



WP4: The Alliance as an Engine for Human Capital

D4.6 Gendered Innovation Training and Mentoring Programme

MODULE 2

GENDER INEQUALITY in the context of FAMILY and SOCIETY

Script

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PART 1

Introduction

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In the decade of 1970's radical feminism emerged in the United States and other European countries as a counter-discourse, on the one hand towards socialist feminism, which attributes women's subordination to global capitalism and envisions their liberation through a change in their rights and duties on the level of production, and on the other towards libertarian feminism which stands for the equality of men and women within the context of social structure.

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Radical feminism arose from women's recognition that a socialist revolution would not necessarily lead to women's emancipation. Former members of the New Left saw gender, rather than class, as the main source of their oppression. They attributed women's subordinate position worldwide to gender differentiation, which assigns women specific characteristics and roles as wives and mothers.

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Radical feminism posits that a system of patriarchy is responsible for women's position as an inferior class based on their sex. In 1980, Mary Anne Warren wrote, "It is not just capitalism, but the patriarchal family—which precedes capitalism historically and can survive its demise—that accounts for the oppression and inferior social status of women. [Radical feminists] therefore call not only for the end of capitalism and the legal, educational, and occupational inequality of sexes but for the elimination of the biological family, at least as an economic and childbearing institution; they also demand the elimination of the sexual taboos which operate to preserve the biological family".

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Radical feminists argued that "masculinity" and "femininity" are socially constructed rather than biologically determined and called for the abolition of gender as a meaningful category. Their revolutionary vision encompassed all of human society, positing that women's emancipation could only occur through the deconstruction of gender, the denial of differentiation between maleness and femaleness, and the disregard of male and female characteristics present at birth. Radical feminism ultimately envisioned the emancipation of all people, regardless of gender, sexuality, class, or race.

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Shulamith Firestone, a major proponent of radical feminism, suggested that technology could positively impact women's lives by enabling women to disconnect from their maternal bodies;

she envisioned an artificial womb to free women from the biological necessity of a woman's body for embryonic development and birth.

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Although radical feminism's influence has declined, the uneven impact of family life on women and men remains a significant issue. It is widely acknowledged that technologies are not neutral; their use and impact are influenced by the social, political, and historical contexts in which they emerge.

Families

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The word "family" is often not clearly defined but described as a general term for domestic intimate relations. It is perceived as an unchangeable structure of private life across all societies. However, the history of family structures reveals a variety of types, reflecting the ways societies are structured. These types include nuclear families, single-parent families, extended families, childless families, stepfamilies, grandparent families, and same-sex families.

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Family structures have changed significantly in recent decades due to economic and cultural transformations. In the EU Member States, family structures vary, reflecting cultural and normative differences. For example, in 2019, only 29% of all households in the EU-27 had children: 20% were composed of couples with children, single adults with children accounted for 4%, and other types of households with children made up 5%.

Care

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Despite recent changes in families and households, gender inequality remains persistent in the context of family, closely related to the gendered division of household tasks.

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"Women comprise 67% of the paid global health and care workforce. In addition to this paid work, it has been estimated that women perform an estimated 76% of all unpaid care activities."

Source: [Gender inequalities at the root of global crisis in health and care work](#) (WHO)

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"79% of women and only 34% of men do cooking and housework every day for one hour or more."

Source: [Gender Equality Index 2019: Work-life balance](#) (EIGE)

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"Women typically spend disproportionately more time on unpaid care work than men... Gender patterns in time devoted to unpaid care work cut across geographic regions, household income and societies. Time use data offers an important snapshot of how gender roles shape the division of labour within a household and also put the spotlight on differences between both sexes.

The day-to-day lives of women around the world share one important characteristic: unpaid care work is seen as a female responsibility. Across all regions of the world, women spend on average between three and six hours on unpaid care activities, while men spend between half an hour and two hours... Hence gender inequalities in unpaid care work are observed all around the world, even if there are regional variations... Overall, women spend more time on unpaid care activities than men representing on average two to ten times that of men's."

Source: [Unpaid Care Work: The missing link in the analysis of gender gaps in labour outcomes](#) (OECD)

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Recent research also finds that an increasingly large share of the gap between men and women in the labour markets come from "the differential impact of parenthood on men and women: the so called "child penalty", borne disproportionately by mothers."

Source: [Parenthood is a key driver of gender inequality around the world](#) (LSE)

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Acknowledging the importance of gender equality in care, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective on 12 October 2023. Pursuant to this resolution, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is preparing a report on "the human rights of women, persons with disabilities, children and older persons as caregivers, as well as receivers of care and support, and for their self-care from a gender equality and human rights perspective, with the objective of evaluating experiences, good practices and main challenges regarding the effective recognition of the rights of caregivers and those receiving care and support."

Source: [Call for Input: Human Rights Council resolution 54/6 on the centrality of care and support from a human rights perspective](#) (UN)

PART 2

Violence

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Family violence encompasses any threatening, coercive, dominating, or abusive behaviour between people in a family, domestic, or intimate relationship, causing fear in the person experiencing it. While anyone can experience family violence, data shows it is predominantly perpetrated by men against women and children in intimate partner relationships and immediate family contexts.

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The main driver of family violence against women is gender inequality, including unequal power relations, rigid gender roles, norms, hierarchies, and the lower status ascribed to women in society. Promoting and achieving gender equality is crucial for preventing violence against women.

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In May 2021, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, was signed. This Convention requires the criminalisation of various forms of violence against women and the imposition of relevant sanctions. The Istanbul Convention is a landmark treaty aimed at ending violence against women. It was the first legally binding framework, establishing clear criteria for punishing perpetrators and positive measures to prevent gender-based violence and protect victims. Turkey permanently withdrew from the Convention in July 2021 and has not demonstrated progress. Most of the remaining 44 signatory countries have, including changes in national laws regarding the legal definition of rape to keep pace with the Convention's goals.

