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Citizenship, Representation and Gender

Abstract: The political transformations of late 1980s and early 1990s marked a 'new political opening' for Central and Eastern Europe. In each country of the region, a new institutional order was built in its specific historical and cultural context. However, all countries disregarded the problem of gender balance in bodies of power. As a result, the share of women in descriptive representation shrunk considerably throughout the region. Initially, all countries had a low percentage of women at power but the situation began to diverge over time. This paper presents research findings from a study of women and men parliamentarians in Poland, Latvia and Macedonia, focussing on political representation and, in particular, on barriers which obstruct women's more active involvement in the public sphere as well as actions, such as quotas, aimed to mainstream gender equality into politics. The problem of women's participation in the legislature as well as barriers to women's involvement turned out to bring in an interesting differentiation into gender equality discourses in the three countries under study.

Keywords: Central and Eastern Europe; descriptive representation; quotas; gender equality.

The traditional definitions of citizenship have been flatly criticised in feminist literature in recent decades. One of the reasons driving this criticism is that gender neutrality of this notion is only illusory (Walby 1994; Lister 1997; Young 1998) and that citizenship assumes a division into the public and the private sphere, placing citizenship in the former, which is considered to be 'masculine'. Feminist criticism has focused particularly on the fact that the private sphere is often seen as equal to women's sphere and that women are underrepresented in the public sphere (Philips 1991). Authors who reflect on the presence of women in the public sphere also ask if women represent the same experience that would translate into their shared interests in political life (Philips 1998).

Another driver of feminist criticism is that traditionally understood citizenship fails to encompass a broad range of activities undertaken by women for the community. Women's active participation often occurs outside the traditionally understood 'public sphere' as women are active in non-governmental organisations or broad social movements, and that kind of activity, in the feminist view, becomes an important defining component of citizenship (Voet 1998; Young 1998; Ackelsberg 2005). Nevertheless, no matter which definition of citizenship we adopt, it is beyond any doubt that participation in political representation of the society, e.g. in the parliament, is an important component of civil rights. Those rights include not only the right to vote but also equal rights to represent voters and their interests.

While literature (Pitkin 1972) distinguishes between various types of representation, this analysis will focus primarily on sociological representation, quantitative (descriptive) representation and representation of interests (substantive representation). According to the definition provided by Joni Lovenduski:

> The claim that women should be present in decision-making in proportion to their membership of population is claim for descriptive representation (sometimes called proportionate, pictorial or microcosmic representation) (2005: 17)

and

> The concept of substantive representation captures the content of the decision of representatives. The substantive representation of a group is most simply described as the representation of its interests (2005: 18).

Women's participation in descriptive representation and representation of their interests (substantive representation) was among important issues covered in studies conducted with female and male parliament members from a few European countries.[1] Do women MPs consider women's current share in power sufficient? What do they think about women's impact on decision-making that affects everyone, i.e. both women and men? Those questions concern the full range of civil rights, i.e. to be a representative and to represent women's interests. This, in turn, leads us to a question on whether and to what extent women's interests and perspectives are represented in parliaments and who represents women and their interests.

This paper will focus on the problem of political representation of women in Central and Eastern European countries using the example of three countries: Poland, Latvia and Macedonia.[2] The particular situation of post-communist countries, the problem of political representation, the divide into the public and the private sphere as well as citizenship in those countries have been commented on in feminist literature in the last 20 years (Einhorn 1993; Rueschemeyer 1994; Scott 1997; Watson 1997; Lukic, Regulska, Zavirsek 2006; Fuszara 2006; Heinen 2006). Before the transition in the region, which began in 1989, the ruling class was not accepted by the vast majority of those societies and its power was seen as imposed. As a result, participation in the public sphere was perceived by many as not quite worthwhile. A much higher value was associated with the private sphere, developing outside control and outside the system of imposed governance (Kurczewski 1993). Under such circumstances, power exercised by men in the public sphere was not an undisputable source of prestige or high status although it provided income and a high position in the formal structure. The decision to enter the ruling circles was primarily a political one. Given

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[1] Within the project entitled "Gendered Citizenship in Multicultural Europe: the Impact of the Contemporary Women's Movements" (FEMCIT) interviews were held with MPs (women and men) in England, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Macedonia and Poland, with additional Polish funding enabling a set of interviews in Latvia.

[2] A total of 30 interviews were held in Poland, 20 in Latvia and 19 in Macedonia (of which 17 were held with MPs and 2 with women from NGOs supporting the introduction of the quota system). In each country the study included MPs from each of the political parties represented in the parliament. As some parties had no women MPs, more interviews were held with men than women, despite all efforts to maintain gender balance.

the deep divide into 'us' (the society) and 'them' (the government), such a step was often disapproved of and undermined the person's social status in the eyes of many compatriots. In a non-democratic system, not only women but also men were 'second-class citizens' in that they had no impact on political decisions and occupied a subordinate position vis-à-vis the narrow ruling group (Slavova 2006). Therefore, the subdivision into the 'masculine' public sphere and the feminine 'private sphere' cannot be instrumental in explaining the unequal position of women and men during that period.

The subdivision into the 'private' and 'public' sphere was distorted also for another reason: a great many political activities undertaken by the opposition took place in private homes, entangling entire families and exposing the 'private' circle to political repressions. As a result, people's 'private' places were also an arena of public activity. Also for those reasons the subdivision into the private and the public as something that determines women's subordinate position versus men can hardly account for the relations between the sexes before the systemic transformation in the countries concerned.

