# Sociologický časopis

# Czech Sociological Review



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*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 2005, Vol. 41, No. 6*

**Thematic Issue**

# Gender and Civic and Political Participation

**Guest Editor**

**Hana Hašková**
Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, Prague

2005

# Editorial

This issue of *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* focuses on the topic of women's civic and political participation and gender equality policies implementation in Central and Eastern Europe. The issue emerged out of the pan-European conference 'Gendering Democracy in an Enlarged Europe', which was held in June 2005 in Prague. At the conference, the final results of an international research project, 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in Ten Central and Eastern European Countries' (the EGG project), were presented in the individual papers of the participating researchers in the EGG project and were also related to issues discussed in papers from researchers outside the EGG project invited to take part in the conference. The articles in this issue were inspired by the conference papers and the discussions that emerged at the conference.

Given how important this international project was for putting this issue together, it warrants a brief but more detailed introduction. The project was supported by the EU 5th Framework Project and co-ordinated by Yvonne Galligan from Queens University Belfast (UK). It ran from 2002 to 2005 and involved the participation of researchers from the University of Sofia (Bulgaria), the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic (Czech Republic), the University of Tartu (Estonia), the Hungarian Academy of Sciences (Hungary), the University of Milano Bicocca (Italy), the University of Latvia (Latvia), the University of Lithuania (Lithuania), the University of Warsaw (Poland), the University of Bucharest (Romania), Matej Bel University (Slovakia), the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), and Queens' University Belfast (UK). Its main objective was to analyse the extent to which representative institutions and other organisations (such as political parties, trade unions, non-governmental organisations and social movements) enable women's participation and representation in political decision-making and governance in the eight Central and Eastern European countries (CEE) that became EU members in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and in two CEE countries that expect to join the EU in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania). The project research examined the development of democratic governance and civil society in Central and Eastern Europe through the lens of gender. It offered a systematic analysis of gender and enlargement, the civic and political participation of women, and the effectiveness of attempts by the European Commission and CEE governments to legislate on gender equality. It focused on three main research questions: To what extent and in what ways have the twin forces of democratisation and preparation for EU accession influenced women's civic and political participation in CEE countries? To what extent and in what ways are women's civic associations embedded in the equality policy framework in CEE countries? Are there specific strategies that could be adopted to enhance women's contribution to governance? In or-

der to answer those questions, the researchers developed a comparative methodological framework, within which they gathered and analysed comparable statistical data on women's civic and political participation in CEE countries, and conducted and analysed an extensive number of expert interviews with politicians, representatives of national and local governments, non-governmental organisations, social movements, trade unions, and academics focusing on gender issues in CEE countries. The final results of the project have been disseminated within academic sphere, but the outcome also includes comparative reports with policy recommendations for the European Commission and CEE governments.

The first article in the issue is by Yvonne Galligan and Sara Clavero, who discuss women's political representation in Central and Eastern Europe and explore the ways in which conservative attitudes towards gender roles hinder the supply of and demand for women in politics in the region, while also looking at how the internalisation of traditional gender norms affects women's parliamentary behaviour. They draw attention to the weaknesses and fragmented nature of the links between women politicians and women's civic organisations, which makes building coalitions around women's rights agendas difficult.

Alexandra Bitušíková analyses statistical and qualitative data on women's participation in Slovak national, regional and local politics, and deals with the question of the (in)visibility of women in Slovak political life. She focuses on the reasons for the low number of women political representatives and on the unsuccessful attempts to increase women's participation by introducing positive discrimination measures. She also points to the main reasons why women are more successful in local than in national politics.

Barbara Einhorn explores some of the debates surrounding the gendered impact of the democratisation process and European Union enlargement on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. She focuses on three key issues of women's political and civic participation: debates about the best mechanisms for achieving gender equality in mainstream politics; questions about the efficacy of civil society activism in relation to mainstream politics; and the pros and cons of gender mainstreaming as a key component of EU enlargement. She raises also the question of the most appropriate frame for achieving more gender equitable societies: the nation-state or supra-national institutions such as the European Union.

Meilute Taljúnaite analyses qualitative data and deals with the questions of gender policy formation in Lithuania. She focuses on 'transversalism', which involves no changes in policy-making structures, and on gender mainstreaming, which continues to be designated as a separate policy space in the country. She argues that the lack of stability in the commitment to gender mainstreaming and the country's policy culture are unfavourable for activities such as evaluation and impact assessment, which are integral aspects of gender mainstreaming.

Małgorzata Fuszara analyses the character of Polish women's civic organisations after the fall of the state socialist regime. She concentrates on describing their enormous diversity and focuses especially on the differences between 'traditional'

organisations and 'new social-movement types' of women's civic groups on one hand, and women's civic groups connected with the Catholic Church and more feminist organisations on the other. She also highlights the complexity and changeability of relations between women's civic groups and the government in Poland.

Hana Hašková analyses Czech women's civic organising focused on gender equality and women's rights in the context of the state socialist regime; the impact of foreign and international donors on Czech women's civic organising during the socio-economic and political transformation of the first part of the 1990s; and current processes of professionalisation, project-orientation and reform-orientation that Czech women's civic groups are undergoing, which were brought about by EU Eastern enlargement. She analyses reasons for shifts in topics, activities, partnerships, strategies and distance from the European Women's Lobby, and the marginalisation or increasing impact on decision-making processes that have been experienced by various Czech women's civic groups.

The articles are followed by a special essay contributed by the co-founder of Karat Coalition, a coalition of women's civic organisations that was established in 1997 on the basis of an idea born at the UN Beijing Conference in 1995. The essay looks at the impact of EU enlargement on women's civic participation in CEE and CIS countries from the perspective of the Karat Coalition, which as a platform for co-operation between women's NGOs and civic organisations and an advocacy body active at all levels of decision-making, including the EU and the UN, has unique insight to offer about developments regarding women's civic participation and EU enlargement.

This issue concludes with a reviews section, which includes reviews of four books that relate to the issues of women's civic and political participation, democracy, gender equality and Central and Eastern Europe, and an information section, which reports on activities in the area of gender and other issues in the recent past.

It is our hope that this issue of *Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review* will contribute to productive academic debate and deeper knowledge about women's civic and political participation, gender equality policies implementation, and governance in Central and Eastern Europe.

*Hana Hašková*
*Guest Editor*

# 'A Job in Politics Is Not for Women': Analysing Barriers to Women's Political Representation in CEE[1]

SARA CLAVERO and YVONNE GALLIGAN*
Queen's University Belfast

**Abstract:** This article discusses women's political representation in Central and Eastern Europe in the fifteen years after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the adoption of liberal democratic political systems in the region. It highlights the deep-seated gender stereotypes that define women primarily as wives and mothers, with electoral politics seen as an appropriate activity for men, but less so for women. The article explores the ways in which conservative attitudes on gender roles hinders the supply of, and demand for, women in the politics of Central and Eastern Europe. It also discusses the manner in which the internalisation of traditional gender norms affects women's parliamentary behaviour, as few champion women's rights in the legislatures of the region. The article also finds that links between women MPs and women's organisations are weak and fragmented, making coalition-building around agendas for women's rights problematic.

*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 2005, Vol. 41, No. 6: 979–1004*

## Introduction

The entry of eight countries from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) into the European Union (EU) on 1 May 2004, and the anticipated membership of Romania and Bulgaria in 2007, has placed a focus on the adoption, interpretation, and application of Western-style liberal democratic norms and practices in former Iron Curtain states [Dryzek and Holmes 2002; Grabbe 2001; Smith 2004]. One aspect of the 'revisiting' of Central and Eastern Europe in the context of Europeanisation and de-

[1] This paper draws from a research project entitled 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in EU Candidate Countries' (EGG). The 42-month (12/03-05/06) project is funded by the EU 5th Framework Programme (HPSE-CT2002-00115) and directed by Yvonne Galligan at Queen's University Belfast. The authors would like to thank Eva Bahovec, Alexandra Bitusikova, Marina Calloni, Ausma Cimdina, Eva Eberhardt, Malgorzata Fuszara, Georgeta Ghebrea, Hana Haskova, Anu Laas, Meilute Taljunaite and Nedyalka Videva for their research on women's representation in the context of this project.

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mocratisation is the growing attention to women's political representation as a measure of how 'democratic' these states have become [Kaponyi 2005; Novosel 2005; Montgomery and Ilonszki 2003; Matland and Montgomery 2003; NEWR 2003]. Indeed, these studies are contributing new cases and analyses to the well-established literature on women's political representation. This article highlights the importance of attitudes and perceptions of women's social roles in shaping the context for women's political representation in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Based on a 42-month comparative study on gender and governance in this region of Europe, the study explores the extent to which the norms and practices of Western liberal democratic traditions can be transposed into political and social systems shaped by a half-century of totalitarianism. Women's political representation is one discrete aspect of this larger study.

The study of women's political representation has resulted in rich insights into expectations of modern democracy and democratic practice. From the relatively straightforward standpoint of counting women, [Dahlerup 1988; Norris 1987], the field has evolved to scrutinising elected women's political behaviour, with a focus on seeking evidence for a gender awareness in the parliamentary agenda commensurate with the increasing presence of women [Leyenaar 2003; Mackay et al. 2003; Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Childs 2002; Sawer 2002; Tremblay and Pelletier 2000; Reuschmeyer 1998]. These studies, generally presented as single country cases, draw on normative analyses of political representation such as Pitkin's [1967] distinction between descriptive and substantive representation, Phillips [1995] elaboration on this theme through the concept of the politics of presence, and general justice-based arguments focusing on democratic legitimacy and women's inclusion [Sawer 2000]. Complementing this intensive focus on the gendering of parliamentary priorities are analyses of large comparative social attitudes and values studies, to which Norris and Inglehart [2000, 2003] and Hayes, McAllister and Studlar [2000] have made significant contributions. More recently, the revisiting of institutional politics wherein gender norms are embedded, constructed, and contested has shifted the focus from the individual to institutional patterns of gendered political practices [Chappell 2001; Hawkesworth et al. 2001; Reingold 2000; Duerst-Lahti and Kelly 1995; Thomas 1994].

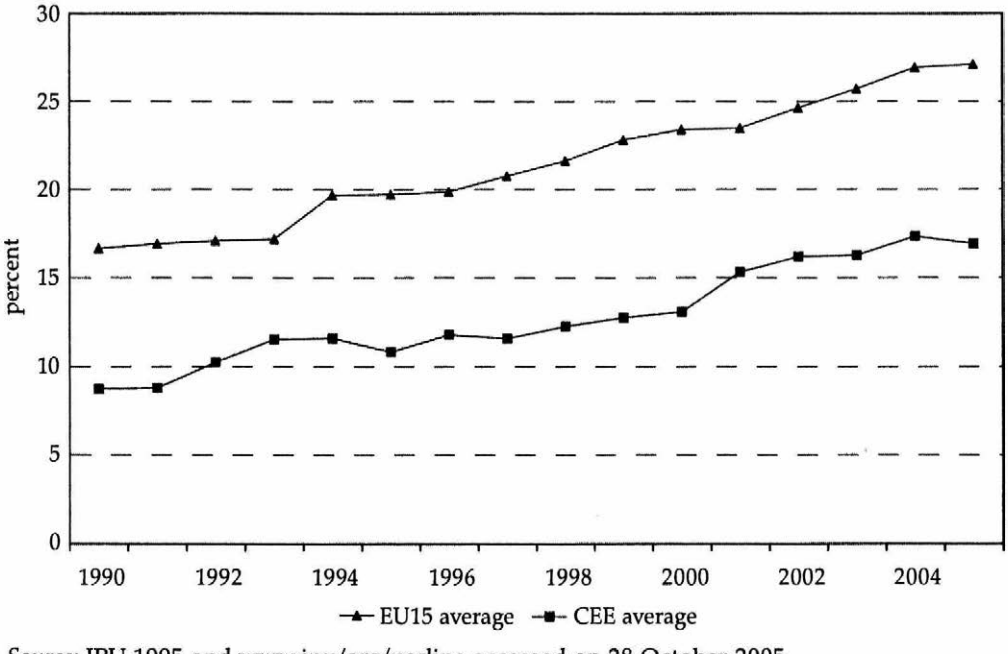
Within this broad range of literature, the first part of this article focuses on political recruitment in party systems of CEE, and in particular addresses women's efforts to secure selection and to hold political office. The framework of supply and demand, as popularised by Norris [1996, 1997] and Norris and Lovenduski [1995], is used to elicit the determinants of political engagement among female politicians across Central and Eastern Europe. In the second part of the article, attention is turned to the literature on descriptive and substantive representation of women to determine whether being a woman in political life in Central and Eastern Europe enables one to 'make a difference', to represent women's interests, and to shape the nature of political interaction in CEE parliaments. The diversity of the literature on women's political participation, then, offers a wide framework for consideration of

the findings of ten-country study. Specifically, the literature offers particular insights that lend themselves to analysis of the significance of social attitudes towards women's political engagement, the internalisation of traditional gender norms by female representatives, and the restricted 'opportunity structure' for women within aggressively masculine fledgling democracies.

## Women's political representation in CEE

Before 1989 women's formal political representation, particularly in national parliaments, was high when compared to EU levels. In the 1970s communist leaders in many CEE countries introduced quotas for the representation of all aspects of political and economic life in the party-controlled national assemblies. The proposed proportion of women on candidate lists was 30%, with the majority of women representing industrial and agricultural sectors and a smaller symbolic number representing the 'working intelligentsia'. Parliamentary institutions, however, were distinct from those of Western Europe in being subordinate to the ruling communist parties which chose all candidates and whose elections simply confirmed their candidature. Despite a relatively high number of women in parliament, women were

**Figure 1. Women MPs in the EU-15 and CEE, 1990–2005**




*Source:* IPU 1995 and www.ipu/org/parline accessed on 28 October 2005

sparsely represented in the upper echelons of the party and thus remained at a distance from the real locus of political power.

After 1989, there was a dramatic decrease in the number of women politicians elected to national parliaments across Central and Eastern Europe. The proportion of women in these parliaments fell from an average of 26% to 9%.[2] By 2005, women's average seat-holding in CEE parliaments had recovered to 17%, though remaining below the European average of 22%, and below the 27% average for the EU-15 countries.[3]

These dramatic changes are clearly connected with the removal of quotas and the introduction of competitive elections and multi-party democracy, although this does not explain why such historical events should have had such an impact on women's representation in CEE – especially given the fact that this decline happened after a long period of state socialism in which the 'emancipation of women' was actively supported through their participation in all aspects of economic and political life. The decline in the representation of women in political life across the CEE region prompts a number of interesting questions: First, there are questions concerning the process of change and the decline in women's political representation, and second, there are questions concerning the outcomes witnessed in CEE under liberal-democratic conditions as compared to those of Western Europe in comparable institutional environments.

The literature on women in CEE countries offers several analyses of the actual situation of women, which can also be used as answers to these questions. In particular two forces that are frequently cited in the literature as responsible for this decline is the introduction of 'masculine' values in the new political context and the revival of conservative gender stereotypes. Writing about post-Soviet society, Kerig et al. [1993] identified three trends: the prevalence of communal values, patriarchal structures and gender stereotyping. This is expressed in a renewed emphasis on family values and a rhetoric calling for a return to 'better times' when women worked in the home, not in the labour force.

Although the existing literature deals with the set of questions raised above, this research on women's political representation in CEE countries casts new light on these issues and throws up some interesting questions. What is novel in this research are both its wide scope and its comparative dimension, enabling us to test the generalisations from the wider literature on gender and political representation.

## Barriers to women's representation

This section explores barriers to women's representation as perceived by key actors in ten CEE countries. In this analysis, the aim is to explain women's political underrepresentation using the framework of supply and demand to elicit the determi-

[2] Calculated from figures in IPU [1995] *Women in Parliaments 1945–1995.*

[3] The EU-15 refers to the 15 EU member states prior to the 2004 enlargement.

nants of political engagement among female politicians across Central and Eastern Europe [Norris and Lovenduski 1995: 115–118]. Although, for analytical purposes, supply and demand factors are considered here separately, it is nonetheless acknowledged that supply factors can affect the demand for women politicians and vice versa. On the one hand, party selectors may discriminate against women political hopefuls because of prevailing gender-role norms, because of perceptions that women politicians are not as capable of doing the job as men, or because they simply believe that women will lose votes for the party. Thus, the demand from party gatekeepers for female candidacies may not be strong. On the supply side, the nomination rate for women aspirants is influenced by the culturally accepted divisions of family labour, a lack of self-belief among potential women hopefuls, their perceived chances of success, and prevailing attitudes towards the public role of women.

While Norris and Lovenduski have explored the gender perspective of political recruitment in the United Kingdom and generalise their insights to the issue in liberal democracies, Matland and Montgomery seek to apply the supply-demand model to the processes that take place in post-communist Europe. They observe a number of crucial differences for gender-balanced representation in the post-communist context that do not apply in established democracies. They note [2003: 38–39] that women's political representation began to increase in established liberal democracies when second-wave feminism began to organise around this issue: post-communist states have not yet experienced a similar development and parties do not experience pressure to put women forward, although there are individual initiatives across Central and Eastern Europe that bring a spotlight to bear on women's political representation. Along with many other observers of the situation of women in post-communist societies, Matland and Montgomery [2003: 36–37] perceive that the 'emancipation' of women rhetorically flagged by communist regimes was more symbolic than real, with women assuming the primary responsibility for the home combined with their duties as workers.

This unacknowledged 'dual burden' and the unchallenged patriarchal values underpinning communism was laid bare in the move to a market economy and democratic politics, leading Bretherton [2001: 65] to the view that the decline in women's political representation 'reflects the enhanced status of parliaments and parliamentarians in circumstances where quotas no longer operate and where renewed emphasis upon traditional gender stereotypes has encouraged or legitimated women's relative absence from the public sphere of politics'. Yet, women emerged from communism with the political capital necessary to take elected office: highly educated, extensively networked, and many with the experience of the transition to democracy, a sizeable pool of potential female candidates was available for parties to draw upon in shaping these new democracies. Why so few have succeeded in breaking into political office is explored in this article.

Data for the study of barriers to women's representation in each country were collected from semi-structured interviews conducted with women politicians, civil

servants and women in NGOs. A total of 117 interviews were conducted between September 2004 and February 2005, 70 (60%) of which were with serving or former politicians, 27 (23%) with administrators in gender units, 14 (10%) with women's NGO activists and the remaining 6 (5%) were feminist academics and journalists (see Appendix 1 for number and country distribution). Most interviews lasted just over one hour, though a small number exceeded 90 minutes. In one case (Estonia) the interviews were supplemented by the findings of a study of party selectors and politicians [Biin 2004]. In four cases (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Latvia and Poland), the qualitative research was supplemented by quantitative studies of public attitudes to women's political participation. In other instances, parliamentary debates and media reports were used to supplement the analysis. However, the dominant focus of the research in each case was a qualitative exploration of the barriers to women's political representation. Respondents were asked to i) provide explanations for women's political under-representation and ii) identify the institutional barriers to women's political representation. With two exceptions, researchers did not record undue difficulties in obtaining access to interviewees. In Lithuania, the study was under way at a time of considerable political crisis resulting in an unexpected election, making access to politicians difficult. The Lithuanian team compensated for politicians' unavailability by interviewing former prime ministerial advisors in addition to gender equality officials and others, and by drawing on secondary source material. Slovak researchers found female MPs and MEPs considerably resistance to being interviewed. Although a sample was drawn from this group (Appendix 1), the researchers observed that respondents were not always alert to the gendered nature of political activity, and could not always relate to sex-based discrimination in political life. Nonetheless, the Slovak researchers gleaned a wealth of observations on women's political representation from their interviews.

The analysis of barriers to women's representation in the ten countries reveals a significant degree of concurrence in relation to perceptions regarding this issue. Generally, respondents across all countries coincide in identifying the key barriers as lack of confidence and interest in politics; a lack of time due to family obligations; and political parties' practices regarding candidate selection. Moreover, when prompted to spell out those barriers further, a common theme emerging from the interviews is a tendency to view barriers as a personal rather than as a cultural or social problem, and thus overcoming them is considered to be a matter of individual effort. Such a perception of barriers to women's political representation as articulated by key actors is illuminating. A key finding from our analysis is the prevalence of gender stereotyping as a common source of obstruction to women's representation, both on the supply and on the demand side.

## Supply-side barriers

The main barriers identified by respondents affecting the supply of women wishing to pursue a career in politics are: i) lack of confidence, interest and motivation;

ii) family responsibilities and iii) chauvinistic treatment of women politicians. What follows is an analysis of each type of barrier as perceived by respondents.

*Lack of confidence, interest and motivation*

Two barriers that were widely identified by respondents were lack of confidence and lack of interest/motivation in pursuing a career in politics.

Lack of confidence is described by some of the people interviewed as 'a fear, on the part of women, of being exposed' or 'being afraid of making themselves look stupid'. However, it is interesting that a number of women politicians interviewed, while citing lack of confidence as a barrier, were keen to stress that in their personal experience this was not a problem for them. Respondents also tended to qualify the claim that lack of confidence constitutes a barrier to the supply and not the demand of women politicians, pointing out that this problem does not affect women who succeed in entering the world of politics. In the words of a Slovak respondent[4] *'... some women have individual barriers (like lack of self-confidence) but not those who enter the world of politics'*. Such a gap between the assessment of objective reality and subjective situations is interesting and lends itself to two different readings. It can be interpreted as indicating a level of self-confidence on the part of women politicians, or else a reluctance to admit discrimination or abuse. Indeed, such reluctance to admit or recognise discrimination constitutes an emerging pattern in most respondents' articulations of both supply- and demand-side barriers.

Lack of interest in pursuing a career in politics, or in aspiring to high levels of office, is also a barrier frequently mentioned by respondents. Usually, this barrier is described in terms of a perception that the world of politics 'is not something for women'. In other words, an apparent lack of interest or motivation is explained in terms of a perception of politics as a 'male' world, a world in which success requires attributes such as competitiveness, aggressiveness and self-assertiveness – which are typically assigned to men. As one Slovak respondent[5] stated: *'Political participation is perceived by men and by many women as a battlefield, as a free arena where the better, the stronger wins'*. In a similar vein, a number of interviewees expressed how politics is widely perceived in their respective countries as a 'dirty' business.

Since politics is perceived as a masculine world, that is, a world where there is no space for women and feminine values, the problem of lack of interest or motivation is characterised by several respondents in terms of 'defeatism' or 'political apathy'. As one respondent[6] in Hungary states, the main barrier standing in the way of women's political success *'is to be found in their own defeatism: in their belief that it (i.e. politics) is not meant to be about or for them'*. Indeed the problem of political apa-

[4] Woman MEP, Socialist Party, Slovakia.

[5] Former vice-chairperson of a centre-left party

[6] Socialist MEP

thy on the part of women politicians may well be exacerbated by a general distrust in politics and political activities in CEE countries, and by a lack of belief that people can make a difference through political activity, an outlook that has its origins in the historical legacy of state socialism.

It is interesting to note that a significant number of respondents provided an interpretation of this type of barrier to women's representation as a personal problem. Indeed, the general perception is that lack of confidence, interest or motivation is a problem that can be overcome through personal effort. This indicates a failure to take into account a deeper explanation, where this type of barrier is seen as a social problem rather than as a 'woman's own fault'.

*Family responsibilities*

Our interviews show unanimity in identifying family responsibilities as a key barrier to the supply of women in politics. In describing this barrier, respondents referred to a lack of time, feelings of guilt, and the unavailability of domestic help, and complained about the significant sacrifices that women have to overcome if they want to pursue a career in politics. Moreover, in talking about their own personal experiences, they depicted a picture of an existence dominated by constant time pressures, stress and guilt. The following words from a socialist mayor in a Slovak village are indicative of this:

> *Every woman who takes this position, sacrifices her family, her privacy, everything, if she wants to do it well and effectively [...] Simply, family duties are much more time consuming for women than for men.... For me, I just do not have time, do not have time. I come home at about six, now it's dark. I can do some work at home, but not in the garden. I have not even had time to dig the ground. My husband also has a responsible job. So I have to do everything during the weekend. But then the children and grandchildren come... so I just hurry, hurry to give them what they need. I think the main problem is that women have to look after the family.*

Much of this stress was seen as connected to a battle of priorities between career and family, although respondents tended to view the time dedicated to politics as time 'stolen' from their families more than the other way around. In fact, some of them made clear (either implicitly or explicitly) that their priorities rested with their families and children, and thus that they would abandon their political career if they were to be put in a position in which they had to choose. As one Czech politician stated:

> *...let's say I come back home between nine and ten in the evening three days in a row, and if my husband told me in such a situation 'what did you do all day and why are you coming home so late', then that would be the last straw, I guess I would have to give priority to my family then, I mean, I am not going to get divorced because of politics, right.*

Once again, a common theme emerging from the interviews is a failure to view those barriers in connection with deeper structural inequalities. Instead, respondents tended to analyse these barriers merely as a problem of reconciling work and family life – a problem that is regarded as a personal or family issue and a sacrifice that all women entering politics have to undertake. It is worth mentioning that, in the respondents' accounts of barriers, there is never any consideration that they actually have a choice, or that their partners are also responsible for family/domestic matters. Rather, there is a tendency to take for granted that they, as women, are the ones who have to carry the burden of family obligations. This could be taken a sign of the extent to which they have internalised the gendered norms prevalent in their societies.

Other respondents, however, dismissed the importance of the problems of reconciling work and family life that tend to be associated with a career in politics, claiming that they are personally 'managing well'. Such claims imply that if other women politicians 'cannot cope' then it is 'their own fault'. It is interesting to note how this type of claim has much in common with the ones just quoted above, as they are both different expressions of the same problem, that is, rendering the problem of reconciling work and family life a purely personal matter. In this regard, the following quotation from a respondent[7] in Hungary is particularly revealing:

> *I want to induce other women to do politics through my own example: I can do it well, even with three children.*

It is interesting to note that no significant differences were found with respect to respondents' interpretations of these barriers to the supply of women politicians according to political affiliation. Thus, as the above quotations clearly indicate, the personalisation of barriers seems to be made by women from across the whole political spectrum.

*Treatment of women politicians*

Another barrier to the supply of women in politics that was mentioned by respondents relates to the treatment of women politicians by other politicians, the media and society at large. This includes practices such as the following:

a) From (male) colleagues: Respondents complained of being targets of dismissive remarks from male colleagues; of being wilfully ignored when they want to speak in meetings; of being the subject of patronising and disrespectful behaviour. The following quotation[8] illustrates this kind of experience:

[7] Socialist MEP

[8] Female deputy, Law and Justice Party, Poland.

*During various discussions everyone spoke up and I stood up and raised my hand [...] and I continued to be unnoticed. In the end I stamped my feet [...] But with a weaker personality, one can feel so [...] less important [...] They [women politicians] see they are not noticed and prefer to resign...*

b) From the media: Respondents referred to how women politicians are portrayed in the media according to stereotypical norms: for example, a portrayal that concentrates on their looks and dress code, and on feminine attributes such as being 'gentle', 'modest' or 'caring'. As one respondent[9] in Slovenia claims:

*The importance that is ascribed to the appearance of women is much greater than in the case of men (...) I have to say that when I entered my first mandate, women MPs managed to organised themselves quite well and refused [to partake in] these kinds of 'beauty contests' proposed by the media. However, in this mandate (starting in autumn 2004) things have exceeded the limits of good taste. One of the most important factors now is the search for superlatives: the youngest, the most beautiful... but the attention is never focused on the 'most effective'.*

Conversely, when women politicians contravene those expected 'feminine' norms they are heavily criticised, becoming targets of mockery. In such cases their conduct is labelled as 'aggressive', while the same type of behaviour is interpreted as 'firm', 'determined' or 'unrelenting' in the case of male politicians.

c) From society: Respondents maintained that society tends to hold them responsible for any family problem such as a separation or divorce, their children failing at school, and so on, while their partners are exempt from any such criticisms. In other words, women who do not conform to accepted social norms regarding gender roles (such as in the case of women politicians) are punished and, in many cases, chastised. The following interview extracts[10] illustrate such perceptions:

*Often women in important positions are held responsible for the eventual personal breakdown of her partnership because it is then so clear that had she been a good wife, a real wife, she would have helped her husband. But of course it is never the other way around.*

*...if anything does not function in the household, if anything happens, if there are children in the household and anything happens, a child brings a note from a teacher, no one will say 'Mr. Novak failed' but 'Mrs. Novakova failed' because she's in politics, if she did not do that and stayed at home, that would not have happened*

Our analyses of the supply factors hindering the representation of women in politics reveal the persistence of deep-seated gender stereotypes. Such stereotypes

[9] Counsellor of the Bureau for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, Government of the Republic of Slovenia

[10] The former is from a Slovenian MP, while the latter comes from a Czech politician.

involve particular notions of the feminine and the masculine and the values associated with each, and allocate women to the private sphere and men to the public sphere. Furthermore, the prevalence of such stereotypes embedded in social and institutional norms and practices may provide a key to understanding respondents' perceptions of barriers as 'personal' rather than 'cultural or structural' problems.

### Demand-side barriers

On the issue of barriers affecting the demand of women politicians, a large majority of respondents coincided in identifying political parties, in particular the procedures of candidate selection, as constituting a central factor hindering women's representation. Only in two countries, namely Hungary and Slovenia, did respondents cite certain aspects of their electoral system as factors hindering the political representation of women.[11] Another barrier that respondents discussed in considerable detail is the lack of solidarity among women politicians. Though not strictly a demand-side barrier, lack of solidarity is put forward as an additional obstacle, which further hampers the possibilities for women politicians to get selected as candidates. Finally, a few respondents also mentioned the fact that women do not vote for women.

In the view of respondents, political parties hinder women's representation in two different ways: First, respondents were keen to emphasise that there are significantly fewer women than men on the parties' electoral lists, and, more importantly, that these women tend to occupy non-eligible positions at the bottom of those lists. In relation to this fact, a number of different explanations were put forward. These include: organisational culture, inaccessibility of women politicians to (male) informal networks, and a more pervasive problem of gendered patterns of distribution of power in the wider society. In relation to organisational culture, respondents noted how there is significant variation with respect to the way in which political parties choose their candidates. Therefore, political parties should be regarded not only as obstacles to, but also as facilitators of, women's political representation. In parties where candidate lists are decided by democratic vote, women have (in principle) more opportunities for inclusion in the list than in parties where such lists are

[11] In Hungary, as in other countries in this study, the electoral system benefits large political parties while excluding small parties from political representation. This is because the system operates with a 5% threshold, which parties must achieve in order to form a parliamentary grouping. There is also the opportunity for multiple candidacies, limiting women's access to party lists as male candidates are given multiple opportunities for election, reducing political opportunities for women. Women candidates are seldom given multiple candidacies. In Slovenia, the system operates a single mandate constituency. Thus, each constituency is divided into voting units, where parties are represented by just an individual candidate rather than a list. Given that parties can put up just one candidate in each unit, this system does not benefit women candidates, because in such circumstances parties will be more inclined to nominate a man.

decided authoritatively by a party chairperson or top level committee. An interesting question is whether such variation in organisational culture is dependent on party political orientation. Although there is no clear evidence that this is the case, a number of respondents took note that in conservative parties male candidates tend to outnumber women to a significant extent, while in parties on the left the proportion of candidates of both sexes tends to be more balanced.[12] Such differences in the support of women candidates by party orientation are particularly evident in the case of Latvia, where parties with a leftist orientation have established 'women's groups', while parties with an orientation to the right have 'ladies' committees' – the task of which is to serve coffee and to offer 'relaxation'.

The inaccessibility of men's informal networks is another explanation provided by a number of respondents. According to them[13] male politicians rely on exclusive 'old boys' networks. These networks are key to accessing power and information and are also the site where important decisions are made (often in the informal setting of a bar). Moreover, these networks are also the sites of socialisation to political life where ties of solidarity are formed. Given the importance of these networks in facilitating career advancement, women's exclusion from them represents a significant obstacle. As we will see below, this is reinforced by the fact that women politicians have not succeeded in forming similar supportive networks.

A third, and more general, explanation given by respondents for the low proportion of women at the top of electoral lists argues that this is just one more manifestation of the deeper problem of the unequal distribution of power in society at large. One respondent[14] in Romania expressed this point as follows:

> *Men are leading the main social and political organisations. They decide the perpetuation of this situation in their own interest. Parties are masculine organisations. Women are forced to act in second rank, in the men's shadow.*

The second way in which political parties act to hinder the political representation of women is, in the view of respondents, the fact that once a woman manages to occupy an eligible position on the list, men tend to be reluctant to support her

[12] Interesting exceptions to this rule, however, are found in: Poland (where the conservative party associated with the Catholic Church has brought the largest percentage of women into parliament; Slovakia (where the Communist Party shares in common with conservative parties the failure to give any woman an important party post); Romania (where the biggest parties, regardless of political orientation, are the most prohibitive to women's participation on candidate lists) and Bulgaria (where the willingness of political parties to invest in women is more opportunistic than ideological, as women are promoted in times of crisis or uncertainty, irrespective of the party's ideology).

[13] This is especially noted by respondents in the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia.

[14] Union leader, vice-president of the women's organisation in an important union confederation.

candidacy. Such lack of support is evident during the electoral campaign period, as parties promote their male candidates much more than female ones. In relation to this, Polish research found a significant disproportion in the use by women and men of unpaid TV election campaign programmes, in particular when one takes into consideration the duration of women's and men's broadcasts. In addition, the research found that when parties presented their programmes in TV broadcasts they generally used a male voice-over [Fuszara 1994]. In sum, TV electoral campaigns tend to be 'male' campaigns: political parties promote men and devote almost all of the airtime to their statements.

Lack of party support for women politicians is also reflected in the lack of preparation and training they provide to their female candidates in comparison to their male counterparts, as a respondent[15] in Slovenia was eager to point out:

> *Were the campaign for women properly prepared, women would be electable [...] It is a decision made by a political party: will they invest in a woman or not. So far no party has decided to invest in an intellectually and politically strong woman.*

In addition to political parties, respondents also mentioned a lack of solidarity and support among women as another important factor acting as a barrier to women's political representation. In their view, this barrier has different manifestations, such as the fact that women politicians have not been successful in establishing women's networks and also the fact that women do not appear to vote for female candidates. Respondents in different countries provided a variety of explanations for this, ranging from lack of time to socialise (Slovakia), high competition among women politicians (Slovenia), and the fact that feminism has a bad reputation (Estonia). In any case, it is interesting to note that here, once again, respondents tended to give a personal or biological interpretation, explaining this barrier in terms of an essentialist view of 'women's nature'. The following extracts from interviews reveal the multiplicity of interpretations:

> *Women's solidarity does not work as well as men's solidarity. Maybe we, women, really do not have enough space and time to meet and prepare systematically... we do not go for a beer together. Sometimes at voting we take the side of men instead of women... I always had good cooperation with male colleagues; way of communication, a bit of women's diplomacy, a smile made a difference. It was more difficult with women, I had a feeling that we could understand each other better...*[16]
>
> *Women's solidarity is only intuitive or spontaneous, but not ambitious and conscious. More women's movements and groups are needed to support women and to build conscious-*

[15] Member of Parliament, President of the Parliamentary Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities

[16] Former Minister, centre-left, Slovakia.

*ness of common goals – to help successful women to enter politics. Every woman in our country fights just for herself. They are more like rivals, without realising any common mission.*[17]

*...women are put in a situation where there is competition between them; by the fact that they are rare the competition is somehow imposed on them. [...] But apart from that I could simply say that yes, women are more insolent to women and don't stand each other.*[18]

## Women MPs making a difference

Campaigns for an increase in women's political representation rest on the premise that women can make a difference. There are a number of arguments supporting this premise – for example, that women's experiences and interests are different to those of men and that these will have an impact on political agendas and on the way of doing politics. In any case, the actual impact women parliamentarians can make will depend on a number of variables that vary from country to country. These include the political context in which the assembly functions, the type and number of women who are in parliament, and the rules of the parliamentary game [Lovenduski and Karam 2002].

Drawing on personal experiences and perceptions of women MPs, representatives from women NGOs and civil servants in the ten countries under study, this section considers the question of whether women in parliament are making a difference in CEE countries and analyses the different strategies that these women are using to maximise their impact upon both the political agenda and upon the way politics is made. In particular their impact is examined on legislation, public policies, and political culture (such as political discourse, awareness and sensitivity to gender issues), and the strategies that women are adopting to maximise that impact. In this regard the section looks at whether women are forging ties of solidarity with women in other political parties and with women's NGOs.

Data from the interviews reveal very similar trends to those shown in the analysis of barriers to women's political representation. These consist in a widespread perception of the differences between female and male politicians based on ontological distinctions of the masculine and the feminine – for example, women are perceived as 'naturally' more caring, more reconciliatory, less aggressive and more sensitive to certain issues. Such perceptions are very revealing, insofar as they uncover a general lack of acknowledgement of how gender roles are constructed. The analysis also reveals interesting self-perceptions in accordance with gender stereotypes which are instilled during the socialisation process and which clearly affect the potential of women in effecting real change. Another important factor hindering the possibility of real change is the fact that feminism has fallen into disre-

[17] Former Minister, centre-left, Slovakia.

[18] Member of Parliament, President of the Parliamentary Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities, Parliament of the Republic of Slovenia

pute and any initiative in favour of women and women's rights is associated with feminism. In addition, there is also a widespread perception that there are more pressing problems which have come about, or have been exacerbated, as a result of the fall of state socialism. Lack of solidarity among women is another factor hindering change. A combination of these factors acts to make women MPs quite reluctant to focus on 'women's issues', as these pose serious electoral risks for them. Instead, they prefer to see themselves as representing the party rather than representing women.

*Impact on legislation*

The analysis of the interviews shows that the extent of women's engagement in the introduction of legislation regarding the protection of women's rights varies among CEE countries. However, when asked to provide an assessment of their involvement in women's issues, respondents in the various countries concurred that the level of such involvement is low and, in the case of specific countries such as Latvia, nil.[19] Moreover, in those countries where women have been actively engaged in the introduction of new legislation, their involvement is considered to be fragmented and confined to specific areas such as the social protection of specific groups of women (e.g. single mothers, the elderly, ethnic minorities); family/parental rights; violence against women and, more exceptionally, reproductive rights.

It needs to be noted that the most significant equal opportunities legislation to have been recently introduced in CEE countries comes as the result of outside pressure (i.e. in relation to EU accession requirements) rather than being the result of internal pressure from women MPs.[20] Nonetheless, respondents in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia called attention to the role played by women in supporting, debating and amending such legislation. Indeed, a number of respondents were keen to emphasise how the introduction of new equal opportunities legislation in their countries involved a long process (sometimes lasting years) in which women played a significant role in initiating a debate, influencing public opinion, drafting different versions of the legislation, and so on. Poland provides an interesting example of a failed attempt on the part of women to introduce new equal opportunities legislation. Women in this country have played a key role in the drafting of a law on equal status for women and men, yet after nine years of lobbying (and after different versions of the draft law having been submitted to parliament in

[19] In Latvia women MPs to date have not brought issues of gender equality into the foreground, nor have they ever made proposals in this area.

[20] Specifically, the following pieces of legislation are mentioned in this context: Anti-discrimination Act 2003 (Bulgaria); Gender Equality Act 2004 (Estonia); Equal Treatment Legislation (Hungary); Equal Opportunities Act 1999 (Lithuania); Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2002 (Romania); Anti-discrimination Act 2004 (Slovakia); Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2002 (Slovenia).

1996, 1997, 1998 and 2004) all their attempts to introduce it have failed so far. The main reasons mentioned by respondents for such successive rejections of the law include a widely shared belief by MPs that gender equality has already been achieved; a belief that gender equality should be achieved by social practice rather than being enforced by law, and a rejection of the fundamental principle enshrined in the law that women and men should be equal, due to a conceptual confusion between notions of 'equality' and 'sameness'.

In addition to the role played by women MPs in the adoption of equal opportunities legislation as part of accession requirements, respondents[21] emphasised the importance of women's involvement in the introduction of new legislation on violence against women (especially domestic violence). According to respondents this is something that constitutes a 'success story' regarding women's active involvement in the introduction of new legislation. In the opinion of respondents, such a success is explained as having been facilitated by the following factors:

a) Strong collaboration between women MPs from different parties and NGOs: In almost all the countries where new legislation on domestic violence has been enacted, this legislation has been introduced from the bottom-up, as women NGOs have been responsible for initiating a debate on the issue and putting it on the public agenda, as well as initiating a draft proposal through women MPs. In this sense, the passing of new legislation on domestic violence represents a joint success of women NGOs and women MPs. This kind of 'success story' is described by a Slovak respondent[22] as follows:

> *It was an initiative of NGOs. E.R. [female], my colleague from the party, she forced it through the Committee, but I was working on these laws from the beginning. We, female politicians, Eva, me and some others, also E.C. who was not a member of the Parliament at that time, we tried to minimise arguments among NGOs about the 'copyrights' of these laws, we devoted a lot of energy to this. We succeeded in the end. It was the success of women's NGOs. It was not done by the government, ministries or MPs. It was the pressure from bottom up and from outside... We are proud of that.*

Apart from effective co-operation between MPs and NGOs, respondents also highlighted the importance of cross-party alliances among women MPs for the introduction of domestic violence legislation in the country.

[21] This is particularly highlighted by respondents in Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia. In Poland a law on violence against women was proposed in 2005 by different political actors, although the most active in putting it forward has been the Government Office ('plenipotentiary') for Gender Equality. This Office works in close co-operation with women's NGOs. It is significant that this law was proposed after the establishment of the office in 2002. Before that there was a lack of co-operation between government and women's groups following the closure of the government Plenipotentiary of Women and Family Affairs in 1997 and its replacement by the more conservative Plenipotentiary for Family Affairs.

[22] Slovenian MP, leader of a political party, centre-right.

b) Institutional structures: As indicated above, the introduction of new legislation on domestic violence was initiated by NGOs in most countries and supported and carried forward by women MPs. But such close collaboration was made possible because of the existence of certain structures in the parliament or government, such as parliamentary commissions on women's rights, which afforded political women an important parliamentary space in which to develop woman-friendly legislative initiatives.

c) Popular appeal: The proposal to introduce a Domestic Violence Bill by Hungarian women's organisations was an exceptional move, as civil society groups rarely initiate legislation. However, the bill enjoyed great popular appeal and garnered wide consensus across different parties. This was probably because the issue was generally viewed as a matter concerning human, rather than women's, rights. Similarly, Romanian activists construct domestic violence as a human rights issue and a problem for society as a whole: this view enjoys widespread acceptance.

Apart from the domestic violence 'success' story, respondents coincided in pointing out that legislative initiatives coming from women MPs mainly concern the traditional 'feminine' policy areas such as the family, education and social security (the latter mainly concerning the social disadvantage of certain categories of women). Thus, women MPs across the political spectrum concur in their prioritisation of social and family issues, such as the social disadvantage of lone mothers, poverty among older women, the provision of child support, maternity and parental rights, amongst others.

*Impact on culture*

In relation to the question about how the presence of women MPs is changing culture, the majority of respondents concentrated on political/parliamentary culture, although some of them referred to a wider sense of the term as the 'general customs and beliefs of a society'.[23] On the whole, respondents' arguments regarding the impact of women MPs in a political culture were based on essentialist notions of women. This indicates a wide acceptance of women's roles independently of gender and political affinity. In their arguments, women MPs are viewed as being more tolerant, better communicators, more gentle and polite than their male colleagues:

> *Women are more careful, more circumspect, and less corrupt than men. They are able to focus on several things simultaneously.*[24]
>
> *There is a certain difference between men and women MPs [...] in their approach to work. The manner of dealing with a particular subject is different in women; it is a lot more thorough, constructive and tolerant.*[25]

[23] As defined by the Cambridge Learner's Dictionary.

