

Statistical tools to monitor and assess gender mainstreaming and impact on policy-making at the international, EU and national level

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Preliminary remarks

Challenging gender policies at the international, regional and national level require the adoption and the advancement of statistical methodologies and tools to enhance the conditions of women and girls in the view of the new development framework represented by the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

But gender policies, as defined primarily by national governmental authorities, in collaboration with interested stakeholders and in compliance with official guidelines and documentation provided by multilateral systems, should be also based upon clear acknowledgement of principles and standard terms informing the policy priorities in the medium and long term.

Hence, the contribution is aimed firstly to give an introductory overview about relevant concepts whose contents have been formulated by the United Nations and the European Union glossaries to set the point over definitions.

Indeed, these concepts are not enough reasonable if not linked to statistical data collection and related analytical methodologies to monitor and assess gender equality and equal opportunities, as pursued by States in the implementation of their policies. Therefore, the second issue that will be developed attains on the key indexes and indicators elaborated and adopted to gradually measure the achievement of gender equality in each State put under monitoring.

A specific topic that will be later explored in the contribution is the nexus between economic independence of women and girls as a key prerequisite to prevent and prevent any form of dependence inflating gender violence, abuse and exploitation. This aspect has been investigated according to a statistical standpoint not only within the United Nations framework – dealing with different regional areas and peculiar country-cases, but also at the European Union level – through careful examination of the phenomenon of gender-based violence by comparing similar conditions of women and girls in EU Member States. In the last part of the contribution, the Italian case is presented to make an interesting assessment about statistics resulting from official/public and unofficial/private data collection on the issue under reference.

Especially at the EU and Italian level, the statistical methodologies have proved to be innovative by reminding to the 2030 Agenda and related SDGs, in a way to inform the recent policy-making processes to advance in gender equality and equal opportunities.

The definition of gender mainstreaming along the global and European perspective and its relevance on policy-making

A global, regional and national investigation over gender-based innovation for equitable SDG outcomes should start from the definition of two mutual concepts – ‘gender’ and ‘gender mainstreaming’ to set the conceptual scene and to draft gender policies for a profitable implementation.

As provided by the UN Women Training Centre's Glossary: "Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that a given society at a given time considers appropriate for men and women. In addition to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender equally refers to the relations between women and those between men [...]". The same relevance is attributed to the concept by the EIGE Glossary: "Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes". However in the EIGE view, the social component of gender should be underlined and requires a dynamic and contextualized approach for a comprehensive definition of this concept: "Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context. In most societies there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources, as well as decision-making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age".

Apart from a general and comprehensive definition of the concept of gender in the international and national common etymology, further accuracy is needed upon the legal difference between gender equality and equity as provided by the international and EU above mentioned glossaries. This correctness is at the core of the shaping and planning actions to study gender dynamics from a statistical point of view. Equality entails not only equal rights of women and men but implies "that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men", to be considered as an indicator of sustainable people-centered development. Meanwhile equity, especially at the international level, "denotes an element of interpretation of social justice, usually based on tradition, custom, religion or culture, which is most often to the detriment to women" and for this reason it is required for a fair treatment of women and men as well as for proper gradual social advancement of women. Hence, clearly bearing in mind these theoretical concepts they should be intertwined with another definition that is useful not for shaping and planning statistics but to facilitate the assessment of gender policies as a key-component of statistical data collection and related evaluation about the conditions of women worldwide. We should refer to the broad meaning of gender mainstreaming. It maintains a specific relevance respectively in the UN and EU frameworks. In the first it is retained as "not a goal or objective on its own. It is a strategy for implementing greater equality for women and girls in relation to men and boys [...]". In the latter "Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making". So far it has required of a broad spectrum of actions, including: 1. the gathering of any sex-disaggregated data and information that are useful to analyse the situation of women and men in the respective policy domain; 2. gender analysis and gender impact assessing tools (i.e. indicators monitoring of equality objectives or gender budgeting) concerning the drafting of legislative measures and the planning of policies and programs as implemented in the political, economic and social environments to achieve gender equality; 3. transparently reporting of monitoring and evaluation results and lessons learned, also making recommendations to public authorities in charge for the gender policy and programs.

These considerations led to the last concept which endorses all the previous ones: gender analysis represents an essential approach to link gender mainstreaming and policy

making as reliable and mutual gender-effective goals. In the international and EU language, it is “a critical examination of how differences in gender roles, activities, needs, opportunities and rights/entitlements affect men, women, girls and boys in certain situation or contexts”. Thus far it is a key-tool to examine, above all at the statistical level, “the relationships between females and males and their access to and control of resources and the constraints they face relative to each other” covering “all sector assessments or situational analyses to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by interventions, and that where possible, greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted”.