This discrepancy between the social and the political situation and, consequently, between the situation of women in CEE versus Western Europe and the USA was typically found in those countries before the transition and the transformation period (before 1989 in Poland, and before 1991 in the other countries concerned). Nonetheless, its consequences are still felt today to some extent. This fact is worth noting as it may help to account for the trends which became visible during the early years of the transition. Importantly, each of the countries underwent a period of thorough transformation relatively recently. Its beginning was marked by the negotiations between the opposition and the communist government in Poland in February 1989, followed by partially free elections and reconstruction of democratic governance. The transformation was even more rapid in Latvia (formerly a Soviet republic) which announced its independence in July 1989, and regained it fully in 1991 after the independence referendum and dramatic attempts to hamper the process. The same holds true for Macedonia, formerly a part of Yugoslavia, which officially announced its independent status as a country in 1991. Those transformations brought, above all, a new role for the national parliaments: from façade institutions which did not exercise real power under communism, they transformed into the legislative authority proper.

Descriptive Representation. Women in the Polish, Macedonian and Latvian Parliaments

In all countries of Central and Eastern Europe the share of women in national parliaments declined soon after the systemic transition. In Bulgaria, for instance, the share of women at the onset of the transformation dropped from 21% to 9%, in Czechoslovakia it fell from 30% to 6%, it stood at 32% in East Germany versus 21% in Germany of the early 1990s. The decline in Hungary was from 21% to 7%, and the figure for the USSR shrunk from 35% to 14% in 1990. This may be interpreted as a sign

of women being suppressed from spheres which regained importance, authority and due role in democracies. During the communist period, parliaments used to be façade institutions, deprived of real power. The selection of parliamentarians was intended to reflect, to some extent, the sociological representation and provide a 'mirror image' of the society, including manual workers, peasants and intelligentsia, women and men, the young and the old etc. Nevertheless, despite those official guidelines the shares of women and men in those countries' parliaments were never balanced. When new democratic institutions were built after 1989, gender equality was not taken into account. During the early period, this aspect was considered irrelevant and any discussions about it were seen as artificially concocted by the communist government or inspired by Western ideas. As time went on, the discourse on gender equality changed dramatically, and the EU accession helped those countries to rely on supra-national structures where the issue of gender equality occupies a central place. Moreover, discussions regarding political representation of national and ethnic minorities began to emerge. The two multinational countries under study (Macedonia and Latvia) had, above all, poor representation of their minorities, especially in the early period, and an especially poor representation of women from minorities in the parliament. During the early years neither of the countries had women in parties representing minorities but this changed in Macedonia after gender quotas were introduced.[3] In today's Latvia there are still no female MPs from parties representing the Russian-speaking population.

Table 1

Shares of Women in Parliaments of Macedonia, Poland and Latvia (%)

Year	Macedonia	Poland	Latvia
1990	4	13 *(1991: 10%)*	
1994	3	13	14 *(1993)* 8 *(1995)*
1998	7	13	17
2002	18	20 *(since 2001)*	21
2006	28	20	20
2008	32	20	22

(2009 data represent the Author's own calculations based on data available from the respective parliament websites, September 2009[4]).

In all the three countries concerned, women's share in parliamentary representation is considerably lower than that of men. However, in Macedonia women's representation now exceeds 30% as a result of the quota system.

[3] In Macedonia, quotas were first introduced into the electoral law in 2001.

[4] Women's share in the parliaments of Latvia and Macedonia is higher than that achieved immediately after the elections: due to political mechanisms in those countries (particularly the ban on being a parliamentarian while acting as a government minister), women's share in the parliament often changes during the term of office of the legislative assembly.

The parliaments of Latvia and Macedonia are unicameral. In the case of Poland, all data in tables refer to the lower chamber of the Polish parliament, the Seym.

Table 2

Positions Held by Women in the Parliaments of Macedonia, Poland and Latvia

Positions held by women	Macedonia	Poland	Latvia
MPs	32%	20%	22%
Speakers	0	0	0
Deputy speakers	1 (33%)	1 (25%)	1 (33%)
Chairs of parliamentary committees	6 (29%)	2 (8%)	4 (25%)

(Author's own calculations based on respective parliaments' websites, September 2009)

It turns out that a higher share of women in the parliament opens the door for women to take up a greater number of high posts. Nevertheless, parity among speakers, deputy speakers and chairs of parliamentary committees is still far away.

Therefore, the shared problem in all the three countries is the 'glass ceiling' which does not allow women to take up the right proportion of the highest parliamentary posts (speakers, deputy speakers, chairs of committees). A higher share of women among MPs is conducive to their advancement to positions of importance in the parliament.

In all the three countries under study the shares of women and men in various parliamentary committees vary considerably. Some committees are typically 'masculine' with a very low proportion of women, while others have a better gender balance. On the one hand, this may indicate that women are stereotypically placed in certain spheres and, on the other, it may reflect women's specialisation as their proportion in some committees is higher than in the parliament overall.

Table 3

Percentages of Women in Selected Parliamentary Committees in Macedonia, Poland and Latvia

	Macedonia	Poland	Latvia
Defence committees	7%	18%	0%
Social policy committees	43%	46%	38%

(Author's own calculations based on respective parliaments' websites, September 2009)

In each of the countries in question some parliamentary committees have no women members. It is noteworthy that alongside the defence committee which has no women in Latvia, the two other countries (i.e. Macedonia and Poland) have no women in agricultural committees. One explanation we encountered in Poland was that the agrarian party had only one woman MP. During the discussion about women's share in the parliament it was pointed out that many problems faced by women living in rural areas never get attention at the parliament. For instance, women in rural areas are not entitled to certain things because in most cases it is the man who formally owns the farm. Women, who do the actual farming work, do not have the status of hired workers and, as such, are not entitled to many rights they would otherwise have.

