

## GENDER AS A NEW EUROPEAN MODEL OF SOCIOCULTURAL REALITY

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**Abstract:** The purpose of the academic paper lies in developing a transnational gender legal model for gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the EU, as well as predicting the consequences of gender equality policy in the EU for social-economic, educational and demographic space through the cultural traditions and values of European nations. It has been established that a wide range of recent investigations' results documenting changes indicate that the gender approach in politics, economics and the social sphere in the context of the cultural paradigm is becoming more and more productive. It has been determined that the gender-legal model for establishing gender equality, developed by the authors and based on cultural knowledge, ensures the development of gender-sensitive strategies in the EU society various life activities.

**Keywords:** gender equality, society, man; woman, discrimination, model, sociocultural space, gender mainstreaming, cultural environment, influence.

### 1 Introduction

Gender equality is one of the defining human rights, and the validity of all international legal instruments in this area applies equally to men and women. Human rights are a precondition for enriching cultural diversity in conditions of equality, human dignity and non-discrimination. Despite this, all over the world, the rights and freedoms of people are often violated due to their sexual identity and gender identity. Gender discrimination is not only common in developing countries, but also exists to a large extent in states with developed democracies, including the EU countries. This significantly limits the opportunities for women and girls to participate fully in the social-economic, cultural and political life of the society. The biggest restrictions and obstacles for women exist in participation in political and state-building activities, in the demographic and educational environment, in the field of employment.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, recognized that women and girls are particularly vulnerable to human rights violations. The Convention defines discrimination against women and sets out what steps should be taken to combat this phenomenon by national governments. This agreement was signed by all European countries, as well as by 159 other countries.

Gender equality is not only a goal in itself, but also a necessary condition for achieving all other goals of international and European development, including the Millennium Development Goals (Quoted in Kabeer and Natali (2013). In the world, in general, and in the European Union, in particular, there is a growing consensus towards expanding the perception of gender equality as a social goal, the achievement of which will lead to a wider effect, including, above all, positive trends in the economy.

The former European Union Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Vivian Reding has made it clear as follows, "We can achieve our economic and employment goals only by making full use of all our human resources, both in the labour market and in all other areas. This is an integral part of our economic recovery plan" (European Commission, 2012).

The cultural sphere of life of the European community at its present stage of development affects gender equality and relations in many areas of decision-making of central and regional authorities, the economy and the social sphere. At the same time, the cultural environment is able to generate job creation, increase the income level of national economies and

exports, profit, promote social integration, cultural diversity and human capital development.

Developing gender equality policy instruments in the EU, taking into account cultural specificities, helps to understand what civil society requires and to conduct work based on this knowledge. Awareness of cultural realities helps to identify regional features of gender issues in the context of legal, political and economic relations in the society; find the most effective ways to combat ambiguous cultural traditions and strengthen positive traditions. The cultural environment contributes to developing the structure of coexisting people of different nationalities and faiths, affecting the understanding of the processes of their development.

In general, gender equality has been included in the 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030 (UN. Transforming our world, 2015). Along with this, the United Nations, focusing on the education of girls and women, has chosen gender equality as part of the Millennium Development Goals (Abu-Ghaida, Klasen, 2004). These basic instruments provide for the achievement of social-economic and environmental well-being not only in developing countries but also in all other countries. It is impossible to accomplish such vital tasks without achieving gender equality.

### 2 Literature Review

Scholars working in various scientific fields (economics, culturology, sociology and psychology) have devoted significant efforts to studying gender equality, highlighting its consequences for the society, in general, and for women and men, in particular, as well as relevant measures towards promoting equality of women's rights).

Theoretical generalization and systematization of 27 main topics of gender equality research, measuring their relevance from a semantic point of view and the interrelationships between them; determining the importance, role and place of each topic in the general gender discourse has been carried out in the investigation of Belingheri et al. (2021).

Significant efforts towards disclosing the phenomenon of gender equality, its role, impact and consequences for the European community were the basis for the exploration of Reingardienė (2004) and Goldscheider, Bernhardt, Lappegård (2015).

The definition of the principle of equality in the sociocultural space is observed in the scientific works of P. Frazier, J. Hunt; the authors have assessed the extent to which the implementation of the norms of the current legislation and human behaviour solve the gender issue in the EU (Frazier, & Hunt, 1998).