The ratio for the elaboration of global, EU and national gender indexes to measure equality and equal opportunities of women and girls

As a preliminary remark, statistical tools – i.e. indexes and indicators – to monitor, measure and compare the situation of women and men over time in a certain policy area, a specific program or activity, demand for a dual quantitative and qualitative methodology. Hence, gender statistics reflect the following minimum criteria: 1. data are collected and presented disaggregated by sex as a primary and general classification; 2. Data reflect gender issues; 3. data are based on concepts and definitions that adequately represent the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives; 4. data collection should take into consideration stereotypes and social and cultural factors that might generate gender biases.

This said, an overview of other indexes that have been elaborated at the global/UN, EU and national/ITA level and the recorded progress of gender equality in 2019 could be convenient to understand how much statistical tools are relevant to define key policies to pursue the promotion and protection of women’s rights and to push for greater advancement of the gender mainstreaming approach.

The first gender indexes were proposed in 1995 by UNDP. The Gender-related Development Index (GDI) and the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM) are two composite indexes whose main purpose was to measure the gap between women and men’s opportunities and capabilities and to assess progress made in reducing gender disparities. Their impact has been relevant in assisting governments and policy-makers monitoring the condition of women and in designing policies and programs to equalize opportunities provided to women and men. However, both GDI and GEM have been strongly criticized for their limitations in accurately capturing gender disparities and their weakness in reflecting critical, concurrent gender issues.

Hence, UNDP has provided for amending them by offering two alternative indexes in 2010: the Gender Inequality Index (GII) and the new Gender Development Index (GDI).

The first is instrumental to measure the loss in human development due to inequality between female and male achievements in three dimensions: measured by maternal mortality ratio and adolescent birth rates; empowerment, measured by proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females and proportion of adult females and males aged 25 years and older with at least some secondary education; and economic status, expressed as labour market participation and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older. The assessment ranges from zero (perfect equality) to one (women fare as poorly as possible in all three dimensions): it entails that the higher the GII value the more disparities between females and males and the more loss to human development.

The Gender Development Index (GDI) measures gender gaps in human development achievements by accounting for disparities between women and men in three dimensions of human development: health, knowledge and living standards. The same component

indicators used for the Human Development Index (HDI) allow to calculate separately the conditions of women and men in these three areas, really impacting on policy design to overcome the gender gap.

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals, the statistical framework and related indicators have changed also in the gender perspective. In particular SDG 5, provided by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on SDG Indicators (IAEG-SDGs) and endorsed by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2016, encompasses several indicators to measure gender equality according to the following key targets:

<i>5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere</i>	<i>5.1.1 - Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex</i>
<i>5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation</i>	<i>5.2.1 - Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age</i>
	<i>5.2.2 - Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than an intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence</i>
<i>5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation</i>	<i>5.3.1 - Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</i>
	<i>5.3.2 - Proportion of girls and women aged 15-49 years who have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, by age</i>
<i>5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate</i>	<i>5.4.1 - Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location</i>
<i>5.5 Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life</i>	<i>5.5.1 - Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments and local governments</i>
	<i>5.5.2 - Proportion of women in managerial positions</i>
<i>5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and</i>	<i>5.6.1 - Proportion of women aged 15-49 years who make their own informed decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care</i>

<i>the outcome documents of their review conferences</i>	
	<i>5.6.2 - Number of countries with laws and regulations that guarantee women aged 15-49 years access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education</i>
<i>5.a - Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws</i>	<i>5.a.1 - (a) Proportion of total agricultural population with ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex; and (b) share of women among owners or rights-bearers of agricultural land, by type of tenure</i>
	<i>5.a.2 - Proportion of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control</i>
<i>5.b - Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women</i>	<i>5.b.1 - Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex</i>
<i>5.c - Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels</i>	<i>5.c.1 - Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment</i>

From 2016 to 2019 the above-mentioned targets and related indicators proved to be enough suitable to assess results and gaps as for gender equality worldwide. Women are yet victims of physical and/or sexual partner violence, with the exception of declining rates about early marriage and female genital mutilation in Developing Countries. The female underrepresentation and limited participation to decision-making processes have been partially tackled by gender quotas. Similar conditions are recorded in the employment: women devote on average roughly three times more hours a day to unpaid care and domestic work than men, do not occupy managerial positions, do not deserve their time for paid work, education and leisure and suffer from gender-based socioeconomic disadvantages. Finally, notwithstanding relevant laws reforms gender discrimination persists and implies strong gaps in legal protection in public and private life, complemented by scarce gender budgeting to address structural issues to countering gender inequality. Within the EU framework, a double-track approach to introduce valuable indicators to assess gender equality has been adopted.