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However, despite significant legal and institutional changes, much remains to be done at the levels of practices, attitudes, and perceptions.

Sexuality

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The 2023 Rainbow Europe Map of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA)-Europe shows that the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people are still not equally respected in the European Union. This gap also affects children of LGBTI parents. While many countries (mostly Western) have changed their laws and regulations over the past two decades to recognise LGBTI people and their families, many legal gaps to fill.

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"Currently 33 of the 50 countries and the 8 dependent territories in Europe recognise some type of same-sex union, among them most members of the European Union(24/27). Nearly 43% of the European population lives in jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is legal." Restrictions regarding marriage or civil union can impact the children of LGBTIQ+ parents: they may be denied tax credits, inheritance rights, healthcare access, and social security entitlements such as parental leave on equal footing with peers in different-sex families.

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Another unresolved area is the recognition of legal familial ties between children and their non-biological LGBTIQ+ parents. Same-sex couples can legally apply for joint adoption in 22 countries.

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However, regulations between countries vary widely, and rainbow families often face legal disparities, especially when parents are from different countries or move to another Member State. Particularly in these cases, children of LGBTIQ+ parents are often in legal limbo, even when involved countries grant many LGBTIQ+ rights.

Assisted reproductive technologies (ART)

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In recent decades, major technological advances have led to the development of new reproductive technologies which pose a potential challenge to the social order of reproduction in terms of gender and to the prevailing parenting model. These technologies are far from gender-neutral, being both a response to and an instigator of new demands regarding parenthood.

Initially, discussions on ART suggested that such technologies could free women from reproductive oppression (Franklin 2001, Cannell 1990). However, it soon became clear that the ef-

fects of new reproductive technologies in general and of ART specifically are neither inherently positive nor negative, and they are not independent of their political and cultural contexts. The focus shifted to analysing gender relations shaped by new reproductive technologies within specific social and historical contexts.

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Some of the topics that emerged are related to: the effects of assisted reproduction drugs on women; the medicalisation of the female body and the exploitation of oocytes and cryo-preserved genetic material by doctors for experimental purposes; the physical and emotional impacts of amniocentesis and ultrasound; and men's discourse around these issues versus women's silence (Martin 1987; Franklin 1991, 1993, 1995; Rapp 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991; Ginsburg & Rapp 1991). Thus, the highly political nature of reproduction and related research has been acknowledged as well as the relationship of technologies to the context in which they emerge.

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Gender inequality in the context of ART is closely related to wider social, political, and economic systems. ART utilisation is linked to the Gender Inequality Index (GII); greater gender equality (a lower GII value) is associated with a 59% increase in ART use. Key GII components influencing ART utilisation include gross national income per capita, maternal mortality ratio, and female parliamentary representation.

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Conversely, gender differences in ART can lead to the exploitation of women's bodies as surrogate mothers and/or oocyte donors.

Conclusion

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Gender inequality in the family stems from cultural perceptions, economic differences, political decisions, and unequal policies. Radical feminists in the 1970s, when considering whether "women are globally subordinated," attributed gender inequality to women's roles as wives, mothers, and family carers. Due to the unequal allocation of parental roles and care duties, gender inequality persists in many family forms and in many parts of the world. However, gender inequality extends to realms beyond parenting and housework.

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Gender difference in domestic violence is an example of persisting gender inequalities related to cultural understandings of masculinity and femininity. Furthermore, gender inequality in the context of family is related to sexuality and the uneven distribution of rights regarding marriage, parenting, and co-parenting. Finally, although technological advances in the areas of

housework and reproduction, initially seen as promising for gender equality, are now recognised as context-dependent and strongly related to social, political, and economic issues. Achieving gender equality in the family requires greater awareness of the cultural and political factors that impose gender difference and gender discrimination.

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UN Women, the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women, recently proposed five ways to drive change within the family.

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"On the International Day of Families, we're highlighting the ways that families and communities can drive change and promote equality by upholding feminist values in and around family units. From celebrating positive masculinity and sharing care work to having open and honest discussions about existing inequalities and gender-based violence, here are five ways family units can help build a more equal future for everyone."

Source: [Gender equality starts at home: Five ways to drive change within the family](#) (UN Women)

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- Share the care
"From cooking and cleaning, to fetching water and firewood or taking care of children and the elderly, women carry out at least three times more unpaid household and care work than men. As a result, thousands of women and girls miss out on equal opportunities to attend school, engage in paid work, or enjoy leisure time."
- Support women's economic empowerment
"Women's economic empowerment sets a direct path towards gender equality, poverty eradication and inclusive economic growth. Women make enormous contributions to economies, whether in businesses, on farms, as entrepreneurs or employees. But for many women, domestic inequalities and a lack of support at home holds them back from reaching their full potential."
- Celebrate positive masculinity
"Traditional notions of masculinity often discourage men from engaging in care and domestic work, as well as from communicating their emotions in open, healthy ways. Challenging such notions—key to fostering equality and preventing violence—starts at home."
- Empower the next generation
"Around the world, young people are pushing for a better, more equitable world. Support and encouragement at home can help put them on the path to success. When we empower and educate young advocates about women's rights, we are ensuring a better future for us all."

- End harmful practices
Practices that are related to specific conceptualisations of women's bodies as sexual and reproductive *"deprive women and girls of their agency as well as their physical well-being."*

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Gender inequality in the family is not just a women's issue; it has broad impact and requires a collective effort to address cultural and political factors that perpetuate gender discrimination