Sen A. in his studies, considered the social consequences of the influence of the cultural environment on the solution of gender-sensitive issues in the social-economic space (Sen, 2004).

Moore, Chishimba, Wilson (2019) have studied standard econometric models in order to understand the relative role of culture in gender mainstreaming.

The role of girls' and women's education and its impact on human capital development was highlighted in the scientific work of S. Dumais (2002).

The colossal influence of a woman on the development of all spheres of the society, her influence on the formation of the future generation has been studied by Kang, Park, Park (2020).

Gender issues in the professional activities of women - managers and their appointment to the highest positions in European companies were considered by Smith, Parrotta (2018), Smith, Smith, Verner (2016). Furthermore, their impact on

management, productivity and financial performance were studied by Adams et al. (2009) and Campbell, Mínguez-Vera (2008).

The substantiated position of Blikhar, Zharovska and Lychenko (2019) lies in the fact that the level of education and professionalism of women cannot be the basis for discrimination against women, which currently exists in the economic and political spheres.

In his research, Szydło M. has come to conclusion that “there is a large gap between the share of working and well-educated women and women on the boards of directors of the EU companies, and this gap should be significantly reduced because there is a right to equality between women and men” (Szydło, 2015).

Masselot (2007), explores gender equality in the context of several components, namely: rights and freedoms, economic efficiency and democratic legitimacy.

Smith and Bettio (2008) consider the “economic perspective of gender”, and emphasize the impact of gender equality on economic growth, explore the levels of rights of men and women as a step forward in the civilization development. This study provides examples of increasing women’s contribution to the economic growth of the EU countries, their role in establishing a sustainable system of social reproduction.

Klasen (1999) assesses the impact of gender inequality in education and employment on long-term economic growth, based on the theoretical model of growth and macroeconomic regression proposed by Barro (1991).

Studies of the impact of cuts in public expenditures caused by the economic crisis, related to the reduction of wages and jobs, on the activities of industries with a traditionally high number of women employed (social services, education) were reviewed by Perrons (2015).

Kapotas P. has studied the issues of gender quotas in Greek politics in accordance with EU law; the author argues that “gender quotas in politics are left outside the scope of European legal norms, and elective position is not considered employment” (Kapotas, 2009).

Ford R. studied judicial practice in the field of discrimination and violation of the rights and freedoms of women in employment (Ford, 2014).

Taking into consideration the significant contribution of all the above-mentioned scholars towards studying the current state, problems and prospects for the implementation of the gender mainstreaming concept in all life spheres of the EU member states, it should be noted that the presented literature review provides a narrow overview of these issues; it is limited to topics of gender stereotypes in politics, educational gender inequality, gender issues in the creative environment, gender pay gaps, women’s leadership and women’s presence in leadership positions. Herewith, a comprehensive assessment of the consequences of gender prioritization for the social-economic space of the EU countries in the context of the cultural environment is insufficiently covered.

### 3 Aims

The purpose of the research lies in developing a transnational gender legal model for gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the European Union, as well as predicting the consequences of gender equality policy in the EU for social-economic, educational and demographic space through the cultural traditions and values of European nations.

### 4 Materials and Methods

The methodological basis of the research is formed by the fundamental provisions of the policy of ensuring equality

between men and women, theories of sociocultural development, economic security, theoretical and applied findings of scientists studying the processes of development of the European society in the context of gender mainstreaming. The research was conducted using general scientific and special methods of scientific knowledge, namely: scientific abstraction, analysis, synthesis of induction, deduction – in order to formulate the theoretical and methodological basis of the research; historical method - for periodization of stages of origin and development of the gender prioritization concept; graphic – in order to visually display individual provisions of the research; abstract-logical – for theoretical generalization and formation of conclusions.

The authors have analyzed both institutional and individual barriers towards achieving gender equality in the sociocultural space. The information base of the research includes international and European regulations, newsletters of the European Institute for Gender Equality and the UN Statistics Division, statistics from Eurostat and the Council of Europe, periodicals, scientific sources and Internet resources.

The methodology used in the present research takes into account the European trends and the impact of the cultural component on the development of rights and freedoms, social-economic growth in the European Union.

