



Gender equality and quality of life –
how gender equality can contribute
to development in Europe.
A study of Poland and Norway

Blueprint Guide

GENDER EQUALITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE: EUROPEAN BLUEPRINT INFORMATION AND INSTRUCTIONS

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Introduction

The Blueprint Questionnaire is a detailed proposal for a common European survey on gender equality. It can also be used as a national or regional survey. The research model is flexible and allows for national adaptation and development. This guide specifies the technical and theoretical basis of the analytical model for studying gender equality and design of the questionnaire based on this model. This guide is an appendix to the Blueprint Questionnaire. The Questionnaire is made available on the basis of Creative Commons BY-NC-ND (Attribution + Noncommercial + NoDerivatives) license¹.

The questionnaire has been developed in response to the need for more in-depth knowledge of gender equality, compared to gender indexes and other tools available and used so far for mapping the situation of men and women. Instead of a limited set of variables mostly concerned with the public sphere, it has an extended set of variables covering most parts of life, including childhood and adolescence, work, households and families, parent and child care, civic activity, experiences and attitudes of gender equality, violence, health and quality of life. It is designed for the specific purpose of mapping gender (in)equality as an individual life-course experience in diverse areas of life and analysing the influence of gender equality on quality of life.

¹ For more details see <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

Development of the questionnaire

The Poland 2015 version of the questionnaire was made within the project “Gender equality and quality of life – how gender equality can contribute to development in Europe. A study of Poland and Norway” (GEQ). The project was led by the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Institute of Sociology in partnership with the Centre for Gender Research (STK) and the Institute of Health and Society (Helsam) at the University of Oslo, as well as with the Chair of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine at Jagiellonian University Medical College. The project was funded from the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 in the framework of Project Contract No Pol-Nor/200641/63/2013.

The Blueprint Questionnaire, as well as the 2015 Poland version, was made by the GEQ consortium.² The Poland 2015 questionnaire was prepared on the basis of the Norwegian study “Gender Equality and Quality of Life: A Norwegian Perspective”, conducted in 2007 (Holter, Svare and Egeland 2009). For a full description of the questionnaire and sources for the questions used in the research in Poland see Krzaklewska et al. 2016.

The Blueprint Questionnaire was prepared taking into account the results from the Poland 2015 survey, as well as the Norway 2007 results, and other research (e.g. IMAGES 2013). It is an elaborated and reflected version of the questionnaire used in Poland, created in order to be used in other countries. Nevertheless, the questionnaire has to be adjusted each time to the social, economic, political, cultural contexts of the country where the study is to be carried out. Read more about the theoretical basis of the questionnaire in Krzaklewska 2016, Holter 2016 and Holter et al. 2016.

Design of the questionnaire

The questionnaire is divided into nine thematic blocks:

- Block A Respondent’s characteristics
- Block B Childhood and adolescence including education
- Block C Work
- Block D Housing situation, financial standing and personal life
- Block E Parents and children/care
- Block F Civic activity
- Block G Gender equality – experiences and attitudes
- Block H Health and quality of life
- Block I Violence

The questionnaire is designed with the respondent’s biography in mind, starting from childhood and youth, followed by adult experiences. Use of a timeline improves the quality of the answers.

Analytical model

Underneath the surface, the anatomy of the survey consists of three main groups of variables – background, gender equality and effect variables. The background variables include information about

² Krystyna Slany, Øystein Gullvåg Holter, Ewa Krzaklewska, Beata Kowalska, Marta Warat, Trine Rogg Korsvik, Aleksandra Migalska, Barbara Woźniak, Kari Solbrække, Piotr Brzyski, Ewelina Ciaputa, Anna Ratecka, Beata Tobiasz-Adamczyk.

the respondent's characteristics such as age, income and education. The core gender equality variables connect directly to the theme, and some of them are used to construct gender equality indexes (described below in detail). The gender equality indexes are: gender equality in childhood, gender formation (psychological gender identity), male-dominated resource balance, gender-equal attitudes and gender-equal practices (retained from the 2007 model), as well as male power and control and traditional gender roles (added in the 2015 model). The effect variables include quality of life, health, conflict and violence. The quality of life is measured by the Gender Equality Study Quality of Life Scale (GEQoLS), which consists of six dimensions: somatic, psychological, social, financial, infrastructural, and life satisfaction.

