

Experience in addressing the gender issue in post-Soviet countries

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Abstract. This article examines the experience of addressing the gender issue in countries formed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since the national and historical characteristics of all independent states are markedly different, the purpose of the paper is to study the challenges that women had to face, to identify the positive experience of the decision in each case as well as to identify the general trends of such decisions. On the basis of statistical data published by the competent authorities of both the independent states themselves and the Economic Commission for Europe, an analysis was made of such key parameters of equality as employment, average wages, level of access to information, the relative number of representatives in leadership positions in state institutions and representative offices in national parliaments, as well as the general trend of legislative initiatives designed to combat discrimination against women. As a result of the analysis of the dynamics of indicators, the leading states in solving the gender issue were identified, and an assessment was made of the development of this area in the future. This analysis led to the conclusion that the transition of women's rights issues to the plane of public discourse, the absence of silence concerning the problem, as well as the observance of voting rights are a guarantee of a significant reduction in the level of discrimination in society. The practical significance of the research lies in identifying the leading countries where the gender issue has been resolved positively, as well as formulating recommendations based on their experience for countries where the gender balance is still not respected, which will lead to a general strengthening of the protection of women's rights

Keywords: gender equality; discrimination; social protection; traditional communities; individual freedom

Introduction

The problem of gender inequality goes back to the prehistoric period, when physiological differences and characteristics were forced to determine the behaviour of each individual and the entire primitive community. In the process of development of social culture, gender roles and gender relations also acquired a more civilized character. However, humanity approached true gender equality only in the twentieth century. A landmark event was the adoption by the United Nations (UN) of the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1953), which codified the basic international standard of political rights. This document became the basis for a broader Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) for Youth (United Nations, 2016), which, in addition to protecting the electoral and political rights of women, also reflected other aspects of

equality, and in 2019, at the G7 summit, an international coalition of the Biarritz Partnership for Gender Equality (2019).

In the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), a lot of attention was paid to declaring equal rights for all genders and nationalities, but the situation was different in practice – there were purely “female” and purely “male” professions, wage standards, conditions for caring for a child. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly formed states were given the opportunity to independently choose the direction of development. The Baltic countries, traditionally oriented towards European values, have become leaders in the observance of human rights. As M. Tomala and M. Słowak (2020) found out, the geographical proximity of such developed countries in terms of gender equality as Denmark, Sweden and Finland, could quickly help get rid of the Soviet

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mentality and make the necessary changes to the legislation of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia.

The rest of the states of the post-Soviet space also moved along the path of gender equality. However, due to differences in economic development, leadership methods, adherence to traditions and stereotypes, the dynamics of the countries were very different from each other. At the same time, researchers still note a number of common features, for example, almost every country has a high level of education of girls and women, while observing their high economic activity and participation in public life. As A.A. Khuseynova (2021) emphasizes, protecting the interests of women has become one of the priorities of state policy in the years of independence. In particular, the National Program for the Improvement of the Status of Women in Society was consistently implemented in Uzbekistan.

At the same time, true gender equality is impossible without the formation of a full-fledged civil society. At this stage, D.B. Vafaeva and A.N. Makhmudova (2023) note that the citizens of Uzbekistan are going through a difficult process of choosing the value direction for the further evolution of society, while the destroyed authoritarian regime has been replaced by a new format that implies pluralism and the right to choose. According to S. Gaffarova (2021), another urgent task is to conduct a gender legal review of existing regulations and introduce the necessary amendments to them. This will serve to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in all spheres of life and activity of society, which should eliminate possible disproportions in relation to the rights, duties and opportunities of a person, regardless of gender.

Speaking about the social and legal side of the gender issue, one should also mention the role of trade unions. According to the analysis of A.M. Toksanbayeva (2022), trade unions are the largest public organization that has the right to introduce mechanisms of social partnership and public control in labour collectives. The aspect of gender equality in everyday life is also important. F.A. Akhmedshina (2022) talks about the formation of a new worldview dominant in Uzbek society, according to which the role of the family, mutual and equal participation of parents in raising children is becoming more popular in the public opinion, while there a negative attitude is being formed towards early and inter-family marriages, as well as polygamy. At the same time, in some countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), especially in Central Asia and the Caucasus, in the face of increased competition in the labour market, occupational segregation continues to exist, and in the most promising industries, employers still give preference to male workers.

A detailed study of the topic of gender equality by various researchers gives an objective assessment, but, as a rule, only in the context of individual post-Soviet states. At the same time, a full-fledged comparative analysis of these indicators has not yet been made. The purpose of the article is to conduct such research and study the positive experience of countries where the equal rights of men and women are respected, as well as to form recommendations for the implementation of this experience by all states of the post-Soviet space.