### 5 Results

Despite the fact that the fight against gender inequality has been going on for decades, at the present stage of the development of the European Union, it also remains a common phenomenon, which is deeply rooted in many cultures of Western Europe. Creating conditions for the introduction of the gender component in the EU public policy at all levels was carried out in several stages. As a result, a legal framework was formed that made it possible to implement gender prioritization in all EU countries. The fundamental documents were as follows:

1. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights as of 1948).
2. Mexican Declaration on the Equality of Women and their Contribution to Development and Peace (1975).
3. Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994).
4. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995).
5. Millennium Declaration (A / 55/2) (the United Nations, 2000).
6. Women in 2000: equality between men and women, development and peace in the XXI century: Special session of the UN General Assembly.
7. Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001).
8. UN General Assembly Resolution 70/1 as of September 25, 2015 “Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” (Resolution 70/1, 2015).
9. Assessment of the Beijing Platform for Action +20 and opportunities for gender equality and women’s empowerment on the post-2015 development agenda (Beijing Platform for Action 20+, 2015).
10. Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy (2018-2023) (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, 2017).
11. EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action 2021-2025 (GAP III, 2020).

The concept of these documents lies in the fact that all girls and women have the right to a life free from violence; for education; equal pay with men; culturally sensitive and stimulating social change, starting at the regional level. That is, the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment in all spheres of life is declared. Along with this, the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in External Action 2021-2025 provides for the protection of achievements in the field of gender equality since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Although the principles of the Beijing Declaration on Women's Rights have not been fully implemented in the European Union, and European culture is still dominated by men, the trends observed nowadays indicate an intensification of efforts towards eliminating existing disparities.

The authors believe that the introduction of a transnational legal gender model aimed at expanding the sociocultural and economic rights and freedoms of girls and women will contribute to strengthening such changes. Such model is proposed by us in Figure 1.

This model should indispensably take into account the cultural environment, which will provide a more detailed consideration of gender-sensitive issues in the context of integration of state-building, political, economic, social and other aspects, in order to assess and gain a comprehensive understanding of the problems and prospects for introducing instruments for the implementation of gender equality in human rights.

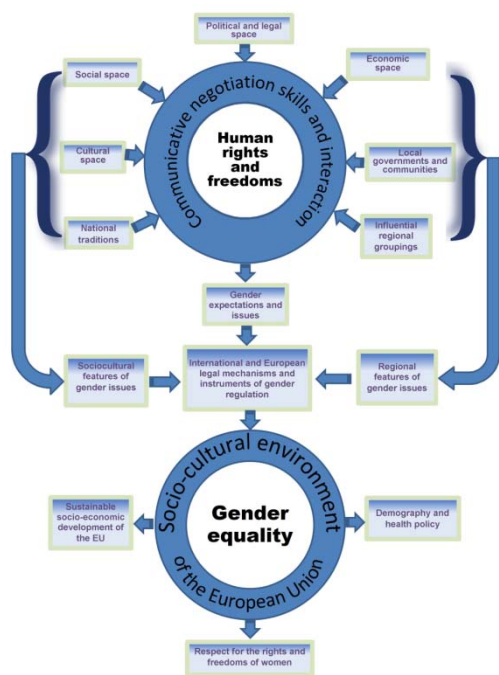


Figure 1. Transnational legal gender model for establishing gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the European Union

Source: Author's development

The concept of the proposed transnational gender law model lies in stating that strategic activities in the context of sustainable development are inextricably linked to culture, society, gender relations and human rights and have economic implications. The gender legal model allows:

- Conducting investigations and assessment of the legal, political, social and economic realities, as well as the readiness of the European community to change, taking into account national and cultural traditions that have developed in the EU;
- understanding the policies pursued by local governments of territorial communities with the support of civil society influence groups;
- studying the cultural traditions and values existing in each individual EU country and identifying those that support the empowerment of women;
- developing communication, negotiation and conflict resolution skills;
- forming a sense of involvement in implementing human rights and gender equality.

The application of this model and its tools will contribute to the development of deep knowledge in the field of society and culture, necessary to address gender-sensitive issues.

By the way, it should be noted that in case of insufficient attention to cultural issues, regional customs and traditions, making a positive contribution to sustainable development planning, may be lost out of sight.

The application of the tools of the proposed gender legal model will make it possible to avoid generalizations and take into account that men and women are not homogeneous groups, that there is stratification by gender, race, class and ethnicity, age, wealth, etc., which can change the processes and results of sustainable development.