[24] Socialist MEP, Hungary.

[25] MP, Republic of Slovenia.

*In every political debate across the whole political spectrum women use a different language from men. I have never seen, in any other space, such differences between men and women and between their mutual relations. I have never felt it in communication in private sphere. In politics, men get together and destroy you without any problems.*[26]

In addition, it was claimed that women are more sensitive towards certain issues such as social, educational and health matters, largely as a result of those 'feminine' attributes. Such attributes were generally evaluated positively by respondents, many of whom support women's participation for the beneficial impact that they can make to both the style and the substance of politics. In sum, women's representation can make a difference, according to respondents, in 1) the atmosphere of parliamentary debate, and 2) the kind of issues that are given priority for political action. With regard to 1), the role of women MPs is regarded mainly as 'compensatory', that is, as off-setting male, more 'aggressive' attributes, by moderating conflict and more generally by introducing a different 'style' of doing politics and exercising power. Regarding 2), women MPs are said to be 'naturally' drawn to social issues in the fields of education, social protection and health, as a result of these distinct attributes. As a respondent[27] from Slovenia argues:

*The analyses we have done among the Slovene women MPs have shown that women have a little different way of functioning. Though this is probably a consequence of socialisation and education and all that and this is why women have different priorities. Maybe they are a bit more sensitive for social politics than neo-liberal economy. Probably women would put more emphasis on social security than profitable companies. This is a fact.*

Moreover, in the views of respondents, such differences in the way women function in politics render their presence necessary insofar as certain issues must be given due attention. According to a Polish respondent:[28]

*Women place greater importance on social, educational matters and to the health service [...] men place greater importance on public investments such as roads. But I believe that women are needed in government at least for work on commissions that deal with these social matters.*

It is interesting to note that these arguments regarding differences and the benefits they bring to society are based on essentialist arguments, while little mention is made of women's distinct experiences, interests and perspectives (other than those connected to their role as mothers and carers) and the potential impact that

[26] Liberal Party MP, Slovakia.

[27] Counsellor of the Bureau for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

[28] Male respondent in a survey conducted on a representative random sample of Polish society (1002) in 2004 for this EGG research.

these can have on established cultural norms by drawing attention, and channelling action, to, for example, gender stereotypes and gender biases in organisational culture. Differently put, these arguments overlook the benefits that women's presence can bring to issues of gender equality in society. Besides, there is little mention of the benefits that women's presence in politics can bring to other women. When mentioned, respondents were by and large rather sceptical, claiming that women MPs do not, as a rule, engage in women-specific issues for a variety of reasons:[29] a scarcity of women MPs; fear among women MPs that if they focus on women's issues, they will be associated with feminism and the women's movement; a lack of solidarity among women MPs; the wide acceptance of a conservative ideology which allocates different roles to women and men according to deeply entrenched gender stereotypes; a conflict between women's interests and party interests; and, finally, denial that any problem exists.

*Women MPs and women's NGOs*

Interviews in the majority of countries reveal a weak relationship between women MPs and women's NGOs. Co-operation is at best sporadic and short-term, and focused on some specific issues, such as domestic violence, the social protection of disadvantaged women,[30] or the introduction of a quota system.

Regarding the kind of collaboration between them, it needs to be noted that a large number of NGOs are generally concerned with social rather than gender equality issues. Put differently, they are mainly service providers rather than lobbying organisations, and as such they are responsible for tasks previously undertaken by the state.[31] The following extract from a Slovenian respondent illustrates the role of NGOs in her own country but it could as well serve to describe the situation in other countries such as Czech Republic and Hungary:

> *There are no political women NGOs. Most of the existing NGOs are engaged with some quite special fields and topics, especially so-called social ones. Those have actually taken over the functioning of state institutions at offering help to some social groups, and this way it has been possible for the state to abandon, without any bad conscience, some actions which it has a duty to carry out. But politically engaged NGOs with women-connected topics, strengthening their power and influence, or otherwise engaged in gender equality, we don't have.*

[29] The majority of these factors are the same as those already mentioned in the section on barriers above.

[30] These have already been discussed in section 4.1 above.

[31] A notable exception is represented by Estonia and Lithuania where women's NGOs claim to be mainly concerned with lobbying on gender equality issues and where, in the case of Lithuania at least, co-operation seems to be rather strong.

Furthermore, in becoming a surrogate state agency and receiving state funding for the provision of services, they have lost not only their economic, but also their political independence. This point of view, however, is qualified by other respondents, who are eager to stress the fact that co-operation between women MPs and women's NGOs is quite recent and still in the process of developing. Furthermore, they cite several instances of successful co-operative work as providing a good example of what women can achieve together when they unite. The example of domestic violence legislation, described above, constitutes a case in hand.

While some interviews highlighted a few successes, others revealed that not all cases of collaboration between women MPs and NGOs have run as smoothly as it may appear. Quite the contrary, this relationship has been often conflictual. For example, respondents from NGOs in both the Czech Republic and Slovenia complained of how they are always regarded as the 'weak' partners in the decision-making process, and of how they feel that they are 'abused' by politicians, who use the services of NGOs whenever they are needed and then 'dispose of' them when they are no longer necessary. The following quotation from a representative of a Czech women's NGO expresses this view as follows:

> *[Domestic violence] is being discussed a lot, it's got into people's consciousness, into the government priorities, into round table discussions. But the government priorities give the Ministry the credit for it all [...] They do not even mention the NGOs in the document [...] I cannot take that they do not give NGOs credit at least for their initiative. I am really disgusted by this – this kind of disrespect is simply beyond any acceptable degree.*

In other interviews, however, the blame is directed in the opposite direction. Yet, on the whole (and again, with some notable exceptions), interviews show a tendency in both politicians and NGOs to blame each other for the lack of more vigorous and sustained co-operation between them. Another reason mentioned for the lack of co-operation is the absence of institutional mechanisms allowing such co-operation to take place on a formal basis. As a result, contacts and exchanges are usually at a personal level and are oftentimes informal (again, with the exception of countries where institutions facilitating social dialogue on gender equality are well established, such as, for example, parliamentary committees on women's rights).

## Conclusion: assessing the state of women's political representation in CEE

This study of women's political representation in CEE countries reveals the prevalence of deep-seated gender stereotypes that define women primarily as mothers and wives, assigning their role as primarily concentrated in the private sphere. We have seen how those gender stereotypes have a significant impact upon both the supply of, and the demand for, women in politics in the region. On the one hand, the wide social acceptance of those stereotypes work to discourage women from

pursuing a career in politics, as they perceive such a career to be in conflict with their role as women, wives and mothers. On the other hand, gender stereotypes also work to block women with political aspirations from prominent political positions, to the extent that such advancement is regarded as incompatible with the prevailing norms and practices of major political institutions such as political parties.

Gender stereotypes not only affect the supply and demand of women in politics, but they also affect the kind of strategies that women politicians pursue to 'make a difference' in the field of gender equality, including women's representation. This is because many women MPs deny the existence of a gender problem in the first place. In many of the interviews with women politicians conducted in the study, there is recognition that women are under-represented in politics, and this is not viewed benignly. Nevertheless, there remains a reluctance to see this as the result of discriminatory practices or institutionalised bias. Women's under-representation in politics is often regarded as being the result of biologically based differences between the sexes (e.g. the 'natural' propensity for women to act as nurturers and to care for children) rather than being the result of socially constructed gender roles that are discriminatory towards women. As a result, the problem with women's political under-representation is typically regarded as a problem of reconciling work and family responsibilities.

Such a conceptualisation of the gender issue (including the problem of women's under-representation) determines the kind of interests and initiatives that women politicians are likely to pursue. Thus women MPs are reluctant to focus on gender equality issues. Instead, they tend to focus their attention on more global social and human rights issues, some of which may bring important benefits to women. Such is the case of the successful political achievements related to taking action against domestic violence (conceptualised as a human rights issue), which was engineered by women MPs together with women NGOs in a number of CEE countries.

The prevalence of gender stereotypes in CEE countries lends support to arguments about the limitations of formal equality in bringing about substantive change. Although such arguments generally draw on experiences in the West, where formal equality initiatives have amounted to little more than the implementation of equal treatment legislation, the findings drawn from experiences in the CEE region lend support to a more robust argument, that in order to bring about gender equality in society, strategies consisting of the implementation of equal treatment legislation, coupled with specific actions to ensure the participation of women in all aspects of political and economic life, such as the establishment of formal quotas and the provision of generous services for mothers, may be necessary but are not sufficient.

This takes us to the strategy that is currently promoted by the EU to achieve the goal of gender equality – gender mainstreaming. The advantage of this strategy is that it draws on structural analyses of gender inequality as a problem that is located in, and reproduced by, public and social institutions and their practices. Gender mainstreaming is about changing institutional norms and practices, and as such

it is viewed as a 'transformative strategy'. Defenders of gender mainstreaming claim that this is the best strategy to tackle gender stereotyping in society – one of the key barriers to women's political representation, as revealed in this study. If this is true, gender mainstreaming may be key to the achievement of an equal representation of women in political life, and therefore key to the process of democratisation in the EU zone.

However, some researchers remain sceptical about the potential of the strategy. They caution that gender mainstreaming is still quite undefined, as it is currently quite an abstract (and therefore confusing and indeterminate) concept. They also caution that it is not clear how the strategy is to be implemented. Thus, while in some places the implementation of gender mainstreaming is a political process that has actively engaged all key players in society (political parties across the spectrum, NGOs, trade unions, policy makers, academic experts, and so on), in other places it is simply a bureaucratic process involving the introduction of new policy tools and techniques by experts and bureaucrats.

The recent creation of women's organisations in CEE countries and their successful engagement in political processes (illustrated by the case of domestic violence) provide a clear example of the potential that women have to effect change once they form cross-party and cross-sector alliances. It could be hypothesised that the implementation of gender mainstreaming in CEE, if it is to be successful, will require the same kind of joint action of sympathetic legislators, knowledgeable bureaucrats, and civil society feminists.

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**Appendix 1. Distribution of interviews**

| Country | Female Politicians | Gender equality administrators | NGO representatives | Others | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bulgaria | 3 | 4 | 2 | 2 | 11 |
| Czech Republic | 20 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 21 |
| Estonia | 2 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 |
| Hungary | 9 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| Latvia | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Lithuania | 1 (male) | 5 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Poland | 18 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 24 |
| Romania | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 10 |
| Slovakia | 10 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 18 |
| Slovenia | 3 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 6 |
| Total | 70 | 27 | 14 | 6 | 117 |

**Appendix 2. Women in the national parliaments of the EU, 2005**

| Country | Women | Men | % Women | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sweden | 158 | 191 | 45 | 1 |
| Finland | 75 | 125 | 38 | 2 |
| Denmark | 66 | 113 | 37 | 3 |
| The Netherlands | 55 | 95 | 37 | 4 |
| Spain | 126 | 224 | 36 | 5 |
| Belgium | 52 | 98 | 35 | 6 |
| Austria | 62 | 121 | 34 | 7 |
| Germany | 195 | 419 | 32 | 8 |
| Luxembourg | 14 | 46 | 23 | 9 |
| Bulgaria* | 53 | 187 | 22 | 10 |
| Lithuania | 31 | 110 | 22 | 11 |
| Portugal | 49 | 181 | 21 | 12 |
| Latvia | 21 | 89 | 21 | 13 |
| Poland | 94 | 366 | 20 | 14 |
| United Kingdom | 127 | 519 | 20 | 15 |
| Estonia | 19 | 82 | 19 | 16 |
| Czech Republic | 34 | 166 | 17 | 17 |
| Slovakia | 25 | 125 | 17 | 18 |
| Cyprus | 9 | 47 | 16 | 19 |
| Ireland | 22 | 144 | 13 | 20 |
| Greece | 39 | 261 | 13 | 21 |
| Slovenia | 11 | 79 | 12 | 22 |
| France | 70 | 504 | 12 | 23 |
| Italy | 71 | 545 | 12 | 24 |
| Romania* | 37 | 294 | 11 | 25 |
| Malta | 6 | 59 | 9 | 26 |
| Hungary | 35 | 350 | 9 | 27 |

*Source:* Inter-Parliamentary Union, www.ipu.org/parline. Data collected on 29 October 2005.
*Bulgaria and Romania are included as EU accession states.

# (In)Visible Women in Political Life in Slovakia*

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the questions of the (in)visibility of women in Slovak political life. The material presents statistical data on women's participation in Slovak national, regional and local politics with the support of qualitative data from interviews with women politicians and activists. The author looks at the reasons for the low political representation of women and the unsuccessful attempts to increase it by introducing positive mechanisms such as quotas. The primary focus is put on the representation of women in municipal politics. The author analyses the main reasons why women are more successful in local politics than in 'high' politics.

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## Introduction

Every country has its own system of values, attitudes, norms and rules that predetermine the role of women in society. Women in Slovakia represent 51.4% of the whole population (Census 2001), but they remain significantly under-represented in decision-making at all levels. Although women in Czechoslovakia won the right to vote in 1919, this did not automatically lead to their integration into political life. The stereotype that women do not understand politics and should not 'poke their noses into it' has prevailed throughout the whole 20th century – no matter what political system was in power.

During the state socialist era, equality between men and women was formally declared in the Constitution,[1] which stated that all citizens had equal rights and

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[1] The fundamental guarantee of equal rights is declared in the Constitution of the Slovak Republic. It covers the general right to vote and to be elected, but it does not mention the principle of gender equality in participation in decision-making. The main programme document of the Slovak Cabinet is the National Action Plan for Women in the Slovak Republic, adopt-

equal duties; men and women had an equal position in the family, the workplace and in public activities; and the working-class society guaranteed the equality of its citizens by creating equal opportunities in all spheres of life in society. In reality, the discrimination of women was concealed behind this proclaimed equality organised from the top-down. Women became a source of cheap labour, essential to the process of industrialisation and the implementation of five-year economic plans. Gender segregation in the labour market, discrimination in the work force, and the glass ceiling confronting women in all state enterprises became an everyday reality accepted by both women and men. Women's participation in public political life was secured by quotas, which, however, did not mean any political power for women. The proposed proportion of women to be included on candidate lists for election to the legislative bodies in Czechoslovakia was up to 30%. All female and male candidates were designated by the Communist Party, and the elections only confirmed their candidature. In spite of a relatively high number of women in the legislative authorities, their participation in politics was only a formality, and their impact on decision-making was negligible. All decisions were made by the male-dominated leadership of the Communist Party rather than by Parliament or the government, which merely accepted all the Party's proposals one-hundred-percent of the time Results of the parliamentary elections were always celebrated as a victory of 'socialist democracy'. After 1989, the quota system was immediately abolished as a discredited symbol of socialism, and this has been reflected in a dramatic decline in women's political representation. People's memories of obligatory and formal quotas have had a negative impact on post-1989 debates on women's political representation.

After 1989, Slovak women faced a new challenge of a choice, which they never had during socialism: a choice of staying at work and being economically and professionally active or of returning to the 'traditional role of women', in the family and with children. The tendency in favour of the return of women to the private sphere re-emerged among conservative political parties and the church. Even some official figures (e.g. Emília Kováčová, the wife of the former Slovak president) challenged women to devote their life to their 'primary role – childrearing', as the only guarantee for the future of the country. This approach did not find many followers for two main reasons:

ed in 1997 (Government Resolution No. 650/1997), which followed the recommendations of the 4th United Nations World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The gender mainstreaming approach, encouraging a gender sensitive approach in all areas of government policies and measures at all levels and at all stages, is reflected in the cabinet document ‚The Concept of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men' (Government Resolution No. 232/2001), which was adopted by parliament in 2001. The National Plan for Employment in the Slovak Republic (Government Resolution No. 908/2000) pays special attention to equal opportunities related to employment. The Labour Act (311/2001 Coll.) covers the issues of the rights of women in the field of social policy and employment. The Anti-Discrimination Act (365/2004 Coll.) is the latest and most significant piece of legislation aimed at guaranteeing the equal treatment of citizens in all areas.

1. The difficult period of the transition to a market economy based on neo-liberal principles neglecting gender perspectives led to the deterioration of socio-economic conditions for many citizens, and most families could not rely on a single income.
2. The majority of Slovak women had achieved the same or higher level of education as men during socialism and wanted to work and build their professional careers.

The high percentage of women in the labour force in Slovakia (up to 45% of the total labour force in the 1990s; Bútorová et al. [1999: 290]) has not led to higher women's participation in political life. Women are active and visible in most areas of Slovak society, but they remain under-represented in politics. The number of women politically active has been only slowly increasing in recent years in almost all spheres of political and civic life. However, those women who enter politics and reach higher posts do not automatically become gender aware or gender sensitive. On the contrary, most of them are reluctant to be in any way associated with women's issues, interests or perspectives for fear of losing votes in the next elections. Lovenduski [2005] is informative about whether the presence of women in politics provides a means of articulating women's perspectives and issues. It seems that in Slovakia, women's political participation has not yet reached the size necessary for the change of political culture, norms and attitudes. The presence of women in politics itself does not seem to be a guarantee of gender sensitive policies. Lack of political experience, knowledge, understanding and awareness of women's issues among the Slovak female politicians and absence of women's solidarity and support networks are reflected in gender-blind policies and attitudes.

This article aims to examine the problems of women's political representation in Slovakia. The discussion is based on statistical data supported by qualitative data from interviews conducted with female politicians, activists, and public officials (10 politicians, 12 activists, and 5 public officials). The research data were collected in 2003–2005, and although they present a picture of women' participation in both national and municipal politics, of particular interest in this article is representation at the local level, where women seem to be more successful and where their numbers are increasing slowly with every election. The study of women's political participation in municipal politics is more neglected in women's and political studies than analysis of the data at the national level, but it is equally important, because the local level can be the first step, and a good starting point, in a woman's political career.

## Women's political representation as reflected in data

Women's political representation has been a topic of political, sociological, anthropological and feminist literature for several decades. Most feminist authors dealing with women's political participation have been examining the importance of women in politics, the meanings of equality, equal opportunities, justice, difference, citi-

zenship, and public-private dilemmas [e.g. Phillips 1998; Regulska 1998; Lovenduski 1998, 2005; Dahlerup 2002]. In her latest publication Lovenduski [2005] cites arguments in favour of increased women's representation and explores whether women's presence in politics makes a difference. She compares the theory of presence (how and why changes happen if there is equality of representation) and the theory of critical mass (only if the number of women reaches a certain critical mass, can qualitative changes occur in the institutional or political culture, values and norms may happen [Lovenduski 2005: 141–142]), both of which have their advocates and opponents. The arguments for women's political representation become even more complex if we realise that each female (or male) politician has a multidimensional presence in politics as a member of a political party, ethnic group, interest group, city, region, etc. [Lovenduski 2005: 14]. How are these arguments reflected in the young Slovak democracy?

Slovakia, a new member state in the European Union (as of 2004), had to adopt and implement all EU gender equality directives (as part of the *acquis communautaire*) within its national legislation as a condition for joining the European Union. Despite an improvement in legislation, all equality laws, national action plans and gender mainstreaming strategies calling for a balanced representation of women and men and a gender-sensitive approach to all government policies remain declaratory and formal, and their enforcement is slow and inefficient. Women are more active in local politics, community activities, interest groups and non-governmental organisations. Men still dominate the government, Parliament, political parties and trade unions. This trend has been similar in many countries in Central and Eastern Europe. We can agree with Gal and Kligman [2000: 93–95] that in the 1990s national politics in these countries remained a male realm, and it was civil society that became an arena for women's civil and political action. This tendency has been slowly changing in recent years, as a growing number of women in politics can be seen. Some of them come to politics from the third sector or from academia with experience of lobbying or working with politicians.

*Women in the Slovak National Council (Parliament)*

The data in Table 1 show that there is a big gap between the pre- and post-1989 period and demonstrate the formal character of women's participation in legislative power during the socialist period. Despite lower numbers after 1989, the ratio of women to men on the political parties' candidate lists has been increasing with every parliamentary election. The number of women elected as members of Parliament is low not only because of the low number of female candidates, but also because political parties rank women in lower places on the candidate lists, with small chance of being elected. However, in 2002 the share of female candidates in the top half of the lists increased to 20.9%, compared to 14.7% in 1998 [Filadelfiová, Bútorová and Gyárfášová 2002: 337]. Unlike the elections before, in 2002 most political parties included at least one woman in top five places, and eleven parties had a

**Table 1. Women in Parliament**

| Year | Number of MPs | Number of women | % of women |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1976–1981 | 150 | 41 | 27% |
| 1981–1986 | 150 | 44 | 29% |
| 1986–1990 | 150 | 44 | 29% |
| 1990–1992 | 150 | 18 | 12% |
| 1992–1994 | 150 | 23 | 15.3% |
| 1994–1998 | 150 | 22 | 14.7% |
| 1998–2002 | 150 | 21 | 14% |
| 2002–2006 | 150 | 22/29 | 14.7/19.3%* |

* After the election several male MPs became ministers in the cabinet and their seats in Parliament were taken by the candidates next on the lists, which improved the ratio of women in the National Council.

woman among top three candidates. Paradoxically, the Slovak National Party, the only political party at that time with a female leader, placed their second woman candidate at the ineligible 52nd position. Several political parties, mostly centre-left parties, announced informal quotas within the parties for the first time. Centre-right conservative parties, on the other hand, opposed any positive mechanisms to secure gender-balanced representation.

Political and public debate on introducing positive measures was for the first time initiated and opened by several women's organisations and female MPs before the elections 2002. Quotas are accepted in many countries across the world as temporary instruments aimed at improving the balanced participation of women and men in politics. They can be either legally imposed or voluntarily adopted by political parties. Since 2002 legal enforcement has several times been an item on the parliamentary and government agenda in Slovakia. The woman MP Eva Rusnáková's first proposal of a 30% minimum quota for women on the candidate lists was quickly rejected in Parliament. The Home Secretary Ivan Simko introduced a second proposal to amend the Election Act, which would secure every third position on the candidate lists for a person of the other gender. The bill proposed high fines for all political parties that break the law. This initiative attracted the wide attention of politicians, media and public. The deputy chair of the Christian Democratic Party and the present Minister of Justice (2005) Daniel Lipšic criticised the proposal as anti-constitutional and discriminatory because 'it strengthened the stereotype that some groups of population could not achieve success without a special protection' [Rebrova 2002; Jurinová 2004]. His argument was supported by a number of politicians, mostly from conservative right-wing parties. More than fifty women's organisations in Slovakia together with the Third Sector Association (*Gremium tretieho sektora* – an umbrella association of non-governmental organisations) were lobbying for

the 3:1 proposal, but in the end it was rejected by the cabinet and did not even make it into Parliament.

The topic resurfaced in 2003 when Jozef Heriban, the chair of the Committee for Equal Opportunities and Status of Women (the advisory body to the parliamentary Committee for Human Rights, Minorities and the Status of Women) presented a proposal for an amendment to the Election Act by setting up a support mechanism for women that would ensure every third place on the party list for a woman. The proposal was the result of a joint decision of the Committee and was supported by women's NGOs associated in Women's Forum 2000. Several newspapers opened a discussion on the topic. Most reactions were controversial and negative, as expressed in the daily *SME*:

> The reason for the low representation of women in political life is their lower interest in this kind of self-realisation. It is so easy, human and natural. Sexes differ because their biological and social determination is different. That is why they prefer different roles. Quotas that want to change it are not only an attack against democracy, but also an abusive violence against women themselves. Social engineering is a modern version of communism. [Schutz, *SME*, 1 March 2004]

Several women activists publicly condemned this type of argumentation and criticised the negative attitude towards quotas: 'The quotas did not go through, there is no threat of communism or injustice to men. There is also no threat of a more human and better society' [Pietruchova 2004]. However, many women politicians, women MPs and even some women experts opposed the idea of quotas, arguing that society was not yet ready for this kind of support mechanism because of the vivid memories of negative historic experiences with forced and formal women's political representation during socialism. The lack of solidarity and collaboration, and the high level of rivalry between female politicians have also contributed to stopping debates on quotas. From the interviews with women politicians it was evident that they did not admit or recognise any obstacles to a woman's political career and did not see it as 'their' problem:

> *I stand for natural respect for a woman, and not for quotas. In my political career I have never experienced any barriers, had no negative experience that would limit me as a woman. I am not aware of any barriers that would prevent women from being successful either in politics or other public or economic positions. In my political party all women have equal opportunities to all positions.* (MP, centre-left)

> *Obviously those of us who are in politics have not had any problems and have not experienced any barriers.* (MEP, Socialist)

> *As a woman I feel equal in the Assembly. I do not feel like a protected animal species which needs special legal protection. (MP, centre-left, quoted from SITA* (Slovak News Agency), 5 March 2004)

Although the political and public discourse on the legal enforcement of quotas remains open, it has had a positive impact on the awareness of the issue among the general public. This has been reflected in the growing support for quotas among citizens in opinion polls: 64% of women and 52% of men supported quotas in a survey in 2002, compared with 60% of women and 37% of men in 1995 [Gyárfášová and Pafková 2002: 24]. It seems that the voluntary adoption of quotas within political parties has a greater chance of being introduced in Slovakia, as was indicated in the 2002 elections. Centre-left parties were the first to come with informal quotas on the candidate lists and most parties took a decision to give at least one important party post to a woman. Although this cannot be considered a major improvement, it is a sign of change within political party policies.

*Women in the European Parliament: victory or shame?*

The level of participation of Slovak women politicians in the European Parliament is more satisfactory. Slovakia has five women among fourteen members of the European Parliament (35.71%). The total percentage of women in the EP is 30.33%, and only three women are chairs of parliamentary committees. One of them is the Slovak MEP Anna Záborská, chair of the Committee on Women's Right and Gender Equality, and Member of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats). Záborská's election was accompanied by protests from many MEPs, but also from numerous Slovak women's organisations. She has been criticised for her conservative opinions against women's rights, her opposition to abortion and gay rights, and her failure to support anti-discrimination legislation in Slovakia in 2004. Her appointment was a result of a political deal between the European People's Party and the Socialists, and it was met with deep disappointment among Slovak women activists.

**The male face of government**

Women's representation in the executive power is worse than in the legislative assembly. This may be owing to the fact that a ministerial post in the cabinet is the highest in terms of power and responsibilities, and men have more self-confidence and no inhibitions to compete for it. The number of female cabinet members has varied since 1989 from 0 to almost 15% and shows no steady increase. While in 1996 Slovakia was the only country out of 27 countries in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union with a percentage of women ministers close to the OECD average (14.8% compared to 16.8% in the OECD; MONEE Project Women in Transition; UNICEF 1999), in 2005 it was at the bottom of the list with regard to the number of women ministers in national governments in the EU25 (0% compared to the EU average of 23%; EC-DG Employment Database, 2005). The data show that Slovak political representatives ignore the principle of balanced representation when it comes to the highest executive body.

**Table 2. Women in the government**

| Year | Number of cabinet members | Number of women | % of women |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1989–1990 | 23 | 1 | 4.30% |
| 1990–1991 | 25 | 0 | 0 |
| 1991–1992 | 27 | 2 | 7.40% |
| 1992–1994 | 29 | 3 | 10.20% |
| 1994 | 18 | 1 | 5.60% |
| 1994–1998 | 27 | 4 | 14.80% |
| 1998–2002 | 20 | 2 | 10.00% |
| 2002–2006 | 16 | 0 | 0 |

*Women in regional and local politics*

Municipal politics, often called 'small politics', is a reflection of politics at the national level, although some data from the local level show more positive trends. In 2002–2004 Slovakia implemented reform that decentralised public administration. The reform transformed older three-tier administration to a two-grade territorial self-administration with 1) regions – higher territorial units (*vyšší územný celok* – VÚC), and 2) towns and villages. The districts, the middle level of public administration, have been gradually dissolved and their competences shifted to higher territorial units and local municipalities.

At the regional level (and previously the district level) of public administration there are no gender-based data. The list of elected candidates shows the number of women in top positions to still be very low, with no women as regional government–VÚC presidents (even no candidatures) and only a small number of women as district government chairs. The percentage of female members of regional councils is 14% (EC-DG Employment Database 2005).

Local self-governments – municipalities – were established in 1990.[2] Since then, they have gone through major public administration transformation, with the final reform of decentralisation in 2002–2004. Municipalities have been given vast responsibilities, which put more pressure on the mayors, who have to cope with a wide range of problems despite a lack of human and financial resources and capacities.

The percentage of women mayors and lord mayors in municipalities (called *starostky* in small municipalities and *primátorky* in towns and cities) has been slow-

[2] There are 2924 municipalities in Slovakia, with an average size of 1800 inhabitants. Of them, 175 have the status of a town, city or city quarter (with its own municipality). Small municipalities with less than 1000 inhabitants represent over two-thirds of all municipalities [Bernátová et al. 2001; www.statistics.sk/vs2002/sk/tab/tab1.htm].

ly, but steadily, growing in each election (1990, 1994, 1998 and 2002), especially in small villages and small towns. No woman has been elected in any of the eight regional cities (centres of the regional VÚCs) since 1990; and only a few women have been mayors in district cities and towns. Opinion polls in Slovakia show that 45.2% of men and 33.6% of women consider the women's representation in local politics sufficient, while 25.6% of men and 42.1% of women find it insufficient [Gyárfášová and Pafková 2002].

## Women mayors: a closer look at motivations for participating in local politics

The data in Table 3 demonstrate that women succeed mainly as mayors in small villages. According to surveys, these are often villages with decreasing and ageing populations. The regional divide, religion, ethnicity and traditionalism / modernity have no impact on the success rate of women. Women have been elected in all categories of Slovak villages – both ethnically and religiously homogeneous and heterogeneous. Size seems to be the main differentiating factor affecting the success of women in local elections [Filadelfiová, Radičová and Puliš 2000: 54–56].

From the interviews with female politicians at local and national levels, several reasons for the growing presence of women in local politics can be identified:

1. *Women as municipal officials are able to stay close to home and the family and can harmonise family duties with work, which is one of the most important factors in their decision to run for the position of mayor.*

The family is a significant factor in women's decision-making about entering politics. More than 90% of Slovaks get married at least once in their lives [Filadelfiová, Bútorová and Gyárfášová 2003: 720]. Family and marriage are still highly valued. Opinion polls show that 70.1% of men and 78.7% of women see family and children as the main barrier to entry into the world of politics [Gyarfasová and Pafkova 2002:

**Table 3. Women mayors in local municipalities**

| Year | Number of mayors total | Number of women mayors in villages | Number of women mayors in cities | Number of women mayors total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| total 1994–1998 | 2866 | 415 / 15.2% | 3 / 2.2% | 418/ 4.5% |
| 1998–2002 | 2867 | 478 / 17.5% | 6 / 4.4% | 484/ 16.8% |
| 2002–2006 | 2787 | 538 / 20.3% | 3 / 2.2% | 568/ 19.4% |

*Source*: Súpis miest a obcí SR 1998. Bratislava: GEOTEXT 1998; ZMOS Bratislava 1999; Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic

24]. For most women who consider going to politics, spousal and family members' consent is very important. Without their permission and support a Slovak woman would rarely embark on a political career [Filadelfiová, Radičová and Puliš 2000: 95]. When it comes to the division of family duties, 68% of women and 55% of men believe that both partners should participate in child-raising and household care. In reality, 88% of Slovak women usually cook, 81% clean, 68% do the shopping, and 67% look after children [Gyárfášová and Pafková 2002]. The urban-rural divide, age and education are crucial factors for the division of labour in the family.

*Family is what counts most when entering a political career... Here in Bratislava the situation is changing, we have different conditions and way of life, services...the family is not so involved... But the rest of Slovakia is more conservative, family help is more important. Everything is based on family relations...I often have meetings with mayors from small towns and villages. These women have to rely on their families if they want to do their work well.* (MP and leader of one political party on the centre-right)

*I can only thank God that my husband accepted my decision to become a mayor, he understands and supports me. It makes me stronger, this feeling that I do not have a problem in the family. It is a position that means many people come to your home at any time, on Saturday, Sunday, during holidays. The family is constantly disturbed. But as a mayor I am here for these people. A woman has a disadvantage that when she comes home, she is supposed to cook, wash, clean, all the things that men usually don't do. If a male mayor is in the office late hours, everything is ready when he comes home, his wife makes dinner, cleans, all is done... It is mainly Saturday when I can clean, wash, cook properly. It is good that the family tolerates it. I cannot afford any paid assistance on my salary.* (Mayor)

*I would have never entered politics if I were not from Bratislava. No one could persuade me to enter politics if I was from Košice and had to be three weeks away from home during the parliamentary sessions. It must be an enormous burden for every woman, a big problem. This is why so few women are in 'big' politics. Politics is for women who have adult children or no children. I have not met a woman in Slovak politics that has small children and is not from Bratislava... Women do not want to risk their family.* (MP, liberal)

*One of the reasons why I decided to become a mayor was that I could do it in the village that is my home. I have my family here, my husband and my son, my parents and sisters, and I can rely on their everyday support.* (Mayor)

2. *Women can identify better with local issues than with national politics. They feel more familiar with the problems of the community and the people, and more useful in finding direct solutions. The main motivation of women mayors is to help their village.*

Most women mayors consider their work as a service to others, a community service. They are able to identify the problems of their villages and their citizens, and they

want to help the community. They see their work as an opportunity to be involved and as a challenge to find solutions to everyday problems of the people. They want to see their villages growing to prosperity. They do not often see their position as a career step towards higher positions, but as a commitment, service and mission.

*I wanted to help the village. I had some experience in working with people; I have been doing it all my life. And social awareness. The situation in small villages is bad, the economy is poor, people need help and support.* (Mayor)

*I am here to help the people and make our village nicer. I did not have much experience when I became a mayor, but people from the village trusted me. At least some of them. I have been living here from my birth, I know everyone. I am doing it for them.* (Mayor)

3. *The position of mayor in small municipalities is less attractive in terms of power and money.*

Mayors in Slovakia are paid according to the size of the village (number of inhabitants), which means that in small localities salaries are low. The mayors of these villages have very limited financial and human resources, but a large amount of responsibilities. They can often employ only one additional administrative person and/or an accountant, and they have to manage a wide range of work themselves. All interviewees agreed that the position of a mayor in small places is less attractive and financially interesting than it is in bigger villages or towns. According to the mayors, that is the reason why men prefer bigger municipalities, where they have the support of a large staff, bigger budgets, bigger projects and higher salaries. Conversely, women who run for mayor in small municipalities are motivated by their desire to make a change and to help their community, rather than by power or money.

*The salaries of mayors in villages and towns are fixed and set on the basis of the number of inhabitants. Maybe that is the reason why men are mayors in towns and cities. Their salaries are much bigger there. Council members can suggest some financial award for a mayor – monthly or annual, but it is not very common in our village. I don't know why, whether it's envy or what. And this is despite the fact that I manage to raise an extra 4 million SK a year from various foundations. I think that if one finds extra money for the village, one deserves to get some award, it is de-motivating otherwise. So the only thing that motivates me is the feeling that I do the job well.* (Mayor)

*Here in our village there is a tradition of women mayors. Before 1989 we had a woman mayor, too. In a nearby spa town, Sliac, it's different. You can't compare the conditions here and there. You know, in bigger places, it's all about money. There were women candidates in Sliac, but they had no success. They only vote for men there. They have bigger opportunities for investment activities, more building activities... And more money.* (Mayor)

*4. Affiliation to a political party does not play a crucial role in municipal politics.*

Many women consider politics a male domain and a dirty business. The political agenda is not a decisive factor in municipal elections and that is one of the reasons why more women are attracted to run for the position of mayor. According to a number of surveys, independent candidates are trusted more, and in local elections they receive more votes than candidates who represent a political party [Bernátová et al. 2001: 247].

> *In our country, politics is understood as a battle for power, 'chairs', money and influence. It is not understood as a way of governing society. Politics and political parties are tools for governing society. Only if people understand civil society – that it's all about how the state is governed, then women will also do more. They understand it better at a local, communal level.* (MP and leader of a political party on the centre-right)

> *I am mayor now for the second electoral term. I always ran as an independent candidate. Maybe there are some villages where political affiliation matters, but not here... In this village we do not organise big campaigns before an election. We had just one meeting, where each candidate presented her or his programme (there were three more male candidates in the first election, then in the second electoral term I was the only one). So I don't know. Maybe people just wanted a new face. Maybe because I used to be publicly very active... They could see I was interested and wanted to help. Maybe.* (Mayor)

> *I have been a member of the municipal council since 1986, so I know this work. This is my second electoral term as mayor. In the first election I was a candidate for the Slovak Democratic Left, for the second time I ran as a candidate for the Slovak Communist Party. But our village doesn't have strong political parties. Once I was elected, I didn't mix politics with my job. I think we are here to serve citizens regardless of any political affiliation.* (Mayor)

The research confirmed the results of previous studies [Filadelfiová, Radičová and Puliš 2000] that women mayors can be distinguished into three categories based on their motivation:

- Mayors who have long experience working with people from the socialist period (former functionaries in the Communist Party, members of the municipal councils, women who were active in various organisations such as the Slovak Association of Women, the Socialist Youth Union, etc.). These women often appear in regional, district or local networks and positions. Their experience from previous public work (management and public speaking skills) and higher self-confidence put them in the front lines of various organisations, including the offices of public administration. These women have no problem occupying top positions, and they see it as the natural continuation of their previous activities.
- Mayors who ran for the position because 'there was no one else to do it'. This is quite common in small, marginalised villages with an ageing population and of-

ten with a high proportion of women in the population (mainly widows).[3] Small villages under 500 inhabitants represent 43% of all villages in Slovakia and have the highest proportion of post-productive population [Falťan and Pašiak 2004], which has a negative impact on civic participation in these communities. Women who agree to become candidates make their decisions on the basis of pleas and pressure from fellow citizens.

- Mayors from the younger generation, or more career-oriented women, who are motivated more by pull factors rather than push factors: by the opportunity to make a difference by improving living conditions in the village; by the challenge of helping and serving the people; by career development prospects and self-satisfaction; and in some cases purely by the opportunity to get a job in a village with otherwise limited job opportunities.

Women mayors prove themselves to be successful and reliable in their activities, a fact expressed by the chair of the Association of Towns and Villages in Slovakia, Michal Sýkora:

> There should be more women in municipal politics. Women are more responsible. It has never happened that they ignore the problems in their villages. If the mayor is a man, he takes it for granted that he doesn't need to take on any family duties. Women manage to do both...Municipal politics is the place where they should start... (SME, 28 November 2002)

In order to encourage more women to participate in municipal politics, several NGOs organise campaigns, projects and workshops aimed at women mainly in rural areas. VOKA, the Rural Agency for Community Activities, is the most active organisation in this area. VOKA is a community association that aims to support the development of rural areas by motivating local resources, protecting local heritage and training rural leaders. VOKA runs the Programme for Rural Women Leaders. It organises informal meetings, training sessions and seminars for women who have capacity to become leaders in their communities, along with meetings for women mayors designed to facilitate the exchange of examples of best practices. In conjunction with the Rural Parliament in Slovakia (VIPA), VOKA organises an annual competition of female leaders as part of the World Day of Rural Women (15 October), which was declared at the Beijing Women's Conference in 1995. In Slovakia, 'The Week of Rural Women' takes place in October every year. Conferences, workshops, exhibitions and informal meetings of rural women leaders are organised throughout the whole countryside. The objective of the competition 'Female Leader of the Year' is to

[3] The Slovak population is ageing, and women's life expectancy is increasing (78 for women, 70 for men as measured in 2005). The early death of men results in an unbalanced distribution of gender and family status within the elderly population. The most rapidly growing population group is people over 60, an increasing share of whom are women, mostly widows.

motivate, encourage and publicly recognise female leaders in the countryside. Several categories are open for nominations: 1) woman-activist (a woman active in a non-profit organisation or association); 2) woman-politician (a woman in local politics – a mayor, a member of a municipal council, or a member of the Rural Parliament); and 3) woman-organiser (not a member of any organisation, but active in the village as an individual organiser of various activities).

The political representation of women at the local level in Slovakia is still not high, but it exhibits a positive trend towards increasing and shows potential for the future. According to some literature [e.g. Meier 2003], working in local politics is often considered a good starting point for the further political career of a woman in higher politics. However, it does not seem to be the pattern followed by women mayors in small and marginalised villages in Slovakia. None of the interviewees is planning to go into higher politics.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data on women's political representation in Slovakia reveals that women are under-represented in all areas of political life. The participation of women in legislative and executive bodies shows no regular patterns of increase, although the parliamentary and public debate on positive measures such as quotas has had an impact on internal policies in several political parties, mainly the centre-left oriented, and on public awareness. Women's participation in municipal politics has been slowly but steadily increasing with every election. Women tend to be more successful in small municipalities with decreasing and ageing populations. Men predominate as mayors in bigger towns and cities that have more financial and human resources and are more attractive in terms of power and money.

When looking at the development of gender equality discourse in Slovakia over the past decade it is possible to see two controversial phenomena. Although public awareness and the sensitivity of gender issues has been improving slightly, as all the opinion polls show, the approach taken of executive and legislative institutions remains unchanged and formal, and there is continued unwillingness to enforce the implementation of international commitments. It proves the argument that political institutions, processes and procedures have a capacity to preserve traditions and cultures and to prevent or slow changes [Lovenduski 2005: 26]. This tendency has become stronger in the most recent government (2002-2006), which backs conservative values and ignores gender equality policies more than any other previous government.

The reasons for the poor visibility of women at all political levels are complex, but a considerable portion of responsibility for the present status quo must be born by women themselves. Those women who succeed in high politics do not use their political power to assert the gender agenda. There are only a few women in the Slovak political arena that have raised their voices in support of women's rights pub-

licly. Several women MPs in the most recent parliaments tabled the question of quotas, but this did not lead to any changes in legislation. In a number of informal interviews, both male and female respondents agreed that female politicians do not want to take the risk of starting a debate on women's issues mainly for fear of losing the support of their voters (especially voters in rural areas and small towns, which make up the majority). In addition, most female politicians show a lack of interest in and knowledge, understanding and awareness about women's rights and the principle of equal opportunities.

*Strategies for increasing women's participation in decision-making*

The first strategy is quotas, which should be understood as one of the temporary tools with which it is possible to rectify the imbalance in political representation. The legal enforcement of quotas in Slovakia was rejected in Parliament several times. A few parties introduced informal quotas before the 2002 election. In spite of the limited commitment of parties to adopt quotas, this would appear to be the most suitable path for Slovakia and it can be enforced in the future. The public support for introducing quotas has been slowly increasing in recent years, as shown in the opinion polls, which proves that the attitude of society towards positive action measures is changing. Raising awareness also continues to be a very important long-term strategy. Despite the progress of the past decade, gender mainstreaming at all levels is still formal, and it is not functioning in reality. Even men and women who are aware of gender policies do not consider it a serious issue and minimise its significance. More public discussions, events and regular media coverage are needed. Another strategy is education, which is a key factor in fighting gender stereotypes and gender blindness. This must start with the education of teachers, and the education of students at primary and secondary schools. It is also important to review and change the textbooks that students use, as they continue to reflect many traditional gender models. Finally, a system of auditing and monitoring mechanisms at all levels needs to be established by independent agencies. It is not enough to have legislation if it is not implemented in practice and monitored regularly. The gender mainstreaming approach must become a policy at all levels and in all organisations and as a normal part of everyday life in society.

