

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MEN IN LABOUR MARKET AND ECONOMIC GROWTH IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

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### **Abstract**

At present the gender equality and its policy is an important element and a priority in labour market of European Union (EU) and European Employment Strategy (EES). The right to equality opportunities in the labour market to all women and men is one of the most fundamental principles of a modern society in European Union (EU), including Lithuania labour market.

Different theoretical approaches to equality in the society are based on culture, political, social values and economic development in the country. The paper analyzes the gap between women and men in labour market. The gap in one field of life (labour market) is related with other fields (education, services) and might have an impact on them. The effects of these gaps may be passed from one generation to the next.

The article discusses the relationships between labour market and economical growth and later checks how the theory proved itself in the case of Lithuania. Economical growth is one of the main concerns of nowadays economical science, because the economical growth of any country increases the welfare of its citizens.

The aim of the research is to determine and characterize women and men equality in Lithuania labour market and to show its relationships with economical growth in the context of European integration.

Research methods applied are the comparative analysis of women and men equality in labour market in European Union and Lithuania based on the synthesis of official European Community publications, scientific literature and systematic data analysis as well as identification of gender equality dimensions using questionnaire in Lithuania.

### **Keywords:**

**Equal opportunities, labour force, labour market, economic growth, European Union.**

### **Introduction**

The problem of women and men equality in science literature is analyzed by researchers from various countries and of different professions - sociologists, economists, psychologists etc. The professionals of each field focus on the aspects closest to their science field. In years the questions about equality between women and men in different spheres of life and activities have been raised by women researchers as well as men researchers. One of the first ones, who raised the problem of the difference of the salary between women and men was J. Robinson (1930).

In the second half of the 1970, the analysis of women and men equality increased. Analysis of gender aspect was introduced into economic development

and globalization problems by E.Boserup (1970); facilitation of the participation of women in the labour market was analyzed by B. Majnomi D'Intignano (2000).

Sainsbury, Diane (1996) characterized the social rights of women and men; the gender questions in the welfare economic country was researched by J.Bussemaker, van K. Kersbergen (1996), M. Daly, K.Rake (2003), D.Sainsbury (2003); C.Fagan, P.Urwin and K.Melling analyzed the influence of age and gender to social disjuncture and the long term unemployment questions (the activity level in the labour market, poverty risk); the labour problems of men and women were analyzed by Al Lee (2007). The first analysis of economical discrimination was

commenced by G.S.Becker (USA Chicago university), in 1992, for these researches he was awarded with Nobel's premium of economics (Becker, 1997, 38-58). He paid a lot of attention to "gender gap" in earnings in labour market, for investments in human capital as important influential elements to economic development (Becker, 1990, 12-37). The relevance of the problem of the gender equality also shows the fact, that English economist A.K.Sen (Trinity College Cambridge, United Kingdom) was awardee with Nobel's premium in 1998. He (Sen, 2003, 178-216) analyzed a key role of women employment in economic development, and stated that (2003, 198) interpersonal comparisons can be used as a basis of inequality analysis between sexes.

The gender equality is relevant to Lithuania as well, but the literature on this subject in Lithuania has grown very fast only in recent years. Various aspects are being analyzed, for example, D.Tureikytė (1999), A.A.Mitrikas (2001) are analyzing subjective evaluation of the status of women in society; I.Trinkūnienė and J.Trinkūnas (1999) analyze the patriarchal manifestation in traditions; J.Reingardienė is ventilating the problems of the strategy of equal opportunities and the theoretical discourse of violence against a woman (2004 A; 2004 B); R.Brazienė (2005), R.Brazienė and I.Luobikienė (2002) analyze the aspects of gender inequality and professional segregation; O.G. Rakauskienė (2000; 2002; 2005) is focused on the women's contribution while creating gross domestic product and gender asymmetry in Lithuanian macroeconomics; A.Purvanekas, G.Purvanekienė (2001; 2006), D.Tureikytė (1999) – the status of the women in Lithuanian society; V.Kanopienė (1998; 1999) analyzes discrimination and opportunities of men and women in the labour market; A.Zdanevičius (2004) researches the trajectories of women carrier and successful carrier strategies.

