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## MODERNIZING THE MECHANISM OF STATE REGULATION OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN THE INNOVATION SPHERE IN KAZAKHSTAN

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**Abstract.** *In the modern world, the development of society has created the conditions for new spheres of human activity. With new systems of production and the management of these processes, innovations are changing the roles of men and women. The more we move into the future, the more women are able to fulfil their potential and enhance their abilities, but their contributions to economic activity, growth, and well-being are much lower than they could be. Moreover, employment in Kazakhstan remains divided into different segments, and this, accordingly, has a significant impact on gender determinants in the development of an innovative type of employment. There are socio-demographic, technical, and institutional constraints, alongside professional and even personal risks, in the formation of innovative employment. In view of the above, this paper aims to analyse the problems of modernising the mechanism of the state regulation of women's employment in the Republic of Kazakhstan and find solutions to form appropriate gender relations in economic and other spheres. The authors develop a policy of state intervention, taking into account the experience of other countries, to eliminate the issues that hinder the development of gender equality. To achieve these goals, the following actions are suggested: the introduction of gender planning into the state budget and the application of EU practices within the budget cycle; and the development a program to increase the access of women to microfinance services. In the course of this study, analysis, synthesis, statistical, graphical, and other methods were used.*

**Keywords:** *gender policy, employment, business innovation, economics.*

**Reikšminiai žodžiai:** *lyčių politika, užimtumas, verslo inovacijos, ekonomika.*

## **Introduction**

Today, the Republic of Kazakhstan has every possibility to create an innovative and invested model for the mechanism of women's development. This is evidenced by the high level of the higher education system in the country, which contributes to the training of women. During a methodological literature review, one author concluded that the government of Kazakhstan needs to improve the mechanisms for the employment of women, which will contribute to the creation of new jobs for qualified, professional, and intellectual women (Kiselyova, Koroshchenko, and Robson 2021, 63–65). In 2019, Kazakhstan dropped 12 positions in the gender equality rating. The relevance of Kazakhstani research in the field of equality is important as there has been no progress made in the promotion of gender values in the country.

It should be recognised that the situation regarding gender equality in Kazakhstan is in a state of deep contradiction that has developed between the formal policy of non-discrimination and the reality of life. This is evidenced by perceived gender equality in state and public life and the implementation of the constitutional principle of equal rights and opportunities of the sexes on the one hand, and the actual discrimination of women in employment and the infringement of their social rights in economic life on the other (Pahomov, Karikh and Bondarenko 2021, 81–82). The authors developed a methodological sequence for studying labor and social security legislation in Kazakhstan as follows:– the study of the structure and guarantees of the implementation of the principle of gender equality in the Constitution of Kazakhstan;

- the generalisation of the international standards of equality of men and women from the perspective of implementation in national legislation;
- the study of labour legislation from the perspective of determining gender differences in employment conditions, including:
  - an analysis of the implementation of equality in access to employment, upon the conclusion of an employment contract, and in the use of working and rest time;
  - the study of guarantees of the right to fair remuneration and equal guarantees of protection against unjustified dismissals.
- a study of the problems of gender inequality in social security rights in Kazakhstan;
- the identification of discriminatory norms in the appointment of pensions, benefits, targeted social assistance, and in the provision of social services;– and the generalisation and formulation of recommendations and proposals aimed at eliminating discriminatory standards of employment and social protection from the law.

Considering current trends in the development of the economy alongside innovation processes, labour, and employment, it is necessary to distinguish between general civilisational and regional civilisational approaches. In the general civilisational sense, Western countries are in the post-industrial stage of development, and the rest of hu-

manity – including the Republic of Kazakhstan – is in the industrial stage. This stage is characterised by the presence of large fragments of pre-industrial structures, especially agriculture, which objectively determines differences in the direction of economic development. In technologically advanced countries, information and communication resources are most important, whereas in economies like the Republic of Kazakhstan this position is occupied by investment and innovation resources.

