



20th Experts Forum meeting minutes

Adopted by written procedure on 30 November, 2017

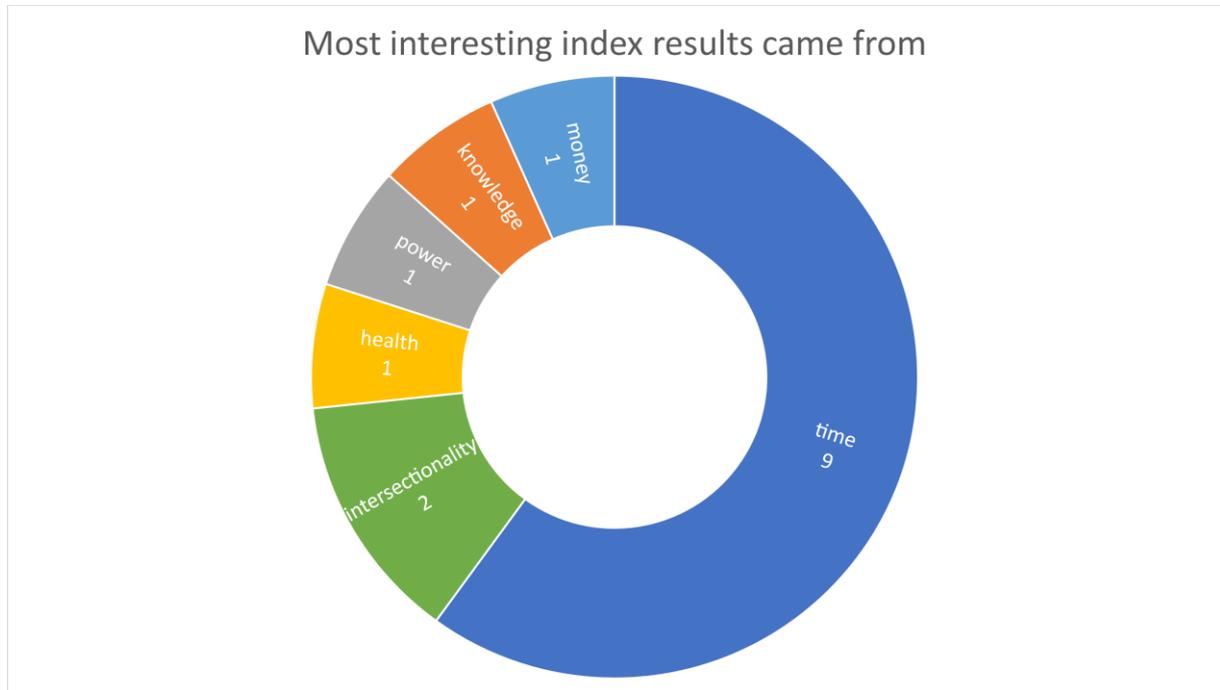
The 20th Experts Forum took place in Brussels on 12 October 2017 focusing on:

- Increasing synergies with EU bodies: European Economic and Social Committee
- Final stages of structuring EF engagement in Quality Assurance
- Increased uptake of the Gender Equality Index in Member States;
- Shaping a broader picture of gender equality and education
- Consulting the Experts' Forum on the upcoming EIGE's study for the Austrian Presidency of the Council on *Digitalisation, youth and gender*.

Overall, 20 members (or alternate members) participated at the meeting. Experts Forum members from Finland, Ireland, France, Cyprus, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, BusinessEurope and observers from the European Commission and the European Parliament did not participate at the meeting.

Virginija Langbakk, Chair of the Experts Forum opened the meeting and reminded to submit the **Conflict of Interest** declaration within 2 weeks from the meeting. She also asked whether any of members has a conflict of interests in relation to this meeting. **No conflicts of interest were noted.**

The meeting was organised back-to-back with the Gender Equality Index release conference. As the Experts' Forum members are important stakeholders in ensuring increased uptake and disseminating results of EIGE's work in Member States, major part of the agenda of the meeting was built around the Gender Equality Index results and follow-up. Reflecting on the Gender Equality Index release conference the day before, the Experts Forum members confirmed that the domain of Time had the most interesting results (see graph below).