*The purpose of the article* – to explore equal opportunities of men and women in labour market and their relation to economical growth under the conditions of integration into EU.

*The tasks of the research:* to analyze the essence of equal opportunities, its sorts and assumptions; to characterize the relation of women and men equal opportunities in labour market with economical growth; to summarize the results of exploratory questionnaire research.

*The methods of the research.* The theoretical analysis of the problem is based on the study of science publications of foreign and Lithuanian researchers, the research of empirical statistical data of Lithuania and the 27 EU countries, their comparative analysis, synthesis of economical indicators. To comprehensively explore the attitude towards the

realization of men and women equal opportunities the exploratory research was accomplished.

### **The essence and principles of equal rights under the conditions of market economy**

Some important events for gender equality policy have happened in 2007: the 50th anniversary of EU gender equality policy and the European Year of Equal opportunities for all. The basis for the European Employment Strategy (EES) and for women and men equal integration into labour market (gender mainstreaming) were put by Amsterdam Treaty in 2000 are important for enlarged European Union of 27 member states, including Lithuania.

The aspects of the state / equality (gender) of men and women equal opportunities in Lithuania are expanding more and more. One of the first researches under this question accomplished in Lithuania was dedicated to the evaluation of the concordance of the country's joining the EU according to the political criteria of Copenhagen (the supervision of the process of joining the EU, 2002). The practice shows that stereotypes of roles of women and men in labour market are still vital. For the real accomplishment of equal rights opportunities, it is necessary to understand the effect of inequality/discrimination on the development of economics and to take actions to solve current problems.

The conception of gender in the article is used based on the opinion that the differences between women and men in the society are created more by psychological, social and cultural differences than by physiology (Marie-Marthe Gervais le Garff, 1998, 50; Hutton, 1997, 28-29; Barancovaitė, 2006). The equality of genders defines the principle, under which different behavior, aims and needs of men and women are evaluated equally, and do not cause different outcomes, which strengthen inequality (Equal ..., 2004). The equality of men and women – is the principle of equal rights and same behavior with them. With the gender equality policy it is aimed for influence, equal distinction to fully-fledged participation in economics, social life and decision making processes (Purvanekienė G, 2001).

The equal opportunity policy of men and women is systematical point of view, created to pay attention to the status of women and men, the priorities and needs in all fields of politics and practice, aiming to stimulate activities which are based on equal opportunities of men and women (Equal, definition dictionary, 2007).

It is stated in the science literature (Jankauskaitė, Mackevičiūtė, 2005, 35) that the equality of men and women covers four main aspects: equal division of authority, power and influence; equal opportunities to

be financially independent; division of responsibility for family and children; freedom from violence because of the person's gender. All these fields are correlating: the equality of genders in one field is impossible if equal opportunities in other field are not created. The realization of equal opportunities is destined by:

- The policy of the country;
- Economical situation;
- Legal base and its realization;
- The education system and its real functioning;
- Stereotypes vital in the society; various traditions and other.

The gender problems arising in labour market are related to the society's stereotypes, women discrimination etc. it is obvious that there is need for exhaustive research and evaluation of labour market changes.

The creation of markets economical relationships has approved that the change of social-economical processes has influenced women status in labour market. Accomplished researches show that modern creation of fully-fledged market is contradictory, because it covers (Rima evskaja, 2007):

*Firstly*, the reduction of social programs which involve women;

*Secondly*, in the era of modern informational and computer technologies it raises higher requirements for the labour force;

*Thirdly*, because the society is "ageing" the responsibility over reproductive society problem enlarges. These problems in bigger part relate to women's responsibility realized in family (women activity in general meaning), which is growing. Because of this reason it is allowed to state, that productive activity of women is reducing.

