in society, but was shifted to the restructuring of institutions and the political and economic decision-making process in society. The well-known world conferences on women convened by the United Nations over the past quarter of a century have helped to bring the issue of gender equality to the attention of the world community. The decisions of the conferences brought together people from all over the world to achieve a number of common goals, developing an effective plan of action for the widespread advancement of women in all areas of public and private life.

Based on the above, as well as taking into account the fact that Ukraine is the legal successor of international treaties and agreements concluded by the USSR, it is appropriate to consider international guarantees that ensure the implementation of the principle of equal rights and freedoms of men and women, based on their diversity. The authors propose to divide the declared guarantees into two groups – regulatory and institutional.

Thus, within the first group, several subgroups of guarantees are distinguished, which are determined by the nature of the norms in which they are fixed. The first to mention are regulatory guarantees of a general nature. They relate to the main provisions connected to the principle of equal rights and freedoms of men and women. These exist both at the universal and regional levels. In particular, the UN Charter states "the determination of the member states of this organisation to affirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and value of the human person, in the equality of men and women", and one of the main purposes of the UN proclaims international cooperation in "promoting and developing respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms for all regardless of race, gender, language, and religion" (United Nations Charter, 1941). These provisions laid the foundations for further development of the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and were also specified in various international documents. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of human rights of 1948 also states that everyone must have all the rights and freedoms proclaimed in the Declaration, regardless of race, skin colour, gender, language, religion, political or other beliefs, national or social origin, property, birth or other status (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948). The above indicates that the document reflects only the principle of non-discrimination.

The next stage was the simultaneous adoption in 1966 of two covenants: on civil and political rights and on social, economic, and cultural rights. These documents, in addition to the provision enshrined in the Universal Declaration of human rights, contain articles prohibiting discrimination against people on any of the grounds, including gender. Both international covenants guaranteed equal political and civil rights for women and men, as well as equality in social, economic, and cultural rights. It should be noted that the authors associate the separation of the second subgroup of regulatory guarantees with the existence of so-called "feminist" provisions. Such provisions are addressed to women and emphasise the equality of their rights and freedoms in relation to the subjective rights and freedoms of men. The appearance of

these documents is due to the fact that, for long, women were in a lower position in terms of their rights and opportunities compared to men.

In the authors' opinion, within the framework of normative feminist guarantees, it is notably that based on the UN Charter in the 1950-1960s, conventions and recommendations on certain aspects of the status of women were developed. These include the following conventions: Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of Others (1949), Equal Remuneration Convention No 100 (1951), Maternity Protection Convention (Revised) No. 103 (1952), Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953) (proclaimed the existence of active and passive voting rights for women), Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1957) (for the first time internationally it was established that the dissolution of a marriage with a citizen of any foreign country, as well as the change of citizenship by the husband during marriage will not affect the citizenship of the wife), Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation No. 111 (1958), Convention against Discrimination in Education (1960); Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962), etc. In 1967, the UN adopted Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993). Article 2 of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women stipulates that the participating countries condemn all forms of discrimination against women and agree to start implementing a policy on the elimination of discrimination against women without delay and using all means, for which they undertake:

- a) to incorporate the principle of equality of men and women into their national constitutions and other laws, if it is not yet included therein, and to ensure the practical implementation of this principle by legislation and other appropriate measures;
- b) to adopt appropriate legislation and other measures, including necessary sanctions, if necessary, prohibiting any discrimination against women;
- c) to establish by law the protection of women's rights on an equal basis with men and to ensure, with the help of competent state justice bodies and other state institutions, the effective protection of women against all acts of discrimination;
- d) to refuse to participate in any act or practice of discrimination against women and ensure the work of public authorities and institutions in accordance with these obligations;
- e) to take all necessary measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organisation, or enterprise;
- f) to take all necessary measures, including legislative ones, to amend or repeal existing laws, regulations, customs, and practices that discriminate against women;
- g) to repeal all national norms secured by legal sanction that contain provisions on discrimination against women.