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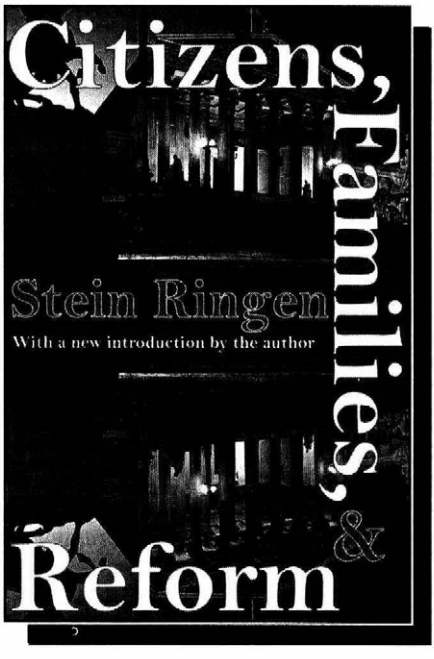
# Citizens, Families, and Reform

## *Citizens, Families, and Reform*
## Stein Ringen
With a New Introduction by the author

In ***Citizens, Families, and Reform***, Stein Ringen shows how long-standing inequalities of income and class are flexible and changing in post-industrial societies. Such inequalities respond to structural changes such as social mobility and to public policies such as those of the welfare state. His book is a study of the process from careful statistical analysis to specific policy recommendations.




***Citizens, Families, and Reform*** draws on two strands of research summarizing detailed statistical analysis, one on children and families and the other on social inequality. Ringen's basic premise is that prudent social policy should start from investment in families. Progress and reform in society, such as extended access to education, tends to modify social divisions and stimulate open opportunity, particularly in the area of higher education. ***Citizens, Families, and Reform*** addresses the situation of children, who have a surprisingly lower standard of living than adult population groups by most measures of well-being. Ringen attributes this disparity to flaws in the distribution of power, which leads to the disenfranchisement of children as citizens. He addresses this problem by discussing children and voting rights, building a case for realizing the ideal of one person, one vote, by extending the vote to children.

Real democracies are necessarily imperfect. Ringen argues for the classical liberal theory of social progress through economic growth and equality of opportunity and warns against the "terrible temptation towards perfection." ***Citizens, Families, and Reform's*** new introduction reviews the debates sparked by the book's original publication in 1997 and suggests areas in which his arguments have been vindicated.

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# Citizenship in an Enlarging Europe: Contested Strategies

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**Abstract:** This article explores some of the debates surrounding the gendered impact of both the democratisation process and European Union enlargement on the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. It focuses on three key issues of gender-equitable citizenship: debates about the best mechanisms for achieving gender equality in mainstream politics; questions about the efficacy of civil society activism in relation to mainstream politics; and the pros and cons of gender mainstreaming as a key component of EU enlargement. It also raises the question of the most appropriate frame for achieving more gender-equitable societies: the nation-state or supra-national institutions such as the European Union.

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## Introduction

This article is concerned with the opportunities for and constraints on the achievement of gender-equitable societies in Central and Eastern Europe.[1]

It focuses on three debates, all of which illustrate the complexity of the issues at stake, the varying pace and scope of change, and some of the factors influencing these changes. The three areas of debate are:

- mechanisms for increasing female political participation and introducing gender-sensitive policies in mainstream politics;
- contestations about the role and efficacy of civil society activism in relation to mainstream politics;
- pros and cons of gender mainstreaming as the EU-favoured strategy for the achievement of gender-equitable outcomes.

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[1] It goes without saying that the transformation process has differed in pace, scope and nature within individual countries in the regions. Beyond individual country differences, the trends evident over the past more than fifteen years vary within the region. Thus there are both notable inter-country differences and contrasting directions of development between the sub-regions of East Central Europe, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and Central Asia. The process of EU enlargement is contributing to widening the gaps between these regions in terms of political participation.

The first two issues represent the age-old feminist – and wider activist – debate about the relative effectiveness of top-down versus bottom-up strategies for increasing gender equality. Will increasing the level of gender equality in legislatures, i.e. increasing the number of female politicians, necessarily achieve a shift in legislation and policy towards more gender-sensitivity? Advocates of this approach argue that there is a need for a 'critical mass' or 'threshold level' of female political representatives in national and local legislatures, and tend to favour quotas as a form of positive discrimination likely to achieve such a 'critical mass' [Lovenduski, 2001]. Opponents are sceptical about the possibility of achieving significant change through mainstream political means and argue rather for the efficacy of grassroots activism 'from below'. This view has been given a very substantial boost in Central and Eastern Europe since the fall of the state socialist regimes, both by governmental and non-governmental, national and international donor agencies, all of whom have lauded civil society activism as the single most important ingredient in the democratisation process.

Both these strategies are relevant mainly at the national level. Another approach is the policy of gender mainstreaming, adopted by the United Nations at the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women and very much favoured by the European Union. Gender mainstreaming is highly relevant to discussions and developments within the region of Central and Eastern Europe, since it – at least formally – formed part of the negotiations and preparations for the 2004 accession to the EU of the first eight countries from the region. This third approach to increasing gender equity in turn raises questions as to what is the most appropriate frame for addressing equalities issues: the nation-state or supra-national bodies such as the European Union. This article therefore discusses the three strategies for gender equity described above and also raises questions about the most relevant framework for achieving them.

The transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe to date has been undertaken – as have political restructuring processes in Western European 'old' EU member states – under the aegis of an assumed consensus around the neo-liberal market model. This version of the 'convergence theory ' is the result of a transition from a bi-polar to a uni-polar world dominated by the processes of economic globalisation on the one hand, and US-led neo-liberal rhetoric affecting politics, economics and social policy on the other. In Central and Eastern Europe it marks the policy outcome of the political abandonment of the socialist rhetoric of egalitarianism and social justice in favour of the liberal discourse of individual liberty and (economic) opportunity.

The fundamental nature of the transformation in Central and Eastern Europe has resulted in profound social, economic and political dislocations. The relative withdrawal of the state from welfare provision within the externally imposed neoliberal paradigm has exacerbated the impact of economic restructuring [Steinhilber 2002]. Some of the negative effects have been huge increases in poverty and a widening income gap [Daskalova 2000: 339]. Some authors would claim that one of

the most definitive effects has been the re-emergence of class as a social determinant in the region [Gapova 2002; Regulska 2002]. Economic losses are presented as more than matched by new opportunities, both in terms of entrepreneurship and the freedom (not always matched by the capability) to organise politically. Yet in several countries the increased space for individuation and the establishment of differentiated identities has encouraged discrimination, marginalisation and – in extreme cases – conflict based on ethnic or religious 'otherness'.

Clearly there have been differences in the approach and implementation of the neo-liberal paradigm. Silke Steinhilber contrasts Poland's radical economic transformation strategy with the Czech Republic's 'mix of neoliberal and social democratic elements of reform' [Steinhilber 2005: 1]. In social policy terms, this is reflected in 'the tension between a tradition of – and in some countries continued commitment to – extensive welfare provisioning and substantive income redistribution through the state on the one hand, and the residualist social policy set-up advocated by the currently dominant global neoliberal economic framework on the other' [ibid.]. Nonetheless, the currently dominant influence of IMF/World Bank neo-conservative ideology – together with the pressures of EU accession – have led to a level of 'real' convergence between Eastern and Western Europe which could facilitate the acknowledgement of common issues among feminist scholars across Europe.

The discourse of transformation has highlighted gains in civil and political rights, while the process itself has been, in material terms, almost entirely focused on economic restructuring: marketisation, interpreted as privatisation. Thus European Union accession, while embodying hopes in relation to the EU commitment to gender equality through gender mainstreaming, is in practice a process of economic alignment and integration. In this process, concerns not only for gender equality, but also for citizenship and social justice are marginalised. The political is seen as secondary to the economic, and hence issues of gender justice, always an add-on to central EU concerns about the labour market, are pushed aside [Jezerska 2003: 172]. Indeed, in the aftermath of the 'no' votes in Holland and France in 2005, there was talk of a retreat from a politically united Europe and a return to the minimalist free trade association the European Economic Community originally represented. This scenario would constitute a further threat to concerns for gender equality – in terms both of social justice and equitable political representation.

Uncertainty about the future of the European Union compounds existing doubts about the EU's genuine commitment to social and gender justice. Ironically, it is the concerns of France and the Netherlands about protecting their superior welfare state that in part prompted the 'no' vote. Conversely, in the UK the possibility of appealing to the European Court of Justice or the European Commission on Human Rights has been seen as giving leverage to feminist activists, who regarded this possibility of appeal to a supra-regional body as a mechanism for exerting pressure on the more conservative British nation-state to implement EU gender-equality directives. In Britain, the beginning of the Thatcher government in 1979 had signalled

the end of the consensus over the post-World War II welfare state based on universal entitlements, and the end therefore also of assumptions about citizenship being based on political, economic *and* social rights, as developed by T.H. Marshall.

## Strategies for gender-equitable citizenship

Regardless of their adherence to particular versions of feminist theory, feminists East, West, North and South have long debated the optimal strategies for the achievement of more gender-equitable citizenship. There is disagreement about whether an increased level of female political participation is indeed a sufficient or even necessary condition for achieving that end [Lepinard 2005]. Two particular strategies that are currently on the international agenda but whose merits are contested are: quotas as a means towards the end of more gender-equitable political representation, and gender mainstreaming as a government policy designed to achieve gender equality One could argue that these contestations are symptomatic of the old debates concerning the merits of top-down versus bottom-up approaches.[2] They also symbolise the difference between gender-neutral approaches to equality of opportunity and gender-specific positive action designed to overcome the legacy of culturally reinforced social hierarchies of gender inequality. Since the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, international agencies and supra-national bodies such as the European Union have favoured gender-mainstreaming strategies. In many regions of the world, and also in the context of EU enlargement, this strategy is hampered by the lack of women in legislatures, and by the fact that women's rights or gender equality as a goal are, with few exceptions, not political party priorities, and that as a consequence, political parties do little to foster higher levels of gender equity in political representation.[3] During the run-up to EU accession the Polish Centre for Women's Rights reported as late as 2000 that 'Poland has done nothing to adjust its legislation to EU standards in the field of equal status of women and men and that issue is probably the last item on the government priorities list' [Women's Rights Centre 2000: 14; cited in Regulska 2002].

The suspicion of top-down statist approaches that was prevalent in the early years of transformation has persisted in some countries and goes some way to explain the enhanced status of NGO activity in the region as opposed to mainstream political involvement. This suspicion was a perfectly understandable reaction to the

[2] Some might maintain that both of these strategies represent top-down mechanisms; however, it could be argued that quotas are a mechanism introduced as a result of women's movement lobbying. The basis for such lobbying has been that whilst numerically increased levels of female representation do not guarantee the introduction of gender-sensitive legislation or the implementation of gender-equitable policies, achieving a 'critical mass' of women is a precondition for this to occur, since marginalised 'token' women have no possibility of altering the prevailing gendered hierarchies of power.

[3] See Lovenduski [2001: 743, 745, 752] on this in relation to the UK elections of 2001.

experience of an all-powerful and invasive state during the socialist period [Szalai 1990]. Nor is anti-statism peculiar to East European feminisms [Mansbridge 2003]. However, when Western or Southern feminists ponder whether or not to 'give up on the state' they are (with the exception perhaps of Latin American countries re-establishing democratic institutions after the end of military dictatorships) not speaking from a position of experiences of the state similar to those in Central and Eastern Europe. The resistance to state-led solutions has – until recently – expressed itself, among other ways, in the rejection of the use of quotas as a political strategy. To many feminists from the region quotas seem to smack of the undemocratic manipulation of the political process by the previous regimes through the installation of puppet 'representatives' in parliaments, whose job it was merely to rubber-stamp decisions taken elsewhere, i.e. in the Central Committees and Politburos of the ruling Communist Parties (with women notably absent from those higher echelons of political power) [Einhorn 1993; Jezerska 2003: 171].

However, the experience of dramatic declines in the levels of female political representation in the early democratic elections in several countries in the region eventually led to shifts in this attitude.[4] Women activists in Georgia, Latvia, and Poland, for example, now advocate the adoption of quotas for women as a necessary short-term strategy for achieving some degree of 'critical mass' of women in parliaments and legislatures, and thus as a mechanism for the achievement of gender equality. In Poland, strong lobbying by the Parliamentary Women's Lobby and the adoption by three political parties of a 30% quota rule led to an increase in the percentage of women, from 13% in 1997 to 20% in 2001 in the Sejm (Lower House), and from 12% to 23% in the same period in the Senate (Upper House) [Fuszara 2000; Spurek 2002]. Drude Dahlerup and Lenita Freidenvall [2005] point out that quotas are not the only, or even necessarily the optimal, route to equal representation for women. The doubling of the share of seats held by women in the Westminster Parliament in 1997 from 9% to 18.9% [Lovenduski 2001: 744] illustrates Dahlerup and Freidenvall's argument that 'major historical leaps in women's parliamentary representation can occur without quota provisions, just as the mere introduction of quo-

[4] Women's political representation fell drastically in the first democratic elections from an average 33% to levels of 10% and below. Even more alarmingly (given the token nature of representation during the state socialist period), the level fell further in several countries in subsequent democratic elections. Thus in Albania, for example, women held 36% of parliamentary seats prior to 1989. Their share fell to 20% in 1991, but, much more drastically, to 7% in the 1997 elections. There appears to be an East-East divide opening up, with Central European countries showing improvements in levels of female political participation in subsequent elections, while levels in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe and the Central Asian republics continue to fall. However, in several countries where there has been improvement, it is only slight. In Ukraine, women held 4.2% of parliamentary seats in 1994, and 5.6% in 1998. In Hungary, the level rose from 7% in 1990 to 8.5% in 1998 [NWP/OSI 2002: 11; UNICEF 1999]; in several cases, what has happened is that the East European level has fallen to a level comparable with Western European countries).

tas has not resulted in uniform increases in the number of women parliamentarians worldwide' [Dahlerup and Freidenvall 2005: 27; see also Lepinard 2005]. Nevertheless, despite the complex difficulties associated with implementation, 'electoral gender quotas as an affirmative action measure to increase women's representation' have been adopted now in about forty countries worldwide as a first step towards equality in political representation [ibid: 26–7].

The introduction of quotas can improve gender equity at the national level. Another reason for not abandoning the nation-state, and one particularly pertinent in the case of Central and Eastern Europe, is the loss of social entitlements which followed the transformation process [Daskalova 2000: 346–7]. During a 1995 political debate in Hungary, the proposal to dismantle remaining universal social welfare entitlements was justified by arguments that 'social expenditures have to be brought down to secure a "healthy" economy, while welfare universalism had to be abolished to ensure economic "growth"' [Haney 2002: 186]. The relative losses women have experienced in access to the labour market have been well documented [Einhorn 1993, 1997; Lokar 2000]; so too have the issues of discriminatory hiring practices and sexual harassment that followed [Daskalova 2000: 340, 342; Einhorn 1997; Haney, 2002; Lokar 2000; NWP/OSI 2002; True 2003b].

The neo-liberal market paradigm empowers the male economic actor as the citizen with the capacity to exchange contracts in the marketplace. Without social entitlements, for example, the entitlement to adequate and affordable childcare in a context where women are still seen as primarily responsible for looking after children, women do not have an equal capacity to access the public spheres of either the market or the polity. This situation is exacerbated by the nationalist and religious discourses paramount in several countries of the region that allot women sole responsibility for the private sphere and enjoin them to produce babies for the nation [Daskalova 2000: 350; Gapova 1998; Slapsak 1997; Zhurzhenko 2001b], discourses that insidiously both reinforce the economy's need to shed labour and legitimise the closure of childcare facilities.

In these contexts, it is necessary to rethink the optimal modality for the achievement of gender-equitable outcomes, particularly in relation to the question of women's full participation as active political subjects in determining policies and practices that affect their lives. A theory of *social entitlements* rather than one of *individual rights* best enables the necessary conceptual and practical linkages between state, market, and household [Einhorn 1995, 2000a, 2006]. It is necessary to reiterate here that the state, historically the provider of welfare, guarantor of social entitlements, and the actor with regulatory power over working conditions, has a crucial role to play in enabling women to develop the capacity to access both market and polity on an equal basis with men. Obviously the nation-state's power to enforce decent working conditions is waning in the face of powerful transnational corporations. In future, therefore, there will be a need to develop transnational regulatory bodies for the protection of citizens' and workers' rights. However, for the short- to medium-term, in the absence of easily recognisable or accessible bodies of

this kind, political participation at the nation-state level will remain important. The extent to which the regulatory role in relation to issues of social justice and gender equality hitherto played by the nation-state is increasingly taken on by supra-national legislative and enforcement bodies such as the European Parliament or the European Court of Justice is a development to be watched.

## The nation-state and political representation

The mutual influence and the two-way effects – in the East and the West – of European Union enlargement have repercussions for two issues to be discussed in this section. Both issues concern contestations around the appropriate analytical framework for dealing with the impact of political transformation in Central and Eastern Europe. The first question is whether the relevant frame for rights claims in the era of EU enlargement (and in the wider context of globalisation) is the nation-state or supra-national institutions. The second is the role of what is variously referred to as a 'critical mass', or a 'threshold level' of women in legislative bodies, or in other words a minority large enough to facilitate the effective consideration of women's interests and women's perspectives [Lovenduski 2001: 744; 746; Rai 2003: 38].[5]

Nancy Fraser argues that today, 'the Keynesian-Westphalian frame is losing its aura of self-evidence' [Fraser 2005: 2]. For her, this loss of self-evidence denotes the demise of Western European social democratic welfare states as a result of neo-liberal policies, and simultaneous challenges to the nation state as the unquestioned address for citizenship claims as a result of supra-national institutions of governance such as the EU and the UN, but also, more powerfully still, of the growing impact of economic globalisation. Therefore, she asserts that in the post-social democratic era 'it is no longer axiomatic that the modern territorial state is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice, nor that the citizens of such states are the pertinent subjects' [Fraser 2005: 3]. Fraser argues that greater social justice can be achieved through transnational solidarity, backed up by supra-national institutions of governance that are in a position to mediate between local (or national) claims and the forces of economic globalisation. This is a very attractive proposition, and some evidence of it exists already in the form of the very effective transnational networking among NGOs that has emerged since the 1995 UN Conference on Women in Beijing. Nevertheless, the jury is still out on whether the nation-state has been superseded by regional or international institutions in terms of its ability to confer citizenship rights or implement human rights. It is still indisputably the nation-state, for example, that has the power of inclusion and exclusion, particularly in terms of permitting immigrants and refugees to gain access to nationality and hence also to citizenship rights.

[5] Joni Lovenduski [2001: 744] states that 'the figure set for critical mass of women is about 30% of the legislature'.

In many instances the national – or in many cases the local – state remains the address for benefit claims [Szalai 2005]. The local state has the power, not merely to distribute benefits in a social welfare regime based on residual needs, rather than universal entitlements, but also to act as the arbiter of eligibility. In judging who qualifies as 'deserving' poor, local welfare officials in Hungary are, argues Julia Szalai, applying gendered and racist discourses, which have the effect of excluding mainly Roma people from full political and social rights, and hence from equal citizenship status with the majority Hungarian population.

In 2004, a special issue of the *International Feminist Journal of Politics* was dedicated to exploring issues of gender and governance in the era of globalisation [Waylen and Rai 2004]. In it, Shirin Rai argued persuasively that 'comparative feminist scholarship provides key insights into the constitutive, gendered nature of the state in the global political economy and thus challenges the "declining state" thesis'. She documents the 'decisive shift' in the 1990s 'from scepticism and caution towards the state to an engagement with and embrace of state institutions' on the part of feminists [Rai 2004: 584, 586]. Shirin Rai had earlier on argued that the danger of co-option of the national machineries and their 'gender agenda' by the state does not negate 'the importance of the state as an arena for furthering gender justice' [Rai 2003: 19]. Of particular relevance to this article is the centrality of women's movement efforts to change state policy, both through arguing for quotas for women in state legislatures, and through engagement with the national machineries for gender mainstreaming.

Discussing the relevance of the nation-state to gender equality aspirations in Central and Eastern Europe, Joanna Regulska [2002: 11–12] observes that 'neither the official "sameness" imposed by the communist political culture nor the "difference" engendered by differing degrees of democratisation has liberated women as fully participating political actors'. She therefore poses the question: 'Will the fact that women have not found significant opportunities in formal, domestic political structures make them more likely to search for alternative ways to act politically beyond the nation-state?' The impressively effective international lobbying activities of Karat, a coalition of NGOs in Eastern Europe, might suggest an affirmative response. Yet as already argued, such transnational networking, however effective in lobbying supra-national bodies such as the EU or the UN, in the short- to medium-term must be seen as complementing rather than supplanting the nation-state's role as the appropriate address for citizenship claims.

Whilst it is true that the existence of the European Court of Human Rights has enabled some individuals within the EU to take their own governments to court, this is costly and difficult, and surely represents the exception. This possible route for remedying gender injustice is an example of negative freedom, in the tradition of 18th-century liberal democratic theory. It also exemplifies the way that human rights discourse – and indeed liberal democratic discourse – focuses on the individual, rather than on social groups, whereas gender equality – despite the multiple differences and inequalities between women fostered in the neo-liberal market model

[Szalai 2005] implies the need to overcome structural disadvantage, and not mere individual difficulty. Most women in Western Europe – whether they are exercised about the continuing gender pay gap, the glass ceiling, occupational segregation in all its forms, parental leave, domestic violence, lesbian rights, or the rights of female migrants and asylum seekers – possess neither the social nor the financial capital to access such supra-national institutions. For the majority then, the nation-state remains the only institution to which they realistically have access and can address their claims for citizenship rights, social entitlements, and greater social justice.

## Civil society activism as political strategy

Most feminist scholars stress the necessity for both increased levels of female political representation, *and* pressure from below in order to make gender-mainstreaming strategies effective [Hoskyns 1996; Rai 2003; Stratigaki 2005]. The transformation process has seen a veritable explosion of 'civil society' activity in Central and Eastern Europe, at the same time as the role of civil society associations and NGOs has become the focus of funding and policy-making by international donor agencies and governments alike. Political theory has long established that women – and not only those adopting the anti-state stance specific to this region in the post-communist period – find grassroots and local, single-issue as opposed to mainstream political party involvement to be more in tune with and compatible with their commitments and lifestyle. An enormous number of NGOs has emerged in the region, many of them initiated and managed by women. However, in the particular context of a rigidly applied neo-liberal market model and the loss of social provision this entails, such political involvement takes on particular meanings, constitutes particular political subject positions, and is accompanied by particular risks [Einhorn and Sever 2003].

Specifically, there is a danger of what has been referred to as the civil society 'trap' [Einhorn 2000a; 2006; Einhorn and Sever 2003]. This is where women's NGOs in effect provide some of the welfare functions abandoned by the state. Karat, an advocacy coalition of women's NGOs in the region formed following the 1995 Beijing UN conference, maintains that women are active in NGOs on an equal basis with men, and that NGOs have been successful in influencing government policy in several countries. However, they also document the lack of capacity-building and expertise, the dependence on foreign donors, and the distortions this can produce in NGO priorities and activities [Barendt 2002; Karat 2002]. Karat recognises the need for NGO advocacy work to be professionalised; Sabine Lang argues in contrast that the 'NGOisation of feminism' dilutes its political and dynamic impact [Lang 1997]. In my view, state retrenchment reduces NGOs and other civil society organisations to acting as service providers, rather than as political activists and social advocates.

The theory of a civil society 'trap' [Einhorn 2000a; 2006] relates to the ways in which it is women's unpaid labour – often performed by women who have been made

redundant and have difficulty finding re-employment – that provides social supports such as childcare or care of the elderly. This labour remains invisible, simultaneously depended upon yet unrecognised by state agencies. Women's NGOs and grassroots activist groups are filling the vacuum where the state has withdrawn from public service provision. This 'trap' at least in part derives from the idealisation of civil society that followed the fall of state socialism. Civil society was seen as the epitome of the democratic space that had earlier been lacking, both by dissident activists and theorists within the region, and by Western analysts and international donor agencies.

There are debates surrounding the conceptualisation of civil society and its relationship to autonomous women's or feminist movements. In the context of the transformation process in Central and Eastern Europe, Ferenc Misslivetz, a Hungarian academic and former dissident activist once commented: 'We dreamed of civil society. What we got were NGOs.' But it could be argued that in order to overcome the donor dependency and potential loss of political edge faced by NGOs in the region, and thus to avoid the civil society 'trap', the imbalance between the market and the state needs to be overcome. While regional resistance to statist solutions is perfectly understandable, given the recent history of all-controlling state socialist regimes, Western and Southern critics of the Washington Consensus see the neoliberal paradigm as having seriously under-estimated the necessary and constructive place of the government regulation in economic development, not to mention its role in the quest for social justice.

Compounding the civil society 'trap' is the civil society 'gap' [Einhorn 2000; 2006; Einhorn and Sever 2003]. This relates to the lack of channels of communication between NGOs and social movements on the one hand and political power structures and state agencies on the other. How does civil society activism by women translate into gender-sensitive policymaking? Both the Beijing Platform for Action and subsequent recommendations have stressed the 'need for greater consultation between NGOs and national machineries' [Rai 2003: 35]. Shirin Rai argues that, in this context, 'the question of access to government becomes crucial' [ibid].

Karat Coalition has identified two problems in Central and Eastern Europe which precisely exemplify this 'gap': 'Despite the fact that a process of opening the state authorities to the public has started, NGOs are kept outside mainstream policy formation. ...The main obstacle is the unresponsiveness and unwillingness of the administration to engage in a dialogue with civil society or even with other departments and governmental institutions' [Karat 2002]. Thus there are risks in focusing on bottom-up strategies, or grassroots activism, to the exclusion of involvement in conventional party politics and the policies of gender mainstreaming. The only way to ensure there is effective transmission of views from civil society to government, and efficient translation of grassroots insights and demands into new legislation and state policy, is to institute mechanisms for regular two-way communication. Overcoming the civil society 'gap' also requires some level of commitment on the part of national governments to take seriously – to the point of adopting and institutionalising – some of the measures proposed by civil society organisations.

## The EU and gender mainstreaming

The threat posed by the European Union's exclusive focus on the economic sphere has already been alluded to above. This may simply elide many of the most crucial problems of political participation and social entitlements faced by women in Central and Eastern Europe. Speaking at a conference in 2002 on behalf of the Karat Coalition of women's NGOs from the region, Regina Barendt stated: 'If state intervention remains limited to the labour market, as was the case under socialism, the most immediate impact is to intensify the exploitation of women on the one hand, and fail to alter the traditional gendered division of labour on the other. We in the region have known this for 25 years, but it is only now slowly gaining recognition in the EU' [Barendt 2002]. The dangers for gender equality inherent in the way that in the EU 'from the beginning the social has been subsumed within the economic and only given a separate focus when this appeared functional or necessary to economic integration' were identified earlier by Catherine Hoskyns [1996: 207], but have not necessarily been adequately addressed since then within EU policy.

Joanna Regulska [2002] has maintained that 'the increasing privileging of economic over social and political ties has further threatened CEE countries' hopes for joining the EU as equal partners'. She found that the evidence from the negotiations around accession 'reinforces the impression that there is a lack of EU commitment to carry gender discourse as a part of accession negotiations'. Furthermore, she felt that while the Polish government had felt obliged, admittedly only in May 2001, to introduce 'required legislation regarding equal pay and equal treatment of men and women', this was confined to measures in the sphere of the labour market, and 'purely instrumental' [Regulska 2002]. Jacqui True documents the Czech 'government's failure to properly implement' the equal opportunities legislation it introduced as an amendment to the Labour Law in 1999 for the purposes of harmonisation with EU requirements [True 2003b: 98–100]. On this evidence, it would seem that neither national governments in the region nor the EU itself have treated gender as a measure of readiness for accession. In the run-up to the first round of enlargement, it seemed that compliance or non-compliance with the gender norms of EU legislation was likely neither to impede nor to delay accession for those countries that joined in 2004 [Steinhilber 2002].

The EU policy of gender mainstreaming itself hides a lack of conceptual clarity in terms of meaning, intentionality and purpose.[6] Is the goal, for example, equal treatment, equality of opportunity, or equality of outcomes? Does it necessitate equal opportunity legislation or anti-discrimination legislation? In political terms, does it involve gender-neutral, positive discrimination, or positive action poli-

[6] Maria Stratigaki [2005: 167] notes that 'both "gender" and "mainstreaming" are conceptual terms that have evoked more confusion, misunderstanding and questions than any other terms used in EU equality policies. Until 1996, there was no clear definition in European Community documents for the term "gender mainstreaming"'.

cies [Lovenduski 2001]?[7] Is there a problem in the fact that gender mainstreaming is a top-down strategy? Might a crucial political edge in terms of feminist goals of social transformation be lost through this strategy [Rai 2003: 19]? 'Gender mainstreaming should not replace politics' [Verloo 2002]; nor should it be used to mask issues of women's rights, to withdraw funding from – or eliminate – measures of positive discrimination for women.

Maria Stratigaki describes, from her eight-year experience of working in the Equal Opportunities Unit of the European Commission, the conflict during the development of gender mainstreaming between two different policy frames. One frame emphasises the transformative potential of GM in 'complementing and reinforcing positive action and equality legislation'. The other uses GM 'as an alternative to positive action', which can be 'used to downplay the final overall objective of gender equality' [Stratigaki 2005: 165–66, 168]. As Stratigaki asserts, 'without simultaneously tackling the accumulated inequalities between the sexes and reinforcing gender-specific policies, GM effectiveness cannot be assured' [ibid: 169].

In practice, gender mainstreaming strategies, especially within the European Union context, are often formulated in terms of economic efficiency, thus as effective strategies for integrating women into the labour market, rather than within a framework of political transformation towards the goal of gender-equitable societies. Stratigaki claims [2005: 176, 180] that there is evidence of 'cooptation by economic priorities' and that 'the use of GM to eliminate positive action can be found in EU labour market policy texts' (see also Rai [2003: 29]). Gender mainstreaming also highlights the ongoing dilemma around equal treatment versus special treatment. The disputes in Britain leading to the rejection of affirmative action measures in favour of positive action illustrate this dilemma very clearly (see note 7 below).

Added to the lack of conceptual clarity at the heart of the EU is the fact that gender mainstreaming machinery in the accession countries remains systemically weak. Zuzana Jezerska [2003: 167] points to the lack of definitional clarity, as a result of which 'national machinery for women' can take a wide range of institution-

[7] While positive discrimination permits enhancing the number of women candidates for political office through women-only shortlists, quotas, or placing women top on party lists, positive action allows only the encouragement of women to put themselves forward for office, but no measures which could be seen as going against gender-neutral equal opportunity legislation. An example was the introduction in 1996 of women-only short lists for political candidacy in the UK, which was overturned by an industrial tribunal on the grounds that it contravened the UK's Sex Discrimination legislation. Interestingly, Maria Stratigaki [2005] uses the term 'positive action' in contrast to equality-based gender mainstreaming approaches. Joni Lovenduski [2001: 751] describes how the equal opportunities approach in the Westminster electoral system – 'the change from positive discrimination (mandatory quotas of women) to positive action (voluntary quotas of women candidates' – led to a fall in the number of female MPs between the 1997 and 2001 elections. In terms of difference-based, gender-specific policies, I would therefore argue that 'positive action' constitutes a diluted and much weaker form of action than 'positive discrimination'.

al forms, 'from NGO status to a very strong mandate within the government'. In Poland, the Equal Opportunities Officer appointed in November 2001 did not have an automatic right to attend cabinet meetings, nor to insist that her recommendations be translated into legislation or government policy. Initial attempts by the Parliamentary Women's Lobby to introduce a draft Equal Opportunities Bill into the Polish Sejm, for example, met with laughter and ridicule. As of 2002, the only country in Central and Eastern Europe that had an ombudsperson dealing with gender issues was Lithuania, which in June 2002 introduced amendments to its 1998 Equal Opportunities legislation allowing a resort to 'positive discrimination' in order to ensure women's rights [NWP/OSI 2002: 14].

Such weaknesses in the machinery designed to institutionalise gender-mainstreaming policies are replicated in many of the pre-2004 EU member states. In the UK, for example, the first fully paid Minister for Women was appointed as late as 2001 [Lovenduski 2001]. However, there has as yet been little sign of effective gender mainstreaming policies emanating from this office and adopted by the government. Few countries acknowledge the need – as Germany does – for state institutions to institute a dual strategy, combining gender-mainstreaming policies with positive measures to enhance gender equality. Even there, however, gender-mainstreaming activities have been starved of resources both in terms of finances and personnel.

It is obvious, therefore, that even where the formal mechanisms and legislation are in place, there are questions about the level of implementation. As in Western Europe, many of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe lack sufficient numbers of women in positions of power in legislatures and in trade unions who are committed to gender equality and could ensure that legislation, once passed, or EU gender-related directives, become translated into reality. Furthermore, it is clear that the implementation of gender mainstreaming policies and the effectiveness of national women's machineries depend in large part on the existence of 'strong democratic movements holding these bodies accountable' [Rai 2003: 19], or in other words on 'the dynamic involvement of political, social and civil actors with high visibility' [Stratigaki 2005: 172]. It is therefore important to consider the fact that women's mainstream political participation on the one hand, and civil society activism and lobbying on the other, are intimately related.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it is argued that there is a need for both top-down gender mainstreaming policies and for grassroots campaigning pressure on the part of strong women's and feminist movements [Einhorn 2000; 2006; Hoskyns 1996; Jezerska 2003; Rai 2003; Stratigaki 2005]. Jacqui True and Michael Mintrom validate the key role of social movements and particularly the transnational feminist movement in 'the diffusion of gender-mainstreaming mechanisms' [True and Mintrom 2001: 27].

In her later study of the efficacy and transformative potential of gender mainstreaming as a strategy, True concludes that 'gender mainstreaming is an open-ended and potentially transforming project that depends on what feminist scholars, activists and policy-makers collectively make of it' [True 2003a: 368].

Without support from mainstream politicians and the institution of properly supported mechanisms for their implementation, gender-mainstreaming policies cannot succeed. Shirin Rai documents 'the paucity of resources available to national machineries in most countries' as an inhibiting factor [Rai 2003: 35]. As several analysts point out, the key to success in terms of the resourcing which can enable full implementation of gender mainstreaming strategies is political support at the highest levels [Rai 2003: 34, 37]. Yet Zuzana Jezerska feels that 'what is lacking most is political will' in Central and Eastern European countries, and that this explains 'the rather patchy growth of women's national machineries' in the region [Jezerska 2003: 182].

Political will also needs to be generated and maintained. Only pressure from below can ensure that issues of gender equity are kept on the agenda of national, supra-national and international institutions, and that gender-sensitive policies are not merely written into legislation, but are also given weight in terms of the human and financial resources necessary for their implementation. Shirin Rai stresses that whilst national machineries have an 'agenda-setting role', 'their legitimacy derives from the close contact they are able to maintain with women's groups' [Rai 2003: 25]. Both political will and grassroots activism are therefore necessary but not sufficient preconditions for the achievement of gender equality. Beyond this combination, the crucial catalysts for effectiveness are communication and influence in both directions. In other words, keeping the channels open for the transmission of grassroots demands to the politicians, and exerting influence to ensure their passage into legislation, are crucial if policies such as gender mainstreaming or quotas are to make a real difference, not only to women's lives, but to the life and health of societies as a whole, both nationally and internationally.

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# Gender Mainstreaming as a Strategy for Promoting Gender Equality in Lithuania

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**Abstract:** The article deals with the questions of gender policy formation and women's participation in Lithuanian political and civil life. It is based on the results of the EU 5th Framework project 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation of Women in the EU Candidate Countries'. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with women politicians and activists, the article mainly describes gender mainstreaming as implemented through 'transversal' action plans for gender equality. These action plans assign responsibility to different units for the delivery of different objectives. The author points out that 'transversalism' involves no necessary change in policy-making structures or practice, and argues that gender mainstreaming continues to be designated as a distinct or separate policy space in Lithuania. The author also notes that the absence of a stable commitment to gender mainstreaming and the general policy culture of Lithuania are not conducive the evaluation and impact assessment activities in this area.

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## Introduction

This article deals with the questions of gender policy formation and women's participation in Lithuanian political and civic life. Gender mainstreaming is a long-term strategy designed to promote equality between men and women. It stands for anchoring a gender-sensitive perspective into mainstream planning and decision-making processes. Though gender mainstreaming is not a discrete topic but rather a fundamental principle, its implementation in all policy areas is somewhat controversial. The aim of the article is to observe the formation, implementation and evaluation of gender policy by different social actors and women's NGOs, and it addresses the following main questions:

To what extent has gender equality policy changed with the changes that have occurred in the political and economic infrastructure?

How is gender mainstreaming regarded and understood by key policy actors?

How is gender mainstreaming implemented and what is its progress?

To what extent does gender mainstreaming contribute to good governance?

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In the national study conducted for the 5th Framework Programme 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in EU Candidate Countries' (EGG), a review was first made of the literature on the subject and then an analysis was made of gender policy in Lithuania in order to define and specify the concepts of interest in the study in the context of emerging evidence about the current state and progress in the integration of gender equality into public policy at the national level. In the EGG study analytical, conceptual and methodological frameworks were elaborated for the country research, which was based primarily on interviews with professionals and experts involved in women's issues and with a range of different stakeholders in the policy processes studied, and on analyses of key documents, particularly legislative texts, surveys and studies on the context of policy formulation and design, policy guidelines, policy reviews, and evaluation reports. The expert interviews were collected and simultaneously analysed at the beginning of 2005. The interviews with policy makers and participants cover the following four categories of relevant actors:

- officials – individuals responsible at present for gender equality (policy staff in parliament, officials in government and in government departments, staff from the Office of the Ombudsman) (5 interviews);
- activists – prominent women leaders from the past or present in democratisation movements at the local level (municipalities) (5 interviews);
- women's NGOs – feminist NGOs focusing on women's rights (9 interviews);
- gender/feminist researchers – those working in the academic or other intellectual spheres (10 interviews).

Gender mainstreaming originated with the realisation that women and men, owing to their social and cultural gender, encounter different conditions and opportunities in life, have different interests and needs, and are differently affected by societal processes. Gender mainstreaming considers women and men and their different positions in society and aims at changing the underlying conditions and structures that generate inequality. While there has been much innovation in developing gender mainstreaming, progress has been uneven within each country. In Lithuania gender mainstreaming efforts are present, but they are highly fragmented, confined either to a particular policy domain or to a specific programme within a domain, and disconnected from general governmental policy on gender. Lithuania is a case apart by virtue of its particular history and by the speed of its transition.

There are three components to gender mainstreaming policy that are applied in Lithuania to a greater or lesser degree:

1. The setting up of dedicated gender mainstreaming units staffed by people with the skills to provide technical support, as necessary, to various parts of the administration;
2. The introduction of policy evaluation and monitoring mechanisms, particularly gender impact assessment methods and regular reporting mechanisms (for example, 'Equal Opportunities for Women and Men' – a sub-programme of the Network Women's Programme and the Open Society Foundation Romania run between March 2001 and June 2002 (http://www.eonet.ro);

3. Implementing changes in the way that policy is made, in particular, increasing social dialogue with the voluntary sector through the institutionalisation of consultation practices, the creation or consolidation of advisory bodies representing women's groups, and equipping women's representatives with the necessary skills to participate in policy making.

Lithuania follows a very similar strategy of gender mainstreaming as that in other EU countries. Recent government documents explicitly refer to gender mainstreaming either as an objective or as a principle governing gender equality policy. However, despite these formal commitments to gender mainstreaming, and except for a few initiatives, there is very little evidence that this approach is actually being implemented. Both the understanding of the gender equality issue and the objectives of policy reveal a significant degree of fragmentation in different government departments (and policy domains) within the country. There is also evidence that 'gender mainstreaming' is exploited to serve diverse political needs: politicians and government officials conveniently use the term 'gender mainstreaming' to refer to a move from a focus on women to a more neutral focus on gender (which is simply understood as referring to both women and men) as the primary focus of equality policy. The term 'gender mainstreaming' mainly functions as a new name for 'old' policy practices, such as positive action measures, transversal national plans involving different departments of the administration, and even equal treatment legislation. For instance, although it is true that the EU countries tend to use a similar line of rhetoric regarding the need to attend to the structural and cultural roots of gender inequalities, in Lithuania, as in many other countries, there is a significant gap between rhetoric and practice.

Equal treatment legislation has also undergone important developments. In Lithuania such legislation has been reformed to broaden both the concept of discrimination, to include indirect discrimination, and the sphere of its application, to include, for example, public services and facilities, as well as education and the workplace. Analysis conducted as part of the country study for the EGG on the laws of the Republic of Lithuania with regard to aspects of the principle of gender equality showed that the country's main laws do not in principle conflict with the equality principle or the legal instruments of the European Union and other international organisations.

Equal opportunities for women and men are established in many of Lithuania's laws: the Act on Elections, the Referendum Act, the Employment Contracts Act, the Civil Service Act, the Work Safety Act, and the Act on Support for the Unemployed, and other laws and codes. The National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2003–2004) can be viewed as the second level of the implementation of the principle of gender mainstreaming in the country. Responsibility for the co-ordination, delivery and implementation of the Mainstreaming Strategy lies with the Equality Commission within the Lithuanian government. However, to ensure that society really adheres to the principle of equal opportunities for women and men, the positive attitude of legislators towards this issue and a sufficiently well developed mechanism in state institutions to address related issues are

alone not sufficient. That is why at the heart of the equality mainstreaming approach in Lithuania there is the very strong influence of the third sector, NGOs, and academics. Gender mainstreaming initiatives in Lithuania tend to emerge as a result of a great deal of effort and perseverance from individual women in key positions of power[1] (e.g. ministers, senior civil servants, MEPs), or even women's organisations, rather than decisions, at a high governmental level, to pursue a new gender equality policy approach.

## Progress in gender mainstreaming

Lithuania has made a formal commitment to implement a gender mainstreaming approach to gender equality. However, there is evidence of a significant level of variation, first, in the extent to which this commitment is being or has been fulfilled, and second, in the methods or strategies that are being utilised to realise this commitment. The term 'gender mainstreaming' lacks a clear and concrete meaning, and therefore, it tends to operate as a catch-all phrase, used to refer to a variety of approaches and activities.

There is a general trend in Lithuania to spread responsibility for gender among units or departments. This 'decentralisation' is achieved through: 1) a revision of equal treatment legislation in order to involve all public bodies in anti-discrimination policy; 2) the creation of 'transversal' action plans on gender equality; and, partly, 3) the systematic use of gender analysis tools in the design and implementation of all other policies.