### **Occupational policy and its influence on the formation of equal opportunities of the genders in labour market**

Equal opportunities of men and women in labour market in microeconomical, macroeconomical, regional, global levels from the time approach influences the development of economy and is important not only for one country, but also for groups of countries. Today countries of growing economy in Europe face many new factors of economical development, which modify the development of economy. One of such factors is labour market and poorly analyzed its aspect – equal opportunities of genders. For the first time, in 1997,

in the multinational conference of European Union Amsterdam the "purpose of full occupation" was raised and unemployment was acknowledged as general European problem. The European Council in 1997 affirmed the Occupational guideline package, which is constituted of 19 guidelines grouped into 4 "stanchions" (EU employment and social policy, 2001, 6):

- *Employment* – the purpose that the labour market is open for everybody; it covers two main strategy moments: preventive effect of struggle with unemployment and stimulation of activeness (active labour market policy);
- *Enterprise and creation of work places* – purpose, the creation of business based on innovations, retention of old working places and creation of new ones, creation of tax system more advantageous for occupation;
- *Adjustment/adaptation* – purpose: under the conditions of globalization and growing scientific and technological advance, to enforce the modernization of work organization, to create for the workers conditions of faster adaptation in the working places;
- *Equal opportunities* – purpose: to ensure the equality of genders when employing, applying with work related warranties etc.

Till the beginning of the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of XX century the economy of the EU countries was developing quite rapidly, and the unemployment rate was small. Beginning from the 9<sup>th</sup> decade of the XX century, EU is suffering from enlarged unemployment, which is bigger than unemployment in Japan and USA. One of the reasons, why the occupational rate in EU is smaller than in USA is that less women are in EU labour market. The European Council in Lisbon's strategy has set the quantitative purpose of the level of general occupation: till the year 2010 to reach that 70 percent of employable EU residents works. When Lithuania became EU member, it assumed responsibilities to accomplish the Lisbon's purposes and the requirements of the Occupational guidelines – to enlarge the occupation and to enhance its quality.

The purposes of Lisbon's occupation in ES-25 and Lithuania are shown in the table No. 1. the statistical data of occupancy shows that in Lithuania the occupational level of women is bigger than the level of ES-25 countries, but it is smaller than the occupational level of men in Lithuania, and much less than occupational level of men in ES-25.

**Table 1. The purposes of Lisbon's occupational strategy**

Occupancy rate, %	Year 2003		Year 2005		Year 2010	
	EU-25	Lithuania	EU-25	Lithuania	EU-25	Lithuania
General	62.9	60.9	67.0	63.5	70.0	68.0
Of women	55.1	58.4	57.0	59.3	60.0	61.0
55-64 year old residents	40.2	44.5	-	46.2	50.0	48.0

Source: Lithuania's convergence program, 2005, 51.

Lithuania has harmonized national and EU legal acts and realizes them in many fields. At the moment the main tasks are equal gender, work force distribution in the sectors of economics and economy, security of equal dynamics of occupied number and practical realization of legal standards. In many countries, in Lithuania also, the laws are advanced, but the equality *de jure* and *de facto* is not the same (Valevičienė, 2003, 11-12).

The realization of the strategy of integration of the gender aspect in EU uncovers complex social

and economical context and national differences and achievement, while struggling with the discrimination of genders. In separate EU countries and their groups' main characteristics of men and women labour market (economical activity, occupational indicators, and education) are defined in the table No. 2. The statistical data shows that the rates of men and women economical occupation and occupational indicators are high, the education level is conditionally high, and bigger part of them work in full occupancy sector.

**Table 2. Men and women labour market main characteristics in separate EU countries and their groups**

Group of countries	Characteristics
<i>Northern and many new EU countries</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Men and women rates of economical activity and occupational indexes are high.</li> <li>2. The education level is conditionally high, and bigger part of men and women work in full occupancy sector.</li> <li>3. Main problem of gender equality in the occupational field of these countries – big professional and vertical gender segregation in labour.</li> </ol>
----- <i>Northern countries</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The active integration of women into labour market was stimulated by the attention of country to the public services of care of children and older people.</li> <li>2. The country plays an important role and aims to facilitate the compatibility of professional and family roles, develops infrastructure of care of these social layers.</li> </ol>
<i>Continental European countries</i> (Holland, Germany, Austria, Luxemburg) and <i>United Kingdom</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The part of women in full occupation field is smaller than men, and they dominate in partial occupation sector.</li> <li>2. Dominates the man – family supplier and his wife's, who works only part of the day and takes care of the home contract type.</li> <li>3. Woman's decision to work only a part of the day not always is voluntary. Public services of children and older people care in these countries are not so fully developed as in Northern countries, and the primal responsibility for housework is woman's responsibility.</li> </ol>
<i>Southern European Countries</i> (Greece, Italy, Spain, France)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Partial occupation is less distributed than in other countries.</li> <li>2. Women occupation and economical activity rate is less than of men.</li> <li>3. Most of the working women work all day.</li> <li>4. The family is the pillar of welfare system, and primal care source. Gender work distribution into public/manly and private/womanly spheres is more obvious than in other countries.</li> <li>4. Gender contract in these countries is in the transitional period: transforms from still dominant man-family supplier, wife-housekeeper to dual family supplier model.</li> </ol>