Literature review

Over the more than three decades that have passed since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Observance of human rights,

including in matters of gender equality, has become one of the highest values throughout the civilized world. At the same time, the inertial processes laid down by the totalitarian regime hinder the development of a just society in the former Soviet republics. The study of the Soviet legacy on the issue of women's rights in Central Asia was conducted by M. Kamp (2016). In particular, she pointed to the continuing low proportion – only about 30% – of girls studying at universities and academic institutions in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, comparing this with the situation in the United States in the 1950s.

The topic of religious influence on the protection of equality deserves special attention. In the Muslim communities of some states, in addition to secular conventions, women and girls are also pressured by the factor of traditional religion. G. Zhussipbek *et al.* (2020), having studied the models of Islamic revival in the post-Soviet space, the challenges that modern women need to be ready for include traditional masculinity, a patriarchal idea of honour, as well as male polygamy de facto legalized by religion. An important parameter in studying the issue of gender equality is the demographic situation – population growth or decline, the ratio of men and women, life expectancy. Since the life expectancy of women is on average 10 years higher, there is a numerical advantage of able-bodied women starting from the age of thirty, which should be taken into account when analysing statistical data.

The processes of globalization, which have become especially relevant in recent decades, also have a significant impact on the gender balance. In the process of studying the impact of globalization on the development of women's rights and freedoms, R. Kaur (2018) came to the conclusion that gender inequality has more manifestations in an integrated world, when one often has to make a choice between family and career. On the other hand, such transnational processes remove the usual boundaries and enable a woman to quickly gain independence from her parental family.

In addition to studying general trends, sources that have studied the issue through the prism of the experience of a single state and its national characteristics deserve attention. For example, R. Turaeva (2017) carried out detailed work to identify the transformation of the role of women entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan in the context of labour migration of the male population. On the example of individual heroines, she revealed a significant change in the minds of modern women who are forced to acquire leadership qualities and become the heads of their families. As a result of field research in Tajikistan, K. Kluczevska (2021) was able to draw analogies between modern women's empowerment and the Soviet campaign of the 1920s for the "Liberation of the Women of the East", since in the early 1990s after Tajikistan gained independence, Islamist religious leaders were reactionary attempts to deprive women of their legal rights.

However, even in traditional societies, women's activity is determined by their understanding of family duty, proper participation in public life, social skills, and business acumen. As Z. Kholmatova (2021) notes with examples in her paper, these qualities allow a woman to qualitatively change the existing social attitude in accordance with her requirements, views and goals. Given the above, this paper was based on the hypothesis that the countries that formed on the territory of the former Soviet Union have different experiences in addressing the gender issue.

Materials and methods

The data used in the analytical paper was taken from the World Economic Forum (2022), as well as from a number of other sources. To obtain a more objective picture, it was decided to study the problem in two dimensions: on the one hand, to assess the actual observance of women's rights in each of the states that make up the post-Soviet space, and on the other hand, to track the dynamics of processes in them over ten years in order to obtain only data "in the moment", while also identifying trends. At the same time, the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 should be taken into account both on statistical indicators and on all aspects of human life without exception. The consequences could not but affect issues of gender equality, in particular, the pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on the labour market. Due to the fact that women traditionally spend more time on housework and childcare, forced isolation and the widespread closure of kindergartens have significantly affected the realization of women's right to a fair wage. Taking into account the circumstances that the majority of medical workers who are at high risk are women, and the fact that the percentage of female employees is also traditionally higher in the services sector most affected by quarantine (tourism and hospitality), it was decided to use statistical data until 2019 inclusive.

In the process of research, a comparative analysis of the observance of women's rights in all the countries studied in this paper was conducted, a number of key parameters were analysed for 2019, as the last relatively calm year, and the so-called "coefficient of equality" was calculated:

$$CE = I_F / I_M \quad (1)$$

where CE – the coefficient of equality, I_F – the indicator for females, I_M – the indicator for males.

According to the chosen methodology, the "coefficient of equality" is intended to demonstrate the state of affairs in key parameters – the higher it is, the more protected women's rights are. The parameters analysed for different genders include the level of education, representation in leadership positions, average wages, as well as the number of parliamentarians. All analysed parameters for each of the states

were summed up and the overall coefficient of equality was derived for each of the studied countries. Further, as a result of ranking the indicators of all post-Soviet countries, the leading states in solving the gender issue were identified and their experience in achieving such indicators was analysed.

To identify trends in gender equality indicators over a decade, the former republics of the USSR were conditionally divided into four regions with different cultural, historical and geographical features: Western European region (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia), Eastern European region (Ukraine, Moldova), the Caucasus region (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia) and the Central Asian region (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan). For the sake of the purity of the experiment, one representative was randomly selected from each conditional region: Armenia, Latvia, Uzbekistan, Ukraine. For each of the representative states of the region, the statistics of key indicators for the decade from 2010 to 2019 were analysed, the dynamics of which, for greater clarity, was visualized in the format of line graphs.