In the discussions, the fact that these issues are overlooked or played down by the parliament was linked with the absence of women in the agricultural committee.[5]

Only one of the studied countries (Macedonia) has a committee which consists of women only. Disappointedly, this is a committee that deals with equal opportunities of women and men.

Quotas and Parities, as Seen by MPs

The experience of all countries shows that even when formal rights to vote and to be elected have been granted, this does not automatically translate into equal participation of women and men in bodies of power. This is hardly surprising: this mechanism of exclusion was envisaged already in times when the struggle for women's voting rights was still going on. In the early 20th century Leon Petrażycki spoke in favour of granting voting rights to women and said:

> Should our conclusions regarding the participation of women in government, in civil service, in national representation etc. become law, it would be naïve to think that such rights would bring genuine equality for women (…) The relevant rights will be actually achieved only by relatively few women, much more courageous and prominent than the men who compete against them as candidates for members of parliament or administrators. The remaining women will be pushed away by men who are less courageous, less talented and do not have such an impressive track record of achievements; men whose only merit is that they are men (Petrażycki 1985: 379).

Empirical proofs for accuracy of that prediction are readily found in many modern-day parliaments.

In some countries, underrepresentation of women leads to efforts aimed at increasing the quantitative representation of women. One way to improve the chances of having an equal representation of women and men in bodies of power is to introduce quotas and parities. As it turned out, the countries covered by our research are highly varied in this respect and so is the discourse on quotas among politicians.

Our interviews with MPs also covered the question of introducing quotas and parities, understood in line with Drude Dahlerup's definition, i.e.

> in a narrow, technical sense, gender quotas are simply a type of equal opportunity measure that force the nominating bodies, in most political systems the political parties, to recruit, nominate or select more women for political positions (2006: 6).

Nowadays, literature draws on various arguments for and against quotas (Dahlerup 2008: 19–24). Arguments in favour also reflect the reasons why women's presence in bodies of power is considered important. In literature, those arguments are grouped under three types of rationale (Outshoorn 1996: 36), which deserve to be mentioned here, also because they will be related to interpretation of research results. The first argument refers to justice. According to that argument it is only fair for a society which consists of women and men in almost equal proportions (or with even with

[5] For instance, the statement by Ewa Tomaszewska, an MP and senate member for many years, made during a discussion held in 2009 at the Institute of Public Affairs on quotas and parities on candidate lists in elections.

slightly more women than men) to have both groups among their representatives, in equal proportions. A similar argument was given by Leon Petrażycki who said that the need to ensure equal rights for women was so obvious that it did not require any proofs from its adherents. Instead, those who did not understand the problem should be educated. Similar arguments can be found in contemporary debates: equal access to posts is considered obvious and does not need to be justified whereas a rationale must be given by adversaries who believe that it is right for a group that constitutes a statistical minority (men) to have an overwhelming majority in bodies of power. The need to change those proportions and ensure equal opportunities does not require any proof (Kurczewski 2008).[6]

At the turn of the 20th century the justice argument was undermined with meritocratic reasoning, i.e. women's poor education was taken as a reason why they were unable to exercise power. At present, this meritocratic argument works in favour of women and their broad participation in governance because their levels of education are equal to those of men, and in many societies even higher. Hence, underrepresentation of women means that the potential of highly educated citizens is not leveraged in the governance processes, which translates into a loss for the society at large.

The second group of arguments in favour of balanced participation in governance is related to the representation of interests. In line with this reasoning, a group's interests are not represented in decision making if individuals from that group do not have an adequate share in decision-making bodies. This argument entails the question about authentic representation (Kurczewski 2008), i.e. whether women are better representatives of women's interests (and men are of men's), and also the question of representation of group interests. Whatever we say to justify the need to have parliaments that represent the nation as a whole rather than certain groups only, it is beyond any doubt that lack of representation translates into absence in decision-making and, in many a case, into lack of opportunities to articulate one's interests.

And, finally, important arguments in contemporary debates refer to the differing experiences, perspectives and priorities of women and men. This group of arguments is highly interesting for a number of reasons, one being that such differences are discussed within the 'difference feminism' and right-wing ideologies which stress the core difference between women and men. In both those perspectives gender is considered an important factor that influences the spheres of interests, competencies and activities. The exclusion processes do not only result in the absence of women but they also exclude women's experience from decision-making that concerns everyone, women and men alike. When men define 'the political' and 'the public', they tend to exclude women believing that the sphere of women's interests, specialisation and competencies is 'not political' and no changes are possible in delineating the private from the public.

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[6] 'Wherever we feel there is a need for representation, what needs to be justified is not that a category is, or should be, present but, rather, than a category must be excluded; what call for an explanation is not that a category should be represented in the same share as in the society but, rather, that one category should be underrepresented in favour of another.' J. Kurczewski (2008) pp. 123–124.

(Conversely) they can result in a tendency to ignore, devalue, or define as outside the appropriate domain of politics those activities that challenge the boundaries of public and private. Finally, to the degree that such frameworks successfully exclude people or issues from the agenda of politics, they can act powerfully to limit effective participation in the formal political realm (Ackelsberg 2005: 70).

The two latter groups of arguments are related to the representation model called 'resamblense', when

a representative should be drawn from, share the characteristics and further the interests of the group represented (Stevens 2007: 68).