Source: made according to Reingardienė, 2004, 17-20.

Lithuania with inner policy means is trying to realize three main purposes: 1) to reach full occupancy, 2) enlarge work productivity and efficiency and 3) ensure social compaction and its coverage. But the fact that not many women work various levels managing works in economy activity and politics, and the fact that their salary is smaller than men's, although the

education level of women is higher, shows that women abilities are not fully used and gender inequality is apparent. In the program of occupation enlargement under EU of the Republic of Lithuania, there are set 5 occupation enlargement directions:

- 1) development of work place system;
- 2) enhancement of support of occupation;

- 3) enhancement of abilities to adjust to the market;
- 4) enlargement of integrality of openness;
- 5) occupational policy.

Fourth occupation enlargement direction shows the importance of gender equal opportunities in labour market.

Enlargement of equal opportunities in labour market means creation of labour market available for everybody, the security of men and women equal opportunities in labour market, while enhancing the Law of women and men equality (1998) and following the right charter of main EU rights, which forbid any discrimination.

### Economical growth: gender aspect

Income differences that are determined by the individual differences of properties, and which are not related with his (hers) abilities (Samuelson, Nordhaus, 2000, 233-234), as unequal relationships with the equal ones, when evaluating personal workers properties not related to his working activity (Pirs, 1997,133) are evaluated as discrimination in labour market. These properties are gender, nationality, religion etc.

In science literature (Samuelson, Nordhaus, 2000, 232; Samuelson, 1994, 351) it is indicated that women for the same work get 20% - 30% less than men, even if they have same education and same duties.

Gender gap in earnings in Lithuanian labour market in 2002 were quite eminent – the earnings of women constituted 81,4% of men's earnings (the supervision of the process of joining the EU, 2002, 1) in the mean time this gap has tendency to reduce (see table No. 3). Important indicators of equality of genders are laid in the table No. 3:

- gender pay gap (as difference between men's and women's average gross hourly earnings for paid employees at work 15 hours) exists in

every shown EU country. Pay gap is smaller in the low paid countries, but the bigger share of women is paid at close to the minimum earnings. In Lithuania this difference is bigger than in Slovenia or Ireland, but smaller than in Estonia and little bigger than in Latvia;

- absolute gap in employment rates as difference between men's and women's employment rates show enough high employment rate in Lithuania, when comparing to gender gap of employment rates with Slovenia, Latvia, EU-27, or Ireland;
- absolute gender gap of unemployment rates as difference between women's and men's (aged 15 years and over) unemployment rates are shown in the Table 3. The data shows, that the employment rate for women is still lower than men, despite some narrowing tendencies. The data characterizes quite good situation in the labour market of Lithuania in the aspect of genders, when comparing to other EU country members. Absolute gender gap in unemployment rates was getting smaller in the period from 2001 till 2006, from -5.5 proc. to -0.4 proc.;
- life-long learning as percentage of the population aged 25-64 participating in education and training over the four weeks prior to the survey (2006) is an important assumption for ensuring better positions in labour market. The results of the survey show that Lithuanian men and women are leastwise tended to life-long learning. When comparing the life-long learning of women and men in Lithuania, it is necessary to note that women are more active participants in life-long learning, respectively 6.6 percent of women and 2.9 percent of men.