The national economy can successfully compete in the market on condition of the constant improvement of goods and services produced and the development of new directions. This is because the trend in global development is such that large industrial corporations are formed under the influence of scientific and technological progress, and the scale of the global market is expanding (Nikolaychuk 2021, 46–48). As a result of these objective processes, competition at the inter-state level is intensifying.

### **Literature review**

Over the last 20–25 years in developed countries, there has been a transition towards the fifth technological order and the formation of the so-called innovation economy, which is characterised by: the recognition of the economic value of knowledge; a focus on the practical application of skills; the availability of special financial institutions and instruments; the development of innovation infrastructure; a coordinated system of innovation support mechanisms; and the relationship between knowledge and social problems in the development of society (Baregheh, Rowley, and Sambrook 2009). The basis of the new paradigm is made up of such technologies as industrial robots, microprocessors, personal computers, and machine tools with numerical controls.

The introduction of this process, as Kairatova and Myltykbayeva (2017) accurately noted, allows for the achievement of individualisation of production and consumption, increased flexibility and production diversification, and the integration of production and marketing, which make it possible to take into account the requirements of the international market. As a result, innovation cycles of all types of innovations are reduced. In this regard, the countries of the world have demonstrated that no state can independently create and modernise an innovation system that can significantly increase the competitiveness of the national economies of all countries. It is significant that a systematic approach to creating an innovative model is the basis of modern relations, in which great emphasis is placed on social growth.

The Republic of Kazakhstan is taking serious steps towards the modernisation of the innovation system: innovation hubs and techno parks are opening; legislation is being improved; a large amount of finance is being invested in support of innovative projects; and favourable conditions are being created for business ventures.

Nevertheless, today the country needs to develop competence in the formation of appropriate gender relations in the innovation sphere. Businesses should become the main actors in the innovation process, using all platforms created by the state and involving both men and women to carry out the tasks set. The government should facilitate the exchange of information, solving problems of coordination, financing, and interaction

between the state and business at the levels of the region and the republic, paying maximum attention to the problems of women. State bodies are obliged to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of strategic state programs, and to direct other participants in the innovation infrastructure – both men and women alike – to advanced technologies in the production and social spheres, including the Internet space.

In this context, the relevance of the topic and the feasibility of conducting research in the relevant area is indicated by: the need to analyse the modernisation of the mechanism of state regulation of women's employment in the innovation sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan; and the identification and disclosure of modern problems related to the provision of mechanisms of state regulation of women's employment in this area. Considering the above, the main purpose of this article is to study the state regulation of women's employment in the innovation sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan in order to predict the further modernisation of the corresponding mechanism. To fulfil the intended goal, the following tasks were determined: 1) to analyse the role of women in the innovation sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan, taking into account the intensification of modernisation processes; and 2) to outline the prospects and problems of modernising the mechanism of state regulation of women's employment in the innovation sphere of Kazakhstan.

The issues of the legal regulation of employment in the innovation sphere are increasingly considered by various scientists; however, the issues of women's employment in this area remain only fragmentarily studied and require more detailed analysis in the context of the transformation processes of modern society (Ortega-Abente and Ruiz-Flores 2021, 55–56). The analysis of the works of representatives of the doctrine showed the relevance of the chosen topic and the insufficient disclosure of the features of modernisation of the mechanism of state regulation of women's employment in the innovation sphere of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## **Materials and methods**

The methodological basis of this study was a set of subject-based principles, approaches, and methods of cognition. The civilisational approach was used in the study of the role and significance of innovations in the Republic of Kazakhstan at different stages of civilisational development. The dialectical method was used in the study of the laws of the development of society and the substantiation of innovative activity as a factor in the development of society and the position of women in it in the context of globalisation. Using a synergistic approach, innovative activity was analysed as a process that reflects the self-organisation of society, and globalisation as a non-linear process that confers an open, unbalanced, multifactorial, and difficult-to-predict nature to the state of society's development.

The hermeneutic approach was used to define the concepts of globalisation, innovation, novation, innovative activity, innovative culture, innovative development, and national innovation systems. The use of a phenomenological approach was necessary for the knowledge and construction of a new model of the mechanism of the state regulation

of women's employment on an innovative basis, in the centre of which is an intellectually developed, non-standard-thinking, creative personality.