The idea to ensure equal opportunities for various groups is increasingly incorporated into contemporary theories of democracy. Sartori writes that in order to ensure an equal start, not to mention equality of outcomes, various individuals must be treated unequally and that we are moving ever further away from the legal order based on 'the same for all' (Sartori 1994: 440, Polish edition). Similar ideas are expressed by Rawls, who writes that undeserved inequalities call for reparation and resources must be allocated in a way to improve the long-term expectations of the underprivileged (1994: 144–145, Polish edition). When thinking about various methods that could be used to include disadvantaged groups, especially those underrepresented in representative bodies, we asked a question about quotas as a way to provide equal opportunities for women and men.[7]

While quotas are currently being introduced in various ways and at different stages of selecting candidates for various posts, yet in the context of the countries in question we should only consider quotas introduced voluntarily by political parties (voluntary party quotas) and quotas introduced into electoral law or the constitution (legal quotas) (Dahlerup 2008). At present, such quotas are becoming increasingly popular in many parts of the world:

Today, around 40 countries have introduced gender quota in elections to national parliaments, either by means of constitutional amendment or by changing the electoral laws (legal quotas). In more than 50 other countries major political parties have voluntarily set out quota provisions in their own statutes (party quotas) (Dahlerup 2006: 3).

The three countries under study differ significantly in this respect. In Macedonia, quotas introduced to the electoral law in 2001 are now mandatory for everyone. In Poland, some political parties represented in the parliament have introduced quotas to their statutes whereas Latvian parties which are represented in the parliament have no quotas and there are no mandatory quotas at the country level. Those differences in factual data are accompanied by differences in discourses on quotas, as reflected in statements made by the female and male MPs interviewed for our study. Gender quotas and related discourses play the most vital role in Macedonia, which is why we will start our description with that country.

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[7] In this text I have focused on women's participation in the parliament but our questions also covered the representation of ethnic and national minorities in representative bodies.

Discourse on Quotas. The Role of Women's Organisations in Introducing Gender Quotas

Macedonia is an example of a country where introduction of gender quotas is central in all opinions expressed by female and male MPs who were asked about the situation of women and gender equality. Their responses reveal a success story, achieved through joint efforts of women in that country: a coalition of women MPs, women's organisations and women academics. In this discourse, a very important role is ascribed to co-operation between women and the pressure exercised by women and women's NGOs. There is a kind of rivalry between political parties as well as the parties and NGOs as to who should take the credit for making this success happen:

We often clash with LP (Liberal Party) on who deserves more credit (for introducing quotas—MF). SDSM (…) was the first one ever to amend our statute to guarantee women's participation in all bodies of the party. Then all the parties which are located to the left or which are more centrist accepted our proposal. (…) An all-women movement, (…), Macedonian Women's Lobby, was founded as an NGO that incorporates all women's organisations. We work together (woman MP, Macedonian).

That memory of 'joint effort to empower women' is also shared by women who got to the parliament only after the introduction of quotas, among them women of other nationalities:

I know that the initiative (to introduce quotas—MF) came from women working during the previous term of office of the parliament, no matter which political option or party they came from. They all worked together to make this goal a reality (woman MP, Albanian).

The discourse does not only uniformly present the introduction of quotas as a largely conflict-free, supra-party and supra-ethnic initiative undertaken by women but also presents the outcomes of this system as positive, with hardly any exceptions. Those positives are often accentuated by men MPs who say that the problem was unnoticed in the past:

Before the introduction of quotas nobody discussed their negative consequences (a minority MP, male)[8]

and by men who appreciate this change in political culture:

The outcomes (of quotas and, consequently, of women's greater presence—MF) are visible, and I will tell you why. When I became a member of the party in 2001, only one woman was a member of the central bodies; discussions back then were horrible, I mean, they would have a discussion and start swearing (…) Now (…) the political life has become more good-mannered, also in the parliament, no matter if you want to admit it or not, so this is (…) a positive outcome (a minority MP, male).

Women parliamentarians recall that the introduction of quotas as such was not opposed but the next step, i.e. ensuring equal opportunities for both sexes by placing women and men on high positions on candidate lists, sometimes led to bitter conflicts:

There were people who were against it. I mean it. It's hard to believe. There was opposition against this issue, and then against myself. There were twists and turns, which is why I left my party (…) This is when

[8] As the interviews were anonymous and some minorities had only one-person representation in the parliament, the text does not reveal the ethnicity or nationality of minority MPs to protect their identity.

I understood that my political career didn't mean anything if I could only secure a place for myself and if the old solution on women's representation remained unchanged. And this is when I stood up against the central presidium of the party, the highest governing body of the party (…). Sometimes you may risk losing your position but you need to make choices and fight in order to achieve things that are more important: choosing between our own benefits or the public good. In that case it was about women (a female MP, Macedonian).

However, the support was so widespread that even the only MP (male) who expressed criticism about quotas and women's greater presence in the parliament supported the quota system as a transitory solution:

I'm against it, to be honest, and I personally think that perhaps two in a hundred women are real representatives of women (…) but I'm against any discrimination and I voted for it only because it's a transitory phase (a minority MP, male).

However, this was an isolated opinion and even that critical MP eventually voted in favour of the quota system, which means that the discourse in Macedonia can be seen as fairly uniform: both women and men, female politicians and NGOs, have a shared opinion on reasons for introducing quotas and on the history and outcomes of quotas. The main disparities concern the originators of the idea and initiators of the whole process (political parties or NGOs?). Nevertheless, NGO have a very similar idea of the events, the only difference being that the non-governmental sector thinks it has played the leading role:

In 1990 and 1991 a few women's organisations were founded at the local level and they dealt with security and social issues. (…)SOZM, [9] with 13 women's organisations, built the first network of women's movement (…) After the second parliamentary elections the situation of women did not improve and this is why we decided to work on it (…) In 1998 we presented our proposal through the MP Nikolina Trajanovska. In theory, the proposal was accepted but nothing changed in reality. That was a wake-up call for us (…) so we managed to find the best model. During the 2002 elections a total of 17.5% women were elected (i.e. 22 MPs). Teuta Arifi was the first Albanian woman ever to become a member of the parliament (interview with an activist from a women's NGO).