Graph 1: Most interesting results of the index

Connecting the dots: EIGE in the EU

Presentation by Pavel Trantina, European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

The president of the SOC section of the European Economic and Social Committee, Pavel Trantina was welcomed as a guest speaker to present the work of EESC and discuss possible synergies with EIGE's work.

The EESC represents organised civil society in the EU representing employers, workers (trade unions) and various interests (e.g. consumers, little farmers, liberal professions etc.). EESC task is to produce opinions on legislative and policy proposals of the Commission and the Parliament. EESC produces around 150 opinions per year. SOC section has produced many opinions on gender equality. EESC is also asked by Institutions, usually the Council and the respective Presidencies, for 'exploratory opinions'.

Following topics of the Committee are of relevance to EIGE's work and further synergies around these could be explored:

- Maternity leave;
- Work-life balance, including time;
- Digitalisation of economy and gender aspects of it (cooperation on the needed data could be explored);



- Intersecting inequalities. EESC has three permanent groups – the Roma, rights of the people with disability and migration. These groups could benefit from EIGE’s work on intersecting inequalities.
- Violence against women and the implementation of the Istanbul convention (EESC issued an opinion on 2010)

The presentation was followed by discussions on how to further create synergies between EIGE, its Experts’ Forum and the Committee. The Forum members welcomed enhanced possible co-operation between EIGE and EESC and between individual Forum Members and the EESC. EIGE will initiate formalisation of the cooperation by drafting co-operation plan.

Action points:

European Economic and Social Committee to send its opinions and other relevant documents to EIGE to be uploaded on EUROGENDER platform for an easy access to Experts’ Forum members.

EIGE to regularly invite Committee members to relevant events.

Experts’ Forum members are encouraged to invite the Committee experts to their national events.

EIGE develop a proposal for a more structured cooperation with the SOC committee (by end of 2017)

EIGE’s Quality Assurance: unique possibilities to contribute and communicate
Presentation by Christian Veske, EIGE

Christian Veske gave an overview on further development of the Quality Assurance process. He described reasons for a stronger engagement of EF members in the Quality Assurance and encouraged all the members/alternates to support EIGE and the quality of its work. Presentation slides are available on the [EuroGender platform](#).

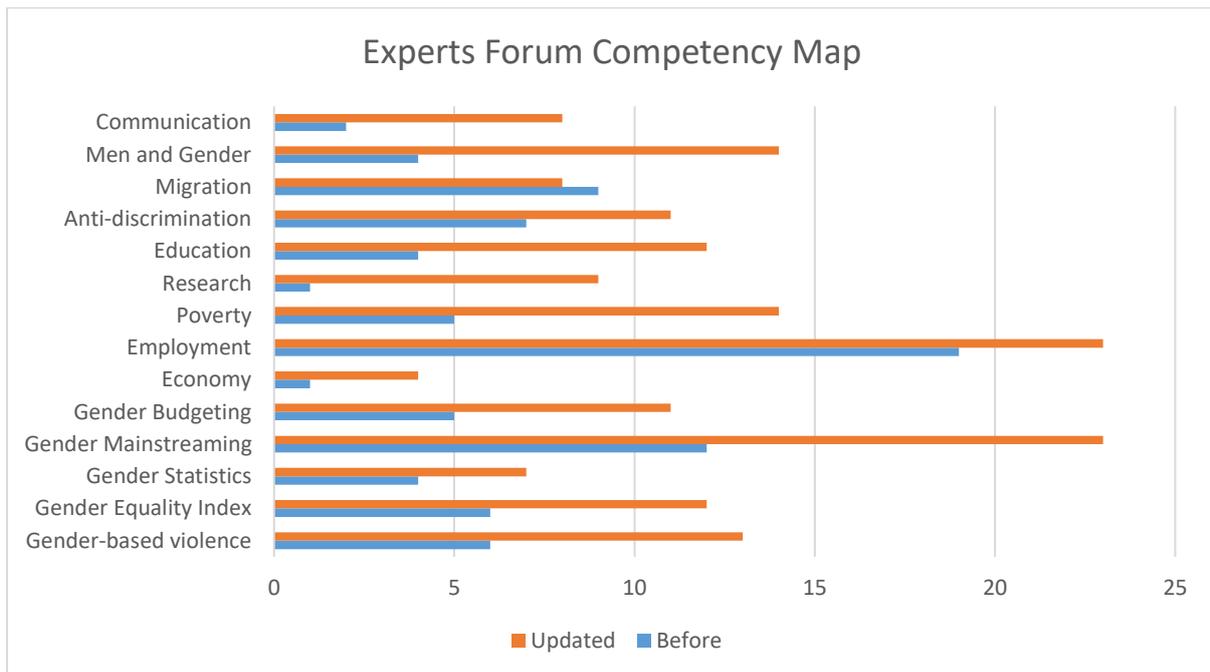
Quality Assurance process is an integral part of EIGE’s work to ensure high quality of deliverables both from contractors and in the development of research in-house (e.g. the Gender Equality Index).