**Table 3. Gender pay gap, Absolute gap in employment rates, Absolute gender gap in unemployment rates and Life-long learning, in percent**

Country	Pay gap			Absolute gap in employment rates		Absolute gender gap in unemployment rates		Life-long learning	
	2001	2003	2006	2001	2006	2001	2006	Women	Men
								2006, in percent	
EU-15	16	15	<sup>2</sup> 15	16.6	<sup>2</sup> 14.4	1.9	<sup>2</sup> 1.4	<sup>2</sup> 10.4	<sup>2</sup> 8.8
Estonia	24	24	25	7.5	5.2	1.5	-0.7	8.6	4.2
Ireland	17	14	9	22.0	18.0	-0.3	-0.4	8.9	6.1
Latvia	16	16	16	5.2	8.0	-3	-1	9.3	4.1
<b>Lithuania</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2.5</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>-5.5</b>	<b>-0.4</b>	<b>6.6</b>	<b>2.9</b>
Slovenia	11	<sup>1</sup> 9	8	9.5	8.0	0.7	1.2	16.3	13.8

<sup>1</sup> 2002 data

<sup>2</sup> EU-27 data

Source: Eurostat Yearbook, 2004, 145; European Commission, 2005, 50: Report on equity between women and men – 2008, 2008, 15, 17, 29.

The data laid in the table allows us to assume that the contribution of women into the formation of the volume of gross domestic product (GDP) is smaller than of men. The theoretical work model of men and women in the picture No. 1, allows us to better understand the effect of smaller earnings on the volume of GDP. In the laid model it is assumed that:

- 1) 50 percent of men and 50 percent of women are participating in labour market;

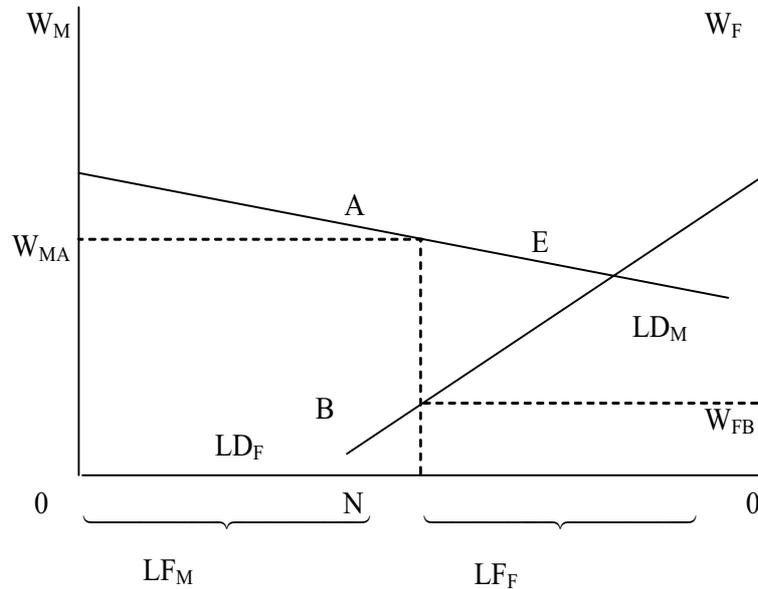


Fig. 1. The interplay of women and men labour market

The practice shows that in the two first activity fields (agriculture and industry) mainly work men; the women work is dominant in the service field. This shows unequal situation of men (M) and women (F) in the labour market. The number of the ones occupied in labour market is directly connected to the volume of product created in the country. The men work demand is shown by straight line  $LD_M$ , located in the left ordinate axis of the coordinate system, and the women work demand –  $LD_F$  shown by the straight line in the right ordinate axis of the coordinate system. The segment AE of the straight line of men work demand  $LD_M$  shows occupancy and the volume of created product in agriculture and industry; the segment BE of the women work demand straight line  $LD_F$  shows occupancy and the volume of created product in service sector. The women work demand straight line  $LD_F$  is sharper; it is two times more sloping than of men. This is so because men control two work activities from three and because of this the working of circulation law in women's labour market. Factual work pay men get of  $W_{MA}$  level, and women of  $W_{FB}$ . It is obvious that women work pay is smaller than of men, women's situation in the labour market is worse or discriminative. So, we can assume that in the service sector the employers get bigger profit, than the employers of other two activity fields.