The evaluation of gender mainstreaming in Lithuania indicates that it is 'transversional' in character. According to Mary Daly's description [2004], transversalism, albeit in different forms, is a quite widely used response or strategy, especially in the form of action plans that assign responsibility to different units for the delivery of different objectives. Daly underlines the need to scrutinise transversalism carefully, as while it appears to be synonymous with gender mainstreaming, it is a somewhat different phenomenon. First, it involves no necessary changes in policy-making

[1] Just a few examples: 1) The very day after the Lithuanian Parliament declared the country's independence restored on 11 March 11 1990, Kazimiera Prunskienė, a professor in economics from the University of Vilnius and a well-known leader of *Sąjūdis*, became the Prime Minister of Lithuania. At that time, Lithuania was the only transition country in all of Eastern and Central Europe where a woman headed the ministerial cabinet. Nonetheless the phenomena of Prunskiene in 1990-1992 was more a symbolic challenge than an actual innovation in favour of women' political involvement. She was the only woman among the seventeen cabinet members. She was the first (and the only) woman to participate in the presidential elections in 2003 in Lithuania; 2) In November 1999, Ugne Karvelis, a female Permanent Representative of the Republic of Lithuania to UNESCO, was elected vice chair of the UNESCO Executive Board for a two-year term. 3) In January 2001 Gintė Damušytė was appointed to head the Lithuanian mission at NATO in Brussels. No woman had ever before (since 1949, when the organisation was created) occupied the position of ambassador to this organisation.

structures or practices, and second, gender equality continues to be designated as a distinct or separate policy space (even though each department or unit under transversalism may eventually be assigned gender equality objectives). Transversalism does not integrate gender into the core of policy, but tends rather to add it on top, as an additional objective or consideration. Another trend in Lithuania is to address gender mainstreaming by means of selectively adopting some of its components, and especially some of its tools or techniques, without the overall framework. In terms of which components or methods are favoured, the view of gender mainstreaming is more or less as synonymous with a gender analysis of policies.

## Interpreting gender mainstreaming: how the issue is understood and addressed

Gender equality surfaced relatively late in the agenda of the negotiations on joining the EU. Much greater priority was placed on social and economic reforms based on neo-liberal principles that lacked a gender perspective. On the basis of documentary analysis and events mentioned by the respondents as crucial for the process of establishing gender mainstreaming in Lithuania the chronology of changes in concepts on women's issues in Lithuania is described in the table below:

**Table 1: A chronology of concepts on women's issues**

| | |
|---|---|
| Gender inequality | 1989–1990 |
| Feminism | (1991) |
| Women's issues (Beijing conference influence) | 1995–1996 |
| Gender equality | 2000 |
| Gender mainstreaming (National Programme) | 2003–2004 |
| Equal opportunities (changes to the status of Ombudsman and to the law) | 2005 |

### *Gender inequality*

Part of the appeal in the concept of equality is that it contains a big vision, a view of society and of the relations between women and men that are embedded within it. However, given how general the meaning of gender equality is, and that it is a concept that is open to multiple interpretations, some respondents prefer to focus mainly on gender inequality. Gender equality thus serves the purpose of a guiding principle or ideal, whereas gender inequality draws attention to the concrete, 'real world' issue.

It is possible to notice a consistent pattern in gender inequality, which enables the discovery of some problematic 'points' of gender relations or, figuratively speaking, are indicative of some gender 'conflict'. Both men and women believe that representatives of the opposite gender live a better and easier life. The percentage of

men who think that the law is more favourable to women, that the state pays more attention to women, and so on, is greater than the percentage of women who do so, and, conversely, the percentage of women who claim that men are more privileged in various areas is greater than the number of men who hold this opinion.

*Feminism*

During the development of democratic movements in Lithuania, women's movements were also created. Therefore, in the interviews with experts and professionals on women's issues, they were asked whether it is possible for a feminist movement in Lithuania to really develop. Despite Lithuania's transition and independence and the current existence of a generally liberalised society, there are still somewhat strong features testifying to the persistence of totalitarian attitudes. It could be assumed that the prior experience of gender policy in Lithuania means that the possibility of any active feminist movement must be put off for a long time.

> *At present, the patriarchal attitudes towards family problems are a good background for a political career, because it is considered as opposition to the totalitarian 'Soviet' past. So, if somebody wants to be accepted in this society he or she cannot speak as pro-feminist.* (Researcher, and a figure involved in gender mainstreaming)

If this is the case it must be expected that in the immediate future feminist ideas in Lithuania will be restricted to the confines of Women's Studies programmes, while certain types of pro-family institutions will be active. While at first glance there appears to be a strong inclination towards feminism at secondary schools and universities, this is not the case, with the exception of a few Women's Studies Centres (NGOs). It is also important to note that women's movements in post-socialist countries in general rarely describe themselves as 'feminist':

> *...Above all because feminism is associated more with a hatred of men and with lesbianism, than with the social transformation of society in connection with women's interests. That is why feminism still has a strictly negative undertone and very seldom does even an independent woman dare to officially identify herself as a feminist.* (NGO activist)

> *First, feminism is policy, and second, it is a scientific substantiation of this policy. My work is related to women's issues, but what is declared by radical feminism is unacceptable to me. My profession is primary. I am not active, that is why I could not consider myself a feminist, surely not a radical feminist. At the same time, I can consider myself a feminist because I am worried about equality between men and women, which does not exist in society.* (Researcher)

Recent developments to explain the persistence of gender inequality across societies centre on gendered welfare states. As feminists have shown, the state is al-

ways gendered, especially in the case of specific types of welfare policies, such as taxes and benefits, or care institutions. Modern feminism highlights the 'stereotype' as closely linked to gender and gender identification, both in the cultural and the social- historical environment. A stereotype is a simplified, easily recognised social meaning: 'It is something fixed, stable and usually has a negative overtone?' (Researcher)

*Gender equality*

The equal treatment (equal rights) perspective was the dominant perspective in what has come to be called 'first wave feminism', a period in which feminist theory and action was largely informed by liberalist principles and theory. In this period the feminist struggle was for the formal equality of women within the existing system of rules and laws. Thus the equal treatment perspective promotes action aimed at guaranteeing women the same rights and opportunities as men in the public sphere. This assessment is part of a wider feminist critique of modern liberal political thought and its application to the issues of gender equality. In the face of these feminist and other critiques of liberal notions of equality, the concept of difference has emerged as one of the central motifs in feminist analysis today. This new perspective focuses on the recognition, valorisation and celebration of gender difference. Such thinking has found its way into policy, where one can see a clear shift of emphasis from equality to difference. However, this new emphasis on gender difference is itself highly controversial for a number of reasons. To summarise, the gender perspective, focusing as it does on difference, represents a major development in the thinking on gender equality. It offers a profound critique not just of policy approaches but also of the conceptual and philosophical foundations of theoretical thinking about equality.

Gender mainstreaming is seen as offering an improvement, building on the strengths, and also the known weaknesses, of the two existing models – the advancement of women, and gender mainstreaming. This approach moves away from focusing solely on women and has the potential to regard men as a disadvantaged group (e.g. in relation to their rights as fathers or family members). In this perspective society itself is at fault for creating, through social practices and structures, fixed and gendered role models and expectations for women and men. The Ombudsman in Lithuania changed its name from the Ombudsman for 'Equal Opportunities for Men and Women' to the 'Equal Opportunities' at the beginning of 2005. Activists at women's NGO were against this change, which they interpreted as a loss of what they had achieved. Gender issues are sometimes regarded as only transitional issues.

The custom of linking gender policy and family policy questions is still very much alive and visible in Lithuania. Gender mainstreaming ought to contribute to the democratisation and modernisation of various structures in the country. The

link between family and work life is the main factor that is governed by gender stereotypes, which is an interesting subject for research. What can be agreed is that changes should be promoted in social and organisational cultures, and likewise to foster media awareness to change the predominant societal view of gender stereotypes.

The interviews conducted in the research revealed quite interesting interpretations of the specific 'Lithuanian' policy approach to gender mainstreaming, but the prevailing approach to gender equality is to look at it through 'family glasses'. But at the same time the spread of the traditional family model is not realistic under current economic circumstances (although women's unemployment is evidently favourable to the development of the traditional type of family). Although the gender mainstreaming approach is considered an important foundation stone for the future, at this point direct and intensified support that targets women is still considered essential. The efficient implementation of gender mainstreaming would require, beyond a general recognition of and commitment to the advancement of women, that all staff in the fields of education, research, employment, and human rights be specially trained in issues relating to the advancement of women. The general trend in Lithuanian policy nowadays is evaluated more negatively than positively by women – the actors in gender mainstreaming – who were very active at the beginning of gender mainstreaming in Lithuania, and as a turn away from positive action to achieve women's equality and instead towards general questions of equality on various bases. On the other hand, young representatives of NGOs evaluated the general trend and many activities and programmes in very positive terms. Some women in the interviews pointed to disturbing signs that the government, which in order to be able to join the EU introduced the minimum equality-related mechanisms required for accession, is now taking indirect steps to de-activate or dilute such measures. They point to the fact that the institutional mechanisms of gender equality (e.g. the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women) have recently been transferred to the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman Office, which in addition to gender equality also deals with a host of other issues, including discrimination against minorities, the disabled, etc.

## Who implements gender mainstreaming and how

Since the strategy for gender equality is based on the broad principles of partnership, a number of different stakeholders participate in its implementation. The agency that leads the way in the promotion and implementation of gender equality policy is the Equality Commission in the Lithuanian government, which falls under the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. However, the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is implemented by public administration through inter-departmental agreements, with each ministerial signatory responsible for their own particular component in the National Programme, and with some of the cited priorities explicitly referring to the involvement of non-state agencies

(without mentioning their specialisation; no mention is made of trade unions). Between 1994 and 2005, the position of State Counsellor (advisor) on Women's Issues existed. During that period, the State Counsellor on Foreign Relations and Relations with NGOs was responsible for these issues. In the Ministry of Social Security and Labour and in the Department of Statistics positions were created to take up the responsibility for gender issues. The use of gender-disaggregated statistics was evaluated very favourably and as very useful by various actors in gender mainstreaming. MPs and NGOs mentioned that they used statistics of this type and are grateful to be able to obtain them from the Department of Statistics almost whenever necessary. An inter-ministerial commission was formed by the Ministry of Social Security and Labour to monitor the implementation of the Action Plan for the Advancement of Women. But the main barrier to gender mainstreaming in the view of one governmental official is that all ten districts, that is, the entire country, are outside her competence for implementing the National Action Plan:

> *I cannot communicate directly with sixty municipalities, and there is no person responsible for equality policy implementation at administrations in the districts.* (Government Official)

Apart from this, the implementation of the strategy is carried out in connection with other programmes and projects carried out by both governmental and non-governmental agencies. During the first two years of its implementation the strategy is to be monitored by an independent implementation group, which will oversee the strategy's progress and impact.

## The main actors in the policy process

Gender mainstreaming is mandatory under the Treaty of Amsterdam and as such it is reflected in all the policies and guidelines of the European Union. In Lithuania it was the Ministry of Social Security and Labour that resolved to have gender mainstreaming implemented at all levels. Under the regulation governing the co-ordination of activities of all the ministries, this resolution also applies to the Ministry of Education and Science.

The Government Programme for 2000 to 2004 placed a high priority on reducing the authority of central ministries, consolidating county administration and increasing the authority and responsibility of municipalities. A few of the gender mainstreaming actors also described this tendency in gender policy formation: ministries → municipalities (e.g. education departments) → schools (universities) as the direction of decentralisation. The most positive comments were received on the commissioning of gender research. Respondents from various groups (officials, researchers, NGOs) emphasised the importance of gender research and its 'pioneering' role in the formation and implementation of gender mainstreaming in Lithuania. The Government Programme was the only programme mentioned by respon-

dents as the main gender impact assessment tool. One respondent, the head of a woman's NGO, noted: *'The legal background exists, but without practice'.*

*Equal Opportunities Ombudsman*

In compliance with the Act on Equal Opportunities, the office of an Equal Opportunities Ombudsman has been set up. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman investigates complaints relating to cases of discrimination and sexual harassment. The Ombudsman reports on the implementation of laws and submits recommendations to the government and administrative institutions on the revision of legal acts and priorities in the policy for the implementation of equal rights. It is a national initiative, and relations with other organisations outside the country are not its responsibility. The officials from this department emphasised in the interviews that gender mainstreaming is a kind of social policy, because a whole system for gender policy implementation has been established. They cited the Swedish model as the best example of gender mainstreaming and proposed the decentralisation of the system. In their opinion a feature specific to Lithuania is that only women's NGO's are really active in gender mainstreaming.

**Women's NGO initiatives**

The number of NGOs dealing with women's issues has recently been increasing. These NGOs are gaining momentum and becoming more and more important in society. In the last couple of years the establishment of local NGOs has been more prevalent. The number of women's organisations has greatly increased and there are currently 63 women's organisations active in Lithuania. They have also become more powerful and more active, and they played an important role in drafting the Act on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. These organisations can be distinguished into two groups: women's groups within political parties, and non-governmental women's organisations. There are women's groups in the five biggest political parties of Lithuania: the Lithuanian Centre Union's Women's Section, the Lithuanian Democratic Women's Group (within the Lithuanian Democratic Labour Party), the Lithuanian Social Democratic Women's Union, the Union of Women Conservatives (Homeland Union – Lithuanian Conservatives), and the Women's Section of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party. In the third sector many of the women's NGOs are established as interest groups. Their membership varies greatly; some have as few as nine members and others as many as 10 000. According to the Directory of Women's Organisations of Lithuania (a summary publication on women's organisations in Lithuania), twenty of these organisations declared the sphere of policy and decision making as their priority activity in 2000 [*Directory of Women's Organisations in Lithuania* 2000]. The training of officials in gender mainstreaming concepts and methods was a more popular idea among representatives of

NGOs than among relevant officials at the ministries. Public women's organisations are also very diverse. Some of them act at the national level (17 such organisations), others at the regional or municipal level, or within other organisations (e.g. women's studies centres at universities). Some of these organisations have set a very clear goal of equal rights and opportunities, others direct their activities towards assisting women or uniting women on the basis of profession, interests, religion, nationality, etc. Ten international women's organisations have increased their activities (e.g. Sorooptimists, Zonta, etc.).

One crucial event that had an impact on NGO initiatives was the establishment of the Lithuanian Women's Party (with Kazimiera Prunskienė as party leader) in February 1995. The primary concern of the party was the status of women, and it invited all women to unite and participate in solving the urgent problems society is faced with. Membership was however open to both sexes. The political programme of the Women's Party included sub-programmes on the status of women, the legal system, politics and ethnic minorities, rural issues, health and environment, foreign and international policies. Soon after the parliamentary elections in 2000 (in which the party did not succeed as it failed to obtain the necessary 5% of the vote to be represented in Parliament) the Women's Party changed its name to the New Democracy Party. During the elections in 2004 a new coalition was formed between the Union of Farmers Party and the New Democracy Party. Gender equality issues are mentioned in the programmes of these parties.

The Lithuanian National Women's Forum, Parliament's advisory board, was only re-established at the end of April 2003 (there were a few attempts to create this board just after the parliamentary elections in 1990). Today it plays quite an important role in coordinating the joint participation of NGOs, Parliament and government officials. The Vision for the Development of an Egalitarian Society in Lithuania by 2014 (a non-governmental document, prepared by volunteers: Ina Dagytė, Esmeralda Kuliešytė, Giedrė Purvaneckienė, Ramunė Trakymienė, and Vilija Vasiliauskienė) was adopted in February 2004. The strategy for co-operation between NGOs and governmental structures was prepared by the same group of volunteers and is currently being implemented. The 'Vision' document also calls for the establishment of a Ministry of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, and mentions distinguishing between the activity of an Ombudsman for Women and Men and the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities (the latter has replaced the former) in employment: 'One of the main spheres of its activities is the improvement of women's status in the society and receiving gender statistics from the employers. All employers' accounts for statistical indicators about women progress in their annual reports.' (Vision for the Development... 2004)

The Women's Issues Information Centre (an NGO that was supported by the UNDP at its beginning) ranks among the strongest women's organisations. The centre acts in close collaboration with the Prime Minister's Office. It also issues publications on women's issues and distributes them throughout the country. Their aim is to help women understand their rights and become knowledgeable about exer-

cising their rights in real life. As a catalyst for the advancement of women's organisations the centre directs the activities of women's organisations towards finding solutions to critical problems, and it co-ordinates joint action and events. Apart from that the centre is involved in publishing the monthly bilingual Lithuanian-English magazine 'Woman's World', which is distributed free of charge, and it also publishes other publications on gender equality issues. The centre collects and classifies gender-related statistical data and the results of social studies, and it initiates projects and studies on women's issues, along with organising conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses aimed at raising awareness and cultivating understanding of gender equality, performing the role of an educational institution by disseminating information on gender equality issues. The enormous participation of the Women's Issues Information Centre in various projects was cited by the actors in gender mainstreaming as the main source of civil activities, and its involvement in different projects was stressed as playing a huge role and as the source of the subsequent organisation of numerous projects. Respondents from other more or less institutionalised units like the Women's Information Centre noted that they do not function as a formal coalition but rather participate in these activities through projects.

Funds were the main driving force behind the development and progress of women's studies in Lithuania:

> *At the beginning of the Women's* [studies] *Programme, the programme co-ordinator used the directory of women's organisations in Lithuania* [published in 1998] *and called on them personally to inform them about Open Society Fund–Lithuania initiatives and the possibilities for participating in one event or another.* (NGO activist)

Nearly all the actors in gender mainstreaming ranked the influence of various donors and funds in the same order, and these donors and funds are indicated as the main social partners that have supported and encouraged various projects in Lithuania on women's issues and programmes: UNDP; the PHARE Programme; the Open Society Fund – Lithuania, the Nordic Council, and the European Community. NGO representatives gave the same positive evaluations of international co-operation and in the same areas: financial support; the opportunity to participate in conferences, etc. (mobility); the ability to receive important information; new experiences; networking. They also mentioned several barriers: the huge fees connected with participating in international organisations (for example, about 700 euros for the European Women's Lobby); the sometimes huge fees for participation in seminars organised by foreign institutions in Lithuania (this problem was cited by entrepreneurs involved in women's issues); not all information that passes through government institutions reaches the NGOs, especially in the periphery, which is why the NGOs prefer to establish their own direct networks with international partners; for those interested in gender issues in Lithuania it continues to be difficult to co-ordinate activities and to work in 'teams'. Only one fact was mentioned as an ex-

ample of positive action to improve the representation of women in decision-making: the women's NGOs campaign during the municipal elections in 2002–2003 (the campaign was to get women on the ballot), when every third candidate in the lists was a woman (but few parties applied this strategy). Today the same initiative is targeting the first elections to the European Parliament (as part of the activities of the European Women's Lobby). The pre-election campaign is called 'Women Voting for Women' and is being organised by NGOs (through a website and printed letters), and the NGO's are sending letters to the heads of all parties calling on them to include more women on their party candidate lists and it seems to have some effect. The actors in gender mainstreaming only commented negatively on the idea of setting gender-specific target quotas in different spheres.

During the interviews the respondents were asked if they have put in place any of the following methods or procedures: a gender mainstreaming unit; a gender analysis of budgets; gender impact assessment tools; the commissioning of gender research; use of gender disaggregated statistics; the training of officials in gender mainstreaming concept and methods; action to improve the representation of women in decision-making; setting gender-specific targets/outcomes, and others. What are the most important elements of each one? All the actors in gender mainstreaming were able to provide information about gender mainstreaming, but its impact varied significantly. This shows that they are only in the process of formation. The gender mainstreaming unit and the gender analysis of budgets were selected as examples of very new issues for the respondents' comments. Most respondents commented on the gender mainstreaming unit by simply stating that they did not know of it, and only a few of them were able to answer that it is something that exists at only the NGO level. Negative responses also prevailed in response to the question on the gender analysis of budgets, and some of the gender mainstreaming actors agreed that there is a certain lack of information from the government on gender mainstreaming, usually only information that is general and aimed at the public.

**Collaboration between actors (inter- and intra-institutional)**

In the Lithuanian national study for the EGG survey the gender mainstreaming actors were asked about the relationship between NGOs and women-officials. Women's NGOs and government institutions co-operate with members of the Women's Parliamentary Group and the Equal Opportunities Ombudsman's Office. They co-ordinate activities between NGOs and other bodies, for example, police institutions in the effort to combat trafficking in women and children. Both NGOs and officials stated in the interviews that these ties are quite close, and they evaluated it as a very positive relationship that exists primarily in the form of joint (personal) meetings, written correspondence (especially during the debates prior to the introduction of a new law), training, round table meetings, and public events (especially before new elections).

The women in the survey expressed the hope that EU enlargement leads to greater co-operation and interaction with women activists in other parts of Europe. They more often expressed the wish that only very common decisions (*'connected more to the economy than the decision-making'*) be made at the EU level. They seek more space to address their own specific needs (at the national level and at all other levels within the state). Some believe that political action aimed at achieving gender equality could be reinforced through joint initiatives and networks. Other women appear to be more positive about co-operation with the European Women's Lobby as a means of opening up opportunities to identify and work more effectively towards common goals. They also see such collaboration as a way of enhancing the possibilities for improving their level of professionalism and strengthening their working methods and strategies.

## Conclusion

Lithuania warrants attention as a country where the EU influence on gender equality policy is being brought to bear mainly by women's groups which, as the country's key actors in promoting gender equality, have played an important role in lobbying an unsympathetic government to make progress in implementing EU requirements relating to gender, including gender mainstreaming. In Lithuania there is an evident trend of spreading responsibility for gender across units or departments, which could be read as a move away from the centralisation of responsibility for gender, and this is occurring through the creation of 'transversal' action plans for gender equality: action plans assign responsibility to different units for the delivery of different objectives. This 'transversalism' involves no necessary change in policy-making structures or practices, and gender mainstreaming continues to be designated as a distinct or separate policy space. This is not desirable from the point of view of the actors in gender mainstreaming. The lack of stability in the commitment to gender equality and the country's policy culture is not conducive to practices such as evaluation and impact assessment. The results suggest that progress in implementing gender mainstreaming is slow and somewhat patchy.

Equal treatment legislation has made important progress, but not enough. The actors involved in gender equality policy in Lithuania acknowledge the positive effect of the accession negotiations, but they also note that this issue surfaced late in the agenda and that greater priority was placed on social and economic reforms. In all recent governmental documents explicit reference is made to gender mainstreaming either as an objective or as a principle governing gender equality policy. The Act on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (1998), which was renamed the Act on Equal Opportunities (passed in 2004 and in effect as of 1 January 2005), can be seen a positive step for the implementation of the principle of non-discrimination, set out in the new EU Constitution. But some fear that in practice it could signify a return to the stage of gender inequality that existed up until 1995. The list of spheres that the Act covers should therefore be elaborated and extended to include the equal development of careers for women and men.

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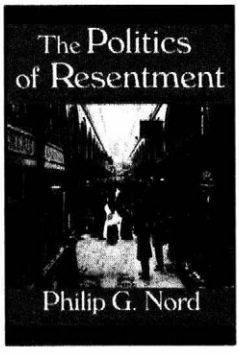


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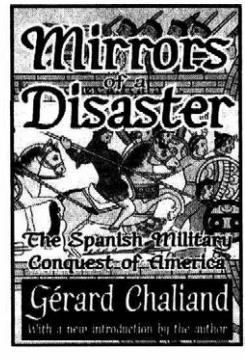


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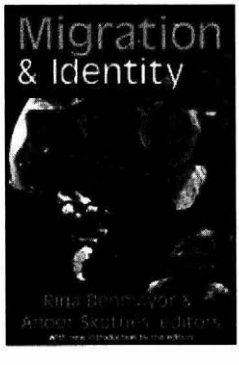


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# Between Feminism and the Catholic Church: The Women's Movement in Poland

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**Abstract:** This article looks at Polish women's movements in the context of how women's and social movements are defined theoretically and in the light of the development of the women's movement in Poland historically. It examines how the women's movement fits into Polish society in the light of public opinion on the women's movement, women's rights and issues of equality, also looking at how these views evolved over the 1990s, and the reasons behind them. It explores the different types of women's movements that exist in Poland, differentiating between them in terms of how much they conform to definitions of 'traditional' and 'new' social movements and in terms of the role they play in effectuating change, their relationships with domestic and international organisations, their relationship to the Catholic Church, their strategies, their formal and informal nature, and other distinguishing criteria.
*Sociologický časopis/Czech Sociological Review, 2005, Vol. 41, No. 6: 1057–1075*

A scholar attempting to describe women's movements is confronted with the same difficulties that usually accompany any analysis of social movements. It is the diversity and variability of such movements that pose the difficulty, as these features are also inherent attributes of any group of social movements. Studies on social movements consequently suggest a variety of different ways defining movements. For example, Blumer [1946: 3] defines a social movement as a 'collective enterprise to establish a new order of social life'; Smelser [1962: 313] describes social movements as 'collective attempts to restore, protect or create values or norms in the name of a generalised belief'; and elsewhere emphasis is put on the fact that social movements strive to achieve change in the social order by non-institutionalised means [Wilson 1973]. Other scholars have suggested somewhat more precise definitions, analysing social movements as 'recurrent patterns of collective activities which are partially institutionalised, value oriented and antisystematic in their form and symbolism' [Pakulski 1991: xiv]. All these definitions actually have many elements in common, elements that Dahlerup also took into consideration in her work on women's movements in Denmark, suggesting that social a social movement be defined as 'a conscious, collective activity to promote social change, with some de-

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gree of organization and which the commitment and active participation of members or activists as its main resource' [Dahlerup 1986: 218]. In accordance with this definition, only movements that strive for change could qualify as women's movements; therefore, any movements aimed at maintaining the status quo, which often arise in response to pro-change movements, would lie outside the scope of an analysis of social movements.

Additional elements in the definition of social movements is that they represent some fundamental interest that is not addressed as a part of routine policies, that they lie outside the process of political decision-making, and that they are relatively permanent and of a certain size. A social movement is a combination of spontaneity and organisation. It expresses a protest against existing values and norms and often attacks the structure of power. As it does not participate in institutionalised power, it frequently employs direct action and disruptive tactics.

Dahlerup also notes that social movements very often organise movement events, and while organisations also do so it is chiefly social movements that resort to this measure. It is frequently by means of the events a social movement organises that it becomes known throughout a society more generally. Dahlerup also cites Zald's differentiation between social movements and 'social movement organisations'. A social movement is more than just an organisation, and as such it usually has many centres and sub-organisations. Its aim is not just to organise its activity, an nor is it the activity itself; it above all seeks to effectuate change: change in a way of thinking, political change, changes in everyday life, and consequently often even a change in the basic structure of power in society.

The transformation of social movements in Western Europe and the United States during the 1980s led to the need to distinguish between old or 'traditional' social movements and 'new' social movements. The most commonly cited features of the latter are the movement's transfunctional, fluid and open character, its inclusive, non-doctrinal and non-ideological orientations, the absence of formal membership and programmes, a socio-cultural, innovative, and self-limiting character, non-violent means, and discontinuity [Pakulski 1991]. A comparison between old and new social movements reveals differences between them in at least four aspects. The first relates to the relevant actors: the old movements usually involved social groups acting as interest groups, while in the new movements the actors tend to be groups acting on behalf of broader interests. The second distinct aspect is that old movements tended to deal with issues like economic growth, distribution, military and social safety, or social control, while the new movements target the environment, peace, human rights, or unalienated forms of work. The third aspect involves values: freedom, the security of private consumption, and material growth were the values of the old movements, in comparison with the new movements' values centred on the autonomous identity of the individual in opposition to centralised control. Finally, the mode of organisation has changed: the old movements were formally organised as large-scale associations; by contrast the new movements feature a lack of formal organisation and are spontaneous, with little differentiation between positions within the movement [Offe 1985].

Like all the other new social movements, the new women's movements emerged in a specific context, preceded by movements that had been organised by a previous generation of women. They were therefore able to draw on the latter's achievements and at the same time engage with them in a specific dispute or discussion of minor aims and especially the means of achieving those aims. It is worth noting, however, that both the old and the new women's movements share a common basic aim: to change the status of women in society [Dahlerup 1986; Styrkarsottir 1986; Gelb 1986].

The circumstances most usually cited [Dahlerup 1986: 220–221] in connection with the emergence of a new women's movement include:

1. a pre-existing communication network in touch with new ideas,
2. the receptiveness of this network to new ideas,
3. a situation of strain or crisis that actually triggers the movement,
4. the international diffusion of ideas.

When analysing women's movements in Poland, both their socio-political background and their history must be taken into consideration, because the analysis of any modern social movement requires that answers be sought to a number of questions: in what types of society does the particular movement occur? What forms of continuity or discontinuity with the past exist? Which institutions are at issue? What are the general political stakes of the disputed issues. And what developmental possibilities are culturally available to collective actors? [Cohen 1985] Analyses of women's movements must therefore seek to find out what women's needs the activities or the women's organisation, movement or informal initiative respond to, what steps towards change are suggested, and what changes are desired. The aim of this article is to address these questions and attempt to determine whether the Polish women's movement can be called a social movement and whether it bears more in common with a traditional or a new women's movement.[1]

## Public opinion on women's rights and gender equality in Poland

Around the turn of the millennium in Poland public opinion polls were showing that it is primarily women who protest against the limited participation of women in government, though men are increasingly coming to share the view that the level of women's participation in the public sphere is too small. Polish society also believes that there is inequality of opportunities for women and men, as an absolute majority (74% of those asked[2]) maintain that women do have fewer opportunities for building a political career than men do. This opinion is cited slightly more often by women (78%) than by men, but it is an opinion that a clear majority of men also

[1] See M. Fuszara [1997].

[2] A survey by CBOS (*Centrum Badania Opinii Społecznej* – Public Opinion Research Center) in 2000 on a random sample of 1010 respondents.

share. In recent years the percentage of women who fully agree that women's chances for success in politics are smaller has increased considerably: in 1993,[3] 64% of female respondents indicated that they felt certain about this, and in 2000,[4] 78% of women thought so.

Public opinion polls in Poland have also shown that an increasing number of people believe that there should be more women in government, Parliament, public administration, political parties, industrial enterprises, and the judiciary.[5] Opinions on this issue are closely linked to the gender of respondents, and it is much more often women than men who want women's participation in government to be expanded.[6]

There is also a clear connection between people's opinions on women's participation in government and their level of education. The higher the level of education, the higher the percentage of respondents who believe that there should be more women in positions of authority than there are now. There is a distinct difference between the views of respondents with secondary or higher education and respondents with primary education. The largest percentage of people who support increasing the number of women in positions of authority is among people with higher education; the majority of people with post-secondary education feel that there should be more women in the government, parliament, local government, public enterprises, banking and in political parties.

These trends are similar to trends that have been observed in previous years: there are far more women who advocate greater participation for women in government, while among men there are more who advocate less participation for women. However, changes are clearly occurring: the percentage of people who think that there should be more women in positions of authority is growing; the percentage who think that women should make up one-half of the members in all bodies of au-

[3] A survey by CBOS in 1993 on a random sample of 1087 respondents.

[4] A survey by CBOS in 2000 on a random sample of 1010 respondents.

[5] Asked about women's participation, in 1995, 40% of respondents indicated that there should be more women in the government, and in 2004, 54% thought so; in 2004, 52% favoured more women's participation in Parliament and 52% in local government; in 2000 44% favoured more women's participation in public administration, while this figure was only 28% in 1995; in 2004, 49% favoured more women's participation in political parties, compared to a figure of 26% in 1995; in 2000, 42% of people favoured increased participation of women in industrial enterprises as opposed to 22% in 1995; and increased participation of women in the judiciary was favoured by 39% in 2000, up from 25% in 1995. From a CBOS survey in 1995 on a random sample of 1230, in 2000 on a random sample of 1010, and in 2004 on a random sample of 1002.

[6] Asked whether there should be more women in the government, in 2004 60% of women agreed and 46% of men; for Parliament the figures were 59% of women and 44% of men; for local government the figures were 61% of women and 43% of men; in top positions in political parties the figures were 56% of women and 42% of men; in boards of industrial enterprises (in 2000) the figures were 52% of women and 32% of men; and in banking (in 2000) the figures were 53% of women and 37% of men. See note 5 for the source of the data.

thority is also growing; and the number of people who declare themselves in favour of only very limited participation for women (10% or less) in government is decreasing.

Women and men also differ in their opinions on whether the membership of women in bodies of authority has an effect on how seriously women's problems are dealt with and solved in accordance with women's interests, although in both groups there is a considerable number of people who think that the gender of a public official influences the way in which issues important to women are settled. In 2000, 33% of men and 46% of women (see footnote 2) held this opinion. The view that it is necessary that women themselves participate in governing bodies in order for problems important to women to be addressed properly is more common among people with higher education, people who live in larger towns or cities, management strata, the intelligentsia, people with higher salaries, and people with centrist political views.

In 1999 CBOS polled a random sample of 1090 respondents about the debate in the Sejm over the status of women in Poland. Respondents were asked to assess whether they considered it an important subject or not. The results convincingly indicate that the absolute majority of society considers the subject of this debate to be important, as although slightly more women (78%) view the subject as important, 70% of men also expressed the view that it as a very important or quite important subject.

However, the differences continue to grow between reality in Polish society and the model accepted by Poles – and especially by Polish women – in this sphere. While the overwhelming majority of Poles consider the situation of women in Poland to be an important or a very important subject, it is a subject that nonetheless is very rarely taken up. In fact, the issue is only raised when it is 'forced' on parliament in the form of an MPs' bill and when it is therefore impossible to avoid the debate. MPs' statements about the situation of women show that their opinions have diverged from those of society in general. The number of men and women who subscribe to the idea of a high proportion of women in governing bodies is growing, but there are neither more women in these bodies nor more MPs who acknowledge the importance of equal opportunities for men and women and equal representation [Fuszara 2002].

The results of public opinion polls indicate that the inequality of men and women in the labour market is another fact that society is increasingly coming to acknowledge. Polls show that women in Poland are aware of discrimination in the labour market and that in recent years this awareness has become more widespread. The majority of women and men believe that women have less of a chance than men of finding a job, getting a higher salary, being promoted to an executive position, or establishing a successful professional career for themselves.[7]

[7] In 2000, 73% of women and 62% of men indicated they felt that women have fewer chances of finding a job; 76% of women indicated that women have less of a chance of getting a higher salary; 72% of women and 63% of men felt women have fewer chances of being promoted

In recent years the awareness of unequal opportunities in the labour market has become considerably more widespread in society and the percentage of people who are aware that a woman has fewer opportunities than a man to establish a successful professional career or occupy an executive post have grown. The higher the education level of the respondents, the more they perceive the existence of gender inequality. An awareness of inequality is associated more with education levels and a related understanding of social reality than it is with individual experience, and this is also evident in the fact that it is poorly educated women who are more seriously affected by both the threat of losing their job and by the difficulties in finding new employment, while the awareness of inequality is greater among the better educated.

People were also polled about the reasons behind the inequality of opportunities for men and women. In response women primarily cited the fact that women are burdened more by family commitments (55%). However, in the 1990s more and more women began to directly point to the discrimination of women by employers as the reason behind the poorer chances women have in the field of professional activity.[8] At the same time the overwhelming majority of women (71%) are convinced that society holds a professionally active woman in greater esteem than an unemployed woman, while a very small percentage (2%) believe that a woman-housewife is viewed with respect [Fuszara 2002].

One response to this and other problems has been for women to organise themselves into groups. In Poland, women's groups have tended to emerge in spheres where women's issues have been identified and defined. The low level of women's participation in power was inherited from the communist period. But after 1989 the proportion of women in Parliament decreased even further. In reaction to this situation, initiatives and organisations have emerged with the aim of increasing women's participation. Also, the gap between men's wages and women's wages grew significantly after 1989, and the situation was compounded by the rise of a new problem that affected women to a greater extent than men – unemployment. In response to these problems, a number of organisations and initiatives emerged that act on behalf of professionally active women.

There have also been responses to other issues. A change to the legal code, which seriously restricted access to abortion, led to the emergence of groups that provide guidance in family planning and birth control. The initiation of a public discussion of violence against women gave rise to the first guidance and consultation centres focusing on this issue and to the establishment of shelters for women and children who fall victim to domestic violence. Finally, in response to the fact that old legal provisions have been shown to disadvantage women in the new socio-economic situation, some centres have been set up to deal specifically with the legal issues of women.

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to an executive post; and 68% of women and 52% of men felt women have fewer chances of building a successful professional career. (See footnote 2 for information on the sample.)

[8] In 1993, in a CBOS survey of a random sample of 1087 women this reason was indicated by 20% of women, and in 1996, in a CBOS survey of a random sample of 1101 women it by 26%.

## The women's movement in Poland before and during the communist era

An aspect peculiar to the women's movement in Poland from the time of its very origin in the 19th century was its connection with the struggle for independence. That was the struggle of prime importance in Poland at the time, and no group, including the women's movement, could avoid taking up a position on it. The first organised group that aimed at improving the position and education of women were the 'Enthusiasts', the best known member of which was Narcyza Żmichowska. The group operated in Warsaw in 1840–1850. The Enthusiasts were engaged in the underground struggle for independence and were consequently also subjected to political oppression. Most of the activists were imprisoned and exiled by the Russian authorities, which ultimately led to the termination of the group's activities [Fuszara 2003].

It was nonetheless in the 19th century that the first signs of progress towards equal rights for women were witnessed. It was then that the first women's congresses were held (in Lvov in 1894, in Zakopane in 1899, and in Krakow in 1900 and 1905) to discuss the role and tasks of women, and this was followed in 1907 by the founding of the Polish Society for Equal Rights for Women, which among its goals also struggled to achieve women's suffrage. When Poland gained independence in 1918 women were accorded the same voting rights and eligibility as men.

Over eighty different women's organisations were established in Poland in the years between the First and Second World Wars. There were a variety of types, from professional groups to religious organisations. In addition, many women's journals and books intended for female readers were published. Women had their own Parliamentary Society, and there were women's funds and scholarships and women's clubs, like the Peasant Women's Clubs organised by the Farmer's Society.

The situation changed radically after the Second World War. The communist government abolished many of the non-governmental organisations that existed at the time. Foundations, for example, were abolished in 1952 (re-allowed in 1984). Some types of organisations disappeared completely, while others were altered and controlled by communist authorities (e.g. the Polish Scouts). The grassroots women's movement was supplanted by institutions imposed from without. 'Equal rights for women' became one of the slogans of the new socio-political system, and a single mass women's organisation called the Women's League was set up in 1945, the aims of which were to promote women's professional work, to organise assistance in everyday life, and educational activities. The League's first organisational code and its ideological declaration spoke of the essential role of Polish women in society in order to fulfil the tasks of the Party and the government. At the First Congress of the Women's League in 1951 it set as its goal to get millions of women involved in the League's activities. At the fore of the League's programme was the struggle for peace and the role of women in contributing to the fulfilment of the six-year economic plan. An increase in women's employment was planned as a means to achieve the latter aim: women were to make up one-third of all employees by the end of the six-year

period. The Second Congress of the Women's League was held after the democratic changes of 1956. Congress participants stressed the need to change the principles behind the League's existence: as opposed to its prior role as a political organisation carrying out Party instructions, it was to become a genuine women's organisation striving to address and resolve women's issues. The Women's League was established by the authorities as the only women's union, and it came into being without the involvement of women themselves. Like many other organisations set up in those times by the new political authorities, it was treated as a part of imposed rule and failed to promote the interests of the group it was originally intended to represent. Such organisations could hope for no social backing whatsoever. This was even reflected in statements made by Women's League activists at the League's Extraordinary Congress in 1981, when democratisation began to set in following the founding of Solidarity in 1980. Their speeches contained formulations like: 'the corset they once laced us with continues to disable us', 'why are we so weak and helpless', and 'democracy is impossible without the women's involvement' [Ratman-Liwerska 1993: 124].

Like many other social movements, the first women's grassroots groups began organising themselves in Poland in 1980–81 during the early years of Solidarity. And as in the case of the political developments in the 19th century, the breaks were put on this progress, too, when martial law was imposed in Poland in December 1981, and once again the main preoccupation became the struggle for independence, a national experience shared by both men and women alike.

In many respects 1989 was the beginning of a new era. Gender inequality was one of the new 'discoveries' in the newly emerging democratic society. But it should be noted that there was a great deal of inequality before 1989: women's wages were lower than those of men, they occupied very few managerial positions, they were absent from the political scene, and they never occupied positions of political power. But these inequalities were never discussed during the communist era.

## Women's movements in contemporary Poland

In 1989, among the many other things that were going on, a proposed act on abortion was submitted to the Sejm for debate. The most interesting effect of this act was how it served to stimulate the activity of women's groups and efforts to articulate women's needs and to set up women's organisations. This trend is interesting because it was initiated 'from below' instead of being imposed on the women from above. Some of the events that were organised as part of the campaign against the proposed act gave rise to more permanent movements aimed at representing women's interests.[9] Since the 1990s more than 300 women's organisations and initiatives have come into ex-

[9] This is why the author's first article on women in Poland is titled 'Will the Abortion Issue Give Birth to Feminism in Poland?'.

istence in Poland and are listed in a directory of such organisations.[10] Among them are associations, federations, clubs, foundations, charity organisations, religious-based groups, groups within political parties and trade unions, and women's studies centres.

The situation of non-governmental women's organisations in Poland is somewhat complicated, as there are clear differences between these organisations. One crucial distinction is between those women's groups that are linked to the Catholic Church and the other, less traditional and more feminist organisations. But the main difference is in the stance on the issue of abortion, the issue of the family model, and particularly on the roles played by women in the family unit. These differences already became apparent when the reports were being prepared for the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing. As a result, two shadow reports were drafted in the Polish NGO sector: one was drafted by the 'Beijing Committee', appointed by representatives of various women's organisations, and the second by *Federacja Ruchów Obrony Życia*, a federation of 'pro-life' type organisations that also refer to themselves as women's organisations.

The government co-operated with and financially supported women's projects after the Beijing conference in 1995 up until 1997. After the 1997 elections a coalition government was formed out of the *Unia Wolności* (Union of Freedom) and *Akcja Wyborcza Solidarność* (Solidarnosc Electoral Action). The change in cabinet also led to changes in relation to women's issues and to women's NGOs, as the new government that was formed in 1997 primarily supported NGOs close to the Catholic Church. In 2002, when the Plenipotentiary for the Equality of Women and Men was established, the government again began to support women's organisations.

## The feminist movement

Within the scope of a short article it is of course impossible to thoroughly discuss the entire mass of women's groups,[11] movements and initiatives that have emerged in Poland in recent years. It would also be difficult to describe them in general terms. But it is this very diversity that is one of the biggest advantages of women's movements in Poland today. This diverse group includes feminist, professional, and

[10] 'In Poland recently 36,000 associations and more than 5000 foundations are registered. [...] In 48% organizations membership is mostly male, in 18% mostly female and in 30% both genders are equally represented. In boards of 28% no women is present and in 4.5% no men. In 66% of organizations boards are dominated by male, in 21% by female, and in 13% there is gender balance on the boards.' [Kurczewski et al. 2003: 45–46].

[11] In Poland there are over 300 women's organisations, but OSKA (The National Women's Information Centre) estimates that about 200 are actually active women's organisations. However, it should be noted that organisations connected with the Catholic Church are unwilling to co-operate with OSKA and others women's organisations, and consequently there is no information at all on many of them in the list of women's organisations.

religious movements, sections of political parties or groups formed at universities, and local Polish branches of international women's groups, but it would be possible to describe them more specifically according to their aims and types of activity. For example, among them there are many movements and organisations that deal with the issue of women in the professional sphere, and their main focus is providing assistance at two extremes of the employment spectrum: unemployed women, and women who set up or run their own, private business. Another type of organisations work with abused women and single mothers, and yet another type is engaged in promoting women's rights. Particularly numerous among the latter are organisations that defend reproductive rights, and many of them emerged in response to the tightening of regulations surrounding abortion. Another type of organisation and initiative focuses on women's participation in public life and especially on increasing the proportion of women in institutions, organisations, and power structures. Finally, there are some organisations and initiatives whose aim is to radically change the status of women in society, and they work towards this aim through a great variety of sub-aims and differentiated forms of activity.