Participating in the quality assurance process, however, does not only bring one-way benefits to EIGE. By participating in the process, members will also have benefits, such as:

- Acknowledgement of their contribution in the publication;
- Letter of appreciation sent by EIGE to the authorities of the Member State;
- Learning from and competence sharing with other experts
- Possibility to present the results in appropriate events;
- Mention in EIGE’s newsletter;
- Being part of EIGE’s dynamic team and creative processes.



EIGE has established a competency map to facilitate an efficient engagement of Experts' Forum members. The graph below shows the situation before and after the update. The map allows EIGE to approach the relevant members for each study or project and its various activities, based on the interest and/or competency they have indicated for the specific areas of EIGE's work.



Graph 2: Experts' Forum competency map

The competency map can be updated throughout the year. Members and alternate members who were not present at the meeting are kindly asked to update their interest via e-mail (experts.forum@eige.europa.eu).

Action points:

Experts Forum members (not present at the 20th meeting) to send their areas of competencies/interests to Experts Forum mailbox by 8th December 2017.

In order to increase the efficiency of the Quality Assurance process, EIGE will approach individual Experts' Forum members directly, according to the competency mapping.

EIGE will add additional category to competency mapping – stakeholder engagement.

After finalising the Quality Assurance procedure internally, EIGE will inform the Experts' Forum members.

EIGE will send notifications to members when a new research or communication product is published.



Gender Equality Index: Reflections and vision for 2018

Input by Virginija Langbakk and Mira Banerjee, EIGE

This session focused on reflections from the Gender Equality Index 2017 conference and EIGE's plans in ensuring increased uptake of the index in 2018.

The Chair of the Forum, Virginija Langbakk, looked back at how the index was developed and how it has evolved over the years. She noted that by now, the Index has the attention at the highest political ranks and it is important to catch this moment. She also suggested that special attention is to be given to various interest groups, such as organisations working on disabilities, LGBT, etc.

Mira Banerjee, Head of Knowledge Management and Communications, explained how EIGE presents the national results during its country visits. In 2018, EIGE is planning to organise country visits to Belgium, Portugal and France. Two countries are still to be selected and Experts' Forum members were encouraged to express their interest.

Action points:

EIGE to send Index country factsheets to the Experts' Forum members as soon as they are available.

EIGE will also send reports on intersecting inequalities and violence against women, once these are available.

Experts' Forum members are encouraged to contact EIGE if they wish to host a country visit in 2018.

Gender Equality Index: Reflections

Working Groups

The objective of these working groups was to give to the participants a possibility to reflect on the reasons behind the gender equality developments in their Member States and its reflection in the Index (increase or decrease in different domains of the Index). Results of the working groups served as a basis for discussions in subsequent working groups at the Experts Forum meeting. These results will also be used by EIGE as a background information for country visits (to determine the focus and aspects of the visit)



Working Group 1: Power and Health

Host: Christian Veske, EIGE.

Main messages: In order to improve gender equality in the domain of power, positive measures are needed. Quota legislation was considered by the members, as one of the key solutions. Regarding health, it was noted that the change over time is not substantial. Several members mentioned that intersecting approach to the health domain would help them to communicate better.

Working Group 2: Work and Money

Host: Jolanta Reingarde, EIGE

Main messages: There are some challenges we have to address, such as situation of low-educated people, people with migrant backgrounds, as well as older women. For example, in Malta the challenge is to find jobs for low-educated and older women. In the best performing country Sweden, there are also problems that create precarious situation for low educated people or migrants. This is important, in order to avoid creating new divides in the society. Good examples were noted from Belgium and Germany, where a new legislation is established, transformative changes in place and improvements are already visible.