- 6) There are three main activity fields: agriculture, industry and services.

Work demand in these three fields is defined by the demand of negative gradient for labour right  $LD$ . It is obvious that the demand for work can be identically satisfied by women and men of analogous qualification and abilities.

The equality of work salary in the labour market between working women and men is shown in the point E, which shows the balance between both genders in economical activity. In such case, one third of the women working in manufacture as well as one third of men would receive equal work earnings.

The triangle ABE created on the fig.1, shows not received work pay of the women, or losses of women earnings, when compared to the earnings of the man. In the dimension of all society, the triangle ABE defines GDP losses. It is obvious that the men do not adopt the earnings difference between men and women.

The weakening and exclusion of superstitions and prejudice can not secure equal opportunities and earnings of men and women in labour market. The experience of the world shows that earnings for one person are as big, as big is the investment into the human capital. When the employers consciously expect that the woman won't work for a long time in the selected working place (may get married, have children etc.) they are not interested in professional preparation of such worker.

Appropriate professional preparation would enlarge the work productivity and earnings. On the other hand, not everyone seeks for bigger earnings; some seek for spiritual and not material values.

Economical analysis shows that when reducing the earning gap between women's and men's earnings and realizing their equal opportunities in labour market, we can win not only in the level of separate individual – a working woman (microeconomic) but also in the level of all society (macroeconomic).

Such position would ensure a more effective use of economical resources, and enlarge the economical commonwealth of the country.

According to science literature analysis, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> picture you will see the logical effect on GDP of liquidation of the earning gap of women. As practice shows, fuller usage of the intellectual and economical potential of both genders for Northern countries has secured highest index of life quality in the world (Jakimavičienė, 2005, 8).

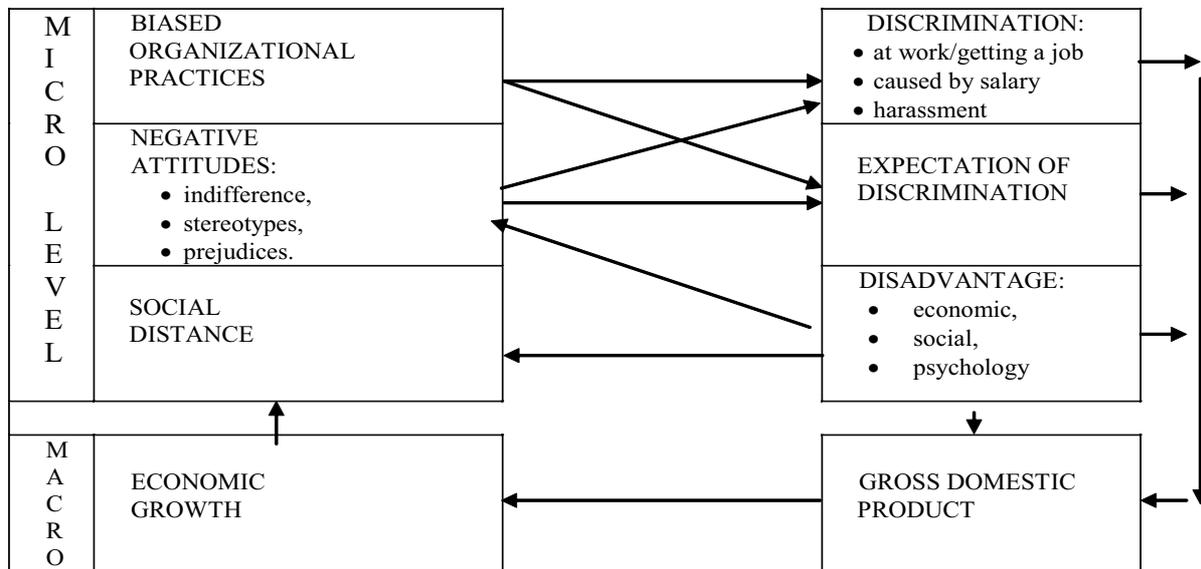


Fig. 2. Gender pay gap and economic growth

Services like agriculture, where women are dominant in today's economy are very important. Here work two thirds of the workers. Who make about 60-70% of GDP. This is the most dynamically developing economy activity in today's economics in developed countries of the world; it plays an important role for Lithuania's economics as well.