Results

In the first part of the research, on the basis of statistical data, the current coefficients of equality for 2019 were determined for all states that were previously part of the Soviet Union. As mentioned above, it is 2019, the last "pre-COVID" year, that can show true statistics. In 2020-2022, due to the restrictions associated with the COVID-19 virus pandemic, indicators such as employment rates, average wages, etc. have already been distorted by the need for isolation, the transition to remote learning, the crisis in the hotel and tourism sectors, as well as excess workload of medical personnel. For the most complete coverage of all areas of activity, which are traditionally characterized by a disproportion between men and women, calculations were made of the ratios of indicators in the following categories:

- employment rate of married people;
- average wage level;
- Internet access level;
- representation in the state parliament;
- work in senior positions in the public sector.

Figures for all mentioned post-Soviet countries are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Key indicators of gender equality in post-Soviet countries, 2019

	Married employment rate, %	Wage rates	Share of Internet users, %	Representation in the national parliament, %	Senior civil servants, %	ΣCE
Azerbaijan						
Men	47.1	172	79.2	83.2	84.6	
Women	39.8	100	74	16.8	15.4	
CE	0.85	0.58	0.93	0.2	0.18	2.745
Armenia						
Men	67.1	153.2	76.2	75.8	85.4	
Women	40.5	100	75.5	24.2	14.6	
CE	0.6	0.65	0.99	0.32	0.17	2.737
Estonia						
Men	76.8	140	91	71.3	54.5	
Women	67.3	100	90	28.7	45.5	
CE	0.88	0.71	0.99	0.4	0.83	3.817
Georgia						
Men	58.4	157	73.5	85.2	77	
Women	43.3	100	73.8	14.8	23	
CE	0.74	0.64	1	0.17	0.3	2.855

Table 1, Continued

	Married employment rate, %	Wage rates	Share of Internet users, %	Representation in the national parliament, %	Senior civil servants, %	Σ CE
Kazakhstan						
Men	81.95	147	72.1	72.9	57	
Women	58.1	100	62.3	27.1	43	
CE	0.71	0.68	0.86	0.37	0.75	3.379
Kyrgyzstan						
Men	82.8	130	65.2	80.8	64.3	
Women	44.9	100	53.4	19.2	35.7	
CE	0.54	0.77	0.82	0.24	0.56	2.923
Latvia						
Men	76	126	87	69	26.2	
Women	69.7	100	85	31	73.8	
CE	0.92	0.79	0.98	0.45	2.82	5.954
Lithuania						
Men	70.7	113	81	78.7	38.5	
Women	67.4	100	82	21.3	61.5	
CE	0.95	0.88	1.01	0.27	1.6	4.719
Moldova						
Men	51.7	117	71.1	77.2	77.6	
Women	43.9	100	67.9	22.8	22.4	
CE	0.85	0.85	0.95	0.3	0.29	3.243
Tajikistan						
Men	81.1	155	62	81	73	
Women	71.3	100	49	19	27	
CE	0.88	0.65	0.79	0.23	0.37	2.919
Turkmenistan						
Men	82.4	163	65	75	69.8	
Women	51.5	100	54	25	30.2	
CE	0.63	0.61	0.83	0.33	0.43	2.835
Uzbekistan						
Men	81.5	157	79	84	62.8	
Women	65.7	100	69.4	16	37.2	
CE	0.81	0.64	0.88	0.19	0.71	3.23
Ukraine						
Men	65.9	129	76.9	88.4	58.1	
Women	54.1	100	74.5	11.6	41.9	
CE	0.82	0.78	0.97	0.13	0.72	3.417

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

Thus, the leaders in the observance of women's rights and gender equality in the post-Soviet space were Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia. The experience of these countries will form the basis of recommendations for the worst performing states. First of all, attention should be paid to the legislative framework of the leading countries and their ratification of international agreements on the protection of gender rights. In this regard, the experience of Lithuania is indicative, the Constitution of which (Article 137, part 3) directly states that "international treaties ratified by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania constitute an integral part of the legal system of the Republic of Lithuania". Thus, all important documents on the protection of rights are almost immediately implemented into national legislation. An important step for Lithuania was also resolution No. 306 of the Council of Courts on the classification of cases and court rulings, requiring mandatory application in the work of the provisions of the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (United Nations, 2016).