We have revealed that in order to maintain the existing positive trends in solving the issues of establishing gender equality in Western Europe, the EU government pays priority attention to the issues of women's employment and their education; social protection and poverty reduction among them; conducting activities in the field of reproductive health and health saving rights; investing in infrastructure, transport services, water and sanitation, which will improve, inter alia, the status of rural women and reduce the shortage of time for them.

The most common violations of women's rights and freedoms in the EU in the field of employment include as follows: denial of employment to pregnant women and women with young children, lower wages, restrictions on certain activities and the exercise of labour rights in certain professions. Such discrimination is based mainly on patriarchal stereotypes and national cultural traditions, which are particularly prevalent in rural areas.

Unpaid household labour is one of the most important factors influencing the decline in women's participation in the official labour market. Figure 2 reflects that women in the EU have a significantly higher share of unpaid household labour and childcare than men.

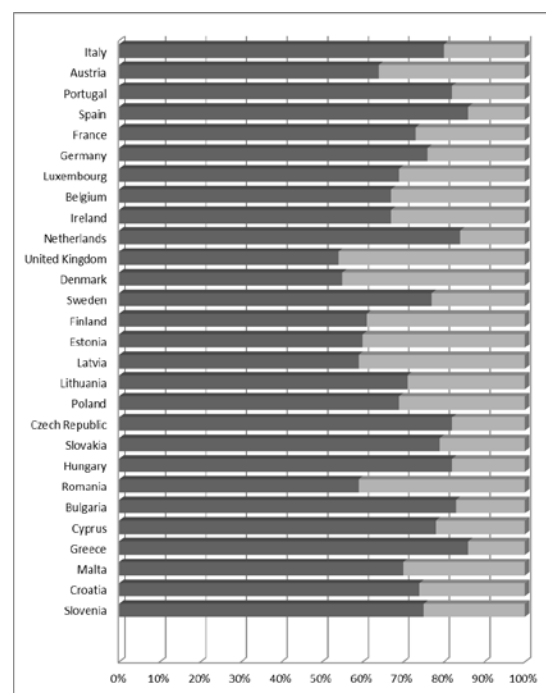


Figure 2. Share of unpaid household labour by women living in EU countries in their total active time in 2020

Source: Developed by the authors based on Eurostat data.

The data represented in Figure 3 show that women spend 2,3 times more time a week on unpaid work than men. This leads to

an increase in the length of the working day and limits choices in areas such as paid work, education and social activities.

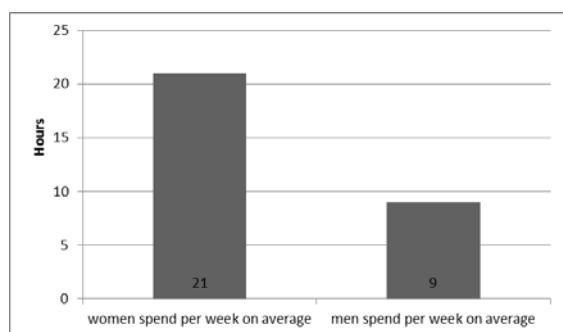


Figure 3. Number of hours per week spent by women and men living in EU countries on household labour in 2020

Source: Developed by the authors based on Eurostat data.

In addition, during the COVID-19 quarantine crisis, there has been an increase in the burden on women, from unpaid household labour and childcare to incidents of gender-based violence. And the level of job loss by women in 2020 was 1,8 times higher than among men.

Development and gender equality policies and strategies in the EU propose measures to address this imbalance, namely: expanding childcare services while making existing ones more accessible; encouraging men and boys to participate in unpaid household labour and childcare; conducting information campaigns and trainings on changing the attitude of men to the division of responsibilities in the family.

All EU countries have achieved gender parity at primary and secondary school level, while the indicators of achieving gender equality at the level of higher education in different countries vary. A significant barrier to girls pursuing a competitive speciality, such as IT and engineering, is encouraging them from an early age to study the humanities, forasmuch as they are perceived to be more successful in terms of existing dominant gender stereotypes and cultural traditions.

Reducing poverty among women and social protection is one of the key priorities of the EU gender policy. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased women's poverty by 9,1% in 2020-2021. Different approaches and levels of social protection development can be traced in each EU member state, each of which develops its own social protection policies and programs. However, the general priorities include as follows: the establishment of benefits and targeted social assistance to unemployed pregnant women and elderly women; social cash payments for women with children; employment guarantees for women of working age; community service programs and pensions for older women; connection to the system of compulsory health insurance, in particular in the field of reproductive health.