In 2002–2003 many of the women's NGOs in Poland became engaged in various activities related to the country's accession to the European Union, and many of the activities related to women's rights in the European Union and the legal changes resulting from Poland's accession to the EU, though some of the activities targeting women were also organised by other NGOs. Interviews conducted with representatives of 30 NGOs[12] involved in such activities indicated that most of the activities organised were information campaigns and training courses for women on women's rights, explaining the operations of EU institutions and how to use EU funds, and, before the elections to the European Parliament, campaigns promoting the election of women candidates. Some activities were conducted on a national scale, others regionally, and others at the international level. There are two main reasons why there were so many initiatives: many women's NGOs have long been active in Poland, and activities of this type were financially supported by different sources both domestic and foreign.

The organisation most involved in informing the public about EU legal standards relating to women was the Women's Rights Centre, which prepared a publication containing EU regulations and tribunal rulings and with comments by Polish scholars. Similar initiatives were also organised by the National Women's Information Centre 'Ośka'. They published *Niezbędnik Europejski dla kobiet* (A Women's Guide to Europe), which is a small gadget-like brochure containing basic information about the position of women in the European Union, how the situation of Polish women would change after accession to the EU, and what the EU has to offer women. Some initiatives of this type were much narrower and local in nature.

[12] These interviews were conducted as part of the project 'Constructing a Supranational Political Space: The European Union, Eastern Enlargement and Women's Agency' with the support of grant no. BCS – 0137954, National Science Foundation, project co-ordinator: Prof. Janna Regulska, Rutgers University, project co-ordinator in Poland: Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara, University of Warsaw

Women's NGOs closely co-operate with the Government Plenipotentiary for the Equality of Women and Men and with Voivod's' plenipotentiaries for equality. NGOs work with the government in implementing the government programme for women; they are able to comment on drafts of legal acts relating to women's issues. These organisations also act as mediators of information, including information on the European Union. Representatives of NGOs are able to participate in various seminars, workshops, and training courses organised by the Plenipotentiary for the Equality of Women and Men and by the Parliamentary Group of Women, and they then organise seminars, workshops and training courses of their own for other women. Although NGOs closely co-operate with the Plenipotentiary for Equality, there is rarely any regular co-operation between them and other ministries. Women's organisations, however, have tried to initiate such co-operation, and sometimes with success.

Another criterion for distinguish between organisations is the degree to which they are formally organised. It is worth remembering that discussions about whether to formalise activities have accompanied the part of the women's movement that is identified with feminism from the outset of the democratic transformation. The feminist movement, which by its very nature acts either in opposition to or outside patriarchal structures, has always found it difficult for various reasons, most often pragmatic, to consent to the requirement that it start operating in a formalised manner. Over time groups have emerged that refused to formalise their activities (for example, anarchist-feminist groups, or even the women's organisation *Kobiet też* ('Women Too'), which operated for several years). Some of the non-formalised and dynamically active groups are groups that were created ad hoc – most often for the purpose of organising some kind of event or campaign (e.g. the March 8th demonstrations) and frequently they are groups that were created by people active in women's and feminist groups. Formalised movements are in frequent and regular contact with formalised groups active in other countries, but some non-formalised groups (for example anarchists) also have very close and extensive international contacts. Non-formalised groups that form for the purpose of a specific campaign are an exception, and they tend to be variable and flexible, while their international associations exist more on the level of individuals than groups.

Some of the women's organisations[13] that warrant mention are: the Polish Feminist Association – Women's Centre (PSF), which was the first new women's organisation in Poland and began functioning in Warsaw in 1980 in Warsaw, and eFKa Women's Foundation, set up in 1990 in Krakow. The Federation for Women and Family Planning, established in 1991 by different women's groups, is an interesting example of the federation type of organisation. The Centre for the Promotion of Women has been operating as an independent foundation since 1993. The Centre for Women's Rights was founded in 1994. La Strada Foundation against Trafficking

[13] For more information on these organisations see their websites: www.oska.org.pl; www.efka.org.pl; www.kobiety.pl; www.federa.org.pl; www.rodzicpoludzku.pl; www.free.ngo.pl/temida; www.promocjakobiet.pl; www.free.ngo.pl/lastrada; www.dukgd.republika.pl

in Women has been operating in Poland since 1996. Ośka – The National Women's Information Centre – was founded in 1996. There are also business organisations like the Polish Association of Women Entrepreneurs, founded in June 1998. Some women's organisations are connected to political parties, for instance the Democratic Women's Union (DUK) founded in 1990, which has close ties to the Democratic Left Alliance. Among the organisations established earlier, under the previous regime, the Women's League and the Peasant Women's Clubs are still active.

Organisations that co-operate at the international level have more complex organisational structures. Probably the best example of inter-regional co-operation among women's groups is the Karat Coalition (Coalition for Gender Equality), the roots of which date back to the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995), when a number of women from NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe decided to form a coalition to advocate for the regionally specific needs of women. Karat was formally established in 1997 in Warsaw, and in 2001 it was registered as an international organisation. Karat receives the financial and moral support of UNIFEM.

Describing itself as 'a regional coalition of organisations and individuals that works to ensure gender equality in the Central & Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States countries, monitors the implementation of international agreements and lobbies for the needs and concerns of women in the Region at all levels of decision-making' (www.karat.org), Karat is comprised of NGOs from twenty countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Ukraine). Its main activities are advocacy at the national, regional and international levels, organising regional and international conferences, participating in conferences organised by the United Nations and in the preparation of UN documents, fundraising for regional projects, publications related to Karat projects, networking and information sharing (mailing lists), and publishing the magazine 'Fair Play'.

An interesting example of broadly based co-operation between women is the Network of East West Women – Polska (NEWW–Poland). This is an independent Polish association that shares the same mission and goals as the Network of East-West Women (NEWW) based in the United States. When NEWW was founded in the United States in 1990 its main goal was to support new women's organisations in Central and Eastern Europe, and it currently connects about 2500 women from 30 countries, across national and regional boundaries, to share resources, knowledge and skills. The majority of NEWW – Poland's current projects are related to gender and economic justice. It also offers legal counselling for women who are victims of violence and acts as the local partner for NEWW fellowship programmes (fellowships especially for women lawyers and economists) and annual conferences and meetings. NEWW–Poland is also part of the Pre-Election Polish Women's Coalition, and it recently translated the book *Our Bodies Ourselves*.

It is much more difficult to characterise the non-formalised groups that can be ranked among new social movements.[14] New social movements are fluid in charac-

ter, open, inclusive, non-doctrinal and non-ideological. They typically lack formal membership and programmes and are not formally organised, they do not differentiate between the positions of individual members, they organise events rather than everyday activities, and they are socio-cultural, innovative, and discontinuous in character. In Poland this type of movement is becoming more and more popular, even if the particular groups are not as well known as traditional organisations. The best known such group is *Ulica Siostrzana* (Sisterly Street), an informal group that was set up at the beginning of 2001 by various women's organisations. Its purpose is a kind of 'de-elitism' of the feminist movement, removing the barriers between feminists and other women and appealing to a broad base of women, including women otherwise marginalised (e.g. mothers with young children, women from small urban and rural centres, etc.) from the mass women's movement in Poland. *Ulica Siostrzana* organises summer workshops every year.

*Kręgi Kobiet* (Women's Circles) are a difficult kind of group to characterise, as they are more than just a form of support or a self-development group, even though they do fulfil such functions. Women meet regularly as part of these groups, and most of the groups create and maintain their own women's rituals. Particularly important for participants in women's circles is the rebuilding of lost bonds between women – both close and distant in space and time. Most attention is therefore devoted to uncovering and sharing women's stories – their own and those of past participants – and especially in relation to women's spirituality.

Informal anarchist feminist groups also exist in Poland and often are associated with the alternative music scene. One of the first groups was the now defunct Women Against Discrimination and Violence (WAD), which brought together those active in the Polish alternative movement. Some of them created groups that continue to exist, such as *Emancypunx* and *Wiedźma* (Witch). These groups are usually fairly small, but their members tend to be bound by strong ties of friendship.

Institutionalised groups also vary. Some of them have a simple structure, others form federations, and there are even some organisations that have obtained advisor or observer status at international institutions. The latter monitor official state activity and 'supplement' it in areas overseen by state administration. They are organised as traditional social movements, and the benefit of being so is that they have the possibility of gaining an impact on administration, state policy, and the shape of legislation. But this comes at a price – a problem frequently mentioned in the case of institutionalised organisations, with their somewhat rigid structure, established by income sources – which is that they have a tendency to come to resemble state institutions. The activity that such organisations engage in mainly involves exerting pressure on state administration, working with it in its activities, and offering individual advice, etc. Conversely, the non-registered, non-institutionalised groups that are often created for the purpose of some specific 'event' or campaign do not have a direct impact on the activity of state institutions. By creating

[14] www.emancypunx.prv.pl; www.wiedzma.w.pl; www.alter.most.org.pl/kurwa

'events' though, they are often better able to achieve their objectives or have a greater impact than the organisations that play an official kind of 'game' (often based on co-operation or on total criticism) with the system of state institutions. Ad hoc groups organising 'events' achieve above all else a significant impact on awareness, as they are capable of gaining a strong media presence and obtaining much wider publicity than traditionally active organisations.

The next criteria that warrant attention in describing the diversity of women's movements and women's organisations relate to activity strategy. Among the various strategies employed by feminist movements around the world, the one probably most frequently encountered in Poland is the 'equality strategy', which is associated with the traditional and early women's emancipation movement and ranks among the movements defined as liberal feminism. In turn, liberal feminism belongs to the branch of feminism defined as 'feminism of similarity', according to which the differences between women and men are largely social constructs, and women and men are in reality more similar to one other than they are different. The equality strategy aims mainly at establishing social and legal equality for both sexes. It is worth noting that at present it is this very strategy that is frequently applied in the activities of supra-national structures, such as the European Union or the Council of Europe. The equality strategy is therefore a feature common to many women's organisations in Poland, which unites them with organisations active on a geographically wider scale. It is worth noting, however, that the very notion of 'equality' and 'equal rights' has been evolving over the last few years: while once this was understood as granting identical rights, at present it is frequently acknowledged that the 'application of the same [rule] for different people' may actually lead to inequality. The understanding of equal rights as identical rights is being supplanted by an effort to achieve equal opportunities.

Conversely, groups that subscribe to a feminism[15] of difference may apply other strategies. Without explaining this feminist position in detail here, it must be born in mind that advocates of feminism of difference set out from the premise that there are certain primary differences between women and men. This differentiation has not, in their opinion, been taken into consideration in the patriarchal world, which was constructed from the perspective of men's values, norms and needs. A transformation must occur, based on rebuilding the world in a manner that takes into consideration the needs and norms that are important to women. This outlook contains the considerably far-reaching vision of 'rebuilding' the world. It does not mean women are to be 'even' with men, but rather that culture is to be built with a view to what is 'feminine' and what is 'male', and take both into consideration. Although most contemporary, active feminist groups include among their overall ob-

[15] In this article there is no need to take into consideration the more complex divisions within feminism in terms of its various kinds or factions. The Polish feminist movement is too thin for such distinctions to play an important role; the only division applied here is therefore the distinction between feminism of similarity and feminism of difference.

jectives such a requirement, that the world be rebuilt, they rarely make precise references in their activity strategies to the difference between the sexes, and they rarely emphasise difference or demand that this be taken into consideration. Polish groups that rank among advocates of a feminism of difference include the groups that organise 'done-paid' campaigns, whose objectives are to compensate women for the household work they perform. To this end the groups also try to restructure the way people think about and define what work is, so that the work that women have performed for wages without pay, unnoticed, or not defined as work, is taken into consideration for compensation.

The image of the Polish women's movement is not yet particularly extensive. It nonetheless comprises various perspectives. The Polish women's movement is viewed, described and evaluated by Polish women scholars slightly differently than it is presented by scholars looking at it from the 'outside'. In her analysis of the women's movement in Poland Gesine Fuchs [2003] pointed out that it frequently makes reference to the concepts of 'rights', the law and equality before the law, and European law. This would therefore situate it within the branch of liberal feminism. In Fuchs' opinion, the stress on rights and the law makes the Polish women's movement different from the women's movements in other countries. It should moreover be noted that people active in the Polish women's movement have discovered that the concept of rights and references to the law (including EU law) are the only arguments that politicians have difficulty undermining, ignoring or negating the importance of. What is interesting is that in analyses conducted by Polish men and women scholars, Fuchs' observation does not appear. This is even more significant in that a comparison of women's movements and the strategies and arguments they apply in Scandinavia and post-communist Baltic countries shows that in post-communist countries arguments referring to rights, and especially to individual entitlements, are still not accepted. Although it appears that these arguments are not yet accepted in Poland either, especially wherever the individual entitlements of women clash with the expectations that women perform and fulfil various family duties, group pressure for women's rights can sometimes open the door to further debate on the rights and entitlements of women.

Another key and distinctive factor distinguishing that distinguishes between women's groups is whether or not they are connected to the Catholic Church or to other, less traditional, more feminist organisations. Groups do not co-operate across this dividing line. But pro-life organisations in Poland also often refer to themselves as 'women's organisations'. Some of their activities will be described below.

## Catholic women's NGOs in Poland

The main goal of some of the Catholic women's NGOs described below is to unite Catholic women, and some concentrate on supporting activity on behalf of women, practising the commandments of their faith. In others the prevailing feature in com-

mon is their 'environmental' character, assembling representatives of feminised occupations or former students from girls schools under the auspices of the Catholic Church. In the spirit of the Catholic Church, the programmes of the organisations mentioned below women view women in the context of the family, and as a result the goals and actions these organisations set out are first and foremost pro-family and only then pro-feminine.

It must be noted, however, that organisations with a religious background often work for the preservation of the status quo, and not towards change, and some arise directly in response to pro-change movements. Therefore, according to some definitions of women's and social movements they are not really a part of the women's movement [Dahlerup 1986].

The first association to emerge since the Second World War with a truly nation-wide membership base that aimed at bringing together Catholic women throughout the country was the Polish Association of Catholic Women (PACW), created in 1990. The activity of the PACW can be viewed on three levels: formative (collective participation in religious rituals, lectures and discussions on religious subjects, organising pilgrimages); social (educational and informational activities, including religious instruction, preparation for family life, and guidance in methods of natural family planning); charitable (offering support for people in difficult living conditions). Some of the other Catholic women's organisations are federative. One such example is the Assembly of Polish Women (APW) - 'Woman in the Contemporary World', an assembly of Polish women that was founded in 1996. The basis for the assembly's activity is the Catholic Church, papal teachings and the Charter of Family's Rights, and its goal is to provide information and strengthen a positive view among women about their femininity and motherhood, encourage their acceptance of the concept of the complementary nature of men's and women's roles in the family and their willingness to fulfil the commandment of caring for other human beings.

One important task that some Catholic women's organisations fulfil is providing assistance to single mothers; for example, the Single Mother's Aid Foundation, established in 1990. The organisation runs educational programmes for mothers and support groups and meetings and supports the establishment, renovation and maintenance of single mother aid hostels and short-term shelters [Petrowa-Wasilewicz 2000; Lopez-Resterpo 1997].

## Conclusion

In a survey conducted on a random sample of respondents in 1998 more than one-half of all men and women indicated they felt that 'nowadays in Poland women have the kind of problems that they should undertake to solve through collective effort', and nearly one-quarter denied the existence of any collective problems. Women more often than men feel that problems of this kind do exist, while men more often

deny their existence. Among women, views on women's interests are closely connected to education levels – the higher the education, the greater the percentage of women who perceive the existence of collective women's interests and the smaller the percentage of those who deny it. The situation is different among men. In general they less often recognise the existence of women's group interests, and this refers especially – which may seem surprising – to men with higher education.

What women's problems do people mention? In the survey abortion turned out to be problem number one (it was mentioned by 50% of respondents); next (much less often) they indicated equal rights and professional activity. But women also differ from men in terms of the problems they identify and consider important for women and associate with women's interests. They cited social and welfare issues twice as often as men, specifically mentioning childcare assistance (day-care for infants and nursery schools for small children), the protection of single women and single mothers, the problems faced by families with many children, family planning, and health (oncological problems). They also mentioned twice as often as men the need to solve problems of violence against women and children and the problem of alcoholism among husbands.

However, such statements are in general rarely related to any action or even willingness to be active on the part of women in general. Only one-half of the women surveyed who mentioned some problem as a women's problem were prepared to engage in any activity in order to solve that problem, and even fewer had ever done so. The reason for this is probably the character of women's identities. The majority identify with the role of a woman within a heterosexual marriage, and this constitutes a very specific obstacle for the development of women's solidarity. The existence of women's solidarity, distinct from familial and matrimonial solidarity, is perceived as contrary to the interests of the institution of marriage. The position and importance of a woman in the private sphere leaves no 'psychological room' for women to undertake any broadly based activity, which would necessarily be in opposition to patriarchal institutions and culture [Titkow 2000].

To conclude it is worth returning to the question of how to describe the Polish women's movement, and whether it bears the traits of a traditional or a new social movement. Women's movements in Poland often appear to be operating in a situation that resembles the Western or American women's movements during a period of a political turn to the right. The questioning of women's rights during the Reagan era in the United States is similar to the impairment of rights in Poland after 1989. Also, governments generally tend to use similar strategies: either they refrain from appointing women to high offices, or they prefer women who rise up the ladder in the world of men and see no need to effectuate changes that would benef women [Sapiro 1986].

Women's movements in Poland emerged after communism in circumstances that meant women were forced to face new problems along with women's problems that had been concealed to that point and suddenly began to surface, and all this coincided with rise of rightwing ideologies promoting a traditional definition of the

role of women and their sphere of activity. The women's movements that emerged in this specific situation seem to have more in common with the traditional than the new social and women's movements. Their ideology is one of equality rather than liberation, and they often refer to the rights of women. As such the Polish women's movement shares many of the traits typical for the early women's movement. But this does not mean that it lacks all the traits of new movements. Although the women's movement is based on and revolves around registered institutions, its actual scope is much broader than the mere formal membership of organisations. Women who are active in such organisations are more susceptible to attempts to manipulate them and to use the movement for someone's private purposes. Therefore, many organisations emerge spontaneously, with a limited degree of differentiation between members' positions, which is a feature characteristic of new social movements. The diversity of movements and their fear of being manipulated leads to a reluctance to form more broadly based structures. However, they do unite for a common aim whenever the need arises and the aim is considered important by many organisations. Although women's movements strive to influence existing structures in an organised manner and thus tend to adhere to the rules of the game, which is a trait shared by traditional women's movements in many countries [Dahlerup 1986], they sometimes also resort to action that is inconsistent with those rules. What unites them is the emphasis on women's participation in the agencies of power and the stress on equal rights. On the other hand, Polish women's movements are similar to the movements in other countries in the West and especially in the United States with regards to the recurring issue of and struggle for freedom of procreation, including abortion, and the constant need to contend with rightwing advocates of reducing the field of activities open to women and establishing a traditional definition of the role of women in society.

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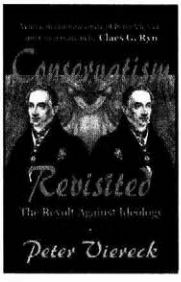


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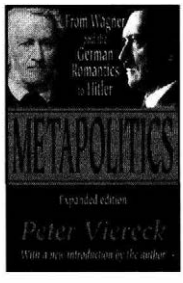


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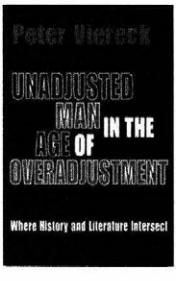


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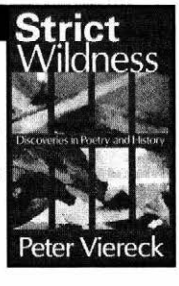


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# Czech Women's Civic Organising under the State Socialist Regime, Socio-economic Transformation and the EU Accession Period[1]

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**Abstract:** The article describes Czech women's civic organising focused on gender equality and women's rights since the Second World War and explains its character and development in the context of a) the state socialist regime, b) the impact of foreign and international donors on Czech women's civic organising during the socio-economic and political transformation of the first part of the 1990s, and c) the current process of the formalisation of Czech women's civic groups brought about by the Czech Republic's preparation for EU accession. The formalisation of women's civic groups is a process that consists of project-orientation, reform-orientation and the professionalisation of women's civic groups. In the era when the funding of women's civic groups has changed (as a result of EU Eastern enlargement) and the range of national political actors engaged in promoting gender equality has broadened (owing to pressure from the EU), these processes have brought about a shifts in the topics, activities, partnerships and strategies of Czech women's civic groups. These processes have contributed on the one hand to the marginalisation of those topics, activities and strategies previously addressed by some of Czech women's civic groups that do not fit in with the mainstream topics, activities and strategies defined by the EU (and by the EU influenced state). At the same time, however, some channels for having an impact on national decision-making processes have opened up to specific women's civic groups. EU Eastern enlargement paradoxically led to the orientation of women's civic groups towards national rather than supranational lobbying.

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[1] The article is based on data and analyses that were collected and made under two international research projects: 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance: The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in EU Candidate Countries' project, co-ordinated by Yvonne Galligan (Queen's University Belfast), and funded by the 5th Framework Programme of the European Commission (see www.qub.ac.uk/egg), and 'Constructing Supranational Political Spaces: The European Union, Eastern Enlargement and Women's Agency' project, co-ordinated by Joanna Regulska (Rutgers University), and funded by the United States National Science Foundation. In parts two and three of this article, the author uses some of the analyses she made and presented together with her colleagues: A. Křížková, D. Lorenz-Meyer,

## Introduction

This article describes Czech women's civic organisational activity aimed at promoting gender equality and women's rights since the Second World War, and explains its character in the context of the equality agenda of the state socialist regime, the socio-economic and political transformation of the first part of the 1990s, and the current processes of formalisation that women's non-governmental organisations (NGOs) underwent as part of the Czech Republic's (CR) preparation for accession to the European Union (EU). First, it examines what the effect of the state socialist regime was on women's civic organising aimed at women's rights and the equality of men and women in the region. It concentrates on the role of semi-state women's organising in promoting the equality of men and women in the region and investigates whether there was any independent women's civic organisational activity focused on women's rights and gender equality under the state socialist regime. It goes on to look at the scope and character of women's civic organising during the political and socio-economic transformation after 1989 and examines the impact of foreign donors on women's civic organising in the country during that period. This is followed by a study of the impact of the EU on women's civic organising in the country during the CR's preparations for accession to the EU, which evaluates both its positive and negative aspects for women's civic organising in the country and asks whether the EU accession led Czech women's civic groups to orientate themselves more towards supranational or national bodies in their efforts to promote gender equality and women's rights. The conclusion highlights and summarises the interconnected effects that the processes influencing Czech women's civic organising aimed at the promotion of women's rights and gender equality since the Second World War have had on its current state.

In the article, Czech women's civic groups are referred to as women's NGOs and informal (non-registered) women's civic groups. Civic participation (and specifically women's civic organising) is thus defined not only in terms of participation in formalised NGOs, which are commonly seen as representing civil society in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), because they are the prevailing form of civic participation there [e.g. Hann 1996; Sampson 1996], but also in reference to informal (non-registered) groups.

The article is based on analyses of semi-structured expert interviews and focus groups carried out in the CR in 2003–2005. The interviews were conducted with: a) representatives of 37 Czech informal women's civic groups, representatives of NGOs that are members of registers of Czech women's NGOs, and representatives of Czech NGOs that are not members of those registers but have at least one project focusing on gender equality, b) 6 Czech female activists active before 1989 focusing on human rights, and c) 7 representatives of the European Commission. The

L. Simerská (2004) and K. Kapusta-Pofahl and M. Kolářová (2005). The author would like to thank the two anonymous reviewers of the article for their comments, and Karen Kapusta-Pofahl and Alena Křížková for their unofficial comments, all of which contributed to its improvement.

two focus groups were conducted with 7 representatives of women's NGOs and NGOs that have at least one gender equality project.[2]

## Historical background

As in many other CEE countries, a number of women's organisations and even informal groups were active in Czechoslovakia between the two world wars, with the women's movement dating back to the 19th century. At that time, Czech and Slovak women gained the right to an education and to vote thanks to the persistent and systematic activities of the feminist movement, prominent figures (such as the first President of Czechoslovakia), women's associations, and institutions.[3] In this situation, where the advancement of women's rights was in the developmental stage, the process was influenced by the onset of state socialism in the country after the Second World War.

## The specifics of women's organising under the state socialist regime – the official sphere

Under state socialism, the 'equal rights of men and women' had to be achieved chiefly through women's economic independence (but without substantial criticism of traditional gender roles within the family). Women's (feminist) associations were referred to as a bourgeois relic [Uhrová 1994]. Soon after the war, the state prohibited the free association of citizens and replaced associations with state-sponsored, state-controlled mass organisations, whose activities and ideas were carefully examined in order to keep them in line with the communist regime. Many existing feminist associations were forced to integrate into one women's organisation – the Czechoslovak Women's Council (CWC). The women's movement thus became less dispersed and more easily controlled. Given the fact that the CWC endorsed ideas that were unacceptable after the communist takeover in February 1948, the communist Czechoslovak Women's Union (CSWU) was established and granted existence as the one and only women's organisation in the country.[4] However, even the

[2] Interview respondents are always quoted with the main topic the NGO focuses on specified, and also usually indicating the location of the NGO and the date it was established and the age of the respondents. However, owing to the fact that permission has not been obtained from all the respondents to quote them other than anonymously (permission was obtained only from some of them), reference to the relevant location, date and age is not always made.

[3] For example, the Women's Production Association (founded in 1871), the Minerva Association for Women's Studies (1890), the Committee for Women's Voting Rights (1905), the Women's National Council (1923) – an umbrella organisation, and others.

[4] According to Potůček (1997), the number of NGOs fell in 1948 from 60 000 to 683. These 683 NGOs were incorporated into the unified National Front. A further decrease occurred in 1970s in reaction to democratisation activities during the Prague Spring of 1968.

CSWU died out after a short period of activity, which was directed at reinforcing state ideology and obtaining women for work in agriculture and industry.

In 1967 the Czechoslovak Communist Party unexpectedly passed a resolution that assembled a constituent convention and revived the CSWU as the only mass women's organisation in the country. An organisation of this type existed in most of the countries of the former Eastern European block [Sloat 2004a: 18]. At the convention, the declaration was made that 'women make up a social group, at whose foundation is not only women's biological difference and maternal function, but also the reality that women's role as mothers has certain social and economic consequences for them' [Uhrová 1994].

In compliance with a federal order of the Republic, national organisations were formed under the CSWU – the Czech Women's Union (CWU) and the Slovak Women's Union (SVU) – and most often they organised cultural and social events, discussions, or ad hoc collective voluntary work at the regional level aimed at improving local facilities. The most active members of the organisation came from the countryside, where the opportunities of cultural and social life were limited in comparison to towns.[5] The bodies of the CSWU were occupied by female representatives of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and at the same time the CSWU made proposals for suitable women's candidates to fill what were puppet-like political bodies with quotas for women. The CSWU officially set the goal of strengthening equality in the creation, implementation and monitoring of government policies, and like the CWU and SWU it was officially allowed to participate in the 'external' observation of legislation relating to women and families. However, according to a statement made by a chairwoman of the CSWU at a convention on 16 June 1989 (several months before the change in political regime), considering the deadlines established for concluding the individual phases in the legislative process, in reality the conditions necessary to really utilise these powers were lacking [Kabrhelová 1989].

No government institutions specialising in the implementation of the equality of women and men existed under the state socialist regime in Czechoslovakia. The issues connected to the position of women in society (mainly in connection to motherhood) were to a certain extent discussed within other governmental bodies.[6] One of the respondents in the above-mentioned interviews, who in the 1980s had been

[5] The fact that a certain part of the activities of CWU came from the actual needs of women and the fact that CWU representatives had the social capital in terms of networking, organisational skills and property resources from the past, might be considered today to be the main reason that the CWU did not die out or lose its whole regional structure after 1989, which was the case of similar organisations in many other countries of the former Eastern European block.

[6] For example, the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Ministry Department for Care of Family and Youth, the government committee for preparation for marriage and parenthood or the government committee for population policies.

active in the Ministry Department for the Care of Family and Youth,[7] described the interaction and interconnection between the CWU and the state in the 1980s as follows:

> *The Czech Women's Union had committees, e.g. the committee for the family and the committee for women's' working conditions. Specifically, the female boss of the Department for the Care of Children and Youth at the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Vlasta Brabicová, was on this committee for family, and actually she very often sent me to the sessions of this committee and it was awkward for me to go to the committee of some sort of NGO* [CWU – author's note] *and not be a member, so I became one in 1986. I kept going to the committees as a member of the state administration and through this activity the state administration got information from the 'women's movement'* [interestingly, 'women's movement' meant CWU in this sentence – author's note].[8] *For example, what is necessary to do and what measures are necessary to take and also what the pains are....*

In this way, according to the interviewee, the activities of the CWU influenced some of the government's pronatal measures of the time:

> *During the time we created family policies* [at the ministry – author's note]. *I know that I went around the regions and around the country. In fact, I consulted on the material* [legislative measures – note of the author] *with these women. And these women had the possibility to say, you know, what they wanted. And I remember that some pronatal measures at that time were created thanks to the Czech Women's Union, and that women, you know, wanted to be freer, to have longer maternity leave, to create for themselves better conditions, that preschool facilities functioned somehow.*

Thus, according to the interviewee, the CWU had some impact on some range of policies, mainly connected to motherhood.

[7] Today, she is an older representative of a women's NGO long in existence with offices in several regions that focuses mainly on work-family issues.

[8] Note that in this quotation the respondent says 'NGO', but she means the CWU, even though it was more a semi-governmental than a non-governmental organisation; also, interestingly, the respondent's reference to the 'women's movement' is in reality again a reference to the CWU. The author here does not agree with the use of the terms 'NGO' and 'women's movement' to describe the character of the CWU before 1989. However, this usage shows the respondent's effort to show the connection between this part (CWU) of the semi-state organisation (CSWU) and real women living in the country. With the same intention, elsewhere in the interview, she also stresses the fact that the CWU (as opposed to the CSWU) criticised police intervention against people protesting against the regime on 11 November 1989, which ultimately led to the change of political regime in the country.

## The specific features of women's civic organising under the state socialist regime – the unofficial sphere

The formation of civic opposition to the state socialist regime and the state started in Czechoslovakia particularly in the late 1960s and in the 1970s. However, women's groups were not formed in the unofficial (underground) civic sphere. Women took part in underground democratisation activities of all kinds along with men, but the issue of human rights and freedoms generally were given primary importance, and women's rights and the equality of men and women were rarely discussed. For example, the issue of women's rights or the equality of men and women rarely came up in the documents drawn up by Charter 77 (*Charta 77*).[9] During its existence, Charter 77 produced over 500 documents addressing issues from a variety of civic-legal and human rights areas. The only issue addressed by Charter 77 explicitly in the context of women's rights was the issue of the sterilisation of Roma women without their informed consent, a practice aimed at reducing the number of children they had [Rakušanová 2003].

Even though some criticism was voiced, for example from Prečan et al. [1997], evaluating the gender relations in the Czech democratisation movement as patriarchal after 1989, our respondents (women active in the democratisation movement before 1989) said that they did not acknowledge gender inequality issues in the movement at that time, as their focus was on human rights and freedoms in general and in their former civic activities the other issues seemed less important.[10]

In sum, under the previous political regime, the second wave of feminism (as a social movement) was missed [Havelková 2002]. Even though some of its issues, such as the right to abortion, publicly available childcare facilities, and women's participation in the labour market, were raised at the state and semi-state levels, they were not raised at the grassroots civic level. Moreover, many other issues, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, etc., were not on the semi-state or state-controlled media agenda at all. Even though the government signed the international decrees of the International Labour Organisation and the United Nations on the issues of gender equality and discrimination and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs drew up periodic reports once every four years on how these issues were being solved there was no civil society group that was able to write and publish 'shadow reports' confronting the governmental ones (in contrast to the situation now).

Historical legacies and past experiences mean that the termination of earlier grassroots women's civic organising, and then the character and activities of the

[9] Charter 77 was the most visible part of the democracy movement in Czechoslovakia. It was a loose association of people, a democratic opposition described by its activists as a conglomerate of informal relations and social networks. From its founding, Charter 77 was persecuted by the regime and was disparaged in the press without familiarising the public with its manifesto, which had about 1900 signatories in total, of which 19% were women.

[10] However, one of our respondents became a well-known feminist after 1989. She stressed the influence of Western feminists after 1989 on her post-1989 activities.

state and the semi-state organisations that were assigned to deal with the equality of men and women during the state socialist regime in the country, are related to the character of women's civic organising focusing on women's rights and gender equality that emerged in the region after 1989.

## Women's civic organising during the first half of the 1990s

In the civically and politically mobilised atmosphere of 1989 and the early 1990s, many civic and political initiatives, groups and organisations were created in all the countries of the former Eastern European block.[11] Analyses of current women's organising in the region have already reflected on the fact that women became more active in civic associations rather than they did in formal politics or large movements after the change of the political regime [Gal and Kligman 2000a, 2000b; Kay 2000; Lang 1997].[12] About 70 women's civic groups existed in the CR already by the early 1990s. Like other countries in the region, women's civic groups were founded as interest or self-help groups; groups oriented around social problems, professional organisations, branches of international organisations, and women's groups connected to political parties, churches, social movements and the academic scene [Čermáková et al. 2000]. In some cases they were founded by women who had emigrated from the country during the communist regime and returned after 1989. Many of the groups were supported on the basis of individual friendships with foreign feminists. Some were established as a result of pressure exerted by non-Czech/international organisations on similarly oriented organisations in the CR (e.g. the pressure of foreign Catholic women's organisations on representatives of the Czech Catholic Church to establish its own women's group).

As in other countries, these groups have addressed a variety of issues, like the issues of women in the labour market and the public sphere, violence against women and trafficking in women, reproductive health and social services in child care, minority women's issues (e.g. Roma women and lesbian women), environmental and eco-feminist issues, and issues of increasing gender sensitivity, awareness and education among the public [Marksová-Tominová 1999; Sloat 2005]. Some have focused mainly on providing services to special groups of women (single mothers, victims of domestic violence, prostitutes, etc.) and thus substitute for the state where it has gaps in the provision of services. Others have focused especially on

[11] According to Potůček [1997], approximately 20 000 civic associations were registered in 1992 in Czech society. Four years later, the number had reached 37 000 organisations. After a legislative amendment introduced in 1997, the number fell to 55 foundations, 695 endowment funds, and 560 public benefit corporations [Potůček 1997].

[12] This was also evident in the huge decrease in the number of women representatives in the parliaments of all the CEECs after quotas for political participation were abolished and after the real decision-making power of parliaments increased (no longer being 'puppet' parliaments) in the region at the beginning of the 1990s [Sloat 2004a, 2004b].

raising awareness and promoting legislative changes in the area of gender equality and women's rights.

Representatives of women's civic groups have also varied in their ideological approaches and in the terms they use to characterise their activities: there are many representatives of civic groups included in the databases of Czech women's civic groups (created by Czech women's civic groups) that do not consider themselves to be feminists, some do not consider their goals to be political, and a small part of them have also denied that their organisations are women-centred. The fear of the feminist label has been connected to the reluctance on the part of society in general to support any kind of 'ism's' from the past [Einhorn 1996; Goldman 1996; Gal and Kligman 2000a], and to a further fear of being labelled a 'western-like', 'radical' 'man-hater' throughout the CEE region [Sloat 2005].[13] The fear of being labelled as politically oriented is linked to the notion of 'dirty corrupt party politics' that derives from the historical legacy of the entire region [Sloat 2005]. The fear of being labelled 'pro-woman' is mainly associated with a fear of being accused of discrimination again men and being unjust and with the notion that the position of women in society should be advanced by men and women together (neither by women's groups nor by means of positive discrimination, which were both discredited in the region's past experiences): For example:

> *Maybe somebody does label us as feminists, but we aren't! I think that feminism is definitely, definitely not the right term. Our activities have nothing to do with feminism. I'd say that we are an organisation that aims to help all of society, not just women. You see – we speak about the equality of men and women. Not just women come to our office, we also co-operate with organisations in which men also work, men and women together. So, not feminism, I would not like anybody to call me a feminist, definitely – I am not a feminist at all....*[14]

This representative then went on to say that they currently *'want to prepare young women for entering into politics'* but that their *'organisation is apolitical'*. This view is based on the fact that many representatives of Czech women's civic groups understand 'political orientation' in terms of party politics.

A representative of another NGO, however, argued the opposite:

> *Of course our activities are political. Yes. Well, we have one leaflet where it was written that we are apolitical, but that was a mistake, that was based on a former misunderstanding...* [Our

[13] The disassociation from 'Western-like feminist radicalism' exists as a widespread preconception in the region without anyone having the ability to name a concrete example of the radical groups from whom it is necessary to distance oneself.

[14] This statement was made by a more elderly representative of a regional office of one long-existing women's NGO with offices in several regions focusing mainly on work-family issues. Interestingly, the main representative of the entire NGO, a person of about the same age, argued that the NGO is politically and feminist oriented.

activities] *are feminist as well...we focus on women, our activities are for women and relate to women... the term* [feminism] *has a negative connotation in the population, it is an invective, it does not have clear definition'.*[15]

In the first half of the 1990s, formally registered women's NGOs and informal civic groups relied heavily on voluntary work and informal networks. With several exceptions of special groups connected to churches or political parties, and with the exception of the Czech Women's Union (with regional offices established during the previous political regime),women's civic groups were very small in size. They consisted of about ten or twenty people, with, for example, only two active members. Such a situation resulted in a number of the women's NGOs that had been founded in the first half of the 1990s breaking up after the departure of those few active leaders who could then not be replaced. Today, only one-third of the currently registered women's NGOs are organisations that were established in the first half of the 1990s.

Funding was derived from individual arrangements. Through personal contacts it was often acquired from private foundations, and bilateral development assistance could be obtained from different countries in 'Western' Europe, the US and Canada, and also from international organisations. Foreign and international funding bodies were the only significant funding bodies for Czech women's civic groups. Funding from these sources tended to be flexible in terms of how it was to be used. There was project funding, but also funding that could be used for the development of the organisation itself. There were also many cases of long-term all-inclusive funding from foreign or international 'parent organisations' for the development of local branches of those international or foreign organisations.

In the first half of the 1990s, however, women's civic groups still lacked experience, expertise, wider recognition, and contact with state bodies, politicians and other social actors. The latter did not recognise women's rights and gender equality as political issues, and the Czech media and society in general were not gender sensitive [Osvaldová 2004; Čermáková et al. 2000]. There was even a rise in gender-conservatism at the beginning of the 1990s in the CEE region [Hašková 2005]; this was also shown in studies reflecting on the empowerment of male economic actors as citizens under the newly applied paradigm of the neo-liberal market in the region, and on the negative effects on women in the region of the post-1989 withdrawal of social entitlements [e.g. Einhorn 2005].[16]

[15] This statement was made by a middle-aged representative of an eco-feminist NGO that was located in Prague and was founded in the second half of the 1990s, but whose office has now closed.

[16] This was also well documented in statements made in the media and on the political scene in many CEECs. In the CR, when the country began encountering its first problems with unemployment, many politicians discussed abolishing the 'mandatory work rule' and deploying the concept of freedom and freedom of choice in reference to the 'voluntary' and 'natural' re-

Since the beginning of the 1990s, women active in the newly created women's civic groups have distanced themselves from the Czech Women's Union and have been wary of Western feminists and feminisms too, while they have also varied among themselves in terms of their topics, ideologies and organisational structures. In the first half of the 1990s there was no common issue that united them (the way the topic of abortion works in Poland [Fuszara 2005]). Instead their activities came across as primarily fragmented and disjointed. Both longer-term and short-term coalitions and umbrella women's NGOs developed mainly around a thematic focus (e.g. violence on women; childcare), or around a religion[17] or a political orientation,[18] and also in relation to the foundation date, that is, either before or after 1989. Thus, for example, the CWU was in several cases explicitly excluded from the range of possible members in a coalition that was forming.[19] In the first half of the 1990s, Czech women's civic groups joined and developed supportive networks with foreign and international women's organisations rather than developing lobbyist networks with governmental and party structures within the country or creating permanent collective channels of criticism (e.g. shadow reports commenting on government adherence to binding anti-discrimination and equality documents targeting governmental structures and political parties within the country).[20]

However, this situation changed over time. An important event occurred in

turn of women to the household and family responsibilities. Similar statements from this period included, for example, a claim that women should leave the labour market during periods of growing unemployment in order to make space for men, arguing that men are the 'main breadwinners'. Employers justified paying women lower salaries by citing a 'man's obligation to feed his family' [Hašková 2005].

[17] Religious women's organisations do not build coalitions with non-religious women's NGOs. They create their own umbrella organisations, e.g. Clubs of Christian women.

[18] For example, an umbrella organisation of left-wing women's clubs was founded as early as 1992 and there are now more than 70 clubs registered under it. In 1993, the Democratic Alternative, an umbrella organisation, was founded in order 'to create a counterbalance to large left-wing Czech Women's Union, and in order to unify small organisations focusing on women's rights, during the period of legislative changes within after-1989 transformation ... Support to right-wing parties was declared in declaration, which was signed by organisations of the Democratic Alternative' [Marksová-Tominová 1999].

[19] For example, in 1998 the Association for Equal Opportunities was established as an umbrella association of several independent experts and more than twenty women's NGOs 'with different focuses but a similar date of foundation – after 1989', which was clearly stated in its definition. However, recently, owing to development in the NGO scene in the process of EU enlargement (this will be described further on in the article), this rather inactive umbrella organisation also tried to lobby together with Christian women's clubs and the CWU (who are not however a member) for specific issues at the government level.

[20] There was however one important exception. As early as in 1990, the Women's Council was established as an association of women's organisations and initiatives aimed at supporting full compliance with the 'Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women'. However, three years later, the Council dissolved without having achieved any significant successes.

the form of the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995. As a result of this conference, the 'Platform for Action' was created, and women's NGOs began to collectively monitor government conformity with the ideas contained in the document. The Czech government used the document when later preparing government documents on complying with the 'Priorities and Procedures of the Government for the Implementation of the Equality of Men and Women' (*Priorities...*), which have been adopted each year by the cabinet since 1998 as part of the preparation process for EU accession. The documents were evaluated by the European Commission. Later on, they were also critically evaluated by Czech feminist activists in the publication of another version of the report – 'a shadow report' issued in 2004 [see Pavlík 2004].

The situation of women's civic organising in the country in the first half of the 1990s was hugely affected by the change in the political regime, by some effects of the legacy of communism, and by the enormous role that foreign and international donors and feminist activists played in the development of women's civic groups in the region. But the situation described above differs from the current situation of women's civic organising in the region owing to another influential process – EU enlargement.

## Women's civic organising during the period of EU Eastern enlargement

EU accession negotiations started in the CR in 1998. EU accession negotiations had a profound impact on shaping the environment in which women's civic groups now operate in the CR and in other CEE countries. Under the pressure of the preparation for accession to the EU, government bodies were created to focus on the promotion of gender equality, and these bodies become new actors on the scene. In addition, EU equality directives were introduced into the national legislation. The EU moreover highlighted the importance of co-operation between governments and NGOs. All these processes and points were not just emphasised by the EU; government compliance with them was also reported on in annual government reports (*Priorities... in the CR*) submitted to the European Commission by all the EU candidate countries, which were then evaluated by the EU as conditions that candidate states were required to meet prior to accession. In effect, the governments of the EU candidate countries were forced to address in some form a number of the issues that women's civic groups in those countries had been raising since the early 1990s:

> *...the fact is that throughout the nineties there were very, I'd say, active women's organisations that talked about it, but society had absolutely no interest in listening, in accepting it, not at all, and things de facto began happening once talk began to turn to EU accession ... it changed in the moment when harmonisation for EU accession started.'*[21]

[21] Focus group 1 – an older representative of a large long-term women's NGO with offices in several regions that focuses mainly on work-family issues.