On a general note, in line with SDG5, Eurostat has developed proper SDGs indicators by selecting specific targets, such as gender-based violence, education, employment and leadership positions with satisfactory results at all. More specifically the mandate to monitor, measure and assess gender equality among the 28 EU MS has been assigned to the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE).

To this scope EIGE created in 2013 a proper tool, the Gender Equality Index (GEI). It not only tracks and reports progress on gender equality comprehensively but also supports policy makers at the national and EU level to design and implement more effective gender measures. If compared with formerly mentioned indexes, GEI is based upon the

opportunity to offer meaningful comparisons among different policy areas, along three complementary approaches to gender equality: sameness, difference and transformative. These approaches are employed to identify gender gaps between women and men in various economic and social domains, over time and in line with a geographical/regional ratio, with the ultimate aim to evaluate the degree of effectiveness between different measures and policies implemented as per gender equality at EU level.

At the national level the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) has worked for the adoption of a basic methodology concerning SDGs indicators within the National Statistical System (SISTAN), in line with international strategies. Definitely, meeting the global and EU demand for information on sustainability is a real challenge but also for the National Statistical System itself.

The current statistical approach has taken into account the evolution of metadata, due to the 2020 revision of indicators suggested by Inter Agency Expert Group on SDGs (UN-IAEG-SDG). At the same time, significant inter-institutional exchange for thematic enrichment and methodological development has been carried out in order to provide a comprehensive statistical overview. From 95 national measures for 66 UN indicators as of December 2016, 325 statistical measures for 130 UN indicators have been resulted and made available also in Statistical Data and Metadata Exchange (SDMX) format, as suggested at the international level.

An integrated appraisal of targets and indicators has been undoubtedly helpful and has needed a taxonomy of measures. At the beginning national statistical measures have been identified equally to indicators required by the UN-IAEG; otherwise, the measures have been similar or partial; additional statistical measures correlated to the national context have been introduced. In summary: 98 statistical measures are identical, 128 are proxies or partial and 99 are national context-specific. With reference to the "no one left behind" principle, in order to meet the global, national and territorial information demand together, special attention has been paid to regional disaggregated data, i.e. by level of urbanisation, gender, citizenship, disability. It has to be said that the SDGs statistics reflect the national system of Fair and Sustainable Welfare Indicators.

In the 2020 Report recently released by ISTAT, a focus on SDGs development is proposed based on an comprehensive assessment of variations recorded among the indicators compared both to the previous year and, in a medium-term perspective, to the last decade. On an experimental basis, 3 indexes are proposed for a preliminary analysis over the social, environmental and economic dimensions. Overall, 41 indicators have been considered for the social dimension, 32 for the economic dimension and 12 for the environmental dimension. In the period under reference, composite indicators show a trend towards improvement, which is more emphasized for the environmental and social dimensions than for the economic one.

These data are confirmed, also recalling the legislative and programmatic measures adopted by the Italian Government, in the 2019 ASVIS Report.

The ratio between employment rate of women with children of pre-school age and employment rate of women without children is an indirect indicator that might evaluate the life-work balance, especially in families with young children. Often limited balance is due to a lack of welfare services to supporting and/or substituting daily childcare. This can lead women to give up their job. In relation to female employment rate of women aged 25-49 with pre-school children (0-5 years) or without children (SDG5.4.1), the former ones are mostly vulnerable, particularly in Southern Italy. As reported by ASVIS on this point, the rules governing funding for policies designed to benefit families have been revised and further measures regarding the work-life balance and family support have been introduced. Moreover, as per work-life balance, while waiting for for the reception of the EU Parliament Directive 2019/1158/EU, designed to improve the work-life balance for

families, the 2019 Budget Law has introduced greater flexibility regarding the period covered by maternity leave.

With regard to SDG 5.5.1 (Proportion of women in Parliament and local governments), in seven Regions the female quota of parliamentarians is more than 40% of the total elected, while it exceeds 20% in almost all the other Regions.