Regardless of who should take the credit for the introduction of quotas, this shared discourse emphasises co-operation between women and a significant impact of women's organisations in the legislative process, lobbying and preparation of women candidates for the elections. Importantly, this initiative encompassed the region as a whole: women took action in order to introduce quotas in a few Balkan countries in parallel. Members of women's NGOs recall that the quota campaign in Macedonia was part of a larger campaign in the Balkans, which was then described in literature as the 'sandwich strategy' (Antic, Lokar 2006). This strategy involved top-down pressures on quotas from international organisations, and bottom-up pressures from women's organisations.

When we look at Poland, the discourse on quotas is quite different. Polish MPs have always been divided as to whether quotas should be legislated. Those disparities were noticeable during our research and are also significant today, during the pro-quota campaign undertaken by the Women's Congress (Kongres Kobiet) in Poland.

[9] SOZM—the umbrella organisation of many women's organisations in Macedonia (National Council of Women of the Republic of Macedonia).

As evidenced by many previous studies (Fuszara 1994; Kurczewski 1999; Fuszara 2006), as well as studies which are being conducted at present, only a few female MPs in the Polish parliament consistently supported quotas in previous terms of office and support them now:

I am in favour of women's greater presence in politics and I know they represent a half of the society (…) I wouldn't necessarily want a man to speak on my behalf on all issues (a female MP, Poland).

Nevertheless, the prevailing number of MPs, even those who do notice discrimination, tend to focus on dilemmas associated with the introduction of quotas:

I've got mixed feelings here. On the one hand, one must admit that women need to clear a path to public life for themselves more firmly than men do, and a quota system may be helpful here. On the other hand, (…) a strong woman with clear-cut views will have no problems getting elected to the parliament (…). In the current social situation, I think that women should get support so the quota system is not a bad idea after all (a male MP, Poland).

Some Polish MPs are against quotas:

Making those kinds of pre-arrangements for parity does not really facilitate good representation of those interests, those communities or the whole society (a male MP, Poland).

It is worth remembering that Poland has seen a few attempts to introduce quotas as a mechanism to equalise opportunities of women and men in politics. Within the first such attempt, in 1990s, quotas were incorporated into the draft law on equal status of women and men which proposed a minimum 40% presence for each gender not only on candidate lists but also in all levels of government (Fuszara, Zielińska 1994). The drafts were repeatedly placed on the parliamentary agenda but the none of them was finally adopted. The second attempt to introduce quota in the electoral law (with a minimum of 30%) was made in 2001 by MP Olga Krzyżanowska. The proposal was rejected with hardly any discussion in the parliament. At that time (2002) quotas on candidate lists were introduced voluntarily by three political parties *SLD* (Democratic Left Alliance), *Unia Pracy* (Labour Union) and *Unia Wolności* (Freedom Union). As a result, the percentage of women among candidates rose very significantly and resulted in a higher percentage of women MPs in 2002 (Fuszara 2008).

2009 was a special year for the idea of gender quotas in Poland. In June 2009 Women's Congress was held in Warsaw, organised by a network of women, some of them members of women's NGOs but most others never involved in women's movement. Among them were women from business organisations, academic professors, actresses, film/theatre directors, journalists, current and former government ministers and a great variety of other women from very diverse communities, representing many occupations, interests and political options. The Congress, preceded by a series of regional conferences, attracted enormous interest. With over 4,000 women taking part, the Congress inspired actions which evolved into something that looks like a broad women's movement. One of the two postulates put forward by the Congress was to introduce gender parity in candidate lists in elections. A total of approx. 150,000 signatures were collected under the draft law on gender parity.[10] Collection of signatures

[10] A legal regulation stipulates that 100,000 signatures must be collected. After the first 100,000 have been validated, further signatures are not counted, which is why only an approximate figure has been given here.

in public places, such as shopping centres, theatres, museums etc., provided an excellent opportunity for publicising the issue. Thanks to the support from some media, the initiative turned into a wide-ranging social campaign explaining the mechanics of parity and its effects. The draft law on quotas underwent the first reading in the lower chamber of the Polish parliament on 17 February 2010.[11] None of the parties or groups of MPs voted to discard the draft after the first reading, yet one small grouping said they would only support further work on the draft because it was a citizens' initiative. As part of pro-quota campaign, meetings with politicians were held (e.g. with the president, the prime minister, heads of parliamentary caucuses and political parties, speaker of the lower chamber, heads of the legislative committees of the lower and the upper chamber). Those meetings provided new data on the attitudes among authorities and party leaders towards gender parity or quotas in Poland. The prime minister, who is also the chairman of the largest political party representation in both chambers (Platforma Obywatelska—the Civic Platform) promised his support. Yet, he also said that quotas in his party would be difficult to introduce at that moment since even female members of the Civic Platform were against it. This statement elicited open opposition from three prominent PO members, all of them women, who wrote a press article, declaring their firm support for the idea of quotas (A.Kozłowska-Rajewicz, J. Mucha, L. Kolarska-Bobińska 2009). A woman member of the Civic Platform suggested modifying the citizens' draft to introduce a quota of 35% for both genders on candidate lists. On 3 December 2010 the majority of MPs in the lower chamber of the Polish parliament (the Seym) voted in favour of the 35% quota in Poland.[12]

However, one fact which political parties will certainly bear in mind is that the idea of gender parity on candidate lists enjoys considerable public support in Poland: in 2009 it was supported by a total of 61% of those polled (support was expressed by 70% of women and 52% of men).