In the EU, principal emphasis is given to women's health, expanding access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health, which is essential for ensuring gender equality and the full and meaningful participation of women in the life of the European community. Priority activities of health services are as follows: development and monitoring of new national clinical protocols and standards; providing assistance to victims of gender-based violence and their families through the establishment of family protection and support centres; creating an active information and counselling system and providing services in the field of family planning.

The implementation of reproductive and health rights activities is of particular importance, requiring approaches that take into account the cultural specificities of each EU country. The EU Gender Health Policy invites men to fully participate in the fight for gender equality in reproductive health and population development, to show masculine responsibility in preventing HIV and sexually transmitted infections.

In many cultures, masculinity is associated with a sense of invulnerability; consequently, apply for antiretroviral therapy much later than women, being in a long period of disease with a more compromised immune system.

Understanding and assessing how cultural values, beliefs and traditions influence people's behaviour is significant in the field of power relations between men and women, and affects reproductive health and health saving rights. By the way, it is a key factor in developing effective health programs.

The authors believe that the use of the proposed transnational legal gender model of gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the European Union and its instruments in the medium and long term will not only lead to the formation of a new optimal mechanism of modern gender-oriented relations in Western European society, but will also improve the demographic situation and eliminate gender stereotypes in education.

For instance, the level of employment in the EU will increase significantly if women have equal opportunities for STEM education and in the labour market. This will increase employment in the EU by 0,5 – 0,8 percentage points in 2030, and by 2,1 – 3,5 percentage points in 2050 (Figure 4).

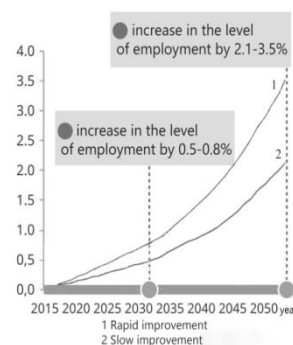


Figure 4. The long-term impact of improving gender equality on employment in the EU

Source: Developed by the authors using data of the European Institute for Gender Equality

Significant improvement in equality between men and women will reach almost 80% employment rate in the EU by 2050. In case more women join the labour market or receive training in low-skilled areas with good employment prospects, they are more likely to find work and make a significant contribution to the economic development of their country and all EU member states. This pace of development will help increase incomes and reduce the pay gap between women and men.

Improving gender equality will create an additional 10,5 million jobs in 2050, benefiting both women and men. Almost 70% of these jobs will be occupied by women, and the level of involvement of women and men will be equal in the long-term perspective.

New workplaces for women are extremely important forasmuch as they can help reduce poverty - this is one of the main priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. According to a recent study conducted by the European Institute for Gender Equality, women tend to suffer more from poverty than men because of the worst prospects for employment and wages (EIGE 2020).

By 2050, increasing gender equality will lead to the growth in EU GDP per capita to 6,1-9,6%, amounting to 1,95-3,15 billion EUR (Figure 5). The increase can be observed in 2030, when GDP per capita will grow to 2%. This growth will mainly be the result of women's increased employment and presence in more productive jobs.

Taking into consideration the above data, it can be concluded that gender equality policy has a strong impact on GDP. Consequently, gender equality is a very significant policy measure towards promoting economic growth. The effect will be greater for those countries where the principle of gender equality is maximally implemented. Therefore, the expected effects of increasing equality between men and women can differ significantly between the EU member states. For some member states, GDP growth will be around 4%, while for others it will exceed 9%.

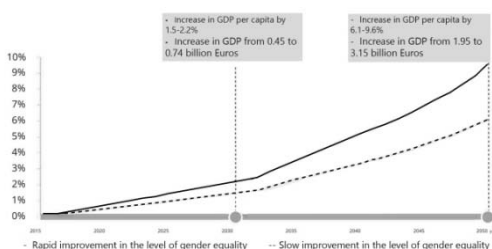


Figure 5. The result of long-term impact of improving gender equality on GDP per capita in the EU

Source: Developed by the authors using data of European Institute for Gender Equality

Measures towards ensuring gender equality can lead to increased production capacity and lower prices. Under such pace development, the EU will be able to produce more goods and services on its territory and become more competitive in international markets. This will lead to an improvement in the trade balance and an increase in EU exports by 1,6-2,3% in 2050; however, a decrease in imports by 0,4-0,7% is also expected. Thus, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, international trade will continue to be one of the principal drivers of the EU economic growth (EIGE 2020).