In 1979, based on this declaration, the UN Convention on the elimination of all Forms of discrimination against women (1979) was adopted. The provisions of the 1979 Convention required member states to incorporate the principle of equal rights between women and men into their national legal systems. At the same time, Article 4 of the Convention of 1979 created a regulatory framework for any state to take measures of so-called positive discrimination, which is not considered discrimination in the content of Article 1 of the convention. These are temporary special measures aimed at accelerating the establishment of de facto equality between men and women, which should be abolished when the goals of equality of opportunity and equal relations are achieved. Among such temporary measures, world experience includes, in particular, quotas for admission to study or work, when drawing up lists of candidates for deputies, tax preferences for entrepreneurs, employment of women with young children, and so on.

The 1979 UN Convention guarantees equal rights for women and men in political and public life. This refers to the right of persons of both genders to vote in all elections and be elected to all publicly elected bodies, to participate in the development and implementation of government policies and to hold public office, as well as to participate in the activities of non-governmental organisations (Articles 7 and 8). On October 6, 1999, the UN General Assembly approved the Optional Protocol to the Convention of 1979, which allows women and women's non-governmental organisations to file individual complaints about violations of the Convention.

Within this subgroup of guarantees, acts related to the protection of the status characteristics of women serving sentences in a situation of military operations should also be kept in mind (Uvarova, 2019). The outcome of the World Conference on human rights should be regarded as a logical conclusion to the development of the principle of gender equality in society. Paragraph 18 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993) proclaimed for the first time at the international level that "the human rights of women and girls are an integral part of universal human rights".

The World Conference on human rights also recommended that the UN General Assembly adopt a declaration on the elimination of violence against women and called on states to fight against this shameful phenomenon. In the same year, the Declaration on the elimination of violence against women was adopted. In this declaration, UN member states pledged to include in human rights reports submitted to UN bodies information on violence against women and measures taken to eradicate it, as well as an analysis of trends in this issue. In addition, the UN Human Rights Commission appointed a special rapporteur on violence against women (Duban & Suslova, 2017).

As the impact of globalisation processes on the economic, political, cultural, and social life of people around the world increases, the threat of human trafficking intensifies, especially with women and children (Goncharova, 2017). All sources that analyse the causes of this phenomenon indicate the globalisation of the economy, the demand for so-called private services, including sexual ones, in developed countries, the growing unemployment rate among women, as well as the intensive and almost uncontrolled movement of human capital through the Internet. Although the phenomenon of human trafficking itself has been known for a long time, modern globalisation has

given its new forms, which are now interpreted as a manifestation of slavery of the 21st century and a gross violation of human rights (Kovalchuk et al., 2017). Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (2000) is designed to prevent and stop this type of international crime and punish those responsible for its commission.

Regional conferences convened before UN World Conferences are important in shaping international norms concerning women. At these regional conferences, after discussing the situation of women in the world and assessing the changes that have taken place, a plan of action or recommendations for the future is usually adopted. These documents form the basis for the work of the World Conference and the forum of non-governmental organisations. In Europe, the role of such conferences is played by seminars that were held in Paris in 1979 and in Vienna in 1984. Their decisions are equal in importance to the recommendations of regional conferences.

The regional document, the European Convention on Human Rights (1950), focuses on civil and political rights. Nevertheless, the gradual intensification of globalisation processes is associated, among other things, with the movement to Europe of considerable masses of migrants from countries with different (non-European) cultural, religious customs and ideas about human rights, which has been called "reverse globalisation" in the specialised literature (Martsenyuk, 2015). This has forced the European legislator to provide the Council of Europe member states with the opportunity to expand the range of anti-discrimination measures. To solve this problem, Protocol No. 12 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (2000) was adopted on November 4, 2000, Article 1. The previously absent general prohibition of discrimination was established for the first time. The preamble to Protocol No. 12 also confirms that the principle of non-discrimination does not prevent member states from taking measures to ensure this process. Socio-economic and cultural rights in this area are also regulated by a separate document – European Social Charter (1961). It reproduces a number of provisions concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities No. 156 (1981) relating to the protection of the labour rights of employed women, the right for equal salary for equal work; the right for maternity leave; the right for breaks for feeding a child, etc. (Articles 4, 8).