Speaking about the anti-discrimination practice of the Baltic countries, it is necessary to dwell separately on the institution of the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities working there. Initially originating in the Scandinavian countries, this specialized institution creates additional guarantees of gender equality in all spheres of state and public life. Moreover, Lithuania had a separate Ministry for Gender Affairs at the stage of formation of a democratic society in the early 2000s. Latvia also shows solidarity with its neighbours: during the recent history of independence, women have already occupied both highest state posts in this country – Vaira Vike-Freiberga was elected President in 1999, and Laimdota Straujuma was appointed Prime Minister in 2014. Moreover, there are at least three articles in the Labour Law of Latvia that directly or indirectly prohibit harassment, sexual innuendo and other actions that fall under the definition of harassment. Unfortunately, such a political practice has not yet been adopted in the new democracies of the post-Soviet space with a large number of historical and patriarchal

layers, which is one of the most important reasons for the temporary lag of these countries behind the Baltic states in terms of equality. However, in addition to state regulation, the behaviour and value orientations of the citizens themselves are important. The attitude of the majority of ordinary residents of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia towards such phenomena as harassment and domestic violence demonstrates that the observance of women's rights in these countries is not only a matter for the authorities, but also for each individual, which is reflected in the World Bank Group (2019) study.

All these political and social factors of gender balance that united the Baltic States are the key, thanks to which Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia occupy the first three places in the ranking. By adopting these legislative and civil initiatives, other countries of the post-Soviet space will also be able to put into practice the ideas of gender justice and gender equality. In parallel with the study of indicators of

gender equality "in the moment", for a better and more comprehensive assessment, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of processes in the medium term of about ten years. Since such a detailed analysis of each country would be rather cumbersome, and all the countries of the former Soviet Union have regional characteristics that can be conditionally divided into four national behavioural patterns – Caucasian, Western European, Eastern European and Central Asian. One randomly selected country from each regional group was analysed. These were, respectively, Armenia, Latvia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Trends in the development of observance of women's rights in the Caucasus region were studied on the example of Armenia (Table 2).

When analysing the trend of the total coefficient of equality, it can be seen that after five years of stable growth in 2014, the graph is levelling off, followed by a decrease in indicators, and only in 2018 the restoration of the gender balance begins again (Fig. 1).

Table 2. Key indicators of gender equality in Armenia, 2010-2019

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment rate	0.66	0.68	0.68	0.66	0.66	0.67	0.68	0.68	0.59	0.6
Wage rate	0.64	0.65	0.64	0.66	0.66	0.67	0.66	0.68	0.65	0.65
Internet access rate	0.85	0.87	1	1.07	1.11	1.05	0.97	0.96	0.96	0.99
Parliamentary representation rate	0.1	0.1	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.12	0.22	0.22	0.32
Management representation rate	0.15	0.14	0.16	0.16	0.17	0.19	0.2	0.18	0.17	0.17
Total coefficient of equality	2.4	2.43	2.61	2.66	2.72	2.69	2.64	2.72	2.58	2.74

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

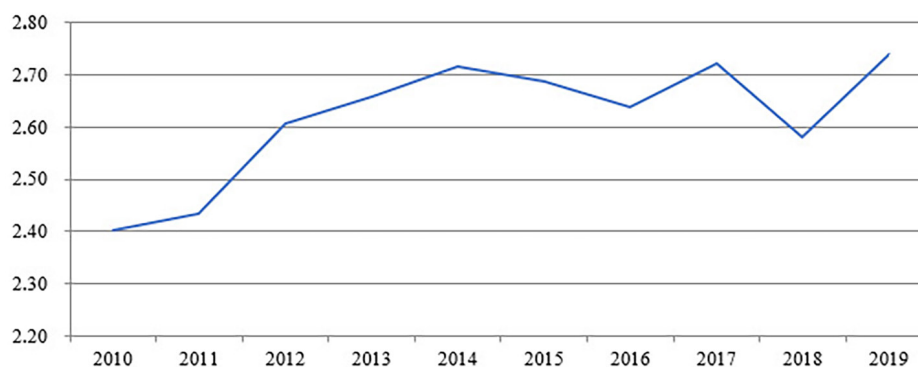


Figure 1. Chart of the development of the main indicators of gender equality in Armenia in the period from 2010 to 2019

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

From the viewpoint of the development of civil society and the political vector of the country, the first negative trend reversal can be explained by the beginning of the second presidential term of S. Sargsyan in 2013 and the subsequent temporary curtailment of democratic reforms, and the second positive trend reversal is caused by the victory of the "Velvet Revolution" in Armenia and return to democratic

values. Trends in the development of observance of women's rights in the Western European region were studied on the example of Latvia (Table 3).

The total coefficient of equality in Latvia has a clear positive trend except for a short period in 2013, which can be explained by several political crises this year, the resignation of the government and preparations for joining the Eurozone (Fig. 2).

