

Making change: working towards gender equality in the media

How the media can promote gender equality? What influence can be reached by activists? How the research can contribute to the knowledge about gender equality? On 4th of December in Vilnius Nordicom, EIGE and Norden have hosted the last stage of the project *Nordic Gender & Media Forum*: the launch of anthology “Making Change. Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media”. The book presents the information and statistics from 100 private and public media companies revealing male culture domination, lack of legislation provisions and horizontal segregation in decision-making positions.

The editor of the book M. Edstrom stressed that people are aware of gender equality, it is being talked about, but not applying enough action. Thus, combined experiences from the Nordic countries display what has been actually done to reach equality in the media. “It [the book] will definitely be helpful and useful to everyone. We have created it to show that sometimes you don’t need money or funding, all you need is a good idea”, explained M. Edstrom, “our book will be available in the online archive free of charge for everyone to get acquainted with and get inspired by the existing initiatives. It is divided into chapters by the work spheres so if you work in journalism you will search for and read the examples from the journalism companies. This way the book is easier to use and is more effective”.

Ulrika Faht, responsible for data compilation, has gathered the information from four spheres of the media: Film, Journalism, Computer games and Advertising that are presented in the book. “The situation in Sweden is similar to the one in the Baltic countries and is different in each work sphere. For example, the computer game industry doesn't consider gender inequality a problem, however, the data of men and women working there is lacking, the same can be inferred to the journalism industry. In Sweden, 20 per cent of women and 80 per cent of men are working in decision-making posts in the advertising industry. The society, myself included, was shocked to see these numbers. Percentile expression exposed the issue, it became visible and clear to the public.”

The projects described in the book are there to promote various ways in which society and individuals can make a change towards equality. Although the book has just been launched, some initiatives are successfully implemented in more than one country. “The example of film industry from Sweden showed how a simple idea can spread. The A-rating is an initiative implemented by four Swedish cinemas which posted an A on their films if they confer three simple questions: are there two or more women, do they have names? Do they talk to each other? Do they talk to each other about something besides men? If the answers are positive the movie gets the A (for Approved) mark to state that they are aware of their content and the dictated content norms. In just a few weeks the campaign spread to United States, China, India...” says M. Edstrom.

As for the Danes, according to Anita Frank Goth, the society was not aware of the problem. “Up to the age of 34, women and men are presented equally on the television. After 35, the number is decreasing. And after 50, only 23 per cent of women appear on television. In 2014, EIGE has conducted a survey in Denmark that revealed a 1 per cent change from 1982! Newspapers of Denmark were in denial.” Hence, the initiative called KVINFO was created. The first one from many extraordinary practices in the book, KVINFO is a database holding almost 2000 profiles of successful Danish women to inspire young professionals. Currently, KVINFO database is being implemented to the Middle East: Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Egypt.

Unfortunately, the Baltic countries did not have the chance to contribute to the anthology, however, their good practices and ideas were brought to attention at the seminar. Latvian children's television analysis revealed worrying statistics. As the media helps to integrate kids to the gender, the lack of female faces (ratio 1:3) is believed to be ample. Estonia presented a promising commercial campaign mocking gender stereotypes. Inspired by Germany, Estonian Ministry of Social Affaires

organizes untypical career days for students to encourage uncommon career choices. Lithuanian representative L. Kreivyte introduced the audience with feminist group “Kulturistes” and their three-part exhibitions “Postidea”. The concept of which was not to complain but to make a gesture using mainstream strategies. “Both, radical feminists and political approaches, are needed to achieve the target” admitted the art critic and curator Kreivyte.

Asked about the framework for the future, the editor Edstrom replied: “As for now, we have more seminars for the book presentation, we are focused on getting the project out of the Nordic states, involve more EU countries, this is actually why this seminar is held in Lithuania. Clearly, it is crucial to talk about the issue, create dialogs. While conducting the seminars, we come across data insufficiency, we still need to gather more statistics and get more agencies and companies, governments to elaborate”. The positive examples from the book are in need of expansion to other countries, however they require some adaptation and the knowledge to apply to the other spheres. “Making Change. Nordic Examples of Working Towards Gender Equality in the Media” grants simple and complex schemes, shows several paths to reach the goal.

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