Summing up the results of this stage of the study, it is necessary to focus on the fact that international regulatory guarantees for the implementation of the principle of equal rights and freedoms of men and women in society are divided into two groups: general regulatory guarantees and feminist guarantees. All guarantees of this variety are extended both at the universal and regional levels. Feminist guarantees define both individual status characteristics of women and their individual subjective rights (electoral, political, education, etc.).

As for national legislation, the Constitution of Ukraine guarantees equal human and civil rights and freedoms. This principle also finds its place in political activities, in particular in the activities of the Parliament (Zaika, 2016). However, the lack of implementation of women's rights in the political sphere should be recognised. Of

course, this situation will not change until quotas for the nomination of women candidates by political parties are established by law (relative to the total number of men and women in the party or its regional branch) (about the parliamentary hearings..., 2018). The consolidation of "women's" quotas by regulations can be considered as a temporary special measure to establish de facto equality between men and women. This method of ensuring gender equality works and is successfully implemented in many Scandinavian countries (Borchorst, 2008). However, such cases are not encouraging, since women's participation in current political public associations is very small. Notably, the successful gender equality policy of these countries is the result of important changes in the life of society, accompanied by the development of public consciousness and state policy on gender equality. The principle of equality is implemented through the creation of national mechanisms: gender equality legislation, special state institutions, and the appointment of gender equality officials.

There are six factors that have influenced the development of gender equality policy in modern Europe. In particular, the social democratic orientation of public policy and the establishment of a welfare state; women's access to work and professional development; women's representation in government; the establishment of an anti-discrimination legislative framework; the establishment of national mechanisms for gender equality; the development of the women's movement (Walter, 2003). It should be noted that as early as 2010, the European Institute for gender equality was established with the purpose of "promoting and strengthening gender equality, including gender mainstreaming in all EU strategies and which is based on national policies, as well as with the purpose of combating gender discrimination and raising awareness among EU citizens about gender equality" (EIGE, 2021). At the same time, one of the considerable functions of the European Institute is the calculation of gender indicators and the construction of the gender equality index (Orloff, 1996).

It is important to note that the EU's activities are aimed at improving the constitutional and legal system in order to achieve gender balance. Currently, the EU is characterised by a tendency to expand the gender agenda related to overcoming discrimination against women not only in European countries, but also around the world. The EU also seeks to broaden gender law by including the following social groups: girls (under the majority age), as well as female refugees and migrants.

4. Discussion

Discussions on how to achieve an optimal balance of representation of men and women in government bodies continue to this day. Proponents of various forms of quotas believe that support in promoting women in politics is necessary during the transition period (Head, 2017). Opponents believe that women are not restricted in their rights, so they should conduct political struggle on a general basis since certain benefits for women promote their passivity, dull the sense of competition, and therefore cannot be considered democratic (Duban & Suslova, 2017). Women's access to representative (legislative) authorities depends on factors related to the organisation and functioning of the political power itself, the procedure and selection criteria used by political parties in the electoral process, and so on.