Many women's civic groups in the EU candidate countries expressed satisfaction with the legitimating power that EU attention brought to some of the issues they had been addressing:

> *Some journalists were already sensitive to gender issues, these journalists wanted to write about the issues, but their bosses stopped them at that time ... in the situation where talks about the European Union started, they began to be authorised to write about the issues. Everything has been perceived differently since that time. Then our articles and comments started to be published and quoted in newspapers. Certainly, without the pressure from the outside* [the EU – author's note], *who knows where we'd be.*[22]

Women's civic groups in the region have used the existence of EU directives on gender equality to bolster their claims, when lobbying the government for policy changes, that their goals are important, and have used the argument that if the EU supports it, the government should support it as well: *'...we're going to try that again ... we're going to lobby Parliament, because in our view the Czech Republic is sufficiently under European law in this area – so we have a chance.'*[23]

At that time, at the end of the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, university degree programmes in gender studies were also established at two major Czech universities after many years of lobbying and preparing for their establishment by women's NGOs and people working on gender issues in the academic sphere. Also, projects focusing on gender equality started to be carried out not only by women's NGOs in the country but also within some other organisations, owing to new funding opportunities offering huge amounts of money set aside for this topic and because of increasing gender sensitivity in the country.[24]

All these processes were positive for women and women's civic groups in the country and were brought by EU Eastern enlargement. However, some criticism has also pointed out that many of these processes are more a form of window-dressing, purely formal in character, and have not really been translated into concrete changes (e.g. True [2003]; Pavlík [2004] – both on the CR). Jezerska [2003] (quoted in Einhorn [2005]) pointed out that 'EU accession, while embodying hopes in relation to EU commitment to gender equality through gender mainstreaming, is in practice a process of economic alignment and integration. In this process, concerns not only for gender equality, but also for citizenship and social justice are margin-

[22] A representative of a well-established women's NGO devoted to promoting gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society, which was founded in the first half of the 1990s in Prague.

[23] Focus group 1 – a middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague that was established in the first half of the 1990s and focuses mainly on the issue of violence against women.

[24] See analyses of several longitudinal survey data on opinions on gender roles and gender inequalities in the CR in, for example, Hašková [2005]; Hašková, Křížková, Maříková and Radimská [2003].

alized'. Steinhilber [2002] (quoted in Einhorn [2005]) noted that in reality 'neither national governments in the region, nor the EU itself have treated gender as a measure of readiness for accession' because 'it seemed that compliance or noncompliance with the gender norms of EU legislation was likely neither to impede, nor to delay accession for the countries that joined' the EU in 2004.

Even though much of the above-mentioned can clearly be documented in the case of the CR, an environment was ultimately established to promote such changes as introducing and implementing EU equality directives, forming government gender equality bodies, and launching joint activities between the state and women's NGOs. However, the lack of general political will had a negative effect on the newly created environment to promote such changes. This led to gender equality legislation not being enforced, positive action measures and positive discrimination policies not being implemented, and the transformational potential of gender mainstreaming not being activated,[25] and to the state's window-dressing activities in the following areas: First, government gender equality bodies with limited responsibilities and frequently rotating, uneducated personnel emerged in patches and exhibited a minimum of activity (Linková [2003]; Pavlík [2004] presents, for example, remarkable information about the number of work meetings in these bodies and the absences of key representatives from these meetings). Second, the interactions between the state and NGOs have been abusive and infrequent and could be characterised as a window-dressing tactic.

The period of EU Eastern enlargement also brought about a sharp decrease in the 'development' funding of women's civic groups and increased their formalisation. Formalisation does not mean that women's civic groups became nothing more than empty shells competing for the financial support of quickly diminishing 'development' funding from foreign and international donors operating in the region during the 1990s and the increasing number of governmental project grants and newly available EU project grants. Formalisation means that many women's civic groups were professionalised, that is, they became formally registered entities with office space and staff with the expertise and skills that are required by the state or other donors, and they are supported and recognised by the state or other donors as experts on a particular issue. It also means that they became more project-oriented, in that their activities consist of conducting specific activities with clearly defined objectives, budgets and timelines that the donor sets, or are set in interaction between the donor and the NGO, a relationship that is, however, unequal. And it also means that they became more reform-oriented, in that they work to improve exist-

[25] The EU defines gender mainstreaming according to the definition of the Council of Europe: '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 at all stages, by all actors normally involved in policy-making' [Council of Europe 1998: 15]. However, given the guidelines on how to develop and implement this policy strategy, considerable ambiguity in this area remains [e.g. Einhorn 2005; Lorenz-Meyer 2003; Musilová 2000].

ing legal or institutional structures step-by-step, or to provide services that could be supported by the state and the EU, which are the main NGOs donors in the era of EU accession. These trends have led to profound changes in terms of the existence, focus, strategies, partnerships, style of work and organisation of the activities of women's civic groups. These processes have also led, on the one hand, to a strengthening of the impact that formalised women's NGOs have on legislative, institutional and societal changes in specific areas of interest, and on the other hand to the marginalisation of women's informal civic groups and women's NGOs that focus on other areas of interest. Paradoxically, the process of EU enlargement, at least currently, has also intensified the orientation of Czech women's NGOs towards Czech state bodies by introducing a new actor onto the scene – gender equality governmental bodies – while EU bodies (with the exception of EU donor agencies) are still perceived by Czech women's NGOs as too removed from them.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – the professionalisation process

Once governmental equality bodies had been established to co-operate with the non-governmental sector in implementing and enforcing gender equality in the country, many women's NGOs tried to use this situation to gain an influence on legislative and executive processes in the area of their interest. Even though many Czech women's NGOs welcomed the opportunity to interact with the government, many of them were then disappointed and felt they had been abused by governmental bodies, because in addition to their regular activities they were providing expertise to paid state officials without being paid or even acknowledged themselves for this service or for the time devoted to it:

> *The Government Priorities give the Ministry credit for it all. Also for the six round table discussions going on – the conception that we introduced, its realisation, on which we worked hard for half a year, and for free. They do not even mention the NGOs in the document ... But I still think this is a big accomplishment. That it's being talked about, something is happening, and something is finally likely to change in the legislation – which interests us most at the moment. So now the criminal act is being re-codified ... we have infiltrated those structures almost subversively because they accept us more if our input can somehow become 'their' idea.*[26]

However, some women's NGOs and feminist activists have not only succeeded in their efforts to be able to influence legislative and institutional changes in the country but also managed to become recognised as professional experts in a particular area of interest by Czech government equality bodies. They either became official members of the newly created governmental body (advisory only) – the Gov-

[26] A middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague that was established in the first half of the 1990s and focuses mainly on violence against women.

ernment Council for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women,[27] or gained unofficial status as professional experts, to whom, for example, legislative proposals are sent for comments and specifically targeted ministerial grants are given in order to solve specific pre-defined issues.[28]

For those NGOs and figures that became professionalised (i.e. also came to be recognised as experts), the possibility to influence government decisions in a step-by-step manner and to serve as government advisors and the providers of (financially supported) services has opened up. Even though unsuccessful women's NGOs cites their failures when trying to influence legislative and institutional processes and become recognised as experts by state officials owing to the very limited gender sensitivity of politicians and the people occupying the government equality bodies that the NGOs are trying to co-operate with, from an analysis of the successes and failures Czech women's NGOs have experienced in this process it is possible to conclude that alongside the above-cited weakness on the part of state officials and politicians there are also some general structural and cultural factors and factors on the side of women's NGOs that contribute to their success or failure.

Successful professionalisation, and thus the resulting ability to have an impact on decision-making processes, has also depended on: a) whether an organisation is formally established, with an office, a management structure, administrative equipment (such as computers, internet, telephone, fax, etc.), and regularly paid staff; b) an organisation having and activating social networks reaching politicians sensitive to gender issues (especially from a government party); c) the strategic use of certain terms and concepts; d) the ability to propose step-by-step reform-like legislative and institutional changes; and e) being involved in dealing with issues that were stressed by the EU in the EU enlargement process, in compliance with EU equality directives and recommendations. Having an office with equipment, an established management structure, and some regularly paid staff has become important for the ability of NGOs to directly influence legislative and institutional changes because of the long-lasting character of those processes:

> *Together with Social Democratic Women, we submitted a proposal ... we were successful ... but it took three years ... Thus, even though an NGO has a clear idea of what and how to change something, I would say that it would take about three years – at minimum – to do it ... we are*

[27] It consists of deputy ministers, representatives of women's NGOs and representatives of some other organisations (trade unions, employers and the Czech Statistical Office).

[28] In one case, a young representative of a well-established NGO (Gender Studies, o.p.s. – an unofficial platform for many women's civic groups in the country that was founded at the beginning of the 1990s in Prague in order to promote gender sensitivity and gender equality in the country), who has also been a member of the Social Democratic Party, became the co-ordinator of a newly created department focused on family policies and social work within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This department has opened up new opportunities for creating effective connections between the women's civic sphere and state institutions, which were lacking previously.

*lucky because we have some paid employees and an administrative apparatus, so that we can monitor things to some extent ... If we were on a voluntary basis only, we couldn't do it ... it is necessary to a have a person systematically monitoring the issue, browsing on the internet and downloading things related to the issue, and then working on the issue....*[29]

Another circumstance that helped a women's organisation to gain a greater influence on legislative and institutional changes and to gain recognition as a professional expert body was if it possessed and was able to activate social networks that interfered with politicians and how skilfully they were able to make use of certain key terms. The following quotation relates to the persistent negative perception of feminism and the pro-women orientation in the country, and it also points to the fact that pushing ministries into co-operation with local NGOs (the EU requirement) does not necessarily translate into the existence of co-operation between all ministries and women's NGOs. On the contrary, in the co-operation between the governmental and the non-governmental sectors there has been a tendency to deal with certain problems without including the gender dimension or women's NGOs into the process:

*We have mainly focused on domestic violence ... It took really so many years for us – small women's NGOs – to be included, and many would tell you this same story, among experts at least somehow interacting with the government ... Simply because we said we were feminists we were very heavily marginalised. So we then often presented ourselves to others differently ... often in an undetectable form* [i.e. in order to at least somehow have an impact on the legislation they underplay the feminist aspect of the issue, gender power relations, and emphasise just their interest in working on the issue as such – author's note] *... We always actively offer co-operation, our know-how ... however, the Ministry of Interior created its own NGO* [establishing its distance from women's NGOs – author's note]*; it has been financing it for several years. And women's NGOs ... the Ministry considered them to be garbage. And it did not want to co-operate with them ... We had to get through to Špidla* [they used their close friendship with a representative of another women's NGO who was a close party-colleague of Špidla, the former premier – author's note], *and then, the Ministry of Interior was forced to take us into account ... When it comes to legislative changes, we oppose their* ['their' refers to the other NGO – author's note] *proposals very often because we maintain a gender-sensitive approach to the issue, and their approach is not gender-sensitive, but we think that without a gender-sensitive approach it is impossible to find the right solutions for the issue.*[30]

For women's NGOs focusing on issues that have not been specifically highlighted by the EU in relation to the CR, such as eco-feminism or women's rights in

[29] Focus group 2 – an older representative of a large women's NGO long in existence with offices in several regions that focuses mainly on work-family issues.

[30] A middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague that was established in the first half of the 1990s and focuses mainly on the issue of violence against women.

relation to childbirth,[31] and for women's civic groups that are not aiming at step-by-step reform-like changes, the doors of communication between the state and NGOs, the doorway to influencing decision-making processes, and the doorway to obtaining recognition and financial support from the state as acknowledged experts, has remained closed. One example of this is an organisation that had to close its office for a lack of funding owing to its topic (eco-feminism) – *'It is in vain to try to explain the connection between a woman and nature ... I'm isolated'* – and because it was at conflict than in co-operation with the government and its focus was not directed at step-by-step reform of existing legal and institutional structures – *'Without radicals, nothing would progress in reality ... If an issue is not defined in terms of conflict, nobody pays real attention to the issue... I see this is the right way'.*[32]

Given the abusive and infrequent nature of the interaction between the state and women's NGOs, and owing to the lack of activity on the part of many of the newly established gender equality government bodies, women's NGOs and feminist activists in the country were prompted to write a 'shadow report' on the Government Priorities document with the hope of drawing the attention of the state, the EU and others to its points. However, as discussed elsewhere [Hašková et al. 2004], a number of interviews with European Commission officials have shown such activity is not necessarily welcomed by Commission officials:

> *We really want to respect the fact that there are issues that if you can't solve them at home, you can't then, say, take an exit strategy* [to the EU – author's note] *in order to solve problems that can't be solved at home.' '... any issue that is not fully allowed to be discussed at the national level cannot be discussed at the EU level. Without the national bodies enabling progress on the issue and without them having an interest in the issue's progress, we can't expect any progress at the multinational level.*

This and other expression of reluctance and a lack of concern on the part of the EU that some women's civic groups have experienced has been translated into a growing distrust of the positive impact of EU bodies on the promotion of women's rights and gender equality in the country, especially by those women's civic groups whose focuses have remained at the margins of EU interest: '

> *... at the end of the day there was not much change in fact ... if you read newspapers constantly, you can see that this has never been a topic that the state would argue about with the EU ... the negotiations were only formal ... they wrote* [the government in the Priorities... – author's note] *that they have disseminated information* [about different approaches to

[31] The maternal death rate in the Czech Republic is among the lowest in the world when measured with standard instruments, but Czech women still lack a number of rights relating to deciding about the place and the form of childbirth, despite considerable progress in this area in the second half of the 1990s thanks to the activities of NGOs.

[32] The NGO was established in Prague in the second half of the 1990s.

childbirth – author's note], *will disseminate information, but women know nothing about this.*'[33]

In sum the process of professionalisation brought about a positive change in that it has helped to strengthen the influence of successfully professionalised women's NGOs on the decision-making processes and has helped them with access to national machineries. Some NGOs took the opportunity given to them by the EU (enlargement) and argued that in the era of the CR's accession to the EU, '*NGOs played a significant role by refusing to make merely formal decisions and make just formal displays of activity. That's where I see them having played a big role.*'[34] Together with processes of reform and project orientations, which will be discussed below, the process of professionalisation led to the marginalising of those women's civic groups that were unable or unwilling to professionalise.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – a project-based orientation

During the EU accession process, the situation of funding for women's civic groups changed. Czech women's civic groups nowadays depend mainly on grant projects for funding, which is time-limited, directed at precisely defined activities, and limited by the topics specified in open calls for project funding. Long-term, flexible and all-inclusive financial support (that could be used not only for specifically defined (project) activities but also for the development of women's civic groups in the region as such) diminished rapidly in the region. As the deadline for accession to the EU neared, donors that had previously considered financial support to women's civic groups in the CR and other then-EU candidate countries, began to limit the kinds and amounts of funding available to them as they moved their attention away from the EU sphere of influence, usually further East.

Under the changing circumstances of funding opportunities for women's civic groups, the process whereby they became increasingly oriented towards project-based activity accelerated. This process was perceived as a challenge by women's NGOs in the region:

*It changed when we lost the continuous funding from the German foundation. Then we immediately had to begin to search and search for grants, which is an extremely difficult task. This is because when you have a clear vision and structure of what you want to do and you want to carry out a specific activity, it is almost impossible to survive, because grants are always configured a bit differently. The grant has its own character; there is always a definition that*

[33] A representative of an NGO established in Prague in the second half of the 1990s for the purpose of focusing on health-care issues and parenthood.

[34] A young representative of a women's NGO established in the middle of the 1990s focusing on prostitution.

*you have to fit into. This means that you are then required at that moment, even if you have a clear vision of a certain project, to make the project fit the needs of the funding institution. I consider this a serious problem and it will simply become a bigger problem in the future.*[35]

State institutions and the European Commission became the new and the most important funding bodies in the region during the EU accession period. They offer funding in the form of calls for projects. The state usually provides short-term smaller grants. Current EU funding differs from what was available before in that it involves much larger budgets. Thus, the availability of large EU funding in the region brought about positive change in the sense that it offered large amounts of money for projects focusing on gender equality, but these same funds also attracted NGOs other than women's organisation to apply for this funding even though some are lacking in any kind of gender expertise. EU funds require extensive partnerships with different social actors and new forms of expertise and resources. Project applicants must also be professionalised, that is, registered entities with office space, qualified staff, and the capacity to manage large projects – qualities that are required by donors:

*There's a lot of talk now about the so-called structural funds of the EU, and there I guess the basic problem will be that the structural funds will be somewhat out of reach for women's NGOs, because they just won't have the administrative capacity to be able to obtain that funding and then administer that funding.*[36]

There is also another problem associated with the EU structural funds that presents Czech women's NGOs with a difficulty in competing for them. Applicant organisations are required to have a considerable long-term financial resources on their account, a criterion only large and well-established organisations can fulfil, while the majority of women's civic groups are unable to do so, as the last-mentioned representative points out:

*What women's organisation can afford that? In each project ... you have to have the money, somehow, at the beginning of the project. And you have to pay for the project. And then, in the future, you get money for the project. That is one problem. ... and then you have to pay some percentage of the total project budget by yourself. That's another problem.*

In this situation the question could arise as to whether attracting non-women's NGOs to compete for structural funds combined with the fact that most women's

[35] A representative of a well-established women's NGO that focuses on raising gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society and that was founded in the first half of the 1990s in Prague.

[36] Focus group 2 – an older representative of a large women's NGO long in existence with offices in several regions that focuses mainly on work-family issues.

civic groups lack the requirements to be co-ordinators of huge EU funds would lead to the creation of large EU-funded projects, co-ordinated by big professionalised non-women's NGOs, which would then sub-contract tasks within the project to small women's NGOs. If this were the case, women's NGOs would not have the final word on the project designs, activities and dissemination. This would probably result in poorer-quality projects and a reduction of the feminist aspects within the projects. But thus far this has not occurred because there are at least two professionalised women's NGOs that also have the administrative capacity to manage such projects.

Once it became necessary to apply for huge EU partner-demanding project grants several seminars were organised for the second round of applications for structural funds. The seminars were organised by the larger women's NGOs and by non-women's NGOs in order to create working groups to determine the design of project proposals for possible grant applications for structural funds. However, several women's NGOs expressed the feeling that there was reluctance on the part of those seminar participants to speak owing to a fear that their ideas would be stolen by others if voiced. The issue of 'stolen ideas' appeared again in the region during period of NGO project orientation and professionalisation – first in connection with abusive government-NGO relations and second in connection with relations between NGOs. This situation can be attributed to the general under-recognition of women's NGOs and their work in the society, to exploitation of their work by the state, and mainly to the growing competitiveness among women's NGOs: *'Recently, the rivalry between NGOs has become strong in general.'*[37] Competitiveness has increased owing to the reduction of funding bodies for women's civic groups in the region and to the fact that other, non-women's NGOs have begun to deal with issues of gender equality, and also because women's civic groups now need to establish extensive partnerships with women's and other organisations they are unacquainted with and whose work in the area of gender equality and women's rights they are distrustful of owing to quality concerns.

In sum, in the period of EU Eastern enlargement, the EU and the state became the most important NGO donors in the CR, while foreign and international donors that acted in the country during the 1990s left the country as it moved into the EU sphere. This introduced an opportunity to gain large EU funding for gender equality projects, but also ushered in increased competitiveness between different actors dependent on the same donors along with new requirements that women's civic groups professionalise and create extensive partnerships with actors outside the sphere of women's civic groups, some of whom (with or without any gender expertise) began to successfully apply for funding for gender equality projects (with or without women's NGOs as project partners), which sometimes, but not always, produce poor-quality results and have no feminist orientation.

[37] A middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague that was established in the first half of the 1990s and that focuses mainly on the issue of violence against women.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – an orientation towards reform

The professionalisation and the project-based orientation of women's civic groups in the CR proceeded hand in hand with the process of orientation towards reform. An orientation towards reform means that the professionalised and project-based women's NGOs and feminist activists (that became informal government advisors, members of the government advisory bodies on gender equality, the 'tutors' of state officials in gender equality, or project co-ordinators and services providers acting with government or EU funds) work in an area designated by the state and the EU (the donors) and their activities are oriented towards achieving step-by-step reform to improve the existing legal and institutional structures. The relationship between the donors (who are also the decision-making institutions), that is, the EU and the state, and women's civic groups is not equal. The donors decide and select who their expert NGOs are to be and the range of NGO activities they support. Women's NGOs acknowledge the weakness of their position and describe their position as that of the *'third'* sector, sometimes even accused of being *'the parasite'* sector.[38] The following two features can be identified as part of the reform-orientation process that affected women's civic groups in the CR in the period of EU accession: 1) acting within an agenda set by the EU (and the state) in order to improve the existing legal and institutional structures; and 2) the marginalisation of those who decide to act differently.

It is clear, therefore, that the donors have the power to delineate the scope of topics, approaches, activities and strategies of those who are dependent on their funding because there are no longer any other important donors in the region (neither the donors of the 1990s, nor public support). But if the state and the EU have become the two most important donors, who is the most important actor in framing the scope of topics, approaches, activities and strategies of women's civic groups in the region? To answer this question it must first be noted that the gender equality agenda of the state was strongly influenced by the EU. However, the state also has a great deal of power over establishing the framework for the topics and activities women's civic groups address. For example, when it comes to the EU structural funds, Czech national agencies (which in an analysis by Marksová-Tominová [2003] were rated as gender-insensitive to gender-unfriendly) distribute the money from EU structural funds to applicants for funding and play an important role in the process of selecting candidates for funding:

> *I would say that we* [women's NGOs] *are attractive for the community funds. That has become clear recently because the focus is much more on equal opportunities than before at the European level. But we are not that attractive for the structural funds because within those funds EU money is distributed through governmental agencies.*[39]

[38] Focus group 1 – several women's NGOs. NGOs began to be designated as 'parasites' under the previous right-wing premier (now the president of the CR), also known for his euroscepticism.

[39] A young representative of women's programmes at a foundation established in Prague at the beginning of the 1990s that focuses on human rights.

In sum, the reform-orientation (together with project-based orientation and professionalisation) of women's civic groups has resulted in a situation where professionalised, project-oriented women's NGOs act to improve the established institutional and legal structures because the main important donors are now the EU and the state, but it also leads to the marginalisation of those women's civic groups that operate differently. Some specific examples will be presented below.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – closing offices and changing focuses and strategies

Since there is no tradition of public support for women's groups in the region in the form of participation or philanthropy, and the forms of funding are nowadays aimed at state and especially EU project calls, a particular kind of women's civic groups are being marginalised and are faced with concerns about their ability to survive. These are women's groups that focus on topics and strategies that lie outside mainstream topics and strategies or that are engaged in activities and services of a different scope and character than what is the mainstream scope and character of the grants available to day, which are now defined by the donors, that is, primarily the EU and the state. As a result, some women's civic groups, which were unwilling or unable to change their focus and strategies, have been shut out completely, while other NGOs have moved to become more involved in the issues, activities and strategies that are supported and more or less away from other issues.

An example of an NGO unwilling or unable to adjust is one eco-feminist NGO that focused on local or small-scale activities, consuming little money, which has now had to close its office owing to a lack of funding. Its former representative saw the difficulty of gaining funding for its activities in the 'new era of funding' as lying not only in their topic – eco-feminism – but also and especially in the scope and character of the activities supported: '*They* [the donors] *want a project for 90 000 CZK* [3 000 EURO], *they give it to some agency, the agency charges them 90 000 CZK and they are satisfied ... I can't accept that, I can't. I don't even know how to do those* [big projects]'.[40] The example of the second case indicated above could be illustrated by an NGO that focused on addressing issues relating to reproductive health while supported by a foreign 'parent' organisation covering all activities. After funding from the 'parent' NGO became unavailable, it changed its focus to equal opportunities in connection to work and family, in correspondence with the thematic focus of available grant resources:

> *I'd say that at the present time it's evolved in a somewhat different direction than where it was going originally. The initial area was ... reproductive health and caring for children. ... the focus and everything changed ... This was relatively difficult and painful ... we began a process of strategic planning ... with all these changes the organisation suddenly shifted in another di-*

[40] The NGO was established in Prague in the second half of the 1990s.

*rection. So now ... for the purpose of some grant applications we just re-formulated it differently ... we're going to go on to focus on these equal opportunities in connection with the family and the labour market, with regard to benefits, and the equality of men and women in the family.*[41]

The departure of foreign and international funding bodies that acted in the region during 1990s and the absence of public support for women's groups has therefore meant that women's civic groups outside the mainstream have had to decide whether to close their offices and maybe get hired by professionalised, project-oriented and reform-oriented NGOs to work on projects designed differently and with a focus on other issues (the case of the head of the eco-feminist NGO) or to change their strategies for attaining their goals, or even to change their goals as such (the case of the NGO that has changed its focus).

The case of the NGO's 'change in focus' is illustrative of the effects of the processes of increasing project-orientation, reform-orientation and professionalisation that were described above. This NGO did not just change the issues it focuses on in order to survive; the changes were much more profound: 1) its entire focus shifted (it broadened the range of topics to include ones that are more acceptable, more mainstream and for which funding exists); 2) its director was exchanged for a 'professional fundraiser'; 3) it now successfully applies for and carries out projects (it had carried out projects even when it had continuous funding though); 4) it has increased the number of its employees and contracted personnel; it has its own office, equipped with computers, telephone, etc.; 5) its long-term representatives do not want to give up their previous agenda but they have recently become reluctant to discuss it – *'until other* [more acceptable – author's note] *problems are solved'*; 6) it eliminated their previous protest and campaign-like activities (protest letters, protest demonstrations in hospitals); 7) within the framework of its previous programme it now concentrates on step-by-step institutional, legislative and societal (education-like) changes only (partly successfully); 8) it has focused on establishing contacts with state officials in its new and its previous areas of interest (still unsuccessfully); 9) it is striving to attain the status of informal government advisor and legislative discussant in the area of its new and its previous interests (still unsuccessfully).

In sum, under the processes of professionalisation, project-orientation and reform-orientation, the changes in the donor situation in the Czech Republic brought about the marginalisation of women's NGOs outside the mainstream in terms of topics, the scope of their activities, and strategies, leading either to the closure of those women's NGOs or to changes in their focus and strategies.

[41] The NGO was established in Prague in the second half of the 1990s.

**The EU Eastern enlargement period – changing partners**

The conditions attached to new funding bodies in the region have encouraged not only changes in the focus, scope of activities and strategies of women's NGOs in the region but also changes in their partnerships. The need to form extensive partnerships between disparate organisations and sectors was articulated in the region as one of the requirements for successfully applying for the new, large EU project funds. One such example is a grant from EU funds for a project on the issue of work/life balance. It is co-ordinated by the Czech Women's Union (CWU), a women's NGO that experienced strong opposition from Czech feminist groups during the entire 1990s. However, the structure of this grant is such that the co-ordinator must be a professionalised entity and is required to contract a large number of partner organisations. Thanks to the formalised structure of this co-ordinating NGO, which has a number of permanent employees, additional funding and property resources, and therefore also its potential to successfully apply for and manage such large projects, the CWU was able to contract out tasks to many partner organisations in the academic, state, trade union, business and NGO sectors. Among the partner NGOs contracted to work on specific tasks are even those who had been declaring a strong opposition to the CWU since the beginning of the 1990s, excluding it from other coalitions and umbrella organisations. The result is that women's NGOs in the region have begun to form partnerships with organisations in a variety of areas, focuses and approaches in ways they would never have done before.

This situation can be assessed from two perspectives: It is possible that this new funding situation in the region could serve to mandate co-operation across interests, with the goal of interconnecting different parts of the previously rather disjointed women's NGO scene and broadening responsibility for gender equality beyond just the domain of women's NGOs to society on the whole (employers, trade unions, media, etc). The danger remains, however, that these partnerships have been created as only strategic, temporary, project-based partnerships, that they are not based on any mutual understanding, and thus, as the CWU puts it, without a productively close connection between them:

> *It was OK when we had a project with three or four organisations ... it was not a problem to divide up our tasks because there was also a good personal relationship among us ... We knew who was good at what, who was an expert in which area ... We applied for ...* [name of the EU project – author's note\ *together with seven partners.... Our application was accepted but it was written there that we have to widen our group of partners ... thus, one partner made a huge campaign to find new partners and then I received an enormous number of offers from organisations that wanted to join the project... there were about sixty of them .... and then we chose thirty partners and with those thirty partners we started the project ... nobody will ever get me to establish such a huge partnership again ... some organisations were just dead-heads... It happened about two or rather three times that we had to change our partners....*

The experience of managing an EU-funded project shows that there are serious risks involved in organising large projects with a large number partners that do not

know each other, and especially with partners outside the sphere of women's NGOs. First, there is the problem of having no knowledge about the capacity and the style of work of the partners. Second, in addition to the need that there be a skilled manager to co-ordinate such a huge project, it is also necessary that there be a professionalised NGO to co-ordinate the project – the project co-ordinator must have in place a skilled and equipped, full-time, paid, management apparatus, and it must be an established organisation with large office space, a bank account, and sufficient financial resources to invest into the project in its early stages. This excludes many women's NGOs from becoming large EU project co-ordinators. They are therefore also excluded from being in a position to design the projects, recognised as their co-ordinators (and experts), and from having a final word in each step of a project's procedures, strategies and the dissemination of its outcome. Third, there is the problem of different approaches to and different levels of understanding about women's issues and basic gender concepts, the problem of using different 'languages' and different approaches, which are broadly appealing or at least acceptable to a greater number of women's and non-women's NGOs. Even though such differences can be mutually enriching for the individual partners, the one experience of such a project had also revealed the many negative effects of those differences.

In sum, huge projects requiring extensive partnerships across different sectors of the society can be confronted with the problems of mutual misunderstandings, unfulfilled expectations, negatively perceived hierarchies, the segmentation of project partners, and a deceleration of the pace of a project's progress. This leads to less satisfaction with the project's outcome and frustrations on the part of the partners involved. In long run, this could lead to lowered expectations about what is to come out of such projects. However, it could also cause organisations to know more about other organisations as partners and thus to better project partner choices in the future.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – informal women's groups

While the CR was preparing for EU accession the process of formalising women's NGOs accelerated and came to affect more or less all women's NGOs in the country. But the image of an across-the-board formalisation of women's NGOs in the region must be questioned, because also during the pre-accession period a small, but nonetheless significant, number of small, unregistered, office-less, employees-less, voluntary-based, occasionally active, creative, radical (not reformist) groups oriented towards campaign and protest activities (not project-oriented), operating on small budgets (with resources based mainly on friendships but also obtained from the public through their public activities), and usually staffed with young women, appeared on the women's civic scene (or increased their visibility) in the region. It could be argued that these groups are still in the first stage of development (some women's NGOs that have recently become formalised started out like that) and that they will start to formalise later on. However, there is one important difference between them and similar women's civic groups that started out in the first half of the 1990s: they explicitly reject the formalisation trend, and as its few opponents bear some signs of

a new social movement. Even though they explicitly criticise formalised women's NGOs for being 'over-formalised', dependent on 'window-dresser', 'abusive' government actors and collaborating with them, and for being more and more distant from the rest of the population by working in their offices on projects targeting issues and activities decided on by the donors, instead of engaging in and supporting grassroots feminist activism, they also have many friends among women's NGOs, who allow them to use their office spaces, printers, and infrastructure for disseminating the materials of informal women's groups. A clear example of this kind of an informal women's group in the CR is a group of anarcha-feminists active on an ad hoc basis; but there are also other examples of women's groups that have appeared when protest activities were being organised, and then disappeared again (e.g. an informal group of women focusing on reproductive health).

In sum, the emergence and existence of informal campaign and protest-oriented women's civic groups operating on an occasional or ad hoc basis and with very small budgets, and supported through solidarity and friendships with established women's NGOs and other sympathetic civil society actors (e.g. anarchists in the case of anarchafeminists) in the region contrasts with the predominant image described above of the processes of formalisation. However, with the formalisation of civil society groups and no tradition of public support for them (in the form of participation as well as financial support) leaves them at the margins of the discussion and activities on women's rights and gender equality in the region.

## The EU Eastern enlargement period – the limits in scope

The EU was the main force behind extending the range of national actors involved in promoting gender equality in the region. Foreign and supranational bodies also supported women's civic groups in the region before the era of EU Eastern enlargement. As early as 1991, women's NGOs in the CR and in other countries of the former Eastern block joined the Network of East-West Women, which supported women's organisations in post-communist countries. They also established the Karat Coalition – a network of women's organisations from CEE countries, which acts as a joint lobbying platform at the international level and from the specific perspective of women in the CEE region, a region that has much in common owing to its similar 20th-century history. Somewhat later in the process of EU Eastern enlargement, another important supranational body – the European Women's Lobby (EWL) – became a new, powerful actor on the scene, because with the accession to the EU, women's NGOs from the new member states obtained the right to become a member.

Czech women's NGOs believe in the capacity of the EWL to effectuate change at the EU level: *'The only way in which to influence European legislation is through the European Woman's Lobby'.*[42] *'During the preparations for Beijing +10, they were able to*

[42] Focus group 2 – an older representative of a large women's NGO long in existence with offices in several regions, focused mainly on work-family issues.

*make the EU take all the comments and include them in the document. Thus, they have real power.'*[43] However, Czech women's NGOs also seem united in their opinion that there are also bad sides to the powerful position that the EWL occupies. They point especially to the fact that the EWL's *'position is exclusive and monopolistic'*.[44] Not all of them feel that their interests are represented by the EWL and they do not believe that they will be represented in the future even though the EWL uses the mechanism of a rotating presidency:

> *Those feminist organisations that have a different approach to prostitution ... they can't co-operate with the EWL and they don't co-operate with it ... there should be more opportunities, more lobbying groups to represent the diversity that exists in reality...'*[45] *'We can discuss the effectiveness of this approach in which one organisation represents everybody, even though it is clear that there are different opinions. It is very easy and comfortable for the EU that they have the only partner for discussions ... This power position is not good.'*[46]

There is another reason why Czech NGOs remain sceptical of the EWL, and it derives from their own experience with the EWL. Even though a sense of scepticism prevails, some Czech NGOs became EWL members for the following reasons:

> *We also signed up for it* [membership in the EWL] *... we are a bit sceptical about the organisation, but we want to be members from the practical point of view. It is better to be in than to be out ... one year ago the situation was such that they* [the EWL] *would admit some organisations we'd almost never heard of before, even though we have been working in the field for ten years. They didn't care; they would take any women ... and this was a big impulse for us to get together and get to the EWL in order to ensure that in the Czech representation of the EWL there would at least be organisations that have been active on these issues for several years ... we didn't want to let happen something that happened in some other countries – that some marginal organisations represent those countries.*[47]

This sense of alienation from the EWL may have been reinforced by the fact that it was recognised as a new actor among Czech women's civic groups late in the process of EU Eastern enlargement. In this regard, Czech women's NGOs refer to another supranational organisation that they had joined several years earlier and

[43] Focus group 2 – a middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague, established in the first half of the 1990s and focused mainly on violence against women.
[44] A representative of a well-established women's NGO focused on raising gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society that was founded in the first half of the 1990s in Prague.
[45] Focus group 2 – a middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague, established in the first half of the 1990s and focused mainly on violence against women.
[46] Focus group 2 – a middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague, established in the first half of the 1990s and focused mainly on violence against women.
[47] A representative of a well-established women's NGO focusing on raising gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society that was founded in the first half of the 1990s in Prague.

which was already representing them at the supranational level – the Karat Coalition: *'I think that if Karat had a chance to be in a similar position as the EWL...it would be positive'*.[48] But representatives believe that there is no way of making the 'semi-peripheral', 'Central and Eastern European' Karat Coalition as strong as the 'central', 'core', 'European' EWL.[49] Czech women's NGOs perceive this situation as a game of power, and they appear to identify more with Karat than the EWL:

> *We co-operated on establishing a network of women's organisations from Central and Eastern Europe, Karat. We got to know each other quite well during the years of co-operation, and so now we know each other and it is not like a situation in which you don't know your partner organisations. But there is a problem in that there has to be a person who distributes information and collects information... in order for the organisation to be able to continue. But try to find a grant for that* [not a project grant but a grant to support the continuation of the lobbying organisation – author's note] ... *We* [Karat Coalition] *have a terrible problem with funding and this leads to a weakening of activities. We wanted to represent the region on different levels – the UN, Europe ... in order to not be eaten by Western Europe ... we have supranational experience, we have contacts and I personally, with my experience, prefer intensive co-operation with organisations from post-socialist countries, because co-operation and mutual understanding is better. But there is a problem – the European women's lobby is an entrenched Western European organisation that is connected to a good source of money* [as an 'expert body' of the EU – author's note] *and they have the money and we have shit all ... again.*[50]

Even though Czech women's NGOs have the experience of lobbying at the supranational level through Karat Coalition, the EWL still seems too far removed from them. They evaluate it positively because of its powerful impact at the supranational level, but it is still too removed in terms of its impact and its concern for the situation in the country.

When it comes to lobbying, networking and influencing policies and legislation, for Czech women's NGOs, it seems more meaningful to concentrate on the national level even though the national level still lacks the political will and understanding to recognise their claims. But at the national level Czech women's NGOs have found their first governmental partners and started to establish lobbying channels, and the national level seems to be closer to them and seems to have a more direct impact on Czech women's lives:

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[48] Focus group 2 – a middle-aged representative of a women's NGO located in Prague, established in the first half of the 1990s and focused mainly on violence against women.

[49] See Blagojevic [2004] on relations between the 'core' or 'centre' and the semi-periphery.

[50] A representative of a well-established women's NGO focusing on raising gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society that was founded in the first half of the 1990s in Prague.

*... it is more useful to focus on the Czech Republic than expend our efforts on a big lobby for some directives in Brussels... Now, if I had someone and had to decide whether s/he would lobby here or in Brussels, then I would definitely decide that s/he lobby here – inside the country.'*[51]

Czech women's NGOs acknowledge the fact, studied and recognised by many scholars [e.g. Regulska 2002, Frazer 1997, True 2003], that transnational bodies are having an increasing impact on citizenship rights (such as gender equality) in individual nation states in the era of globalisation (and, in relation to recent development in the CEE region, the era of EU enlargement). The fact that women in CEE countries have not yet been recognized as fully participating political actors in these countries led Regulska ([2002] cited in Einhorn [2005]) to ask: 'Will the fact that women have not found significant opportunities in formal, domestic political structures make them more likely to search for alternative ways to act politically beyond the nation-state?' The obstacles that Czech women activists seem to encounter at the national level due to lack of will on the part of Czech politicians and representatives of governmental bodies do not lead them to focus more on lobbying at the supranational level – at least recently and at least at the EU level. This is because of some of the obstacles they have encountered at the EU level and primarily because, for them, the nation state and its bodies still play a crucial role in enforcing gender equality and women's rights in the country. Even though the impact of the EU on the Czech government in the area of implementing gender equality in the country has been huge, it is still the state and its bodies who make the decisions about how to implement and enforce EU equality directives and recommendations, about the specific competences of government equality bodies, and about the level of the enforcement of the gender quality agenda across local-region governmental institutions, etc. (Recently the Czech government rejected the advice of the Czech Government Council on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women – an advisory body that women's NGOs belong to – that it bit to have the European Institute for the Equality of Men and Women based in the Czech Republic). Einhorn [2005] has pointed out that, at least recently, in the short to medium term, the effects of lobbying supranational bodies like the EU or the UN must be seen as complementing rather than supplanting the nation state's role in civic issues such as gender equality and women's issues.

## Conclusion

It can be concluded that there were three major social processes that all had a profound impact on Czech women's civic organisation for the promotion of gender equality and women's rights today. The first major factor was the historical legacy of

[51] A representative of a well-established women's NGO focused on raising gender sensitivity and awareness in Czech society that was founded in the first half of 1990s in Prague.

the state socialist regime. The state socialist regime promoted women's labour market participation without challenging traditional gender roles (leading to women's so-called double burden), set up quotas for women's political participation without recognising them as fully participating political actors, promoted one women's semi-state organisation as the only form of women's organisation, but which women in the region remained unable to relate to, and destroyed civil society and feminist activism in the country. This led to reluctance on the part of society in general to support any kind of 'ism's' from the past or to support any kind of quotas, which were historically discredited, or positive discrimination measures, while also destroying an existing tradition of support for women's civic groups. This same legacy made it easy to gain relative general acceptance of proposals made by women's NGOs oriented towards work-family issues but difficult to gain general acceptance for 'unknown' (and ultimately ridiculed) topics in the country, such as sexual harassment or domestic violence, in the first half of the 1990s. It also meant that in the first half of the 1990s women's civic groups were reluctant to be labelled as 'politically oriented', and women's civic groups could be distinguished by the date of their foundation (before and after 1989). Last but not least, it also meant that in the first half of the 1990s women's civic groups exhibited a lack of knowledge and experience; feminist activists generally lacked expertise in the field of gender equality and women's rights issues, and they did not know how to lobby or proceed to achieve institutional, legislative and social changes, or how to attract the interest of the media and the general population.

The second major factor was the political and socio-economic transformation that occurred after 1989. It was focused mainly on economic aspects and left citizenship rights (such as gender equality) at the margins of political and media interest, and during this transformation there was a huge decline in women's participation in formal politics as quotas were abolished and women's activity instead came be concentrated in civil society groups. In this period many foreign (Western) and international organisations were interested in the development of civil society in the region and gave their support primarily to NGOs, sometimes in the form of long-term financial support for their development, and sometimes as funding for specific projects on topics, approaches, and strategies of change defined by the donors. For women's civic groups this was the only source of funding, but it was a productive source that led to their development in terms of knowledge and organisation. The state was not interested in these groups (unless they provided services), and there was no public support for them. Traditional attitudes to gender roles strengthened and a negative view of the equality agenda and equality bodies predominated, seen as phenomena typical for the previous regime, and this played a role in things during the first half of the 1990s, when the debate moreover focused more on values like free competition and the public and politicians directed their attention to the country's economic problems, rather than taking an interest in equality for men and women; this came later, with the negotiations on the country's accession to the EU.