Table 3. Key indicators of gender equality in Latvia, 2010-2019

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment rate	0.99	0.95	0.91	0.89	0.91	0.91	0.92	0.91	0.91	0.92
Wage rate	0.82	0.84	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.84	0.83	0.85	0.8	0.79
Internet access rate	0.96	0.97	0.97	0.99	1	0.98	0.98	1	1.01	0.98
Parliamentary representation rate	0.28	0.25	0.3	0.3	0.33	0.22	0.22	0.19	0.19	0.45
Management representation rate	2.4	2.39	2.52	1.98	2.55	2.61	2.52	2.57	2.69	2.82
Total coefficient of equality	5.45	5.4	5.54	4.99	5.62	5.55	5.46	5.52	5.6	5.95

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

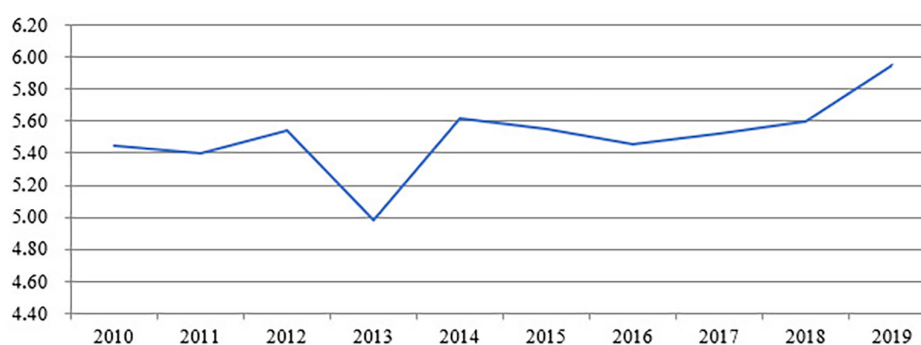


Figure 2. Chart of the development of the main indicators of gender equality in Latvia in the period from 2010 to 2019
Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

At the same time, subsequent years show the continuation of the right course towards gender balance. Characteristically, its resumption in 2014 coincides with the entry into office of the first female prime minister of Latvia, Laimdota Straujuma. Trends in the development of observance of

women's rights in the Western European region were studied on the example of Ukraine (Table 4).

Gender equality indicators for Ukraine also formed a steady growth until a certain period, but since 2014 this growth has slowed down significantly (Fig. 3).

Table 4. Key indicators of gender equality in Ukraine, 2010-2019

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment rate	0.74	0.76	0.75	0.8	0.82	0.81	0.81	0.81	0.83	0.82
Wage rate	0.78	0.75	0.78	0.77	0.76	0.75	0.75	0.79	0.78	0.78
Internet access rate	0.83	0.89	0.89	0.92	0.96	0.94	0.96	0.97	0.95	0.97
Parliamentary representation rate	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.1	0.11	0.13	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.13
Management representation rate	0.56	0.61	0.62	0.65	0.74	0.72	0.74	0.79	0.81	0.72
Total coefficient of equality	2.99	3.1	3.13	3.24	3.38	3.35	3.39	3.50	3.52	3.42

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

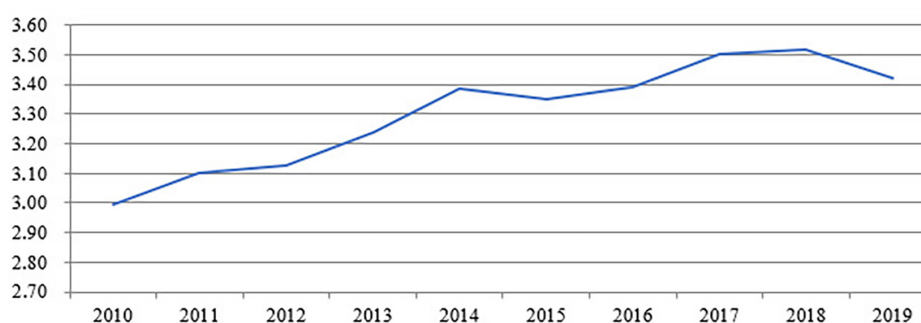


Figure 3. Chart of the development of the main indicators of gender equality in Ukraine in the period from 2010 to 2019
Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

This can be explained by armed aggression and temporary occupation of part of the territory, which could not but affect the general social situation in the country. Nevertheless, the positive dynamics of the equality coefficient is observed, which means that temporary difficulties have not prevented the further strengthening of the positions of

women's equality in Ukraine. Trends in the development of observance of women's rights in the Western European region were studied on the example of Uzbekistan (Table 5).

Uzbekistan is one of the few countries in the post-Soviet space that demonstrates a steady increase in gender equality indicators over the ten years studied (Fig. 4).