The introduction of a gender component in career guidance counselling will allow girls to consider the possibility of obtaining higher education in male-dominated areas, which will lead to more women with higher education in STEM sphere. In the long term perspective, bridging the gender gap in STEM education will have a positive impact and lead to an increase in total employment in the EU in 2050 by 1 200 000 workplaces (Figure 6).

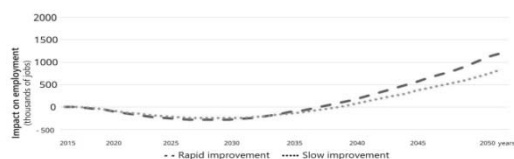


Figure 6. The result of the impact of eliminating the gender gap in the field of STEM education on the employment of the population of EU countries in the long term perspective

Source: Developed by the authors using data of European Institute for Gender Equality

New workplaces will be highly productive forasmuch as the spheres of IT, information, financial or consulting services belong to the areas of activity with high added value. Bridging the gender gap in STEM education will boost EU GDP per capita by 0,7 - 0,9% in 2030, and by 2,2% - 3,0% in 2050 (Figure 7). In monetary terms, eliminating the gender gap in STEM education will lead to an increase in GDP to 610 - 820 billion EUR in 2050.

Higher productivity in the labour market will lead to higher wages and bridging the gender wage gap by 2050 (European Parliament, 2020).

Strengthening gender equality in the fields of employment and education, a balanced distribution of unpaid household labour between women and men can lead to an increase in the birth rate by 8% by 2030. Higher birth rates, in turn, lead to an increase in population and full provision of the labour market in the long term perspective. It is expected that by 2050, the increase in the birth rate will lead to an increase in employment by 1,3-2,6 million people. It is an extremely positive outlook, given the current demographic situation with a significant increase in the number of older people (Strategy Europe 2020).

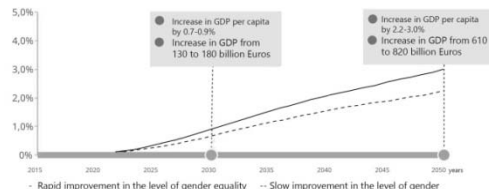


Figure 7. The forecast of the impact of eliminating the gap in the sphere of STEM education on GDP per capita in the EU in the long term perspective

Source: Developed by the authors using data of European Institute for Gender Equality

## 6 Discussion

The results of the research have made it possible to assess previous scientific developments conducted by scientists working in different fields of knowledge and at their intersection (state formation, politics, economics, social and gender sciences, psychology, culturology), and identify advantages and disadvantages, patterns and phenomena of the discourse on the formation of a model of a new gender-oriented society in the civilization of the European Union in the context of sociocultural space. The topic limits the representation of the social-economic component and issues of state formation of such a model, its sustainable development in the centuries-old values and traditions of national cultures of Western Europe.

## 7 Conclusion

In order to achieve progress in the field of human rights, due attention should be paid to the complex, changing and pivotal nature of the national features of the cultural environment of the peoples inhabiting the EU. Gender-sensitive approaches based on cultural knowledge will ensure the development of viable models and strategies, open opportunities for the implementation of the necessary gender policy and full realization of human rights in gender-sensitive issues.

In order to achieve smart, sustainable and social growth, the European Union should start implementing a new transnational gender model for gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the European Union, taking into account the diverse cultural traditions and values of Western Europe. Such model, which will make it possible to form a new sociocultural reality in the near future, contributing to the harmonious existence of Western European society and the effective development of the economic space, has been proposed by the authors in the course of the present research.

The instruments of this model study how variables, such as: economic status, politics, law, sex, age, gender, religion and ethnic identity are interrelated and lead to ambiguous manifestations of power. Therefore, it is assumed that the use of the authors' proposed transnational legal gender model of gender equality in the sociocultural environment of the European Union, as well as its instruments in the medium and long term will not only lead to a new optimal mechanism of modern gender relations in Western European society, but it will also increase economic benefits, improve the demographic situation and eliminate gender stereotypes in education.

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**Primary Paper Section: A****Secondary Paper Section: AO**