While the model proposes a certain way of measuring gender equality dimensions, each index can be measured in somewhat different ways, although the overall meaning of the index should not be changed. For example, there are many gender equal attitudes variables in the survey, but only some of these are selected for the gender equal attitude index. The most meaningful gender attitude questions can be selected for the particular country in order to best capture the attitudes that actually have an impact on other dimensions or effect variables.

Gender equality indexes

Besides the thematic structure, the questionnaire included the following subdimensions of gender equality, operationalised as indexes. Here we list the questions which were used to construct the following gender equality indexes.

Gender equal attitudes: DC5_2, DC4_4, DC4_6, DC4_10, E11, G6_2, G6_3.

Gender equal practices:

- Sub-index of care practices: DA19_10, DA19_11, DA19_12, DA19_13.
- Sub-index of household duties division: DA19_01 – DA19_06, DA16_08.
- Sub-index of decision making: DA18_1 – DA18_7.

The male-dominated resource balance index: A3, C9, D7, DA4, DA14.

Gender formation: DC5_08, DC5_09, G4_1, H6_M/H6_K.

Gender equality in childhood: B17, B21, B25, B26.

Male power³: DA20, DA25, DA26, DA16, I4_1, I4_2, I4_3, I4_6, DA30_1, DA30_2.

Traditional gender roles⁴: DC5_1, DC5_6, DC7_8, G.6_5.

Gender Equality Study Quality of Life Scale (GESQoLS)

Quality of life is an independent variable in the GEQ study, and the aim of the analysis is to find out whether there is a relationship between the studied dimensions of gender equality and men and

³ For now the constructed index measures only male power in the relationship. There is a possibility in the future to develop the index further to grasp the power balance between partners.

⁴ Gender role attitudes were treated as part of GE attitudes in the Norway 2007 model, but were markedly more important in the Poland material and therefore singled out as a specific dimension.

women's quality of life. The GESQoLS (Gender Equality Study Quality of Life Scale) was developed on the basis of the WHOQOL-BREF instrument and through principal component analysis of the relevant variables in the Polish survey data. The new scale allows a comprehensive evaluation of individuals' self-assessment of six dimensions of quality of life: somatic, psychological, social, financial, infrastructural, and life satisfaction.

It should be noted that this is one of several approaches to the new survey data concerning quality of life and health. Some of the original Norway 2007 questions, not used in the Poland 2015 version, are included in the list of additional questions (pool questions). However, since the Poland survey mainly confirmed interesting new results of the WHO-based approach, it is retained in the blueprint questionnaire.

Guidelines for researchers

Method development

The two main steps of the method development are:

1. Before the survey – pretesting, adapting questionnaire, creating a good platform for combined methods and interdisciplinary research (see below), pilot study.
2. After the survey – analyses of the data, comparing with qualitative results, overall discussions and analyses.

Even if there is not much funding for the study, and a basic (short) version is all that can be applied, it is important that the researcher team takes time for informal pretesting of the questionnaire, discussing the results, and applying the necessary changes and modifications. The pretesting should include respondents selected for diversity (gender, age, place of living, education) and having diverse experience, e.g. different work or family situations.

In development of the study, it is important to create awareness of the analytical model behind the questionnaire. Variables are used to map specific items, but are usually also part of one of the indexes (dimensions) of the model, and should help illuminate these. Therefore, when selecting variables for an index, important are both conceptual criteria (see below) as well as technical criteria (e.g. that the variable is precise and concrete, has a meaningful distribution, etc.). In short, variable selection requires thought and needs pretesting.⁵

The Blueprint Survey offers a basis for national studies as well as European comparison. As described below, it is designed to be flexible, in order to balance the need for “best fit” in the national context and the need for European-level data. The basic aim is to capture the dynamics of gender equality processes and how these relate to other social hierarchy as well as to health and quality of life.

Tool flexibility

The Norway 2007 model with five dimensions of gender equality was based on a broad empirical evaluation of the evidence as well as varied theoretical perspectives. This open approach has been

⁵ In the case of Poland, this was done through focus group interviews.

extended since then. The blueprint model is flexible in several ways, in order to be adaptable to the wide variation in Europe regarding gender equality issues

Research teams cooperation

Each national team in a European survey must be able to adapt the survey model and design to their contexts as far as possible, within the limits of a representative survey where most questions and methods are common.

The blueprint is a way to do a new type of gender equality survey, linked to a new type of research cooperation. A specific aim of the Poland–Norway project (GEQ) was to extend the European learning model in our area, beyond the “copying of best practice” level, towards better mutual in-depth learning. The learning model that worked well in the Poland–Norway case is retained in the blueprint questionnaire.