Table 5. Key indicators of gender equality in Uzbekistan, 2010-2019

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Employment rate	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.84	0.81
Wage rate	0.63	0.63	0.62	0.62	0.63	0.64	0.65	0.65	0.61	0.64
Internet access rate	0.51	0.6	0.63	0.65	0.65	0.7	0.74	0.78	0.78	0.88
Parliamentary representation rate	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.28	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19	0.19
Management representation rate	0.61	0.65	0.63	0.65	0.59	0.62	0.63	0.65	0.7	0.71
Total coefficient of equality	2.86	2.99	3	3.05	2.99	3	3.05	3.12	3.13	3.23

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

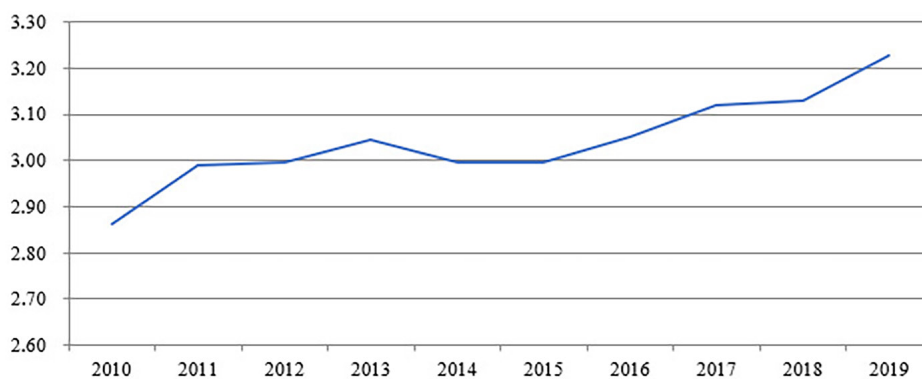


Figure 4. Chart of the development of the main indicators of gender equality in Uzbekistan in the period from 2010 to 2019

Source: World Economic Forum (2022)

At the same time, it should be remembered that although relative indicators are on a constant uptrend, in absolute terms, all key indicators have great potential for growth. Thus, key indicators of equality were obtained and compared – both as of 2019 and in dynamics over the previous decade. It can be concluded that after gaining independence, all countries are carrying out effective work to restore women’s rights and maintain gender balance in all areas of activity – from confronting domestic violence to being represented in leadership positions in the highest state institutions.

Based on the results obtained, it should be noted that among the global trends aimed at the formation of gender equality, the technological development of society plays an important role. The United Nations Development Program (2023) considers equality of access to information technologies among its main tasks and makes every effort to reduce the so-called “Digital Gender Divide”, which is that of the 2.7 billion people on Earth who do not have regular access to the Internet, more than two-thirds are women and girls. Also, a recent study showed that men are 21% more likely to use the Internet, while in the least developed countries, this figure reaches 52% (Rodríguez Pulgarín & Woodhouse, 2021). Social networks and the ability to freely communicate online with peers and like-minded people have the most positive impact on the formation of modern values among girls and women, regardless of where they live. Access to contemporary works of art in digital form, information about cultural events, examples of correct gender relations also have a positive impact on the formation of a real picture of the world and the place of women in it. Information campaigns, online seminars and trainings also lead to an increase in a woman’s self-esteem in each case. As can be seen from the research results, the indicators of women’s access to the Internet are quite high and have a positive trend.

It should be noted that in addition to national legislation and individual political initiatives at the global level, the authorized international UN WOMEN division is engaged in the protection of women’s rights. This organization, founded in 2010, addresses the issues of gender equality, as well as the expansion of the rights and freedoms of women. Its powers include both cooperation with the governments of individual countries, and with representatives and representatives of civil society around the world. It is with the assistance of UN WOMEN that the necessary reforms of national legislations, the formation of fair standards and the implementation of sustainable development goals are carried out. At the same

time, the organization’s strategic priorities have been and remain women’s unimpeded access to governance systems, a decent income and economic autonomy, freedom from violence and equal participation in humanitarian missions.

In general, the equal participation of women in labour activity, the expansion of their economic opportunities, the absence of special obstacles in entrepreneurial activity are the key to the harmonious and intensive development of human civilization and technological progress as such. Inertial processes are still strong, which are expressed in the manifestation of the national mentality and male dominance. Women still face a lack of family support and difficulties in raising capital to build personal financial independence. Access to secondary, vocational and higher education is gradually becoming equal for both sexes, but even with the necessary knowledge and a diploma, it is more difficult for a woman, other things being equal, to get a promising job and acquire practical skills. Nevertheless, the indicators of the gender equality coefficient – both at the moment and in the medium term – indicate the strengthening of women’s rights in all countries of the former Soviet Union. The positive moment of these processes also lies in the fact that women who have achieved their own rights pass on these values to their children, which influences the formation of the nature of their relations with society in the future and is a guarantee of the development of a just society.