The structural-functional approach was used when considering the structure of society, the spheres of social development, the classification of types of innovative activity, and the participation of women. The use of the axiological approach made it possible to conduct research on the employment of women in innovative activities, which provided for certain social and individual needs.

The methods of analysis and synthesis were used to study the current state of gender studies and to analyse the content of the concepts of gender policy, mechanisms for the formation and implementation of gender policy, public administration, and gender parity. The formal-logical method enabled us to clarify the mechanisms for the formation and implementation of gender policy in the Republic of Kazakhstan. The comparative legal method allowed us to study the problems of legal regulation of women's employment in the innovation sphere in the Republic of Kazakhstan and the EU in order to search for ideas and mechanisms of gender parity. The method of systems analysis permitted the study of the development of gender policy as a whole, the integral parts of which are its essence, principles, requirements, and mechanisms of formation and implementation. The structural and functional method was used to research the organisational and technological basis of the state regulation of women's employment. The modelling method enabled the development of practical recommendations aimed at improving the mechanisms of the state regulation of women's employment in the Republic of Kazakhstan for the formation and implementation of gender policy. The statistical and graphical methods were used to conduct gender analysis in the field of employment and, finally, the method of correlation-regression analysis facilitated the determination of trends and predictions related to gender parity.

The research methodology was based on a set of principles, chief among which is the principle of the unity of theory and practice. In the course of this study, an integrated approach was used, which became the methodological basis for the study and which made it possible to consider certain problems systematically.

## **Results**

The Republic of Kazakhstan follows global trends in the progressive development of socio-economic and political systems. Since gaining independence, the country has been changing and improving the systems of economy and management, taking into account the most advanced achievements of science and technology. Kazakhstan is part of the global space, and systematically participates in international rankings in order to give government authorities the opportunity to assess their current position in the competitive global socio-economic, political, and innovation spaces.

An example of this is the participation of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the global innovation rating, which has been calculated since 2007 by representatives of the INSEAD international business school – with campuses in Europe (Fontainebleau, France), Asia (Singapore), and the Middle East (Abu Dhabi) – and, later, researchers

from Cornell University and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). In the 2019 Global Investment Index, the Republic of Kazakhstan took 79th place in the overall rating, achieving 33.03 points out of 100 possible – dropping five positions compared to the previous year (Cornell University, INSEAD, and WIPO 2019).

To eliminate the factors hindering innovative development, it is necessary to develop a policy of state intervention that takes into account the experience of other countries. At the same time, according to Abueva (2016), it is necessary to use the principles of coordination, alignment, and motivation, which allow for the activities of all participants to be harmonised.

The main instrument of innovative development should be government programs that can provide an effective solution to the problems associated with scientific and technological progress (Abueva 2016). The state, represented by the Government of Kazakhstan, is the main initiator of innovation processes in the country. On 17 May 2003, in Kazakhstan, the Decree of the President No. 1096 approved the Strategy for Industrial and Innovative Development for 2003–2015. Its main goal was to achieve stable growth by diversifying production away from commodities. Indicative in this regard was the adoption of the State Program of Forced Industrial and Innovative Development of Kazakhstan for 2015–2019, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan No. 874 of 1 August 2014.

However, despite numerous initiatives in recent years, Kazakhstan's innovation system is still in its infancy in many respects. Business innovation remains weak and undiversified. The business sector provided only around 40% of research and development (R&D) in 2015, which is low by international standards – especially compared to the OECD average of 68% – and is well below the levels of countries such as China or Malaysia (OECD 2017a, 2017b). Moreover, this low share should be viewed in the context of overall low R&D spending; measured in relation to GDP, the gap is even wider. Public funding for R&D is also insufficient. R&D intensity (the ratio of gross expenditure on research and development –GERD – to GDP) fell from a peak of 0.28% in 2005 to approximately 0.15%, recovering to 0.17% in 2010 – a figure still well below the 2% target set in various government policies and programs (OECD 2014). In this respect, Kazakhstan is typical of its neighbours in Central Asia, which also suffer from low investment in R&D.