The third major impulse was the EU accession period itself, which forced the governments of CEE countries to establish national equality bodies, to accept and implement gender mainstreaming as one of their policy tools, and to start co-operating and communicating with NGOs in the region. This brought about positive changes for women's civic groups in the region, in that some of their claims were heard and some of the channels for making an impact on the decision-making process were slightly opened, even though many of the processes introduced at the decision-making level (pushed by the EU) were more a form of window-dressing and had little impact on the real promotion of gender equality in the country. The slight opening up of decision-making channels to include women's NGOs, along with the changes affecting how women's NGOs are funded (the state and the EU became the most important donors, financing women's NGOs in the form of project grants as foreign and international agencies active in the region throughout the 1990s withdrew) intensified the process of formalisation of women's civic groups in the region, a process that involved their professionalisation and their shift to being project-oriented and reform-oriented. Their professionalisation has led women's civic groups to become formally registered entities, with the office space and qualified staff that donors – the EU and the state – require they have, and as such they allow themselves to be supported and recognised by the donors as experts on a particular issue. Project-orientation means that women's NGOs are engaged in conducting specific activities with clearly defined objectives, budgets and timelines, which are established in the unequal relationship between the donors and NGOs. Reform-orientation means that women's NGOs work to improve existing legal or institutional structures step by step, or provide services that the donors might support. All this brought about profound changes in the existence, focuses, activities, strategies and partnerships of women's civic organisations, which had the power to somewhat dilute the impact of the historical legacy in the region. It broadened the spectrum of actors focusing on gender equality in the region. It also intensified the impact of formalised women's NGOs on legislative and institutional changes on one hand, while it marginalised those women's civic groups whose focus lay outside the mainstream issues, activities and strategies (defined by the EU and the state, influenced by the EU), a problem compounded by the lack of public support for women's civic groups (despite a increase in public interest). Paradoxically, the process of EU enlargement, at least at present, has also led Czech women's NGOs to be oriented more towards national decision-making bodies than EU bodies (with the exception of EU donor agencies), to which some of them even belong. This reflects the fact that even though the EU has been a powerful actor, influencing almost every aspect of women's civic organisation in the country, the nation state remains the most important agent for enforcing gender equality and women's rights in the country.

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# The Impact of EU Enlargement on the Civic Participation of Women in Central and Eastern Europe – The Perspective of the Karat Coalition

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## Introduction

The EU accession process was the dominant political context in eight Central and Eastern European countries in the years prior to May 2004, when they became EU members, as it continues to be in the current candidate countries (Bulgaria, Romania) and in countries planning to apply for membership in the near future. This process has had an impact on women's civic participation and has positively reinforced the role of women's NGOs and the position and structure of the institutional mechanisms aimed at gender equality. It has also increased the level of gender awareness. However, its (positive) impact on the current real situation of women has been less evident.

Europe has been in a state of constant change since 1989. But while Europe is overcoming its former division, new borders are being established in the East and South-East of Europe. The new political situation in Europe is reflected in new terminology. The countries or group of countries are defined by their accession status (or lack of it) in relation to the European Union. The former division between the EU and CEE/CIS was replaced by a new one on 1 May 2004: a division between the old and new EU member states on the one hand, and those outside the European Union on the other. The new political division is also perceived as the inclusion of some states and the exclusion of those who have no chance of joining the EU in the near future. As a consequence, co-operation between former partners in the third sector – women's NGOs – is now seriously threatened by the new EU border. This is quite alarming, as collaboration, the sharing of experience, and the joint action of women's activists in the CEE/CIS regions in the past has significantly contributed to strengthening gender-equality advocacy in countries in these regions and to a certain extent has prevented the growth of a gap between EU countries and Eastern European countries outside the EU in terms of their observance of gender equality standards.

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## Civic dialogue: the impact of EU standards and requirements on women's civic participation at the national level[1]

Women's activists from both the accession and candidate countries have perceived the EU accession process as a great opportunity to more effectively advocate for the improvement of the situation of women, especially in the labour market. The EU's gender equality legislation, policy and programmes, and the mechanisms for their implementation, while not perfect, provide the tools to influence governmental policy in the direction of ensuring gender equality. Feminist activists are aware that merely joining the EU will not automatically lead to the improvement of the situation of women, and that EU membership is not a panacea. Instead they simply perceive it as a significant opportunity to adapt various mechanisms of democracy.

EU membership has been a priority for the accession governments, and this has had positive consequences for women. The governments have begun to observe the directives, standards, opinions and recommendations of the EU regarding the equal status of women and men. An increasing number of politicians (even if they are not enthusiastic about the implementation of the gender equal opportunities policies and laws) have been influenced by EU standards and at least try to behave in a politically correct manner. In addition, the government has started paying attention to the demands of women's organisations.

In this context civic dialogue was an important EU requirement, as it led to a change in the attitudes of governments towards NGOs. Despite the fact that civil society played a leading role in the development of the post-1989 democratic system, the role of NGOs in the social and political life of post-communist countries has not been well defined. The EU requirement of civic dialogue also gave NGOs legitimacy in the eyes of the governments, which until now had been very slow in recognising the social significance of NGOs.

Government recognition of the role of NGOs in civil society, forming advisory bodies made up of NGO representatives and inviting them for consultation on government documents and strategies, illustrates how EU recommendations have been translated into national mechanisms. Unfortunately, in some cases, despite the government's good will, their lack of experience in discussing and negotiating with NGOs and accepting their amendments at such a level means that NGO expertise (which often exceeds that of public officials) has not been fully utilised. Furthermore, consultations have sometimes been treated as an obligation and formality enforced from the 'top' (i.e. the European Union). Nonetheless, this initiative has to be seen as very positive, especially given that it is only the start of a process.

[1] This section is based on 'Gender Assessment of the Impact of EU Accession on the Status of Women in the Labour Market in the CEE. National Study: Poland', by K. Lohmann and A. Seibert (eds.), KARAT Coalition 2003.

## An example from Poland

*The political situation and women's NGOs*

The role of women's NGOs has been similarly unclear as that of other NGOs. The women's movement developed significantly after 1989 and it continues to grow, and from the beginning of the democratic transition women joined in the civic dialogue. Currently there are more than 300 women's organisations in Poland. The degree of civic participation of women, the dialogue and co-operation between women's organisations and government, have depended largely on which government was in power. The right-wing government in 1997–2001 promoted a patriarchal model of the family, and during this time women's NGOs were the only bodies promoting women's rights and actively fighting the discrimination of women, in reference to international agreements ratified by the government. Women's NGOs were critical of government policy, which ignored the need for strategies aimed at ensuring the equal status of women and men. This resulted in the consolidation and strengthening of women's NGOs, and their consolidation led to the extremely successful involvement of women's NGOs in the 2001 election campaign and to a significant increase in the number of women in Parliament (20% in the lower house and 23% in the upper house, up from 13% and 12% respectively). This not only demonstrated the strength of the women's movement but also showed politicians that they must be accountable to women. The increased role of women's activists in political life (related partly to EU accession) was visible in 2001, when using arguments related to gender equality standards and the EU gender equality directive for establishing gender equality machinery they pressured the government, which led to the creation of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Women and Men (2002).

*Consultation on policy documents*

In the dialogue with civil society, women's NGOs together with representatives for different industries and ministries, and experts and academics and others were all invited to take part in consultative working groups focusing on documents and strategies developed by the government. The Ministry of the Economy and Employment consulted in this manner on the development of new employment and social policy strategy and documents, which respond to the European Employment Strategy and the equal opportunity pillar, including gender equality.

*Co-operation with women's national machinery and other ministries*

In Poland a good example of co-operation between women's NGOs and the Polish government is their co-operation with the Office of the Plenipotentiary for the Equal Status of Women and Men. This co-operation is executed in part through the Advi-

sory Board to the Plenipotentiary, where the expertise of women's NGOs has very often been used. In addition, the Office of the Plenipotentiary, as a member of working groups in other ministries, appoints representatives of women's NGOs to join these groups. In other new member states and in the western Balkans similar co-operation has also been taking place, and very often women's NGOs and national machinery jointly implement EU-funded projects.

## CEE women's civic participation at the EU level

The work of women's NGOs and networks in the region is also linked to the wider work of civil society at the EU level. Women's organisations actively participate in the discussion about the impact of EU accession on women and to a certain extent about the future of Europe (Karat Coalition's Contribution to the Forum of the Convention for the future of Europe, 2002). As far as co-operation with women's organisations from the EU is concerned, it changed as the date of the accession for eight CEE countries approached. Invitations to join the debates and conferences organised by EU women's NGOs focusing on the impact on women of the enlargement process was already visible during the Swedish presidency (the first half of 2001), and it increased further during the Danish presidency (the second half of 2002). There was a notable increase in interest in women from 'exotic Eastern Europe', but also a willingness to understand the perspective of the women who would soon become EU citizens. Co-operation was developing despite difficulties associated with the ability of those involved to understand one another, not so much in terms of language but rather in terms of the very different experiences of EU and CEE women. Unfortunately, despite several examples of very good co-operation between CEE and EU women, the co-operation started quite late and did not significantly contribute to the capacity of CEE women's NGOs to participate in civic dialogue, advocacy and lobbying at the EU level before the accession.

### *CEE women's civic participation at the EU level after accession*

CEE (the new member states) women's civic participation at the EU level considerably increased after accession. This is mainly thanks to numerous initiatives from EU advocacy networks based in Brussels, which require legitimacy to lobby at the EU level of behalf of NGOs from 25 countries and to strengthen lobbying activities at the national level in the new member states.

## The new political situation in Europe after May 2004 and its implications for the civic participation of women

Although the process of enlargement has positively reinforced the role of women's NGOs and their civic participation in the new member states, in the accession/candidate countries, and slightly also in some neighbouring countries, it also caused new and largely artificial political dividing lines to develop across the continent between the new member states and their non-member neighbours with or without membership perspectives. This will increase the gap between the situation of women in the region and their civic participation at national and EU levels. The European Union, instead of creating new borders, should ensure its relations to Eastern and Southern Europe and CIS countries are inclusive in nature. This needs to be reflected in all its policies towards the region.

A new division between Eastern and South-Eastern Europe is foreseen in the new Financial Instruments[2] that are being developed and discussed in Brussels now. These Instruments divide the region into the candidate countries of the Western Balkans and Turkey (Croatia and Turkey), potential candidates (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia), and neighbouring countries (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan). A response to this newly foreseen division was the recent participation of major gender equality networks and organisations from Central and Eastern Europe and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States in June 2005 in Brussels to deliberate over current changes in EU policy towards their countries.[3] In Brussels this delegation, which was supported by UNIFEM, met with Members of the European Parliament and EC Officials to convey several concerns relating to the new Financial Instruments. They called for the new EU Financial Instruments to be amended to integrate gender perspectives, as the EU commitment to the promotion of gender equality is not reflected at all or only very weakly reflected. The new instruments fail to draw on the lessons learned by the new member states under the 'old' instruments, and particularly, the considerable challenges encountered by NGOs in gaining access to EU funds. Cross-country or sub-regional co-operation to advance gender equality is at risk of being hindered by applying different instruments with varying rules and different procedures to different categories of countries.

[2] The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), and the Stability Instrument (IS). These instruments will be the framework for EU support to most countries in Southern and Eastern Europe and the European part of the former Soviet Union from 2007 until 2013.

[3] Press release, 'New Financial Instruments Are Gender-Blind' Key Representatives of Women's Networks and Organizations from Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States Call for the New EU Financial Instruments to be Amended to Integrate Gender Perspectives, Brussels, June 2005.

## Conclusion

The work of women's NGOs in the region is directly linked to wider work on civil society and democratisation; women's groups and networks strengthen and increase the capacity for democratisation as they address its capacity for gender equality. EU enlargement created a great opportunity for women's civic participation from the old and new member states and for women from all of Europe. Karat Coalition believes that political action towards gender equality could be strengthened by developing a common agenda for and by women from the whole of Europe, and CEE women from the new member states should play a bridging role to prevent the emergence of a new European East-West divide.[4]

### *About the Karat Coalition*

*At the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 the idea was born to establish a coalition of women's NGOs from Central and Eastern Europe. This idea was realised in the Karat Coalition, which was formally established in February 1997 and in 2001 was registered as an international organisation. As a regional coalition of organisations and individuals Karat promotes gender equality in the CEE and CIS regions, monitors the observance of international agreements and documents, and lobbies on behalf of women's interests at all decision-making levels. Karat has members in 22 countries in CEE and CIS.*

*Since the beginning of its existence Karat has been a successful advocate for the improvement of the situation of women from the CEE/CIS region at all levels: national, regional or international (mainly UN and EU). Particularly important is the involvement of Karat in the Beijing Process. Karat members actively participated in B+5 and B+10 reviews. They presented the shared perspective of women from the CEE/CIS region and advocate for their rights when participating in CSW meetings, and they have also prepared alternative reports for several countries in the region (2000) and information sheets on the progress of the implementation of Beijing documents in various countries of the region (2005). Apart from involvement at the UN level, Karat engages in advocacy and lobbying activities at the EU level. Since 2002 it has been actively involved in the EU integration process. Its involvement is diverse consideration that Karat's members are new member states, accession countries and the neighbouring countries of the EU. Karat presents the perspective of the whole region by taking part in various EU advocacy and lobbying actions. It moreover also focuses on building up the capacity of its member organisations in the areas of advocacy and lobbying.*

*Karat has acquired extensive experience and become a recognised expert in combining economic issues with women's rights in the context of CEE/CIS region. Its main recent*

[4] 'Gender Equality. Social and Economic Justice'. Position paper to the 49th UN CSW, New York, 28 February – 11 March, 2005, by the Karat Coalition and Stability Pact Gender Task Force.

*projects focused on these issues. Karat has also issued publications on the economic situation of women from the region, the impact of the EU accession process, the monitoring of women's workers rights, etc. All publications are available on Karat's website: http://www.karat.org/publications/publications.html*
*In 2001 Karat launched its Economic Literacy Programme. As an expert in the economic and social situation of women in CEE/CIS region, Karat is often invited to provide its expertise in this field, to conduct training or to provide speakers at various events. For more information go to: http://www.karat.org*

KINGA LOHMANN *initiated and co-founded the Karat Coalition in 1997 and after working as its regional co-ordinator she was appointed executive director in 2002. She participated in the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995, when the idea of initiating co-operation between women from CEE/CIS was born. She is an activist involved in formulating the special CEE/CIS vision on women's equal status and representing this viewpoint at UN and EU fora. She is the author and co-editor of several reports monitoring the implementation of international commitments by governments to promote gender equality and a member of the Advisory Board for the Polish Minister for Gender Equality (2002–2005), the External Gender Consultative Group for the World Bank in Washington (since 2004). She is an historian by training.*

**Nancy Fraser: *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflexions on the 'Postsocialist' Condition***
New York and London 1997: Routledge, 241 pp.

There is recent evidence of the growing influence of the critical theorist Nancy Fraser, professor of social and political theory at the New School of Social Research in New York. In *Justice Interruptus* she sets out to address the dilemmas of justice in the 'post-socialist' age after 1989 by pointing out the need for an integrative approach capable of incorporating the distributive paradigm, represented by the traditional conception of social equality, and the recognition paradigm, represented by the multicultural politics of difference. Fraser defines the 'post-socialist' condition in order to specify the framework of contemporary political theorising. She distinguishes three constitutive features of 'post-socialist' conditions: 'an absence of any credible overarching emancipatory project despite the proliferation of fronts of struggle; a general decoupling of the cultural politics of recognition from the social politics of redistribution; and a decentering of claims for equality in the face of aggressive marketization and sharply rising material inequality' (p. 3). In particular, Fraser criticises the unproductive opposition of culture and economy and the very frequent interpretation of the distributive paradigm and recognition paradigm as mutually incompatible. She argues that both paradigms refer to a fundamental aspect of justice that cannot be suppressed; the distributive paradigm deals with class inequities and material injustices, which the recognition paradigm tends to overlook, while conversely the recognition paradigm deals with institutionalised injustices and cultural misrecognition, which is more or less neglected by the distributive paradigm. However, these two kinds of injustices are of crucial significance, and according to Fraser every current relevant theory of justice should address them as two analytically distinct but practically intertwined aspects of justice. Moreover, the comprehensive political project of the 'post-socialist' era must take into consideration these three constitutive features – an absence of any credible vision of social transformation, an equality/difference dilemma, and resurgent economic neoliberalism in connection with globalising capitalism – and develop a credible vision of radical democracy that could present an alternative to the present social order.

In the first chapter, 'From Redistribution to Recognition?', Fraser explains her two-dimensional approach to the theory of justice, which takes into account both economically grounded maldistribution and institutionally generated status inequity or misrecognition. In this context, she elaborates the moral-philosophical, social theoretical and political-theoretical underpinning of her approach. Fraser bases her critique of both egalitarian theorists and recognition theorists on the notion of bivalent categories such as gender and 'race'. She argues that the category of gender (and that of 'race') encompasses both socio-economic injustices associated with exploited classes and cultural injustices associated with despised sexualities. Consequently, to rectify gender inequity, both the political economy must be restructured and resource equities eliminated, and institutionalised disrespect must be eradicated and the cultural norms enabling recognition changed. 'Of course, the two faces are not neatly separated from each other. Rather, they intertwine to reinforce each other dialectically because sexist and androcentric cultural norms are institutionalized in the state and the economy, and women's economic disadvantage restricts women's "voice", impeding equal participation in the making of culture, in public sphere and in everyday life. The result is a vicious circle of cultural and economic subordination.' (p. 21)

Fraser also analyses aspects of justice in terms of political orientation, and she distinguishes between affirmation and transformation with respect to both redistribution and recognition. Fraser cites the liberal wel-

fare state, which actually generated misrecognition by focusing only on surface reallocations, as the paradigmatic example of affirmative strategy in redistribution, and points to socialism as the paradigmatic case of transformative strategy, owing to its focus on a deep restructuring of the relationships of production. With respect to recognition, Fraser's paradigmatic case of affirmative strategy is mainstream multiculturalism, which focuses only on the surface reallocations of respect and leaves intact the symbolic structures that virtually support the misrecognition of depreciated groups, and her paradigmatic example of transformative strategy is deconstruction, which destabilises deep binary oppositions and thus also group differentiation. In both aspects of justice, affirmative strategies are inadequate, and therefore, Fraser advocates transformative strategies. However, in her later works, Fraser reached the view that this distinction is not absolute but rather contextual. At the same time she awaked to the difficulties connected with the implementation of transformative strategies and consequently began arguing for 'nonreformist reform': 'on the one hand, they engage people's identities and satisfy some of their needs as interpreted within existing frameworks of recognition and distribution; on the other hand, they set in motion a trajectory of change in which more radical reforms become practicable over time' [Fraser and Hrubec 2004: 881]. Affirmative transformations of this kind combine the radical contents of transformative strategies with the easy assertion of affirmative ones.

In addition to elaborating this two-dimensional theory of justice in the first part of the book Fraser also presents a critique of the current welfare state, which in her view relies on the old gender order based on the ideal of the family wage. In the chapter 'After the Family Wage' she compares the 'universal breadwinner model' advanced by liberals and American feminists and the 'caregiver parity model' asserted by social democrats and the majority of Western European feminists. While the first model lays emphasis on promoting women's employment through the state provision of employment-enabling day-care services, the latter supports informal care through the state provision of caregiver allowances. Nevertheless, in Fraser's opinion, neither model respects the complex nature of gender equity, which requires both gender equality and the recognition of gender differences. Fraser formulates seven normative principles according to which the level of attained gender equity can be assessed: the antipoverty principal, the anti-exploitation principle, the income-equality principle, the leisure-time equality principle, the equality-of-respect principle, the anti-marginalisation principle, and finally the anti-androcentrism principle. Fraser proposes an alternative conception of the welfare state, one based on the 'universal caregiver model' that combines the previous two models and corresponds to modern post-industrial conditions. The 'universal caregiver' model requires a new view of men's roles and the radical re-organisation of working life. Consequently, this alternative for truly promoting gender equity calls for the deconstruction of gender in the sense of making 'women's current life-patterns the norm for everyone' (p. 61).

The second part of *Justice Interruptus* is devoted to reflections on the theory of discourse, which Fraser sees as a means for overcoming the decoupling of the social from the cultural. Her guiding aim here is to interconnect discourse analysis with the institutional level of the social structure. In the chapter 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', Fraser deals with Habermas's explanation for the genesis of the public sphere and proposes a critical reconstruction of his model. In 'Sex, Lies, and the Public Sphere' she goes on to discuss the separation of the public and the private. In 'A Genealogy of "Dependency"' Fraser deals with the genealogy of the concept of 'dependency' and revises the Foucauldian approach. Finally, in 'Structuralism and Pragmatics?' she criticises the Lacanian theory, which in

her view reifies 'the symbolic order', and in a discussion of the pragmatics model elaborated by the French feminist Julia Kristeva she draws attention to the contribution that discourse theory has made to feminist theory.

In the third part of *Justice Interruptus* Fraser applies her general theory of justice to gender inequity and conceptualises a feminist critical theory of justice, which combines an anti-essentialist cultural politics of recognition with an egalitarian social politics of redistribution aimed at developing a 'credible vision of radical democracy'. In the chapter 'Multiculturalism, Antiessentialism, and Radical Democracy' she distinguishes three phases of second-wave American feminism. She reconstructs the history of the US debate over difference, and she points out the weaknesses of the first phase of the debate between 'equality feminists' and 'difference feminists' and the second phase of the difference debate that focused on 'differences between women', and finally she discusses the current phase, which focuses on 'multiple intersecting differences', by presenting the distinction between the anti-essentialist deconstructive version of feminist theory and the pluralist version of multiculturalism within the framework of feminism. In accordance with her two-dimensional theory she argues that a one-sided focus on cultural politics is insufficient and neglects the injustices caused by political economy. Moreover, she tries to resolve the dilemma between the anti-essentialist sceptical attitude toward identity and difference and the multiculturalist aim of revaluing and promoting group differences and group identities. Fraser calls for the construction of a new equality/difference debate that can 'combine the struggle for an antiessentialist multiculturalism with the struggle for social equality' (p. 187).

In her most recent article, 'Mapping the Feminist Imagination: From Redistribution to Recognition to Representation', Fraser returns to her previous notion of the feminist debate and relates it to the post-9/11 political climate. She writes about a new phase of feminist politics that is characterised by reframing gender justice. Feminists thus face a new form of injustice that Fraser calls 'misframing': 'Misframing arises when the state-territorial frame is imposed on transnational sources of injustice... In such cases, struggles against maldistribution and misrecognition cannot proceed, let alone succeed, unless they are joined with struggles against misframing' [Fraser 2005: 305]. Therefore, feminists have to develop a new transnational political space to appropriately address gender injustices arising from 'women's vulnerability to transnational forces'; gender injustices have to be seen as connected not only to redistribution and recognition, but also to representation, which according to Fraser constitutes a third dimension of gender injustice. 'In contesting misframing, therefore, transnational feminism is reconfiguring gender justice as a three-dimensional problem, in which redistribution, recognition, and representation must be integrated in a balances way.' [Fraser 2005: 305] Furthermore, in this new feminist political project Fraser highlights the role of the European Union, which in our globalising world she sees as a competent partner for other transnational agents, such as the United Nations and the World Social Forum.

In the ensuing sections of *Justice Interruptus* Fraser advocates her approach and stresses the benefits of her conception in a review of currently prominent feminist approaches. In 'Culture, Political Economy, and Difference' Fraser interprets Iris Young's theory of difference based on an identification of the five faces of oppression: exploitation, marginalisation, powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence. Whereas Young criticises Fraser for dichotomising culture and economy, Fraser's criticism targets the failure of Young's approach to encompass both culture and political economy. According to Fraser, Young for the most part insists on the multiculturalist politics of difference while evading the political question of how to pursue redistribution and recognition simultaneously. In other words, she crucially ne-

glects any normative judgment that could distinguish emancipatory difference claims from exclusive ones and justifiable claims for redistribution from unjustifiable ones. Fraser argues that the politics of difference is not globally applicable; she assumes that there are many different kinds of differences, which require the application of different kinds of remedies. Therefore, it is necessary to develop a critical theory of recognition that would entail 'a more differentiated politics of difference' (p. 204). In 'False Antithesis' Fraser responds to Seyla Benhabib and Judith Butler in an effort to do away with the false antithesis of Critical Theory and poststructuralism, or, put otherwise, to integrate the normative and the discursive in the conception of subjectivity. Finally, in 'Beyond the Master/Subject Model' Fraser discusses Carole Pateman's view of sexual contract and argues that Pateman underestimates the structural mechanisms that generate new forms of subordination that differ from the classical master/subject model.

Although Fraser's guiding aim in *Justice Interruptus* is to advocate her two-dimensional theory of justice, in her more recent work, as mentioned above, she has reformulated her theoretical project and instead proposes a three-dimensional theory, which corresponds to the acceleration of globalisation that makes the 'Westphalian' territorial-state frame more complex and opens up a new set of political struggles related to representation. 'Explicitly thematizing the problem of the frame, this notion points to yet another class of obstacles to justice: neither economic nor cultural, but political. Representation, accordingly, constitutes a third, *political* dimension of social justice, alongside the (economic) dimension of redistribution and the (cultural) dimension of recognition.' [Fraser and Hrubec 2004: 887] Fraser is therefore currently developing a critical theory of global justice by turning her attention to the question of the frame, which she aims to integrate with her previous approach.

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## Jacqui True: *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism*

New York 2003: Columbia University Press, 272 pp.

In *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism: The Czech Republic after Communism*, the political scientist Jacqui True addresses the ways in which gender influences the processes of globalisation in the post-socialist Czech Republic. She analyses historical documents, scholarship and archival materials in English and Czech, and personal interviews conducted in Prague between 1995 and 1999. After providing some contextual information, True goes on to analyse aspects of gender in the family, the labour market, commercial markets, and women's organisations after 1989. As a framework for the analysis of these cases, True discusses the interpretive value of neo-liberal, Marxist, feminist, and institutionalist theoretical approaches for the study of post-socialist transformations and argues that each of these popular theories provides inadequate explanations when used alone. True is interested in analysing the 'dynamic interplay between local practices and global forces in the postsocialist context' and does so by drawing on what she identifies as 'neo-Gramscian, institutionalist, and feminist theories', focusing particularly on how gender operates to inflect these dynamic processes (p. 25). True uses a three-part definition of gender in her analysis that encompasses ideologies, inequalities, and

political identities, and she links these facets of gender to the concept of 'common sense' (p. 26). She writes, 'I view historically specific, common sense ideas about male and female human nature as being encoded in social practices. In turn, these encodings shape state and civil society, and the forces of production and reproduction in transitions to "capitalist democracy"' (p. 26).

In the first two chapters, True presents the reader with a brief discussion of what she sees as some key moments in Czech and Czechoslovak history as regards gender relations and politics and argues that these events are crucial to understanding the context of the late 1990s, which is the focus of the book. She discusses the ways in which gender was implicated in the workings of the socialist planned economy in terms of the horizontal and vertical gender differentiation of industries and professions and the differentiation of tasks within sectors. She argues that a 'gender regime' existed despite the official rhetoric of equality, and it carried over into the private sphere, contributing to women's double burden of work and family responsibilities (p. 28). She then discusses the development of 'an independent women's movement' during the Prague Spring in 1967–1969 (p. 39). She locates this movement in the activities of the Czechoslovak Women's Union (CWU) in 1967, and she draws on the debates that went on in the pages of the CWU's magazine *Vlasta* around that time to illustrate some of the issues of the day. She argues that in 1968 *Vlasta* briefly opened up a 'new discursive space for feminism', until the magazine was censored in 1969 (p. 43). She also cites the creation of Charter 77 as an example of 'gender solidarity' among dissidents and mentions the role of women in the dissident movement (p. 49), and she contrasts what she calls the 'new de facto "feminist" discourse and movement' of 1968 with the 'socially conservative ideas about appropriate gender roles' prevalent after 1989 (p. 52).

After introducing the context of the discussion, True devotes a chapter to each of the four aspects of gender in her analysis. In Chapter 3, for example, she discusses the family, arguing that 'successive Czech governments have used the family, and in particular women's labor in the family-household, to facilitate the shift from the state to the market system' (p. 55), and she criticises these policies for inadequately addressing several aspects of life, including the housing shortage, declining marriage rates, and declining fertility rates (p. 71). In True's opinion this inadequacy is an indication that government policy is out of step with the actual changes in gender relations and definitions in Czech society. In Chapter 4 True discusses women's participation in the labour market, noting that 'gender relationships have become salient distinctions used to sort out new labor and property relations in the Czech lands since 1989' (p. 74). She uses the concept of a 'three-tiered labor market', comprised of a highly skilled 'labor aristocracy', low-skilled 'precarious workers', and 'unofficial workers' working illegally or in illegal activities (p. 79–80), and in discussing gender stratification in the workplace she further distinguishes between the 'former socialist *public* sector' and 'the nascent *private* sector', and between domestic and foreign firms (p. 80). True concludes this chapter with a discussion of sexual harassment and work in the sex industry, in relation to both cases briefly addressing the impact of EU law on the Czech legal system, and she claims that 'the Czech government has used a considerable amount of EU financial assistance to translate documents and make amendments to national legislation, none of which has resulted in any change in the sexist culture [of] Czech politics, let alone in Czech workplaces' (p. 100).

In the discussion of how 'capitalist expansion in Eastern Europe has been promoted by the marketing of gender identities in global culture industries and consumer advertising' (p. 103), True analyses the use of nudity and female bodies in magazine and billboard advertisements, which she argues

emphasises certain differences between women and men and produces gendered consumer groups. She situates these trends in advertising within the wider context of the globalisation of 'culture industries', such as film, music, and fashion (p. 105). True moves on from this analysis to discuss what she sees as the significance of two products marketed to women – the Czech editions of Harlequin novels and *Cosmopolitan* magazine – for 'providing a public forum where women can air the problems of daily life and their dissatisfaction with the gender regime of state socialism and postsocialist democracy' (p. 117), drawing a parallel with the role that she argues *Vlasta* played in 1968.

The final case that True analyses is that of women's organisations after 1989. Using a neo-Gramscian framework, she starts off by briefly summarising the theoretical perspectives on civil society before and after 1989. She goes on to discuss women's participation in politics, the 'masculinization of the public sphere' (p. 137), and the 'feminization of the civic sphere' (p. 147). She then evaluates the success and failure of four examples of women's organisations in the Czech Republic. The first two – the Women-Friendly Response to Violence against Women project, and the Network of East-West Women – are discussed in terms of their relation to 'American feminism and NGOization' (p. 152), and the second two – Project Parity, and the Czech Women's Union – in relation to EU accession activities. She argues that although women are not adequately represented in formal political structures, their work in organisations has allowed them to nonetheless participate in building democracy.

It is particularly interesting to see what the scholars who completed research projects in the 1990s have made of their data. In *Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism*, True captures some of the popular debates of the time, such as the debate surrounding sexual harassment or the role of *Cosmopolitan* magazine as a subversive voice, and ongoing debates over, for example, the role of women in politics, explanations for declining fertility rates and postponed childbearing, and the politics of European Union funding for NGOs. However, True's discussion raises a number of concerns, as although the concepts of global and local play figure prominently in the analysis, and although True is careful to define many of the other key terms she uses, she neglects to offer any critical reflection on the meaning of these terms. While she insists that notions of global and local should be analysed as a set of interactions rather than separate processes, without referring to the critical scholarship on these terms she runs the risk of perpetuating the appearance of a vague western globality and Czech specificity.

Another problem is the way in which True uses the term 'women's movement' to characterise the activities of the Czechoslovak Women's Union in 1967 (p. 39). Without any discussion of how she defines a social movement or dealing with social movement theories, it is hard to accept the idea that the actions of a small number of women sitting on a Communist Party Central Committee and agitating for reform constitutes a women's movement. While True presents convincing evidence of arguably feminist sentiment among CWU organisers during this period and in the content of *Vlasta* in 1968, a clearer discussion of the definition of the concept of a movement is needed. Judging by her discussion of women's organisations in the 1960s and the 1990s, it seems that True, like many of us, is eager to find evidence of a grassroots women's movement in the Czech Republic. Although there are some compelling reasons why establishing wider support for feminism would benefit women's organisations (see Kapusta-Pofahl, Hašková and Kolářová 2006), analyses that draw in alternative theories of resistance that incorporate non-movement activism (but also widen the field of analysis beyond organisation in the form of NGOs) could also help move the understanding of Czech feminist activism forward, particularly in cases, like many of those discussed by

True, where neither the social movement nor the NGO models are adequate.

*Gender, Globalization, and Postsocialism* will be of interest to students and scholars in a wide range of fields, including gender studies, sociology, and political science. It is written in an accessible style suitable for use in the classroom.

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**Milada Anna Vachudova: *Europe Undivided: Democracy, Leverage, and Integration after Communism***

Oxford 2005: Oxford University Press, 341 pp.

The central concern of *Europe Undivided* lies with the divergent political trajectories of Central and Eastern European (CEE) states in the process of transition from integral units of the erstwhile 'communist bloc' to prospective membership in the European Union. The work focuses on six CEE states in particular: Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia, and argues that notwithstanding national particularities two broad overall patterns of 'transition' can be identified. The first of these involves the progressive reconstruction of these states along classical liberal-democratic lines; complete with the conventional institutional architecture of a liberal state and a functioning competitive electoral system based upon adult suffrage. Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic are reckoned as fitting this first pattern, while Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia are identified as 'deviants' that depart from this model. This latter group are characterised by the author as 'illiberal democracies', and a significant component of the overall argument of the work is concerned with accounting for their 'deviance'. Yet the core concern of the work is with the role of the European Union as a facilitator and regulator of political reconstruction projects in CEE after 1989-91. The work makes its most significant contribution to the ever-expanding literature on CEE 'transition(s)' with its elaboration of a detailed concept of 'leverage' with respect to the influence of the EU in CEE political reconstruction. In this respect, though not expressly formulated as such, the work aspires towards the development of a more general model of post-communist 'transition', in which the role of the EU is placed centre-stage.

Vachudova argues that the EU exerts two distinct kinds of 'leverage' over political developments in CEE states. The first – 'passive leverage' – refers to the kind of 'gravitational pull' of the EU as a political and economic bloc. This is reflected in the positive appeal of the EU as a political and economic entity to political elites in CEE states, and in the perception of EU membership as a potential 'prize' to be won in the course of successful political reconstruction. Yet it is also reflected in the asymmetrical structural relationships that exist between members of the EU and non-member states. The latter find themselves structurally disadvantaged economically as they individually face global competitive economic pressures without the support and protection provided by the EU to its members. In this respect, the simple existence of the EU as a political and economic bloc in conditions of intensifying global economic competition induces CEE states to re-orient themselves towards the EU and to aspire to EU membership, by default, as it were. Therefore, remaining aloof from the EU is not a genuinely sustainable option in the long-term for such states and particularly given the economic destruction and dislocation that accompanied the early years of 'transition' for CEE states.

The second kind of leverage, active leverage, differs from the first both tempo-

rally and conceptually. The 'passive leverage' of the EU operated largely on its own between 1989 and 1994, as the EU itself struggled to come to terms with the transformations of its CEE 'hinterland' and was divided over policy and strategy regarding the new ex-communist states. 'Active leverage', on the other hand, came to the fore alongside 'passive leverage' after 1994, as the EU began to actively intervene in CEE political reconstruction through the promise of prospective EU membership subject to satisfying certain conditions of membership. Through this conditionality the EU exerted active leverage over domestic political reconstruction within EU candidate states in CEE, as it specified detailed requirements for the political reconstruction process, and regularly monitored and supervised compliance and/or the process of reform in candidate states.

Vachudova's work is a detailed study of the role of the EU, through the process of 'leverage', in channelling the political reconstruction in six CEE states. The work dedicates two chapters to the concept of passive leverage and how it operated during the 1989–1994 period and three chapters to the later period of active leverage, and focuses on EU interventions in enhancing political competition and promoting neo-liberal economic reform. As a work forged within the mainstream International Relations' (IR) paradigms of inter-state relations and sub-state political interactions, combining realism and rational-choice theory in unqualified forms, it may leave many sociologists disappointed. Its unapologetic Schumpeterian notion of democracy as little more than a mechanism for the periodic changing of the state executive through an élite competition for votes in the political marketplace may also leave many political scientists dissatisfied. And its implicit 'end of history' perspective, where liberal democracy represents the secret *telos* of 'transition', hence the problem of the 'deviants', may leave many others unimpressed. Yet, *Europe Undivided* is an empirically rich and detailed work, and exceptionally methodologically conscientious within the confines of IR frameworks. Though the framing of its question may be less than ideal, the work nevertheless contains much of interest to sociologists, not least its rigorous elaboration and operationalisation of the concept of 'leverage', and its documentation of the EU's role in CEE political reconstruction in such terms. At the very least, it provides a challenge to social constructivists and sociological institutionalists to provide an equally comprehensive and detailed account of the EU's role in 'transition' that is not marred by the excessive reductionism and crude rationalism of IR exponents. And as such, it must be welcomed.

*Sara Clavero*

**Yvonne Galligan – Manon Tremblay (eds.):**
***Sharing Power: Women, Parliament and Democracy***
Burlington, VT 2005: Ashgate Publishing Company, 240 pp.

In *Sharing Power: Women, Parliament and Democracy*, editors Yvonne Galligan and Manon Tremblay apply a common framework to twenty national case studies of women in parliament. Each case study addresses the historical elements of women's political rights, the roles of political parties and the electoral system, obstacles to the full representation of women in parliament, and strategies for increasing the number of women parliamentarians. In this way they attempt to create a standard for comparison between several nations with various political and structural histories; for example, for comparing women's parliamentary representation in emerging democracies in Latin America to an established democracy like the United Kingdom. Most applicable to the Central and Eastern European context are the case studies of post-communist countries like Hungary and Croatia. Despite its breadth, this collection is surprisingly far from formulaic; the authors illustrate these topics in common through historical analysis, empirical data, and qualita-

tive sociological data. This review briefly assesses each case study in the order presented in the anthology.

The introduction outlines several principles of women's parliamentary participation common to several nations that guide this research. The right-wing/left-wing debate, though it is not always explicitly stated, argues that liberal parties are more sensitive to the need to promote female Members of Parliament (MPs). Socio-cultural factors, derived from political history or religious dogma, also hinder women's access to politics. EU member states must balance traditional practices with EU priorities aimed at the equal representation of women in parliament. Some nations incorporate the notion of *parity* into their system, i.e. guaranteeing equal numbers of women and men access to elected office. Others use a system of proportional representation, where the proportion of members elected reflects the proportion of votes gained for that party, and thus the political groups that exist in society are proportionally represented in elected bodies. Ideally, this system should increase the number of women holding parliamentary seats.

Sharon Bessell opens *Sharing Power* with a description of the socio-cultural expectations for shaping the landscape of women's parliamentary participation in post-authoritarian Indonesia. Strong notions of paternalism and ideals of womanhood, rooted in an Islamic culture, circumscribe women's roles to 'wife, household manager, child bearer, educator' and lastly, 'citizen' (p. 13)' That the country formerly had a female president has sent a strong signal that woman have a place in politics, but the number of women in parliament is still a paltry 11%.

Hungary represents another example where women are losing out in the political scene during the transition to democracy. Here also women's roles as mothers and caretakers are cited as a barrier to political representation, as is the communist patriarchal legacy and the public bias against affirmative action policies. Yet even as a relatively new democracy Hungary has managed to establish both legal and institutional structures for advancing women's rights, such as a strong anti-discrimination law and government agencies specializing in gender issues. The author of the chapter on Hungary, Elisabeth Kardos-Kaponyi, raises concerns, however, about the unfulfilled promises of greater gender equality and the role of the European Union in influencing the Hungarian gender agenda. The socialist and liberal political parties have adopted the EU theme of equal opportunity by encouraging women candidates and promoting 'women's' policy issues.

According to Alisa del Re, the Italian political agenda scarcely addresses gender concerns at all. Her argument that historical gender prejudices have barred women from political participation is supported by data; since the mid-1990s, women's parliamentary representation has remained around 11%. The Italian debate centres on the principles of egalitarianism (abolishing all gender differences) and difference (recognising the unique situation of women's oppression).

France, another EU state, has a majority voting system, and political parties are unwilling to apply the principle of parity to their party candidate lists. Mariette Sineau's empirical and historical analysis of the quantity and impact of female MPs reveals how their numerical weakness limits their impact in parliament. Even with these barriers, the radical notion of parity exists in French law. Sineau hopes French women will take advantage of the 'opportunity offered by the building of Europe' and enter politics at the supranational level, and that they will fight to close the loopholes in the parity law, which make it possible to exclude women from lower-level political offices (p. 60).

In addition to socialisation-related obstacles and the division of labour between the sexes, Yvonne Galligan notes that Irish women are also confronted with the traditional Roman Catholic dictums about a woman's place in society. Financial and family networks, educational background and

'availability', that is, the perception that if elected a woman prioritises political responsibilities over family concerns, also factor into the equation. Those women who do make it to elected office must balance responsibilities to their constituencies and to their job as a legislator.

Mi Yung Yoon's analysis of sub-Saharan Africa highlights barriers in common across forty-three nations: unequal access to education, financial difficulties, patriarchal culture, the socialisation of gender roles, household responsibilities, and an electoral system that negatively affects women's legislative representation. Yoon further analyses four nations – Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Uganda – where women occupy more than 20% of the seats in parliament. In these nations, female legislators and NGOs put gender issues on the agenda, though in some cases a lack of education and experience results in the disenfranchising of women MPs.

Stephanie Rousseau examines in Peru the unusual coincidence of the decision of women to enter institutional politics with the rise of Alberto Fujimori's part-democratic, part-authoritarian regime in the 1990s. Corruption aside, Fujimori's administration campaigned for women's rights through supportive legislation; the small number of female MPs elected were able to effectuate changes beneficial to women. Peru is an unusual case because parties hold little power, there is a 30% quota and 'double preferential voting' in favour of women, and traditional culture does *not* bar women from access to politics; nevertheless, women have still not achieved equality with men in the level of parliamentary representation.

The United Kingdom is home to one of the world's best politicians, Margaret Thatcher, but despite her success political parties and electoral systems make entry into politics difficult for women. In the chapter on the UK, Fiona Mackay suggests possible constitutional changes and presents Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland for examples of methods of networking and mobilising female academics and politicians and women's NGOs. While most female MPs focus on policy change in 'traditional "feminine" areas such as education, social welfare, and health' (p. 118), the simple presence of women MPs in Scotland encourages male MPs to also advocate for these 'feminine' issues.

Croatia, a post-communist, European nation with a recent war behind it, emphasises developing a public role for women while simultaneously decreasing their role in the private sphere. Smiljana Leinert Novosel highlights the historical role of NGOs in fighting patriarchal structures and their current role in counterbalancing the often gender-insensitive views of party politicians. Women's interest in politics is on the rise, and though quotas are not mandated, their informal use within parties points to the strengthening presence of women in politics.

The under-representation of women in Canada's House of Commons is explained in terms of incumbency and gender-based socialisation, neither of which has been addressed by either the federal government or the feminist movement. Manon Tremblay suggests introducing financial incentives for parties in order to promote the advancement of women politicians and also proposes changing the system to one of proportional representation.

In her study of Switzerland, Thanh-Huyen Ballmer-Cao mentions the matter of Swiss conservatism (women's suffrage was only granted in 1971), and she argues that the country has been playing 'catch-up' since then. The women's movement, strong regional governments, direct democracy and the electoral system have a positive influence on female political representation. Surprisingly, the debates on gender quotas (which were ultimately rejected) pointed out the disparities between women and men; in the past proportional representation in Switzerland had addressed only issues of 'region, partisan tendency or language' (p. 170).

There are several differences between the situation of women in Australia and in New

Zealand, such as the electoral system (quotas in Australia and proportional representation in New Zealand) and women's agency (via NGOs in Australia and from within New Zealand's Labour Party). New Zealand historically boasts more women MPs than Australia, though in both nations women face similar barriers owing to cultural expectations, the 'closed gates' of political parties, and neoliberal attitudes. Sandra Grey and Marian Sawer the authors of the chapters on these countries, present New Zealand's Prime Minister, Helen Clark, as an example of a woman parliamentarian who has pushed for community services and social security policy changes.