Therefore, one may say that the discourse on gender quotas in Poland has been quite stormy and has followed a sinusoidal cycle: on a number of occasions it seemed that the discourse had died down and would be hard to revive. However, the problem of underrepresentation of women in the government has always been present on various agendas and underrepresentation has been criticised by members of women's organisations, the Women's Party (Partia Kobiet) or plenipotentiaries for equal status. In 2009 a great number of women gathered around this issue which seems to have become a powerful tool for women's movement. This movement goes far beyond women's organisations which, undoubtedly, have rendered considerable services in the defence of women's rights in Poland yet are far less powerful than the Women's Congress, which has become a forum for women from many different communities and backgrounds. As a result, politicians (even those who do not support gender quotas)

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[11] The function of the rapporteur for the draft in the parliament on behalf of a citizens' committee was Prof. Małgorzata Fuszara, the author of this paper.

[12] This regulation has been now referred to the Senate and will be discussed by the Senate Committee on 8 December.

are forced by women's movement to take a stance on women's underrepresentation in the political sphere.

Quite a different picture has emerged from the research work conducted in Latvia. The interviewed parliamentarians, female and male, expressed lack of support for gender quotas, saying in unison that underrepresentation of women among MPs was not a very significant problem. This may be illustrated by an opinion expressed by one male MP from a party which has no women among its representatives:

> I am very much against any gender quota systems. Gender is not the most important criterion when making decisions regarding candidate lists. We have never made any special efforts to include women on our lists (a male MP, Latvia).

Only one of the 20 interviewed parliamentarians recalled the attempt to introduce gender quotas into the electoral law: a long time ago such a proposal was put forward by left-wing women but was ultimately rejected and never considered very important. A very typical statement was made by one female MP who liaises with women's NGOs:

> I'm afraid we are too feminised and women reach high positions faster (a female MP, Latvia).

However, it is important to point out that Latvia struggles with specific problems posed by its citizenship legislation. The country refuses to grant citizenship to many of its residents or forces them to take special examinations before granting citizenship. The citizenship legislation has created a deep divide between the Latvian-speaking and the Russian-speaking population which effectively prevented solidarity between women in joint efforts to exercise their rights regardless of class, ethnic group or language (Novikova 2006).

We asked politicians not only about their attitudes towards gender quotas but also wanted to know who, in their opinion, should represent women. In this way, we attempted to draw a picture of quantitative representation in the context of opinions regarding the representation of women's interests. A few patterns emerged from politicians' responses. Acceptance for gender quotas often goes hand in hand with the view that women should be represented by women. This view is expressed consistently by those who believe that women's interests can only be represented if the right percentage of women participate in various bodies of authority. The second group of parliamentarians accept gender quotas but believe that women may be represented by women as well as by men. They attach importance to the rule of justice which justifies the equal quantitative representation of women and men in authorities, regardless of what they think about representation of various group interests. The third category consists of MPs who reject quotas and believe that women may be represented equally well by women and by men. Presumably, those interviewees attach most importance to representation of women's interests and believe that since such interests may be expressed by both genders, quantitative representation is not a particularly relevant issue. And, finally, the fourth group includes MPs who reject quotas but believe that women should be represented by women. Those who express this view seem to negate the need for quantitative representation of women and for representing women's interest, which is tantamount to accepting the status of women

as 'second class citizens'. Fortunately, this view was expressed by the smallest number of interviewees but it is important to bear in mind that some modern-day politicians take such positions.

Overall, it needs to be stressed that most MPs in each of the countries under study, whether female or male, believe[13] that women may be represented equally well by women and by men.

Barriers to the Activity of Female MPs, as Seen by Female and Male Parliamentarians

Another important issue which was reflected in our studies concerns the barriers faced by women MPs.[14] Women make up a minority in countries' parliaments and, moreover, for a long time those institutions were shaped exclusively, and later almost exclusively, by men. Research has demonstrated that women believe (and men often share this view) that the barriers encountered by women are much greater than those faced by men. Various hurdles occur at the stage of running for elections and then when fulfilling the responsibilities of an MP. Such hurdles are faced by women because of their gender and because they attempt to represent women's interests.

Barriers Faced by Women Running for Parliament and Positions of Power

The key barriers mentioned by the interviewed MPs (both women and men) are rooted in cultural considerations, and, especially, in the definition of social roles of women and men. They also result from double standards which prescribe that women are the only ones to bear the responsibility for the family, care and housework:

People would ask: How can you, as a woman, work full-time if you have kids who are at school from 8 am to noon? Who will take your kids home? Who will take them to extracurricular classes? (…) Regretfully, our society is very conservative and puts all the responsibility on women's shoulders, and that is a barrier to equal opportunities at work (a female MP, Latvia).

Women object such double standards:

My male colleagues ask me: How do you reconcile family life and your work at the parliament? So I ask them back: And how do you reconcile the two? (a female MP, Poland).

However, since many women and men share the view that women are responsible for the private sphere, women who have families are less likely to get involved in politics. The importance of this explanation is indicated not only by opinions expressed by our interviewees but also findings from other studies which have established that

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[13] It is noteworthy that similar findings were also obtained in other countries covered by this study, i.e. Spain, Sweden and the UK.

[14] A preliminary analysis of barriers discussed during the interviews in Poland and Macedonia was published in: M. Fuszara (2008a). *Równe szanse czy bariery? Kobiety w parlamencie Polski i Macedonii* [Equal Opportunities or Barriers? Women in the Parliaments of Poland and Macedonia].

women MPs are much more likely than their male counterparts to be single and/or have no young children (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2008).

The traditional understanding of social roles is often linked to gender stereotypes:

unfortunately, women have poorer (access to politics—MF) because there is this stereotype of a male politician and I find it regrettable (a male senator, Poland).