Perhaps the most important obstacle to business innovation in Kazakhstan is the weak demand for innovative products. Local firms tend not to invest in non-technological innovation without making a huge effort to change their processes and marketing strategies. The results of research developed in collaboration with industry are limited, as are the culture and infrastructure that support business collaboration. Despite an increase in university courses that train potential entrepreneurs, firms have limited access to managerial and entrepreneurial skills. Early funding is very scarce, and is constrained by the poor chain of innovative enterprises in a reformed Kazakhstan that is evidenced in terms of progress, challenges and opportunities, and limited venture capital skills. The link between higher education and research institutions is also limited, a legacy of the Soviet separation of education and research. The relationship between science and industry, while strengthening over time, remains weak.

The presence of women in the labour market is becoming increasingly important and necessary. This is evidenced by the growth in the number of employers hiring women in the country. The reason for this, according to Husni and Suryani (2018), is that women are considered to be more conscientious, careful, and obedient in carrying out their work duties. The optimal legal regulation of women's work should be aimed at achieving gender equality in the workplace and creating conditions in which women and others can combine work and family responsibilities. A favourable environment for working relationships for these categories of workers should be created both by internal and global regulations. Actions at both levels, according to Buribaev and Khamzina (2019), by their nature reinforce each other. Despite this, it can be noted that in recent years Kazakhstan has made some progress in the field of gender equality; it was the first Central Asian country to establish a national coordinating framework for advancing gender equality through the National Commission on Women, Family, and Population Policy. Several laws, strategies, and policies were adopted, including: the Law on State Guarantees of Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities for Men and Women of 8 December 2009, No. 223-IV; the Gender Equality Strategy, approved by the Resolution of the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 18 October 2005, No. 1043; and the Concept of Gender and Family Policy in Kazakhstan until 2030, approved by the Decree of the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan dated 6 December 2016, No. 384. Based on the above, one can conclude that female labour in the Republic of Kazakhstan is still only used in a small number of industries. Lack of access to leadership positions hampers the increase in the competitiveness of women in the labour market (Suprayitno, Triastity, and Zakiya 2021, 117–119), and the earnings of Kazakhstani women are often less than the wages of men for the same type of work. It is highly indicative that the problem of non-recognition of unpaid domestic work, which in most cases is performed by women, remains a problem. The Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan needs to continue the process of the optimal legal regulation of women's labour, which should be aimed at achieving gender equality in the workplace and creating conditions under which women can combine work that meets modern innovative realities and family responsibilities. The Republic of Kazakhstan is taking serious steps in such areas – as evidenced by the creation of institutional foundations for the functioning of the state and the formation of the necessary infrastructure to promote the development of innovative relations in the country – but the innovation system of Kazakhstan is still in its infancy in many respects. Business innovation remains weak and undiversified; the business sector provides only around 40% of research and development activities in the Republic of Kazakhstan. One of the most important barriers to business innovation is the weak demand for innovative products. To eliminate the factors hindering innovative development, it is necessary to develop a policy of state intervention, taking into account the experience of other countries.

Thus, it can be concluded that the main obstacles that discourage potential female entrepreneurs in the Republic of Kazakhstan are: social stigma, gender inequality, and the inability to maintain a balance between work and personal life; lack of information, available capacity, resources, support, and finance; fear of risk; inability to provide a correct assessment; and the innovation gap, digital isolation, and the lack of basic innovation

skills. Female entrepreneurs are forced to find their way out of a whirlpool composed of: multitasking; work-life conflicts; a lack of financial resources and support services; inadequate business, management, and marketing skills; and poor access to information, business networks, technology, and innovation markets. However, research continues to suggest that innovation, or the drive to innovate, is the first criterion for successful entrepreneurship. In this regard, it is indicative that with regard to gender equality, from the point of view of empowering women to participate in the innovation sphere, the growth of female entrepreneurship in the Republic of Kazakhstan is a very important area.