Celia Valiente, Luis Ramiro and Laura Morales explore the theories behind the political under-representation of Spanish women using an empirical test of demand-side and supply-side arguments. They find that women are gaining access to parliament, have similar educational and social characteristics to male MPs, and have even improved their position within power structures, but that they are nonetheless 'still far from sharing power with men on an equal basis' (p. 201). The low demand for female parliamentarians seems to be a function of the parliamentary culture and party selection practices.

Scandinavia has long been hailed as the most politically gender-friendly region, with its multi-party, proportional representation and preferential voting systems. But Jill M. Bystydzienski draws attention to the sex-role debates of the 1950s and 1960s that highlighted the 'striking disparity [that] existed between the formal quality of the sexes and the everyday reality faced by women' (p. 210). Focusing primarily on Norway, which lagged behind the other Nordic nations in gender equality issues, Bystydzienski argues that simply increasing the numbers of women in parliament has not increased the amount of influence that women MPs wield in changing policy. Parliamentary structures and power relationships must change so that women's needs are meaningfully addressed.

The final case, by Monique Leyenaar, tracks the movement of women in politics from tokens to players in the Netherlands. Parties and the government, by providing political and financial support, have empowered women MPs. Unlike their counterparts from the 1990s, modern female MPs do not fit the labels of feminist, mother, or housewife. Leyenaar worries that the supply of women willing to become parliamentarians may decrease owing to the increased demands of career, family, and community, and to a conservative shift in Dutch politics.

This book is an excellent primer on worldwide women's parliamentary representation. Within the constraints of the common framework, the authors of this anthology convey a surprising amount of analysis. However, each account leaves the reader with more specific questions. How will post-communist and post-authoritarian nations shake – or learn from – their political past? What concrete methods of overcoming socio-cultural biases are transferable across nations? What avenues of further research are necessary?

There is noteworthy acknowledgement of the work of non-governmental organisations; almost all the case studies describe grassroots efforts to mobilise, train, and educate women in parliamentary skills. Most cases also assess the form and impact of women's movements, particularly in relation to suffrage rights, on the current situation of power sharing in parliaments.

One minor criticism is that this collection lacks a representative non-European perspective. Indonesia, Sub-Saharan Africa, Peru, Canada, and Australia and New Zealand represent five out of the fifteen case studies; in two of these examples, multiple nations are combined. In addition, organising the chapters thematically (instead by the level of women's representation in parliament) would help readers to grasp the similarities and differences in women's struggles to share power across the globe.

*Veena Srinivasa*

## The Enwise Valorisation Conference: Enlarging Europe with/for Women Scientists – Tallinn 2004

In September 2004, in Tallinn, the Estonian Ministry of Education and the Estonian Archimedes Foundation organised the conference 'Enlarging Europe with/for Women Scientists'. The day-and-a-half conference set out to present and discuss with the main stakeholders in politics and science the key findings and policy recommendations of a report entitled 'Waste of Talents: Turning Private Struggles into a Public Issue – Women and Science in the Enwise Countries' [Blagović et al. 2004]. In the words of the conference organisers the event sought to 'valorise' the insights gained from the report, that is, to enhance their value and (political) status.[1] Thus, apart from raising awareness about the particular configurations of gender inequalities in research and the 'double exclusion' women scientists face with respect to 'male-dominated scientific structures' and to the 'science centre' (Ben-David) that provides the norms and ideals of scientific activity, the organisers envisioned committing national decision makers from ministries of science and education to endorse measures to promote women in science in the Enwise countries.

The Enwise expert group of fourteen senior scientists, who co-authored the report and contributed to the organisation of the conference, was set up by the European Commission in 2002 with the mission of investigating the current situation of women scientists in the Enwise countries in order to provide a solid basis for formulating science policy. The experts were also asked to submit recommendations on how the awareness of gender equality in scientific research can be raised and how the situation of women scientists and their participation in European research and decision-making bodies can be improved. This project is part of the Commission's wider effort to build a prospering competitive European Research Area, in which investment in research and development is promoted, researcher mobility is encouraged, and the talent of women and young scientists are put to full use. The Commission holds that, thus transformed, European research cultures and infrastructures will benefit European societies even more and end the current trend of the emigration of scientists from Europe to, mainly, the United States.

The organisers invited participants from national delegations in the 33 countries associated with the EU Framework Programmes for Research and Technical Development, along with a delegation of women scientists from the Western Balkans and from Georgia, Russia and Ukraine. Overall, nearly 250 delegates from 44 countries participated in the conference, comprising a heterogeneous (predominantly female) audience of administrators of research institutions, working scientists, gender experts, members of the European Commission, and ministers responsible for research, science and education.

The conference was divided into four plenary sessions and four parallel half-day workshops, which were intended to explore in depth the key issues raised in the Enwise Report. Plenary sessions included three keynote addresses by members of the European Parliament and a prominent feminist philosopher of science; an overview and personal memories of the Enwise project; the screening of a French documentary film 'Femmes de têtes' [Nisic and Julienne 2004], and a round-table discussion with the EU Commissioner for Research.

Despite generous funding the conference only partially succeeded in accentuating the key findings of the Enwise Report, explicating its methods, and discussing and supporting concrete policy measures. One major challenge from the outset was the generation of a level of debate that was accessible to and enriching for both experts in the field, and politicians and scientists with little knowledge of gender issues in science, so that a dialogue between these groups can be initiated.

**The plenary speeches**

Paradoxically, the conference did not sufficiently engage the specific findings of the Enwise Report.[2] This was most evident perhaps in the three keynote speeches. It was not clear what the present and former MEPs from Estonia and Greece, Marianne Mikko and Anna Karamanou, had to contribute to reflecting on the situation of women scientists in Europe's semi-periphery. Drawing largely on reports commissioned by the European Parliament's Women's Rights Committee Karamanou presented some general figures: on the persistent under-representation of Western women in science and technology, in research funding, and in positions of decision-making in these sectors; on a 'masculine' research culture with long working hours and networks of promotion that often exclude women; on the systematic under-valuation of research published under a female name and the relative lack of research expenditure in fields that are of particular relevance to women (e.g. breast cancer and osteoporosis). While highlighting additional handicaps for women scientists in the Enwise countries, such as low wages and underdeveloped research infrastructures, the speakers largely failed to examine whether the inequalities found in these countries are simply compounded or are differently configured than in Western Europe.

Most disappointing for those interested in theories of knowledge was the keynote address from the feminist philosopher Sandra Harding. Harding had been asked by the conference organisers to relate her talk on feminist epistemologies to the first chapter of the Enwise Report, which explored contradictory gender regimes (or 'gender contracts') in Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States. Under the promising title 'Gender and Knowledge: New Issues' Harding (reading her presentation, which was also printed in the conference programme) presented the well-rehearsed argument of standpoint epistemologies that previously excluded subordinated groups can bring new questions, 'gender-distinctive cognitive perspectives', and potentially transformative insights to the study of nature and social relations. Not only did Harding fall short of addressing 'new issues' for those familiar with her work, she also made no reference to how standpoint theories could be relevant for producing less distorted knowledge in Central and Eastern Europe. With the scheduling of her talk at the end of the conference, and with no time for the audience to ask questions, potentially interesting concerns were left unexamined, such as what kind of work would have to be produced for 'women ... to understand the conceptual practices of dominant institutions through which their exploitation [is] designed, maintained, and made to seem natural and desirable to everyone', and what would be the contours and implications of 'an overt pro-democratic counter-politics of science' in the Enwise countries [Harding 2004: 7].

The two plenary talks that centred on the Enwise project had their own shortcomings. Marina Blagojević, a members of the report's editorial group, introduced the report. Instead of contextualising and elaborating select findings that illustrate how the report takes into account differences between and among the Enwise and Western European countries, Blagojević's power-point presentation of nearly 92 slides (which were also printed in the conference programme) took listeners 'fast forward' through the entire report. In view of two of the report's key findings, that women researchers are concentrated in those scientific fields and employment sectors (higher education and other government research institutions) where research expenditure is lowest and thus far are substantially under-represented in high-level EU monitoring and evaluation bodies, Blagojevic's (and the Enwise Report's) claim that the recognition of women's abundant talents and excellence would create a 'powerful win-win logic' for Europe perhaps prematurely forestalled any discussion of possible resis-

tance to gender equality measures on the part of those who benefit from the current organisation of science.

Brigitte Degen, a member of the Women and Science unit at DG Research and a key supporter of the Enwise project, chose a poetic format to remember and reflect on the project and its contributors. While certainly evocative and moving, Degen's 'Enwise Memories' did not reflect on the history of the report's making and currently or potentially difficult aspects of working with a diverse group of women scientists (neither does the report). Apart from being a methodological desideratum, reflections on the difficulties involved in working across national and cultural differences and the strategies for managing them could have provided valuable insights for everyone trying to foster collaboration among women scientists in the region.

**The workshop sessions**

According to the conference programme the four parallel workshop sessions were intended to offer a 'detailed analysis of the Enwise Report'. Three of these sessions took as a point of departure presentations by authors of the Enwise Report, which were complemented with presentations from other experts in the region. Session 1 focused on the 'Enwise Specific Gender Contexts' (i.e. the first chapter of the report that analyses the simultaneity of 'modern' and 'traditional' elements in present and past gender relations). The session dealt with the relevance of gender studies and the integration of a gender perspective in science. Based on the second and third chapter of the Enwise Report, Session 2 presented structural changes in R&D systems in the Enwise countries and statistical findings of vertical and horizontal gender segregation in different scientific fields and employment sectors, and it reflected on brain-drain/brain-gain issues. Session 3 focused on the participation of women from the Enwise countries in the 5th and 6th European Framework Programmes (based on the fourth chapter of the Enwise Report). Finally, Session 4 dealt with the relationship between science and society. Contributions looked at experiences in and with the science of pupils and young researchers and new transnational policy networks that promote women in science.

This author attended Session 2 in the hope of learning more about the 'brain-drain' and 'brain-circulation' trends that were touched upon in the Enwise Report and on the statistical measures that were used, particularly the so-called 'honey pot indicator'.[3] Unfortunately, the chairwoman, Rossela Palomba, decided to hold all six presentations in a row and have questions only after the coffee break, allowing only five minutes at the end for responses by the presenters. The first presenters, who might have explained the statistical indicators, took the audience through a stream of highly elaborate statistical tables that represented in graphs and columns how men and women scientists fared over time at different levels, in different scientific fields and in different countries. It was evidently not the aim of the session to disseminate and critically evaluate research methodologies but rather to 'prove' various degrees of 'odds' for women scientists – as if the data speak for themselves. The demands on the concentration and listening skills of the audience were aggravated by the largely formal statistical format of three of the presentations, the last-minute admission of yet another (statistical) presentation from Russia in the time assigned for discussion, and the masculine *habitus* of most speakers in the audience who delivered long-winded co-presentations rather than formulating questions or critical comments.

The two presentations addressing brain-drain issues were markedly more conceptual. The presentation from Michael Daxner, emeritus professor of sociology, was outstanding for his complex analytical (and gender-sensitive) approach to the brain drain, his political suggestions, and the controversy his

presentation created. Daxner advocates a comprehensive multi-dimensional approach to analysing brain drain and to policy making. Analytically he posits that the brain drain has to be linked to its twin, the brain gain, and to migration and displacement, and he distinguishes the effects of academic mobility on the life-world and the system level. Considering the migration of women scientists from the Enwise countries to Western Europe and the United States, Daxner suggests that at the system level 'each drain causes a bigger loss that the gain on the receiving side could be' and that 'the investment into the training of highly qualified women cannot be compensated by remittances [that they send to the country of origin] to the same extent as by male migrants' [Daxner 2004: 11] because women scientists are more likely than men to be supporting a family in their host country.

Arguing that so far policy makers at the national and the supranational level have not adequately dealt with academic migration, Daxner advocates 'new and committed forms of compensation for irreplaceable losses' [Daxner 2004: 13] on the part of Western countries, such as outsourcing a significant research capacity to a country where such a capacity has been 'drained out'. These suggestions were considered highly offensive to some scientists who worked in the Enwise countries, reminiscent of Daxner's observation that 'there is always a rude conflict between the returnees and those who have stayed. Both adopt different strategies of victimisation, and often also of a heroic aspect of their respective role' [Daxner 2004: 8]. With Daxner unable to respond directly, such differences in perspective could not be debated and concrete policy measures were left undiscussed.

Obviously, this workshop session may not be representative, and the other sessions were reportedly organised in a format that was more conducive to exchanges between and among the audience and experts. However, the well-intended attempt by the conference organisers to include several young scientists as rapporteurs in the workshops rather than selecting them on the basis of presentation skills, resulted in some vagueness as to what had been discussed in the other workshops.

### Raising gender awareness and generating political commitments

All participants that this author spoke to reported that some of the most important discussions and liasing occurred over the coffee and lunch breaks. While this is often the case at large conferences, it also indicates that the conference did not (or not sufficiently) provide a forum for discussing and exploring the first-hand experiences of working scientists or examining concrete policy initiatives. Thus, a discussion forum for young scientists was finally moved to the end of the conference, when most participants had already left. A focus on lived experiences could have usefully complemented the focus of the Enwise Report on macrotrends and shed some light on how gender inequalities are maintained and perpetuated in scientific institutions on a day-to-day level, and could also have helped to raise gender awareness. This could have followed the screening of the evocative documentary film 'Femmes de têtes' [Nisic and Julienne 2004], which presented the testimonies of eleven successful European women physicists, mathematicians, biologists and astrophysicists (among them a Nobel Prize winner) on their experiences of systematic discouragement and discrimination.

There was also little talk about gender-biased institutional protocols and procedures and the lack of transparency and accountability in many research institutions in the region. If women scientists are systematically underrated and underpaid, are predominantly located in higher education, and have a relatively low presence in the business and enterprise research sector, where 47% of research expenditure in the Enwise

countries is made (compared to 23% in the higher education sector), then a discussion about how this can be changed is urgently needed. Unfortunately, of the administrators in national ministries and political decision makers only the Estonian Minister of Education and Research was able to participate in a round-table discussion with the EU commissioner for Research and could be publicly committed to supporting women in science.

These considerations point to a number of missed opportunities in an otherwise highly important conference. As one Czech woman-scientist who was invited remarked, more space should have been devoted to questions and particularly to discussions with politicians and official representatives. But saying that the conference did not completely succeed in 'valorising' the findings of the Enwise Report does not diminish the relevance of these findings. We can only hope that both working scientists and politicians will be inspired and find some time to read parts of the report so that, as Czech woman-scientist put it, the debates that were missing 'might come in the next conferences'.[4]

*Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer*

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Notes:

[1] The Enwise stands for Enlarge 'Women in Science' to the East and is the name of an expert group of women scientists from seven Central and Eastern European countries and three Baltic States. The so-called Enwise countries include Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

[2] Note that the Enwise Report was officially launched in January 2004 and hence was available to all speakers six months before the conference.

[3] The honeypot indicator 'quantifies the loss of access to and/or control over R&D expenditure experienced by women researchers *en masse* because they are more likely to concentrated in the low expenditure R&D sectors or fields of science' [Blagović et al. 2004: 82]. According to the authors 'the score itself is the difference between the expected R&D expenditure per capita pro rata for women and the observed R&D expenditure per capita pro rata for women expressed as a percentage of the expected R&D expenditure per capita pro rata for women' [ibid: n. 25, 82). It is still not clear to this author how exactly the honeypot indicator is calculated and especially what the 'expected research expenditure' for women researchers refers to.

[4] The Enwise Report is available online at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/highlights_en.html and http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/women/wssi/publi cations_en.html; a hardcopy can be ordered by sending an e-mail to: womenscience@cec.eu.int. The report is currently being translated into Czech and will be available from the National Contact Centre – Women and Science in Prague.

## Report on the 10th Metropolis Conference – Toronto, October 2005

The International Metropolis Project is a forum for bridging research, policy and practice on migration and diversity. The project aims to enhance the capacity of academic research, encourage policy-relevant research on migration and diversity issues, and facilitate the use of that research by governments and non-governmental organisations. In the decade since its inception, the project has grown to include researchers, policy-makers,

international organisations and NGOs from North America, most of Europe, and much of the Asia-Pacific region. The project is managed by a Secretariat, which is jointly located in Ottawa and Amsterdam. It is also guided by an International Steering Committee made up of approximately forty partners from across the project, who provide advice, direction and an international perspective. Between conferences, the Metropolis network is brought together through shared research projects, publications and informal policy discussion; smaller inter-conference seminars; a website that highlights research and upcoming activities; the *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, which showcases international research on migration and diversity; and an annual publication – *World Bulletin* – which updates the network on partners' various projects and activities. The next conference will be held in Lisbon in October 2006 and in Melbourne in 2007. All relevant information about the Toronto event and the project itself can be found at: http://www.toronto.ca/metropolis/

The 10th Metropolis conference was held in Toronto, Canada on 17–25 October 2005 under the title 'Our Diverse Cities: Migration, Diversity and Change'. According to organisers, this was the most attended event of the Metropolis conferences, hosting some 1300 participants, mostly from North America, Australia and Europe (almost exclusively from the UK and Scandinavia). The Metropolis Project was also celebrating its tenth anniversary. The fact that the conference was held in Canada and that participants were mostly from North America heavily marked the basic perspective from which the problems of contemporary migration were seen. Another important feature was the visible presence of participants from various governmental organisations, although academics and some non-governmental organisations were present, too.

While the European approach, though it varies from one country to the next, shows a certain dilemma, which centres on whether Europe needs migrants and is stuck on the 'us and them' distinction that stems from the nation-state patterns of European societies, the Canadian approach is about how to manage migration for the prosperity of all the sides involved. As the mayor of Toronto stated, the number of migrants Canada 'imports', according to a pre-defined immigration policy at the national level, is equal to 1% of the total Canadian population each year. Or, as the novelist and essayist John Ralston Saul put it, Canada benefits from the stupidity of other states. Generally, the conference was conceived as an illustration of Canada's understanding of itself as a country of diverse societies, as a mosaic, with the accent on communities, which remain free to express their differences, while at the same time creating a Canadian identity. Day one was therefore dedicated to study tours, ranging from themes such as Toronto's Multicultural Media and the Act of Becoming Canadian to Pride and Prejudice: 'Diversity Our Strength'. Within the first study tour, the participants had an opportunity to discuss the citizenship procedure at Toronto´s George Brown College with the presiding citizenship judge and community advocates, and to witness an actual citizenship ceremony. From that point of view, Canadian society seems like a highly inclusive one, as the period for obtaining citizenship is roughly three years, compared to fifteen years in the Czech Republic (with uncertain results). The other conference days always began with two plenary sessions in the morning, and continued with dozens of community-based and conference-based workshops. Unfortunately, both parts were organised in such a way that left almost no time for questions and answers. While community-based workshops were held at various spots in the city of Toronto, the conference-based ones were more of an academic nature.

The first day was dedicated to the subject of diversity in contemporary cities from the perspective of mayors (with mayors, deputy mayors, vice mayors and former may-

ors of Toronto, Zeeburg, Sao Paulo, Vancouver, Lyon, Malmö and Stockholm taking part in the discussion). The second plenary session focused on the role of government and employers in ensuring a barrier-free workplace. The complete list of workshops and plenary sessions is available at the conference website, so here mention will only be made of those the author personally attended, accompanied by commentary on the plenary sessions that the author found relevant from a professional perspective and from the Czech point of view.

A workshop called 'Balancing Gender Equality and Religious Diversity: Muslim Women in Western Societies, Islamic Law and the Justice System' treated a number of relevant topics: religious vs. civil marriage, the complexity of the gender problem at the intersection of Islam and Western societies, and faith-based arbitration in family law. Audry Macklin from the University of Toronto argued that faith-based arbitration in family issues is essentially the same process as mediation, commercial or non-commercial, which is common in civil arbitration. She also pointed out that the legal system, which should establish gender equality, allows for different forms of discrimination, most often for economic reasons (women with children unable to make choices because they have to face major economic obstacles). Therefore, she did not see how Canada's recent decision to abolish faith-based arbitration could be justified. It should be of no concern to the state whether we choose a religious or a secular institution for arbitration. This was strongly opposed by Alia Hogben from the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, who welcomed the government decision because, as she said, it recognised that faith-based arbitration meant a greater danger of the exclusion of women from the community, and seriously diminished the status of Muslim women as Canadian citizens because of the different regime they were being exposed to. In this regard, especially painful in Europe is the issue of 'limp marriages', marriages that are divorced according to individual European legal systems, but are still not divorced according to the law of Muslim countries, some of which do not recognise divorce initiated by women. These women, and their children, are then in danger when they decide to travel to such countries.

The plenary session on day three addressed the topic of globalisation and security. In the face of arguments claiming that multiculturalism is essentially a weakness, because it allows people to migrate freely while allowing them freedom of denomination, association, and so on, which creates room for abuse by violence-oriented groups. David Wright-Neville from Monash University in Australia argued the very opposite, that a strong and equal community will always be a much better barrier to extremists than any measures of repression or police activity. So the argument goes that a truly self-confident community is more likely to take responsibility for the security of society as such and for its own security. He illustrated this with a few examples from Australian community life.

The plenary session the next day was dedicated to the issue of diversity as a competitive advantage. Phil Wood from COMEDIA in the United Kingdom conducts research on the relationship between the treatment of culturally heterogeneous employees and company competitiveness. He said that if a connection could be established, it would be a strong argument for multiculturalism. (Unfortunately, there was no time provided to ask him what happens if the relationship cannot be established or if the relationship is found to be random.) He criticised Richard Florida, famous for his research on the close relationship between technology, talent and tolerance and prosperity for the US, Canadian and EU societies, arguing that Florida overestimates the importance of creativity in the contemporary economy.

Especially interesting, in the light of current events in Paris, was a workshop on Immigration, Gang Activity and Criminality.

Research conducted by Scot Wortley from the University of Toronto and supported by Scott Decker, a top US criminologist from the University of Missouri – St. Louis (who was also involved in the EUROGANG project), showed a considerable relationship between the physical gettoisation of immigrants in contemporary Western cities and gang/criminal activity. That raised the question of whether and how governments should intervene in preventing the segregation of groups on the basis of territory and national/racial marks.

Given that each workshop lasted for three hours and had many speakers, the variety of workshops did not make much sense, as they all took place at the same time and involved again more lecturing than discussions.

At the first plenary session on the last day the role of NGOs in building social capital was discussed. Fariboz Birjandian from the Calgary Catholic Immigration Society talked about the role of NGOs, focusing exclusively on the integration of immigrants, the so-called immigrant service agency and refugee community organisations. The aspect of voluntary work was heavily stressed. Irene Bloemrad from the University of California in Berkley treated the question of political incorporation from the perspective of two equally dysfunctional systems based on the assumption of neutral government: the first she labelled as French republicanism and the second as American market pluralism. Her argument was essentially that political decisions are collective actions, such as in parties and lobbies, and that there is no reason to impose a hierarchy on what kind of collectiveness is and is not acceptable (as in the case of cultural collectivities).

A special treat for all the participants was the presence of Lord Bhikhu Parekh from the London School of Economics (and the House of Lords), an important author in the field of political and social science in reference to multiculturalism (MC). He lectured on four contemporary anti-multiculturalism discourses, the first three from the right-wing perspective and the fourth from the left. The first of these claims that multiculturalism leads to terrorism – this position negates all the merits of MC because of some of its detrimental aspects. The second one claims that MC is about Muslims and is a version of 'the clash of civilisations' theories – it inflates the importance of those Muslims who are extremist and relates crimes to Islam. At the same time it neglects the vast majority of those Muslims who have a hard time trying to live their lives as ordinary believers. The third one claims that our experience tells us that we should stop immigration and that MC encourages it – this position is empirically obsolete and normatively wrong; all the prosperous countries were built on immigration. The fourth position tells us that MC undermines class solidarity by breaking classes into national/cultural groups.

Parekh also attacked the common interpretation of MC as the non-judgmental coexistence of cultures and offered his own definition: that MC means that no culture is self-contained or self-sufficient and therefore that we need institutionalised intercultural dialogue. To conclude in a somewhat poetic manner, I will refer to an anecdote that Parekh told: Christian missionaries came to an Indian province, where it was the custom to invite guests to dispute religious issues with the community priests in front of the ruler. First the guests ask the questions, then the hosts. So, the missionaries asked the priests: Do you believe that God is one or many? They answered: Your question is absurd and blasphemous; it is absurd because you assume that God can be either one or many, and it is blasphemous because you attempt to reduce God to human categories. The missionaries in this anecdote refused to continue the conversation. And Parekh added that MC is about asking questions, but also about taking questions from others; and it may be added the Metropolis conference provided a good framework for this activity.

*Selma Muhić Dizdarević*

## The Political Space for Women's Agency in the Framework of EU Eastern Enlargement

'Constructing Supranational Political Spaces: The European Union, Eastern Enlargement and Women's Agency' is the title of a project that was run in 2000–2005 by the Gender and Sociology Department at the Institute of Sociology AS CR. The project made a comparative study of the Czech Republic and Poland. It was headed by Prof. Joanna Regulská[1] from Rutgers University in the United States, and it was financially supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF) USA and the Grant Agency of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic.

The project focused on the process of EU Eastern enlargement, exploring the ways in which women in two accession countries, the Czech Republic and Poland, have engaged as political actors in the construction of a supranational political space. It devoted special attention to the restrictions on what women can do (through an analysis of constraints, such as a patriarchal political culture, the legacy of socialist uneven development, the limitations stemming from the EU's primarily economic focus, and institutional, rhetorical restrictions) and to what women are able to do successfully owing to the new opportunities created by globalisation trends and by the post-1989 transformations. In an empirical and institutional analysis of the processes, actions, and responses in connection with the EU initiated by women and by EU institutions in the two states, the study presents an account of the ways in which agency is mobilised and competing interests are negotiated in the process of constructing political spaces. Through its focus on agency the study articulates the process through which agents act, choose, and connect with other actors. The study explores women's agency and asks how women construct dynamic sets of strategies. By focusing on the complexity of women's agency the research was designed to uncover new forms of interaction between the nation-state and on a supranational scale.

The significance of the project can be summarised in two main points. First, it represents one of the first extensive examinations of the discourse on EU Eastern enlargement and gender and presents an account of the ways in which women activists and NGOs, state politicians, and EU representatives use and re-work EU and gender discourse as a means of advancing their goals and formulating political agendas. Second, the study helps to clarify how women understand politics and their political activities, how they can construct their agency, interests, and identities beyond the nation-state, and how these identities are translated into mobilising practices across various scales.

The project was co-ordinated from Rutgers University and three teams worked on the project research: at Rutgers University – Prof. Joanna Regulská and Magda Grabowska, a PhD student; at Warsaw University – Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara and Joanna Mizielinska, PhD The project co-ordinators in the Czech Republic were Mgr. Alena Křížková, Mgr. Hana Hašková and PhDr. Marie Čermáková from the Institute of Sociology AS CR; Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer, PhD. and PhDr. Eva Kalivodová from the Gender Centre at the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts; and PhDr. Lenka Simerská a Mgr. Marksová-Tominová from Gender Studies o.p.s.

The project began in May 2002 with a meeting in Warsaw, where the research topics and methodology of the project were discussed and hypotheses and theoretical concepts of the research were defined. The main research methods elected were: document analysis, in-depth interviews, focus groups, and content analysis of the press. The research goals laid out in the project were designed to encompass the environment of EU enlargement and of all the important actors in this process and in the process of formation of a women's agenda in connection with EU enlargement in the pre-accession period

of 1996–2004. The first stage of the research involved the analysis of documents related to the country's accession to the EU from the perspective of gender contents and equal opportunities policy. This was intended to map the gender discourse in the EU, which is passed on to the candidate countries through its written and more or less binding documents, and also to trace how these procedures subsequently emerge and appear in documents in the Czech Republic and Poland. For this reason the analysis looked at documents from the European Commission referring to equal opportunities policy and the regular reports of the European Commission on the preparation of the Czech Republic/Poland relating to EU accession, along with other documents, such as the Employment Action Plan from this period.[2] It was also necessary to map the media discourse during periods when important documents emerged or were published or when other important events took place in connection with the Czech Republic's/Poland's accession to the EU or in the area of equal opportunities for women and men. Therefore, throughout the course of the project extensive analysis was conducted on the three most widely read daily newspapers, examining the occurrence, context and content of references to the European Union and women.[3]

In the autumn of 2002 a second meeting on the project was held in Prague, the aim of which was to complete the creation of the project's theoretical framework and, especially, to create the methodological grounding for the most demanding part of the project – in-depth interviews with representatives of NGOs and politicians. The decision was made that in each of the two countries approximately thirty in-depth interviews would be conducted with NGO representatives. The NGOs were selected on the basis of an exhaustive list of organisations dealing with women's or gender issues, but it also included NGOs that in recent years had worked on a gender-oriented project and at the same addressed the issue of EU accession; the respondents were contacted by telephone. The in-depth interviews were conducted in the middle of 2003. As the research attempted also to describe the dynamics of the relationships of these organisations and their reciprocal awareness, the focus group method was applied. In the spring of 2004 the research team in the Czech Republic invited representatives from the ten most active Czech NGOs for a group discussion, which followed a prepared outline led by an experienced moderator. A total of seven representatives from the most active women's and other NGOs accepted an invitation and took part in the discussion, all of whom had participated in the in-depth interviews during the months before. At the start of 2005 the focus group discussion was repeated with the same participants. This procedure made it possible to compare over time the views women's NGOs have of their position and the space for the political agenda within the framework of EU accession, but it was also possible to observe the group dynamics of the representatives of these organisations, which actively co-operate with one another or are at least in contact within the same field of interest.

For the Czech team the next stage of research consisted of the planned interviews with politicians and officials in public administration who either directly or indirectly (creating documents, policy proposals, directing campaigns, creating political debates) took part in the negotiations on EU accession. In the summer of 2003, the Czech research team conducted ten in-depth interviews with politicians in the Czech government who as part of the pre-accession negotiations and over the course of the negotiations period were responsible for gender issues and equal opportunities policy. The aim was to cover all the significant types of actors at various levels of the Czech Republic's accession to the EU in connection with the emergence of gender issues at the Czech political level. The project researchers therefore met in the au-

tumn of 2003 in Brussels for a regular meeting and to conduct ten interviews with European politicians and officials. In the summer of 2004 another ten interviews were conducted with representatives of the delegation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic on their view of the space opening for women's issues and issues of equal opportunities for women and men in the Czech Republic in connection with EU accession and the actors in this process.

The year 2004 was then heavily devoted to analysing the massive data files and presenting the preliminary results of the research to the scientific community at conferences and seminars. The research team underwent training to work with the *ATLAS.ti* program for conducting sociological analyses of qualitative data. The analysis of Czech data and Polish data was conducted separately using the anchored theory method – categories of meanings, subjects, and dimensions were formed, which allowed the researchers to arrive at a list of codes. The research team was very interested in ensuring that the results were to at least a certain degree comparable. At the group meetings discussions were aimed at creating a unified structure of codes and their dimensions, which were then to be monitored in the in-depth interviews in the next step of the analysis. In June 2004 a seminar was organised at the Warsaw Academy, where the main team researchers in the project presented the preliminary results of analyses of the data from in-depth interviews in non-governmental organisations, which constituted the project's main data source.

The project researchers presented the results of the research at other conferences and seminars, for example, at the 2nd Pan-European Conference on European Union Politics 'Implications of a Wider Europe: Politics, Institutions and Diversity' (The Johns Hopkins Bologna Centre, 24–26 June 2004),[4] and at McGill University in Montreal a seminar was organised on the topic 'Building Leadership in Non-Traditional Ways' (Women's Research Centre, 10 November 2004);[5] a lecture was given there for the Political Science Department (12 November 2004).[6]

In the autumn of 2004 the main project researchers met at Rutgers University for a two-week research meeting to intensively work on the comparison of results from the two countries and to discuss the form that the final studies from the project would take. At the end of the meeting an international conference was organised at Rutgers University, 'From Cold War to European Union: Women and Gender in Contemporary Europe' (1–2 October 2004), which was designed as a forum to present and discuss the project and its results with the wider academic community, many of whom are working on similar topics in the United States and Europe. The Czech team presented the paper 'Interrogating Women's Collective Agency in Central and Eastern Europe'.[7] The conference also saw participation from, for example, Prof. Ann Snitow from the New School of Social Research in New York, Prof. Nanette Funk from City University in New York, Prof. Nira Yuval-Davis from the University of East London, Dr. Francisca de Haan from the Central European University and others.

The final meeting for the project took place in April 2005 at the Institute of Sociology in Prague, where the researchers discussed the preparation of the project's final studies and co-ordinated the individual comparative analyses that had been prepared by that time.

This author found the project to be an important experience in team building, and, as the Czech team co-ordinator, and enjoyed the experience of progressing from a position of partial knowledge of the research topic and issue to a more comprehensive level of knowledge. The process was very much about sharing information informally, accumulating individual fragments of knowledge and putting them together to fill in the puzzle. These fragments included the different stories, actors and their competencies and incompetencies, abilities and inabilities, actions, informal debates, written information (newspaper analy-

sis), unpublished (secret) government papers, and descriptions of different activities, relations and strategies by actors. Gathering these fragments into material for analysis was a continuous process of confrontation with newly emerging facts and information from even unexpected sources. The stages of the project overlapped and intertwined and provided new impulses for new research questions and for interpreting the research findings.

*Alena Křížková*

**Notes**

[1] Prof. Joanna Regulská is originally from Poland, where she was a prominent figure in the Polish women's movement. Although she now resides in the United States, she continues to follow and actively support the women's movement in Poland. She works in the Department of Women's and Gender Studies and Geography and the Centre for Comparative European Studies at Rutgers University.

[2] The results of the analysis of documents were published in D. Lorenz-Meyer 2003: 'Policy Initiatives and Tools to Promote Women's Participation and Gender Equality in the Process of the Czech Republic's Accession to the European Union', pp. 59–83 in *Women's Civic and Political Participation in the Czech Republic and the Role of European Union Gender Equality and Accession Policies*, edited by H. Hašková and A. Křížková. Sociological Papers 03/9, Institute of Sociology, Czech Academy of Sciences

[3] The results of the media analyses are published in H. Víznerová 2006: 'The Reflection of Events Connected with the Czech Republic's EU Accession, Equal Opportunities Policy, and Women's Issues in the Print Media between 1996 and 2004', in *Gender Equality Policies and Discourses in the Czech Republic*, edited by H. Hašková and A. Křížková. Sociological Studies. Sociologický ústav AV ČR – forthcoming.

[4] Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer: 'Gender Equality and Its Discontents. Inconsistencies in EU and Czech Policy Initiatives to Promote Gender Equality in Accession'; Joanna Regulska, Joanna Mizielinska and Magda Grabowska: 'Gender Gaps. On Some Paradoxes of Eastern Enlargement'; Hana Hašková: 'Women's Civic Participation and EU Enlargement Impacts on the Promotion of Gender Equality in the Czech Republic'.

[5] Keynote speech by Hana Hašková and Alena Křížková: 'Building Leadership in Non-Traditional Ways: The Case of the Czech Republic', a workshop for the Women's Research Centre, McGill University, Montreal, Canada.

[6] Alena Křížková: 'Constructing a Supranational Space for a Women's Agenda: The Process of Czech Accession to the EU', a lecture presented on invitation to the Political Science Department at McGill University in Montreal.

[7] By Hana Hašková, Dagmar Lorenz-Meyer, Alena Křížková and Lenka Simerská.

## Women Scientists Discuss How They Navigate through the Science Labyrinth – Parliament of the Czech Republic, Prague, 10 October 2005

On the sunny Monday morning of 10 October, 2005, a group of prominent Czech women scientists met at the Parliament of the Czech Republic to discuss issues related to gender equality in research and development and the position of women in Czech science. 'Paths through the Labyrinth: Why There Are Still So Few Women in the Sciences' was the title of the conference, which was organised by the National Contact Centre – Women and Science (NKC) of the Institute of Sociology, Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, and it was the first event of its kind in the Czech Republic. It was held under the aegis of Anna Čurdová, an MP and President of the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, and Martin Jahn, Deputy Prime Minister for Economics. In addition to offering a forum for discussion, sharing experiences and building alliances, the organisers intended the conference to be an opportunity to mobilise women scientists to suggest measures that could be implemented in research and development (R&D) in order to improve the working conditions of women scientists. There was strong interest in the conference, with 180 registered attendees. In fact, the organisers had to refuse further registrations owing to a lack of space. Journalists, scientists and high-ranking officials in R&D were invited.

Anna Čurdová opened the conference just after nine o'clock with a welcome speech

stressing the need to address the issue of equal opportunities in R&D because of the crucial role it plays in economic development and the well-being of society. This was followed by two keynote speeches, one by Professor Gerlinda Šmausová from the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University in Brno, and the second by Dr. Hana Havelková from the Department of Gender Studies at Charles University. Gerlinda Šmausová, in her paper, 'Who's Afraid of Marie Curie?', examined the omnipresence of the abstract construct of 'gender'. She used Sandra Harding's term 'gendered universe' to discuss the relationship between science and gender in three perspectives: 1) the gendered aspects of science, as an institution specialising in knowledge production, 2) science as an institution of a gendered labour market, and 3) the group and individual characteristics of researchers as gendered beings. She closed with a look at the impact of gender on constructions of objectivity. In the second keynote speech, 'Czech Women Researchers between East and West', Hana Havelková, explored whether there are any specifically local gender features of knowledge production. She examined cultural (gender) and institutional (the organisation and funding of science) aspects of knowledge production. She also presented statistical information concerning the representation of women in Czech science and in comparison with other Central and Eastern European countries, and pointed out that numerous statistical indicators show that the Czech Republic fares worst among the CEE countries in terms of the position of women in science.

The keynote speeches were followed by a section titled 'Views from the Inside', where Professor Eva Syková, director of the Institute of Experimental Medicine of the Academy of Sciences, Professor Věra Majerová, head of the Department of Humanities at the Czech Agricultural University, and Ing. Jana Žlábková from the Agricultural Faculty of South Bohemian University in České Budějovice, all shared their own experiences. In 'How to Have More Successful Women in Science', Eva Syková followed up on Gerlinda Šmausová's examination of gendered binaries and explored the obstacles that women, owing to a different gender socialisation, have to overcome in the masculine environment of science. She concluded by presenting her 'ten commandments' for a successful career for women in the sciences, which attracted considerable attention and even provoked laughter among the audience for their poignant relevance; the need to 'find a suitable partner who will agree with women's work involvement (or find another partner)' and the need for women to support other women were among the most memorable.

Eva Syková's witty presentation was followed by the arrival of Martin Jahn to open – for the second time that day – the conference, a mistake that arose from a mix-up about the conference's starting time. He approached the issue of women in science purely from the perspective of economic development. 'Mobilised' by Eva Syková's speech, the audience was animated and eager to ask questions, and Martin Jahn was forced to explain why the Government Council for Research and Development had not addressed the question of women in science at all. The Government Council apparently imagines that establishing kindergartens and nurseries is the only solution to the issue, which reveals just how unaware the Council is about the real depth of women's issues. Jahn's presentation could have been seen as funny, were this not such a serious problem. For state administration, however, it is clearly not a pressing issue. Jahn's argument was that any measures implemented must be systemic and not haphazard. He promised to deal with and address any suggestions for measures proposed at the conference, and on 19 December 2005 the organisers presented such proposals to the responsible bodies in R&D.

In 'Generational Co-operation in Research: Hopes and Disappointments', Professor Věra Majerová attended to the issue of

young scientists and the importance of intergenerational co-operation. She discussed the establishment of the Sociological Laboratory, which she heads, and the opportunities that the laboratory grants young researchers.

These presentations were followed by animated discussions in the plenary session. Most surprising was the debate concerning the introduction of affirmative action measures for filling decision-making positions. Although the opinion was voiced that quotas are dangerous because they only allow a person to be judged by sex and not on merit, the majority of those who expressed an opinion supported the idea of percentage targets for women's representation in top and decision-making positions.

Two foreign guests accepted the invitation to the conference and spoke in a section titled 'Support Activities'. Karine Henrotte Forsberg, the President of the International Federation of University Women and the head of the Equality/Parity Grouping at the Council of Europe, introduced the activities of the University Women of Europe association. She was followed by Johannes Klumpers, the Acting Head of Unit C-5 Women and Science from the European Commission, whose presentation titled 'Women and Science Activities in the European Commission' introduced the activities of the Unit and the Commission in support of gender equality. His very comprehensive introduction to the Women and Science Unit activities conveyed the distinct impression that the issue is important at the EU level, at least to some people. The block of Support Activity presentations was closed by Marcela Linková, who, in her presentation 'Engaged Science: Knowledge Production as a Political Act', discussed the activities of the National Contact Centre – Women and Science, which she co-ordinates, in terms of its links to epistemological issues in the sciences. She argued that support action for gender equality in R&D must be correlated with feminist epistemological concerns in order to ensure the efficiency of such measures.

The afternoon session was dedicated to the issue of work-life balance. Invitations to the round table were accepted by many prominent Czech women scientists, including Prof. RNDr. Helena Illnerová, DrSc., Prof. PhDr. Ing. Věra Majerová, CSc., Prof. RNDr. Blanka Říhová, DrSc., RNDr. Hana Sychrová, DrSc., Prof. MUDr. Syka, DrSc., and Prof. Dr. phil. Gerlinda Šmausová, Priv.-Doz. The introductory presentation was given by PhDr. Marie Čermáková, director of the Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences. All the speakers stressed that the issue of work-life balance is one of the crucial obstacles to the full participation of women in the sciences and equal opportunities for them. Professor Říhová stressed the need to create conditions for young women researchers to be able to have a family while continuing to build their careers, and warned that if no measures are adopted, we could be faced with a situation where young women researchers opt not to have children. Professor Illnerová mentioned the different expectations that are placed on women and men with regard to parenthood and the importance of parenthood for women especially. She also advocated the need to attend to this issue so that women can contribute to knowledge production.

In the ensuing debate women researchers voiced their concerns about the negative impact of parenthood on their opportunities to build a career, the different expectations put on them, the double standards rampant in research institutions, and the neglect of these issues. The debates resulted in the adoption of six recommendations for action:

Recommendations for grant agencies in the Czech Republic:

1. Raise the age limit for grants targeting young researchers by two years for each child an applicant has;
2. Develop a plan to address the issue of how to continue research grants in the case of parenthood – by offering an adequate range of options corresponding to the con-

ditions of each scientific discipline, which would be part of the terms of use for grant money (for example, allowing an extension of or a short-term break in a grant project, say, for a six-period, in the case of parenthood), and by striving to increase the awareness of these possibilities within the research community;

For universities:

3. Exempt years spent on maternity or parental leave from inclusion in the time limit for the completion of a PhD (e.g. Masaryk University in Brno has already adopted this measure);

For the Government Council of the Czech Republic for Research and Development, universities, and the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic:

4. Analyse the possibility of a systemic solution to the issue of harmonising an academic career with family obligations, for example, in the form of a tax deduction for the costs of services related to childcare and housework;
5. In compliance with the European science policy promote the higher representation of women in decision making in universities and in research and development with the aim of achieving a higher representation of women in decision making in R&D, for example, by setting percentage targets;
6. Develop measures and projects with the aim of increasing the number of women studying and working in the technological sciences and engineering and the natural sciences.

The proposed measures are currently being elaborated in documentation that will be presented by the National Contact Centre – Women and Science to these stakeholders with the aim of negotiating the possibility of implementing them.

The conference was highly appreciated by the women researchers present for specific reasons: one was the opportunity to meet other women researchers, share experiences and become acquainted with their research; another was the chance to express appreciation for the NKC's activities in working for change in the area of gender equality in R&D.

*Marcela Linková*

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