Mixed-method approach

The survey can be made alone, but it should be accompanied by a minimum of qualitative study. The qualitative study can also be used after the survey to improve the interpretation of the results.

The quantitative method aims for “robust results” and a realist approach focusing on the main messages in the data. Results should appear fairly consistently across different statistical methods, from two-way crosstabs to more complex analyses. There may be “advanced” results, applying multivariate analyses, but unless they have backing in the rest of the study including the qualitative parts, they are treated with caution.

Sampling and study population

The survey should be fully representative for a country/region. It should mirror the diversity of the population, including migrants, diverse socio-economic classes, regional diversity, etc. (e.g. not being just a middle-class recruited panel). Although representative samples are the preferred solution, the survey can be adapted to specific target samples too (e.g. students). The survey should be applied to a population above 18 years old.

The survey should be run by a highly qualified research company (or possibly by the research team itself if they have adequate capacities).

A larger sample (more than 2000 respondents) allows more advanced analyses. When the sample is reduced, multivariate techniques using many explanatory or associated variables become less reliable.

Special attention should be paid to respondents who refuse to participate in the study (dropouts) – if possible some data (e.g. basic demographics, reasons for non-participation, general attitude towards the subject of gender equality, quality of life) on dropouts should be gathered and analysed.

Questionnaire adaptation

As shown, the survey can be adapted, but the core dimensions (indexes of gender equality and quality of life) should be kept, and the Blueprint version should be followed unless there are good reasons for the change. This includes how the questions are formulated and the list of answer alternatives. Additional questions, improved formulations or answer alternatives can also be tested and later considered in further research (these are marked in the questionnaire as “pool of questions”). The

additional questions serve to highlight specific issues in the country/region and can be used if needed or relevant in the context.

In some cases the answer alternatives have to be changed. This concerns e.g. adjustment of the income and education scales (the preferred option would be European standard scales, but this is not applied in this version of the Blueprint).

Language and translation issues

Special attention should be paid to issues of language and translations. As the Blueprint is in English, there are also Polish and Norwegian versions of the 2015 questionnaire available on request.

Survey techniques

In the case of the Polish survey, a computer-assisted individual interview (face-to-face) was used with some parts being self-filled by respondents, while in Norway the study was conducted through mail and self-filled questionnaires. Whereas a face-to-face interview gives the interviewer better control over completion of the questionnaire, with intimate and sensitive questions (e.g. concerning conflicts or violence) a self-filled individual questionnaire is preferable. A computer-assisted individual interview allows greater control over filters and limits missing data.

Ethical Considerations

If using this Blueprint, the country-specific ethical guidelines for sample survey research should be followed, including informed consent and safeguarding of data. All data or combinations of data should ensure full anonymity.

Usage of the Blueprint Questionnaire and Guide

Anyone using the Blueprint Questionnaire and Guide, in part or as a whole, should refer to these documents. Also, potential users are encouraged to get in contact with the GEQ team (see below) to ensure compatibility and common standards.

The Blueprint Questionnaire and Guide are made as a proposal for a common European survey, and the preferred method of survey employment is through European cooperation.⁶ European development can in our view be made in two (or more) steps, starting with a pilot in some countries, and then apply to all countries if the pilot is successful. The pilot countries should be selected for European diversity, and be combined with gender equality research development in the country.

However, this European plan may not be realistic in the short term. Researchers in some countries may want to run the survey in a smaller (and less expensive) version, as part of a survey taking up other issues, or similar (example: a survey on immigration issues, including gender perspectives). Although it is not done in the present Blueprint, a “minimal” version of the survey can be made.

The results of running the Blueprint Survey (in full or adapted version) should be included in the European database for surveys using the model. The new research instrument requires an organisational basis, preferably a European research team, to work optimally on the European level. The tasks include administering and updating the common database, and making it freely available for

⁶ At the time of writing, we have no indication whether the proposal will be followed up, or in what way.

researchers (examples of this type of development can be found in the case of harmonised time use studies, ISSP, ESS and others).

Contact us

If you wish to use extended parts of the questionnaire, if you want to cooperate in the organisation of the European database, or if you would like to learn more about constructing gender equality indexes, please contact Ewa Krzaklewska (ewa.krzaklewska@uj.edu.pl), Anna Ratecka (anna.ratecka@uj.edu.pl) or Øystein Gullvåg Holter (o.g.holter@stk.uio.no).

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