Discussion

From the above calculations and charts, it follows that the experience of resolving the gender issue has a positive trend throughout the post-Soviet space. These indicators are especially interesting if we look at them through the prism of the prevailing gender imbalance in the southern regions of the former USSR. With the advent of the opportunity to find out the sex of an unborn child even before the birth at a relatively early date, a significant part of the parents terminates the pregnancy if a girl is expected. This attitude towards the sex of an unborn child is rooted in traditions and prejudices, according to which the son is considered an assistant in the household and the guarantor of a calm old age for the parents, while the daughter, according to customs, leaves home for her husband’s family. For the same reason, under formally neutral inheritance laws, the actual heir to land, real estate, and other property is the son.

This uncivilized custom of terminating a pregnancy because of the sex of a child has formed a whole demographic

phenomenon called the “Generation of Missing Girls” by sociologists in the Caucasus and Asia and has led to an imbalance of the sexes, when 115-120 boys are born per 100 girls. R. Wright (2015) studied the topic of selective abortion in more detail on the example of Armenia. He identified the main misconceptions and concluded that it was necessary to ensure proper sex education in schools and the destruction of anti-scientific superstitions about human reproductive properties. Nevertheless, despite this demographic imbalance in a number of countries, indicators of gender equality have a positive trend in the medium term throughout the entire territory of the post-Soviet space.

V. Bayramov *et al.* (2023), who also studied the issue of women’s rights in the former Soviet Union, determined a direct relationship between women’s participation in the country’s economic life and economic growth using econometric analysis. The coefficients of equality obtained as a result of this paper for all states of the region confirm and supplement these conclusions. Similar observations, but already at the global level, were also stated by A. Saboor *et al.* (2023), who conducted a study of the evolution of society and confirmed a stable relationship between the civilizational development of certain communities and the empowerment of women in them. Among the prerequisites for development, they name a centralized information system for electronic registration of citizens and the provision of the possibility of unimpeded voting for women and for women by state bodies responsible for the observance of electoral rights. The relationship of women’s political empowerment with technological change, which is the locomotive of long-term economic growth, was also studied by S. Dahlum *et al.* (2022). After analysing data from 181 countries for 221 years, they came to the conclusion that the growth of women’s political influence, in particular, their right to vote and be elected, in each individual state inevitably leads to an increase in the technological equipment of this state in the short term.

Peculiarities of housekeeping in rural regions of Asian countries were also studied by N.G. Hegde (2020). According to his conclusions, despite the relatively large number of children in families and the low level of education, the development of private craft skills by women and state support for their promotion can significantly strengthen the property and social status of women even in remote areas within 3-5 years. At the same time, it is necessary to remember the high vulnerability of women in rural areas, which are most susceptible to the influence of destructive and discriminatory traditions. Among the priority challenges M. Naushad *et al.* (2022) cite the lack of rights to parental land, different approaches to raising sons and daughters, early marriages, vulnerability in everyday life. At the same time, according to the results of their research, the women’s labour contribution to the agro-industrial complex is decisive in the development of the entire agricultural sector.

The cultural features of the regions studied in this article are also mentioned in the paper of P. Giuliano (2020), who studied the relationship between gender and culture. She came to the conclusion that gender roles are not genetically prescribed, but tend to change under the influence of cultural and social environments formed by family, peers and teachers. The study of these metamorphoses in a historical perspective also complements and confirms the regional trends noted in this article in the formation of the coefficient of equality. The experience of addressing the gender issue

in the Baltic countries was also studied by E. Brainerd and O. Malkova (2023) through the prism of panel data related to state support for pregnant women and women who have recently given birth. The study showed that even a slight increase in maternity leaves significantly affected the mental health of the study participants and significantly contributed to the strengthening of their marriages.

At the same time, in the process of discussing the problem of gender equality, it is necessary to adhere to a single field of meanings and terminology. The issue of the difference between the concepts of “gender inequality” and “gender gap” was discussed in the paper of B. Shang (2022), where he defined gender gaps as observed differences between men and women in various social and economic indicators, and gender inequality was determined by gender prejudices and unequal rights, as well as opportunities. The influence of the state on the formation of the internal policy of social protection of women cannot be underestimated. The legislative bodies of countries independently bring the documentary base in line with modern realities. However, sometimes they do it too slowly. For example, Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. ZRU-562 “On Guarantees of Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” (2019) was adopted by the Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan only in 2019.