This may also lead to difficulties in finding women candidates for parliament in communities where the traditional division of roles (public-male, and private-female) is deeply rooted:

It was easier in areas where women are emancipated (i.e. to find women candidates after the quota system was launched—MF), and in areas with patriarchal customs it was much more difficult (…) Now, it has become easier since we have reached a critical mass of women in our party, which means that the election campaign is easier and it just has to bring results (a female MP, Macedonian).

Acceptance for traditionally understood social roles of women and men is often combined with beliefs regarding power and governance:

The prevailing attitude here is that women are the ones who do various things (…) whereas men are the ones who make decisions (a female MP, Latvia).

Research has demonstrated that this view is shared by many women who made it to the parliament from right-wing parties: it is obvious for them that they work to support male leaders without aspiring to high posts. This system of beliefs builds both external and internal barriers obstructing some women's attempts to climb higher, notably among right-wing circles.

Another group of barriers are those of institutional nature. They are reflected primarily in the mechanics that drives the line-up of candidates for elections. One such mechanism, described by a male Latvian MP as 'replication' of the current political set-up, offers greater chances for election to people who are already involved in politics than to those who are new. This represents an additional hurdle for women, who are less numerous in politics and often run for parliament for the first time:

This system replicates itself because men are more likely to get elected, they gain popularity and recognition, and tend to get re-elected (a male MP, Latvia).

It is worth adding that recognisability of individuals who were previously involved in politics is not the only driver of such replication. According to the seemingly objective criterion which relies on the number of votes received in previous elections, the highest positions on candidate lists are often allocated to people who received the highest number of votes in the preceding elections. As the highest numbers of votes usually go to people on top positions, a vicious circle is formed. This mechanism can be used as a classic example of indirect discrimination: men are not openly given preference but they will continue to be put on top positions in future since more men than women were placed high on candidate lists in the past.

Another barrier related to the structure of candidate lists in elections results from the fact that men often have no awareness of their female colleagues' competencies.

This problem affects not only parliamentary elections but also other situations when candidates for high posts are sought. Men's relationships with other men are primarily based on exploration of opinions and competencies. Men are more likely to have discussions, do sports or do business with other men without even realising that there is highly competent female colleague who would make an excellent candidate for the post.

The last barrier related to candidate line-up in elections is associated with the way women's roles are perceived in various functions, including the parliament. Women are often not seen as politicians but, rather, as 'decorative elements' or the ones who 'soothe the savage beast':

> This is how women get included. Someone will as: Is there a pretty woman out there? I'd say: Why are you asking? And they'd say: I need one for the candidate list. So I tell them: Then you probably need a woman politician, not a woman? (…) This means we are viewed as embellishments (a female MP, Poland);

> I suppose they confuse parliamentary elections with beauty pageants. They'd take any young woman as long as she's pretty and attractive (a female MP, Macedonia).

Such practices threaten the position of women for a number of reasons. Firstly, they show that women are sometimes put on candidate lists not because of their competencies but for other reasons, such as their good looks. Arguments against gender quotas, such as 'there are no competent women out there' turn out to be unjustified because politicians who seek women candidates do not ask about their competencies. Secondly, this reinforces the stereotype of women as those who take up marginal positions as 'decorations' or those who will 'soothe the savage beast' and make the atmosphere more pleasant. That forms another vicious circle: women with certain characteristics are sought for candidate lists and then those very characteristics are used to prove that women are incompetent and cannot be independent thinkers or significant political figures.

Further obstacles to women who want to build a position as a politician stem from the fact that efforts are made to find candidates people who will not represent a threat to party elites. In the most extreme cases this means that women who have already achieved a high position will get excluded from candidate lists:

> As women, we are essential for their image, such as their 'European image' (…) so when women are needed, they are admitted (…) but once they have fulfilled their role, or become too strong in their respective fields or in the image of the organisation, they get their wings clipped and are put on the back bench, and their career is over. This is sad because a woman here stands no chance of building an image of her own, even if she could become strong and could easily build a strong position. It's just that men line up against her to prevent her from gaining independence [15] (a female MP, Macedonia).

This ends in a self-fulfilling prophecy, i.e. there are still not many women with considerable political experience whereas women who do get admitted to politics have no experience, which proves the claim that 'women aren't expert at politics' (Fuszara 2006).

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[15] A similar mechanism was brought to our attention during our fieldwork in Spain where our interviewees said that ever 'new' women are sought for elections to prevent female incumbents from building a strong position for themselves.

When women without political experience are brought into the parliament, women's organisations and women who are sensitive to gender equality try to educate such newcomers and win them over by referring to shared experience:

Women's forums put forward women candidates. Not all were accepted. In some parties the majority of women candidates were entered by their respective parties. Women in Albanian parties were very weak (…) The decision was made by the party. (…) Back in those times men politicians would choose women and sometimes they would choose women who were family members or relatives and were trusted regardless of competencies. Fortunately, all women who got to the parliament, no matter how they were elected, managed to unite. The Macedonian Women's Lobby got actively united women, even though women had been entered by their respective parties (a female MP, Macedonia).

And, last but not least, one needs to mention the considerable role of inner barriers that prevent women from running in elections. For instance, self-criticism among women tends to be high, especially when contrasted with much weaker self-criticism among men:

Although they have achieved so much and they have all the expertise, women nevertheless experience some kind of fear (…) thinking they might not be up to the task… Oftentimes women are more (…) aware of the consequences of a risk (a female MP, Poland).

This inner barrier is reinforced by the greater external expectations and more rigorous attitudes towards women in comparison with men. Thus, we are dealing with double standards of assessment, depending on gender:

Some men hold high posts and are excused for their incompetence, garrulousness and gobbledygook. I could imagine that if a woman spoke like that, she would be 'stoned to death' at once. She would get much harsher treatment. I don't like when psychological expectations towards women are higher than those towards men (a male MP, Latvia).