Working Group 3: Knowledge and Time

Host: Mira Banerjee, EIGE

The availability and cost of day-care for children and the elderly were considered as key factors for improving gender equality in the domain of time. In many countries, challenges in finding employment have led to more traditional roles at home. On the other hand, some countries noted a clear shift in attitudes and increased engagement of men in caring of children and domestic work. Regarding the domain of knowledge, the group discussed reasons for fewer boys graduating from universities. In some countries, it is more attractive for boys to choose employment with a salary instead of university with a low-income perspective. On the other hand, it was noted that women might choose to go to university because of the lack of employment opportunities.



Gender Equality Index: What's next? Working Groups

The objective of these working groups was to map possible uptake and initiatives around the Gender Equality Index in the Member States for 2018. The session was divided into three groups, which all discussed the following topics: 1) Index as a tool for policy monitoring; 2) Index Communication; 3) Who are new stakeholders? As an introduction, Estonian member gave an overview how Estonia has used the Index as a tool for monitoring their national welfare strategy.

Topic: Index as a policy-monitoring tool

Main proposal was to promote and/or combine Index results with the national gender equality research. For example, in Hungary, the National Statistics Office issues a publication on women and men in Hungary and the Index could be reflected there. In Estonia, Ministry of Social Affairs produces Gender Equality Monitoring, which could also make use of the Index.

Action point

Experts Forum members to reflect on a possibility to include Index results in national research and inform EIGE, enabling further discussion with the Management Board.

Topic: Index tells a story

Working groups reiterated the idea of using Index as a strong communication tool during the country visits that EIGE is organising. Additional request was to provide the members with the easy to use Power Point slides.

Action point

EIGE to send Index Power Point Slides once these have been developed. Country visits will have a specific focus on the index.



Topic: Who are the new stakeholders?

Working groups confirmed the need to reach new stakeholders in Member States, but also stressed the need for a strategy to do it. Identified stakeholder groups include the following: ministries responsible for **sports, education and health**. Additionally, NGOs working in these areas should be engaged.

Action point

Experts' Forum members will try to reach out to new stakeholders in their respective countries with the specific information from the Index. When needed they will ask information or support from EIGE.

Additional discussion was around the launch of the Violence domain of the Gender Equality Index. The release will take place in Brussels on 21 November, at an event in the European Parliament. German representative informed that Germany has a working group on domestic violence and asked if EIGE could come and present there or if the report could be delivered there.

Action points

Any specific requests for EIGE to present the results of the index and its domain of violence against women, the Experts' Forum members should send a separate e-mail to stakeholders@eige.europa.eu

EIGE will share the materials on the Violence domain with the members. Experts' Forum members will share these with their networks.

Working Group: Digitalisation, Youth and Gender

Host: Jolanta Reingarde

The objective of this working group was to brainstorm and get additional ideas for EIGE's future research on digitalisation, youth and gender for the Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU. Participants noted that this is a topic still under-researched. From the working group some new

Action point

Experts' Forum members to send information about experts on digitalisation in their Member States to EIGE by December, 2018.

aspects came out, for example, how boys and girls are differently introduced to digitalisation. In addition, the group discussed about potential experts on digitalisation.



Working Group: Education package

Host: Christian Veske

The objective of this working group was to get Experts' Forum ideas on the key aspects to stress in communication of the topic gender and education. Forum members stressed the complexity of this topic (different levels of education, cultural contexts and education systems). Members noted that the problems with gender-sensitivity of schooling start from early levels of education. In higher levels of education (high school and beyond) it is already more difficult to change the mind-set of young people. Members suggested that, even though there are already key players at the international level (e.g. OECD) working in the field, EIGE could contribute with specific focus on EU countries.

Conclusions

Virginija Langbakk

Chair of the Experts Forum closed the meeting by emphasising the importance of working together and increased engagement of the Experts Forum. She also stressed that digitalisation is one of the topics that is still being shaped in EIGE and once it has been taken forward, EIGE will invite Experts' Forum members to contribute extensively.

EIGE confirmed its readiness to encourage and support Experts' Forum members in their outreach with the Gender Equality Index in their Member States, by providing necessary information and communication materials. EIGE welcomes information about Forum members' plans and activities in relation to the index.

The next meeting will take place in May 2018. The exact date will be communicated in the coming months.