In addition, in relation to SDG 5.5.2 (Proportion of women in management positions), in 2019 Italy is among the EU countries where the proportion of women in the boards of directors is higher (36.1%). The proportion of women in decision-making bodies is less high (18.6%, an increase of 1.8 percentage points compared to 2019). This performance is a direct consequence of the execution of governmental policies aimed at protecting gender equality in management and control bodies of listed companies and public companies. On this point a MoU for the development and growth of female entrepreneurship and self-employment, signed on 4 June 2014, has been further extended until 31 December 2019. Although a fixed one-third (33%) gender quota was introduced initially, and the 2020 Budget Law has provided for an increase up to two fifths (40%), the constant rate (+ 6.6 percentage points compared to 2013) still seems far from the desired levels of gender equality. In this regard, Directive 2/19 issued by the Ministry for the Public Administration and the Undersecretary for equal opportunities on 26 June 2019, has introduced further “Measures to foster equal opportunities and strengthen the role of equality committees within public entities”.

Finally, it is interesting to mention the relationship with new technologies (SDG 5.b.1, Proportion of individuals owning a mobile phone by gender): gender differences in mobile phone use have decreased, while for internet use the gender gap decreased over time, from just under 12 percentage points in 2010 to 4.7 points in 2019.

Gender economic independence as a precondition to reinforce the condition of women and girls to prevent any form of gender-based violence, abuse and exploitation: a statistical global, EU and national approach

The nexus between the economic independence of women and girls and their self-esteem to counter any form of violence, abuse and exploitation has been explored through the statistical lens to inform the need to adopt proper policies to prevent gender-based violence.

In the UN Glossary gender-based violence (GBV) takes in “any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males”. This means that “the nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions”, including sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance.

Because of the complexity of the issue, GBV includes: 1. physical violence, that is an act attempting to or resulting in pain and/or physical injury, sometimes leading to femicide, or the gender-based killing of a woman; 2. verbal violence, which could include insulting or threatening in private or public settings; 3. sexual violence, that means many hurtful actions in the public and private sphere (i.e. rape - sexual violence including some form of penetration of the victim’s body, marital rape and attempted rape; forced condition in front of others, forced unsafe sex, sexual harassment, abuse for reproduction - forced pregnancy, forced abortion, forced sterilization); 4. psychological violence, that reminds to former acts of violence, or purposeful ignorance and neglect of the other.

Finally, the GBV concept entails socio-economic violence: it is retained both a cause and an effect of dominant gender power relations in societies, such as taking away the victim’s

earnings, not allowing her to have a separate income, denial of access to education or (equally) paid work (mainly to women), denial of access to services, exclusion from certain jobs, denial of the enjoyment and exercise of civil, cultural, social, or political rights.

In the EU gender language, GBV is deeply rooted in gender inequality and is interchangeable with violence against women by EIGE due to the fact that, despite both women and men experience GBV, the majority of victims are women and girls. By referring to the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, GBV is defined as “physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life”. Multiple and complementary forms of discrimination and violence could affect women so that a statistical comprehensive approach has been adopted at the EU level, covering: 1. physical violence: any act which causes physical harm as a result of unlawful physical force; 2. sexual violence: any sexual act performed on an individual without their consent; 3. psychological violence: any act which causes psychological harm to an individual; 4. economic violence: any act or behavior which causes economic harm to an individual.

Particularly the latter could be considered also in a dual perspective, as structural or institutional violence, which can be defined as the subordination of women in economic, social and political life. By using the GEI according to a cross-cutting approach, the so-called ‘violence’ domain is investigated by EIGE based on the recognition of violence as an expression of power linked to the domination of some forms of masculinity, mostly over women. In this context GBV and violence against women are tackled taking into consideration direct and indirect features. The first ones consist of a violation of human rights and the principle of discrimination, therefore require addressing root-causes and dealing with potential and factual consequences on women; the latter ones demand countering cultural and social attitudes and stereotypes which have been translated into beliefs, values and norms: these criteria have gradually imposed different and contrasting codes of femininity and masculinity, so far entailing concrete disadvantages for women in public and private life.