As scientists note, today women all over the world come up with their own ideas, plans, programmes, trying to change their situation. Thanks to their active actions, numerous international instruments have been adopted, changes have been made to the national legislation of many states, and structures have been created to address women's problems. Despite this, national legislation on women's rights is still poorly developed in many countries today, and in some states it is not developed at all. In this regard, women have the right, referring to UN and ILO conventions, declarations, and other international documents, to apply to courts at all levels to protect their rights (Tickner & Sjoberg, 2011). The current legislation of Ukraine on this issue is quite voluminous, yet it is only a collection of legal acts, and its real implementation is provided by various mechanisms and institutions, in particular, the UN Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, the Council of Europe, and many others. It is these bodies that one can apply to in case of violation of the legislation on this issue (Onishchenko, 2009). The constant active work of international intergovernmental organisations (especially the UN) contributes to a deeper understanding of the problems that women face around the world and contributes to their effective solution (Voitenko & Yushko, 2019). For this purpose, many European countries are creating institutions that are designed to protect gender equality. For example, back in 1999, the Office of the Ombudsman for gender equality was established in Lithuania (Kostyuchenko, 2019).

The Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2010), in particular section 188(3), states that "in the labour classification system for determining remuneration, the same criteria should apply equally to both men and women, and the system should be designed to avoid any discrimination based on gender". In addition, section 6 of the act of equal opportunities for women and men prescribes sanctions, according to which violation of equal rights of women and men is subject to punishment under the administrative code, namely administrative fines from 35 to 1,100 euros. It is the Ombudsman who can investigate the cases of administrative violations and decide on the application of administrative sanctions if this violates the "law on equal rights and opportunities for women and men". The salary gap correlates with the employment of predominantly women or predominantly men, in particular in positions of a certain level, in various sectors of the economy, that is, with the horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the labour market (Ambrozaitienė & Bankietienė, 2016).

As is evident, the development of ideas about "male" and "female" behaviour, different gender roles, activities, and emotional characteristics is a long-term process that occurs under the influence of many factors. The most important role in this process is played by the features of historical and socio-economic development, cultural and religious traditions, value orientations, as well as the state and political structure (Agenor & Canuto, 2015). Under the influence of these circumstances, gender stereotypes were formed in many countries, which, in turn, caused discrimination in various spheres of life. This was reflected in the adoption of programmes and decisions that met the interests of only one part of the population (Human Development Report, 2016). As a result, there was a gender imbalance that negatively affected the economic and socio-political development of states.

Thus, gender equality is an integral part of democratic transformation, successful economic development, and building a stable global legal order. Understanding the successes achieved at the international and national levels and existing obstacles is, in the authors' opinion, of considerable scientific and practical interest.

5. Conclusions

The principle of gender equality implies that all members of society are placed in the same conditions. This principle is an integral characteristic of justified social development. The subjects of the principle of equality are men and women. In this context, equality of rights and freedoms is an indicator of the state of equality in the whole society, reflecting specific relationships between both genders. At the same time, the principle of gender equality of men and women combines the main characteristics of equality in general and reflects its essence and content. The essence of the principle of gender equality is that women and men are independent (free) and equal subjects, including having their own autonomy of will in the event of their participation in social connections and relations, the fulfillment of their rights and legitimate interests.

Now it must be recognised that the problem of ensuring gender equality still exists. The legal framework of the "women's issue" in Ukraine is outdated, does not meet modern conditions and requires fundamental changes. It is advisable, first of all, to pay attention to the following problematic aspects when developing legislative acts and measures for their implementation: in the field of personal safety and prevention of violence; in increasing the competitiveness of women in the labour market; on occupational safety at work and improvement of its conditions, etc. In addition, to improve the situation of women, it is necessary to understand the causes of women's disadvantaged situation, eliminate these causes or mitigate their consequences, and not understanding what is bad in their current situation. It should also be borne in mind that it is not possible to solve the problem only by improving the current legislation. Serious measures are required to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement practices, strengthen control and supervision, and effectively apply legal liability measures to human rights violators. Given the above, in the authors' opinion, it is necessary to conduct serious work in this area (both at the objective – by introducing really effective technologies for ensuring equality, and at the subjective level – by carrying out a systematic, purposeful impact on public consciousness within the framework of educational work in educational organisations, public associations, etc.).

Authorship

All the authors contributed equally to the study. K.M. and O.K. led investigation and data curation. R.Sh. was responsible for overall project supervision.

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