**Research methodology and results**

Aiming to learn the students' attitude towards the situation of equal opportunities of men and women in labour market in Lithuania, a questionnaire was made, and the exploratory research was accomplished in January-February of 2008. The survey attended day and evening study form students of second course of Kaunas Technology University Economy and Management faculties (N=82).

The demographic characteristics of the students: questioned day time students: 32 women and 12 men; questioned evening time students: 18 women and 20 men. The youngest respondent was 19 years old, oldest – 44 years old. Overall there were 61 percent of women respondents and 39 percent of men.

The analysis of the results of research showed that 81.3 percent of day time women students think that men have more opportunities in labour market. To this statement agreed 75 percent of day time men

students. 66.7% of evening time women students and 45.0% of men agreed to that statement. We can assume that the changes are happening, which have been influenced by education, science and technology advance, this is why the evaluations of unemployed youth and employed people are different.

Aiming to indicate the respondents' attitude towards current stereotypes in Lithuanian labour market it was asked if there are only womanly or only manly professions. The questionnaire based research showed that the respondents do not accept professional stereotypes. Only 12.2% of daytime women students agreed with the stereotype, that some professions (for example teacher, nurse, salesman etc.) are suitable only for women. 25.0% of day time men students agreed with this stereotype. Evening form students agreed more to the opinion that the stereotypes exist, accordingly: 33.0% of women and 40.0% of men. The research shows that men of both study forms agree more with the stereotypes which exist in our society than women.

Statistical data shows that women earn less than men, but the respondents who took part in the research not always agree with this opinion. 19.0% of day time women students and 33.3% of men think that it is natural that women earn less. The opinion over this

question of evening time students distributed in this way: 38.9% of women and 40.0% of men.

While analyzing the attitude that women, if only they want, can reach the same in the work carrier as men, evening form women students expressed pessimism. 84.4% of women and 83.3 of men of day time studies accepted the idea that women can reach the same in the working carrier. 50.0% of women and 85.0 percent of men of the evening study form students supported this opinion.

While analyzing family supply, it was asked who supplies the family more: man, woman, both, hard to tell. 33.4% percent of day study women and 66.7% of men think that man supplies the family financially. In the evening study form 22.2% of women and 45.0% of men respondents thought that men supply the family. Evening study form respondents indicated that women also bring in a meaningful contribution into family's budget.

The results of empirical exploratory research show that respondents, the students of Kaunas Technology University, who participated in the research think that the opportunities of men in labour market are better than the opportunities of women, that women earn less than men, but according to the opinion of the respondents different genders have fairly good opportunities to make carrier. While analyzing the results of the research, it was noticed that the opinions of the day and evening program students, and this may have be the result of the fact that evening time students already have working experience and evaluate the opportunities of different genders in a more realistic manner.

### Conclusions

In the occupation enlargement program of the Republic of Lithuania, which conforms the strategy of European occupation, important attention is paid to non-discriminative policy, i.e. for security and development of women and men equal rights in labour market, and creation of labour market available to everyone.

Mostly segregated women discrimination types in labour market show with that, that women work in less prestige work places, their salary for the same work is smaller. In this process, according to the researchers, still the negative influence may be made by vital stereotypes in the country.

In today's Lithuania, work pay split between genders is reducing, but still, not all intellectual and professional potential of the women is used. Continuing to reduce the split between women and men pay, and while realizing their equal opportunities in labour market, we can win not only in the level of separate

individual – a working woman (microeconomic) but also in the level of all society (macroeconomic).

The results of empirical exploratory research accomplished in 2008, show that respondents, the students of Kaunas Technology University, who participated in the research think that the opportunities of men in labour market are better than the opportunities of women, that women earn less than men, but according to the opinion of the respondents different genders have fairly good opportunities to make carrier. While analyzing the results of the research, it was noticed that the opinions of the day and evening program students, and this may have be the result of the fact that evening time students already have working experience and evaluate the opportunities of different genders in a more realistic manner.

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