The factor of physical development should also be taken into account – from a comparison of statistical data from different post-Soviet countries, we can conclude that there is a direct relationship between girls’ access to sports and physical education and the general level of equality in the country. Therefore, it is necessary to form physical health support programs for both sexes at the state level, develop a network of sports clubs, as well as build street sports workout facilities. Investments in these programs will eventually pay off with the formation of a civil society of equal rights, which will lead to the growth of the state’s economy and an increase in the social level of its citizens. Scientific activities are also one of the dimensions of freedom – a woman who has received sufficient education and the opportunity to actualize herself in science is a priori deprived, as a rule, of an inferiority complex, and her self-confidence becomes the key to further personal growth. The key thesis of many scientific papers, confirmed by the results of this research, is that the restoration of women’s rights and gender justice positively affect not only women themselves, but also men, children and the well-being of society as a whole.

The results of the paper and their comparison with the experience of other studies also show that the approach to assessing indicators of gender equality in the countries of the post-Soviet space is correct. At the same time, the methodology for calculating the coefficient of equality proposed in this paper helps to see the picture more fully and pay attention to the trends that the authors listed above noted. In particular, while the Caucasus and Central Asian regions show the largest growth in relative terms, the Baltic countries lead in absolute terms. However, it is important to understand that, purely mathematically, Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have already come close to the parity of “male” and “female” indicators in a number of indicators, i.e., to a true gender balance, the further development of which is no longer possible.

Conclusions

The data obtained as a result of the research confirm the initial hypothesis that there have been positive changes in

addressing the gender issue in all countries of the post-Soviet space. With the help of a special method for calculating the coefficients of equality for such key parameters as the level of employment, wages, access to information and representation in the highest government posts, it was possible to reduce the statistical data for all the countries under consideration into the plane of comparable values and conduct their comparative analysis. As expected, each of the states has its own speed of achieving gender equality, while the traditionally European-oriented Baltic countries have the highest rates. At the same time, in the regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia, where traditional ways and religious prejudices are strong in some places, the observance of women's rights still requires the close attention of the progressive public and state support at the level of national legislation.

For a more complete assessment of the actual state of affairs with gender equality, an analysis of the indicators in dynamics over the previous ten years was also carried out. Despite the relatively modest absolute indicators "in the moment" for the countries of the Central Asian region, the linear graphs showed that Uzbekistan demonstrates a steady increase in indicators in relative terms, which means it is moving in the right direction. The standard of living in the

state and the level of economic well-being of its residents directly depend on the observance of women's rights in this society. The positive experience of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia consists, in particular, in the unconditional implementation of international documents that guarantee gender justice; introduction of the institution of the Ombudsman for Equal Rights; elections and appointment of women to the highest state posts; coverage of territories, including provincial areas, with high-speed mobile Internet; equal access to credit funds; availability of accessible physical education facilities.

These developments and successfully implemented projects in various sectors – educational, legislative, social, banking, information, sports – should be integrated into the national economies of the rest of the states of the post-Soviet space. This, on the one hand, will solve the issue of gender equality, and, on the other hand, will give countries a tangible impetus for development.

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Conflict of interest

None.

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Досвід вирішення гендерного питання в пострадянських країнах

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Анотація. У статті розглядається досвід вирішення гендерного питання в країнах, що утворилися після розпаду Радянського Союзу. Оскільки національні та історичні особливості всіх незалежних держав помітно відрізняються, метою статті є дослідження викликів, з якими довелося зіткнутися жінкам, виявлення позитивного досвіду вирішення в кожному конкретному випадку, а також визначення загальних тенденцій таких рішень. На основі статистичних даних, опублікованих компетентними органами як самих незалежних держав, так і Європейською економічною комісією, було проведено аналіз ключових параметрів рівності, як-от: зайнятість, середня заробітна плата, рівень доступу до інформації, відносна кількість представниць на керівних посадах у державних установах та представництвах у національних парламентах, а також загальна тенденція законодавчих ініціатив, спрямованих на боротьбу з дискримінацією щодо жінок. У результаті аналізу динаміки показників визначено держави-лідери у вирішенні гендерного питання, а також зроблено оцінку розвитку цієї сфери в майбутньому. Проведений аналіз дав змогу зробити висновок, що перехід питань прав жінок у площину публічного дискурсу, відсутність замовчування проблеми, а також дотримання виборчих прав є запорукою значного зниження рівня дискримінації в суспільстві. Практичне значення дослідження полягає у визначенні країн-лідерів, у яких гендерне питання вирішено позитивно, а також у формулюванні на основі їхнього досвіду рекомендацій для країн, де гендерний баланс усе ще не дотримується, що призведе до загального посилення захисту прав жінок

Ключові слова: гендерна рівність; дискримінація; соціальний захист; традиційні громади; свобода особистості