## Discussion

Public sector organisations must adapt to changing conditions and requirements in order to effectively carry out their functions at the legislative level and in terms of providing quality public services (Muratbaeva et al. 2021, 150–151). Reputable think tanks supported by the state, as well as international organisations such as the World Bank, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), and others, have repeatedly drawn attention to the importance of creating incentives and conditions for the development of innovation (Hanneke, van Buuren, and Bekkers 2018). Of course, technological progress allows women to participate in innovative entrepreneurship, yet entrepreneurship remains a gendered activity, and women are still drawn into the intricate and turbulent maelstrom of multitasking. This is clearly illustrated in Malik's (2017) dissertation on female digital entrepreneurs, where data from 30 in-depth interviews with American female digital entrepreneurs using a "tension-driven approach" were analysed. The results show that women experience multiple levels of stress in their creative pursuits, along with social pressures to find real work in the real world, as opposed to virtual environments or working online from home while fulfilling social and familial responsibilities. They experience several levels of stress as they discuss and implement the dominant social discourses about entrepreneurship, build their careers, and encounter opportunities and challenges in emerging virtual landscapes. Malik also argues that female entrepreneurs in the field of innovative technologies experience "conflicting cravings" due to social messages or social expectations regarding a variety of roles in public and private spaces. Her research shows how gender processes continually influence the results of innovative entrepreneurship. This complements the study on the challenges women face in their entrepreneurial journey and emphasises the need to develop policies that support practices that will enable and support female innovative technological entrepreneurs in their work. Progress on gender equality in the EU is also slow in a number of areas. The European Commission's "Report on Equality Between Men and Women in the EU 2018" shows that women continue to be underrepresented in decision-making positions in both politics and business. In 2018, only 18.4% of the leaders of the main political parties in the EU were women, and correspondingly only one in three were deputy leaders. Women hold only 6.3% of seats on the boards of directors of EU state-owned companies and still earn, on average, 16% less than men. Despite its shortcomings, the EU can provide significant assistance to Kazakhstan. The Enhanced Partnership and Co-

operation Agreement between the EU and Kazakhstan (EPCA) aims to strengthen cooperation in 29 key policy areas, including gender equality. Meanwhile, the new EU-Central Asia regional strategy also emphasises gender equality and the empowerment of women as an area of cooperation.

A large number of studies, especially over the past two decades, have recommended the implementation of legislation, policies, and practices that encourage the long-term participation of women in entrepreneurship and contribute to socio-economic development. For example, Khaire (2011) called for the implementation of legislative policies to promote the empowerment of women as effective innovative entrepreneurs.

To motivate female entrepreneurs, Khaire (2011) proposed the provision of training opportunities exclusively for women, along with financial assistance and the development of policies, practices, and mechanisms that “ease women’s homework”. Legal scholar Loza (2011) recommends focusing on innovative female entrepreneurship, arguing that the law academy has done nothing for women’s entrepreneurship despite the role of women as critical actors in economic growth and as “the engine of the economy and development”. In her study of the development of female entrepreneurship from a range of other academic disciplines, she argues that further research is needed on female innovation-driven entrepreneurship. She recommends that the legal academy enter the field of entrepreneurship studies with a uniform taxonomy of definitions, and that scientists approach their work on entrepreneurship in an interdisciplinary manner.

In this regard, the following actions are suggested to modernise the mechanism of state regulation of employment in the innovation sphere in Kazakhstan: the introduction of gender planning into the state budget and the application of EU best practices within the budget cycle; the development of a program to increase the access of women, including those living in rural areas, to microfinance and services for the development of the innovation sphere; the strengthening the role of trade unions in increasing women’s access to jobs in the field of innovation and reducing the gender pay gap; and the comprehensive support for compliance with Kazakhstani legislation and the principles of preventing discrimination in the workplace. In order to stimulate the long-term participation of women in innovation and to contribute to socio-economic development, researchers continue to call for the promotion and implementation of legislative policies and legal research on innovation, including a policy of equal opportunity – which is especially needed for women in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

## Conclusion

1. This study makes it possible to conclude that the innovation system of Kazakhstan is, in many respects, still in its infancy, and business innovation remains weak and undiversified. It can be stated that the system of guarantees for working women in the Republic of Kazakhstan is supported by real mechanisms for their enforcement, but in some cases such a responsibility is absent. Moreover, in order to modernise the mechanism of state regulation of the employment of women in the innovation sphere, Kazakhstan should gradually increase the level

of state support for universities and research institutes, both in terms of volume and types of funding.