Differently, to carry out an in-depth analysis over GBV, EIGE developed in 2013 an ad hoc project and related online ‘mapping tool’ concerning the current status and potential of administrative sources of GBV data across the EU. The main purpose of this project has been to provide a comparable data collection on different types of violence against women, and to support EU MS to prevent and counter the phenomenon at the national level. Indeed, data on violence against women can be obtained from different sources, including via sample surveys (as the closest proxy to real prevalence or incident rates), or from administrative institutions dealing with reported cases of violence against women (such as the police, justice, or health and social services). Official statistics are compiled and produced, usually by National Statistical Offices, based on data from surveys and/or administrative sources. So a specific methodology was early introduced and progressively updated, to face potential GBV underreporting: an initial mapping the current status and potential of administrative data sources on gender-based violence in the EU; the terminology and indicators for data collection on rape, femicide and intimate partner violence; the improvement of police and justice data on intimate partner violence against women. The project has focused on five classifications of violence against women: intimate partner violence (all types); sexual violence (outside intimate relationship), which includes: rape; sexual assault (excluding rape); sexual harassment; and stalking. Specifically a set of 13 indicators on intimate partner violence have been developed, to be used specifically by the police and the justice sectors. Furthermore, a specific set of recommendations to Eurostat have been compiled, in order to guide MS to improve administrative data collection on intimate partner violence, in terms of the overall quality

and reliability of data, availability, accessibility and comparability. Of the 144 administrative data sources identified, the majority record incidents related to intimate partner violence, rape and sexual assault. Fewer sources of administrative data cover sexual harassment and stalking. Among the critical gaps recorded for data collection, there are: substantial differences in legal definitions of forms of GBV prevent measurement in a comparable way across the EU MS, decentralized data collection and lack of a coding system to register data on violence against women used systematically within and across agencies.

Within the Italian system, the methodology adopted in 2018 by ISTAT on stereotypes about gender roles and the social image of violence is implemented through an agreement with the Department for Equal Opportunities at the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. The agreement provides for the creation of an integrated and multi-source Information System on violence against women. It contains data on violence against women in its various forms, to be monitored both qualitatively and quantitatively, recalling the Italian legal commitment following the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) by Law No. 77 of 27 June 2013, particularly its Articles 11, 12 and 14. The ISTAT survey run through six dimensions: gender role stereotypes and stereotypes about sexual violence, perception of spreading violence, causes of violence within the couple, acceptability of violence within the couple.

A full acknowledgement of violence against women is essential to better comprehend its cultural causes of violence and monitor them over time, but also for the development of policies and of a proper monitoring system to counter violence against women. For this reason, in its latest 2020 Report on SDGs, ISTAT has proposed an in-depth study on this issue. With reference to SDG 5.2.1 (Proportion of women and girls, at least 15 years of age, who have had at least one partner in life and have been victims in the last 12 months of physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or previous partner, by form of violence and by age group), ISTAT has introduced a proxy indicator, accompanied by information on assistance and support services to women who suffer physical, sexual and psychological violence. In 2018, 133 murders of women were committed in Italy (10 more than in 2017). About 80% of these crimes were committed by people who known to the victim: partners, former partners and family members. In 2017, there were 253 anti-violence centres (CAV) 211 shelter homes active in Italy, which hosted respectively 43,467 and 1,786 women.

The ASVIS 2019 Report emphasizes the relevance of Law No, 69 of 19 July 2019, the so-called “Code Red”, to protect victims of domestic and gender-based violence by amending the criminal code and the code of criminal procedure. The Law has introduced important new offences, such as revenge porn, forced marriage and permanent facial injury. Provisions regarding the violation of restraining orders and stay away orders have been strengthened, whilst sex offenders must receive psychotherapy, and special training courses are to be organised for police, Carabinieri corps and prison officers. Furthermore the Decision adopted by the Italian Senate on 16 October 2018, to set up a Committee to look into the femicide phenomenon, marks a relevant step. This Committee has the mandate of investigating the real size of the problem and the conditions and causes that lead to such crimes, monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention and identifying any inconsistencies or shortcomings in the current legislation.

Closing remarks

The multi-level comparison offered by global, regional and national systems for the statistical analysis of women’s condition, with particular attention to GBV, leads to some general conclusions.

First of all, it is necessary to start from common, accepted and consolidated definitions of the phenomena under reference: this aspect has been found in all these systems, with slight differences relating to the lens of the gender phenomenon as a whole.

At the same time, gender equality requires complex legislative measures, policies and programmes: however, none of these instruments can be effective if considered separately and if they lack a satisfactory quantitative and qualitative statistical framework. In such perspective, the systems have offered differentiated solutions, recently aligned through the framework defined by the SDGs introduced in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the focus devoted to the issues of violence against women and gender-based violence has proved to be effective to move from statistical knowledge to concrete and targeted interventions, especially at the national level.

Finally, addressing the challenges for gender equality and gender empowerment requires a joint cross-cutting effort across all the systems explored: public administrations, research centres, the entire society where cultural and social attitudes need to evolve to ensure that the fight against gender discrimination and the promotion and protection of women's rights are adequately and positively prevented, addressed and managed.