2. Based on the above, it can be concluded that in order to eliminate the factors hindering innovative development it is necessary to develop a policy of state intervention, taking into account the experience of other countries. Difficulties in the employment of women in the Republic of Kazakhstan undoubtedly reduce the state's ability to achieve higher levels of economic development.

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## Valstybinio moterų užimtumo reguliavimo mechanizmas Kazachstano inovacinės ekonomikos srityje

Anotacija

*Inovatyvi visuomenės plėtra sukuria prielaidų naujų žmogaus veiklos sričių atsiradimui, novatoriškoms šių procesų gamybos ir valdymo sistemoms. Gilesnės ir tikrai revoliucinės naujovės ilgainiui keičia vyrų ir moterų vaidmenis. Gerai žinoma, kad naujovės ir lyčių vaidmens pakeitimas yra katalitiniai procesai, skatinantys pokyčius. Dinamiškame amžiuje moterys stengiasi išnaudoti savo galimybes ir panaudoti savo sugebėjimus šalies labui. Iš tikrųjų moterys yra šalies modernizavimo lyderės, tačiau jų indėlis į ekonominės veiklos, augimo ir gerovės rodiklius yra daug mažesnis nei jų potencialas. Be to, užimtumas Kazachstane išlieka suskirstytas į skirtingus segmentus, ir tai atitinkamai daro didelę įtaką lyčių pasiskirstymui darbo rinkoje bei trukdo naujoviškam valstybės vystymuisi. Tyrimas leido padaryti išvadą, kad bendrieji veiksniai, lemiantys naujoviško tipo užimtumo plėtrą Kazachstano Respublikoje, susiję su dideliu intelektiniu potencialu ir inovatyvios ekonomikos plėtra. Tačiau novatoriško užimtumo tipo formavimosi procesas yra fragmentiškas, o kartais dėl ekonominių, socialinių-demografinių, techninių ir institucinių apribojimų – prieštaringas ir rizikingas. Šiame straipsnyje taip pat atskleidžiamos moterų užimtumo valstybinio reguliavimo mechanizmo modernizavimo problemos Kazachstano Respublikos inovacijų srityje. Tyrimas leido pagrįsti faktą, kad šiuo metu Kazachstano Respublikoje būtina ugdyti kompetencijas, tinkamas lyčių santykių formavimui ekonominėje srityje. Straipsnyje teigiama, kad, norint pašalinti priežastis, trukdančias inovatyviam vystymuisi, būtina plėtoti valstybės intervencijos politiką atsižvelgiant į užsienio šalių patirtį. Šiame kontekste modernizuojant valstybinį užimtumo reguliavimo mechanizmą inovacijų srityje galimi šie veiksmai: valstybės biudžeto, skirto abiem lytims, planavimo įvedimas ir ES geriausių praktikos taikymas biudžeto cikle. Be to, reikšmingas indėlis gali būti programos, kuriomis siekiama pagerinti moterų, taip pat kaimo vietovėse gyvenančių asmenų prieigą prie mikrofinansų ir paslaugų, skirtų inovacijų sričių plėtojimui, sukūrimo; reikia stiprinti profesinių sąjungų vaidmenį didinant moterų galimybes įsidarbinti naujoviškose organizacijose, mažinti vyrų ir moterų darbo užmokesčio skirtumus ir, apskritai, remti Kazachstano įstatymų, skirtų diskriminavimo eliminavimui darbo vietoje, rengimą, taip pat imtis prevencijos siekiant užkirsti diskriminavimą.*

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