Women who have become parliamentarians face similar barriers as those encountered by women running for elections.

Barriers Encountered by Women MPs in Connection with Their Gender

Gender stereotypes entail problems for women in fulfilling their roles as MPs. This is reflected in attempts to question women's competencies, talents, or even intelligence, and in the belief that men perform better as politicians. As a result, women are endlessly forced to prove that they are competent and up to the mark, and are able to fulfil public roles. In contrast, men are not expected to provide such proofs:

There is this common belief that if a woman wants to be half as good as a man, she needs to be twice as good as him (a female MP, Macedonia).

Similar opinions were expressed by women MPs in other countries covered by our study.

Among common obstacles preventing women from getting to high posts or even from performing efficiently as politicians are various kinds of downgrading manipulations. The treatment which women are exposed to includes infantilisation, a focus

on women's appearance and a patronising attitude that plays down women's roles.[16] Such manipulations take a variety of forms. For instance, women are addressed by diminutive forms of their first names or hear pseudo-compliments which, in fact, are a way to demonstrate a condescending attitude towards women's statements and their political roles. A similar role is played by statements which attach excessive importance to women's appearance and physicality:

Discrimination of women in politics is done in ways that are very hard to combat (…) For instance, I have never heard of men being blamed for being old or fat whereas this is notorious when talking about women. I have never heard of men being accused of being too masculine or insufficiently masculine. When talking about women, this is standard practice (a female MP, Poland);

(…) Women (…) are not pardoned for things that men get away with. Women have to have a perfect hairdo, they need to pay constant attention to being properly dressed (a female MP, Latvia).

Another problem that makes it harder for women to establish themselves in politics is that the roles of women in the public sphere are not described as those of stand-alone politicians but, rather, are contrasted with their male counterparts. Women' strengths are described in terms of 'soothing the savage beast' or being an embellishment. Even if we acknowledge that 'soothing the savage beast' may reflect the important way in which women transform the political arena and its mechanisms, we must not fail to notice that such statements refer to women mitigating someone's (men's) behaviours rather than acting independently in politics. Nevertheless, this factor is viewed ambiguously as such statements also mean that women's participation brings profound changes in the political arena and politicians' behaviours.

A very significant barrier to women's involvement is the 'glass ceiling', preventing them from being admitted to high posts, whether in the parliament (the presidium) or in political parties:

There is a strong dominance of men and it is men that get functions of greater responsibility (a female MP, Macedonia);

It is very hard for a woman to secure a position for herself. Her male colleagues would make sure that (…) this doesn't happen. (…) This is one of the areas where you typically face discrimination. There is no single political party that would have any [gender] balance in its decision-making bodies or governing bodies (a female MP, Poland).

And, finally, the factor that makes it harder for women to build their positions in politics is that they are excluded from unofficial, social gatherings where decisions about public life are reached. Such 'behind the scenes of behind the scenes' often plays a crucial role in politics: important topics are discussed during a game of football or golf, on a hunting trip or at a men-only boozy dinner. Oftentimes women would come to a meeting where a decision is to be reached only to hear that the decision has already been made by those who took part in such closed-door gatherings. As a rule, women are those who get excluded from such behind-the-scenes decision-making.

[16] The paradox associated with the cultural definition of 'femininity' in the context of power was discussed, e.g., by Pierre Bourdieu, who wrote that describing a woman politician as feminine is among the subtlest ways to challenge her right to use the male attribute of power (2004: 117, Polish edition).

Barriers in Representing Women's Interests Women (Substantive Representation)

The most significant barriers encountered by women in political activity are those which prevent them from representing women's interests. Consequently, women cannot fulfil the hopes of female voters who expect that greater participation of women in the parliament will entail better representation of their interests. Needless to say, all barriers discussed above make such pursuit of interests impossible or, at best, more difficult. If women are excluded from meetings where the most important discussions take place, if they are not placed in posts with decision-making authority and have no say when party priorities are set and decisions are made, they cannot easily meet women's postulates. Moreover, our interviews brought a number of examples showing difficulties in representing women's interests. Many of them are caused by reluctance towards gender equality mainstreaming mechanisms and problems in soliciting support for such projects. This is because the number of people who are sensitive to gender equality is insufficient and those matters are viewed as being of interest only to women and affecting women only:

> For some reason, it's only women who raise those issues while men aren't interested; (it would be necessary—MF) to build the will for greater co-operation (a female MP, Macedonia).

In Macedonia, which introduced a gender quota system relatively recently with a roaring success, some interviewees pointed out that this development does not settle the problem of quotas in electoral law. Ever since gender quotas were introduced, their presence in the legal system has been under constant threat because various amendments to electoral legislation may entail an attempt to erase the quota provisions. As a result, the defence of gender quotas requires a fair amount of attention and work from women MPs.

Finally, interviews conducted in various countries provided examples of topics which are of importance for women but, for various reasons, may be considered controversial. As such, they are not addressed by parliaments and any debate on such topics is hindered by either political parties or speakers of lower/upper chambers. In the benign scenario, such issues are not eliminated but are never included among priorities for the party or the parliament. Consequently, they never get discussed because other issues are considered as more important than women's interests. Examples mentioned in Poland included women's reproductive rights and difficulties in passing a law on prevention of domestic violence. In Macedonia, regulations on trafficking in women were given as an example in this context.

Instead of Conclusions

The political transformations in Central and Eastern Europe brought, on the one hand, 'a new political opening' in each of those countries since democratic institutions were built anew. On the other hand, the creation of a new institutional system occurred in each country in a very specific context, with its historical baggage and ideas

about the ideal democratic system which should replace the old political regime. All the countries shared an attitude which was sometimes labelled as 'gender neutral' and which may be described from a feminist perspective as 'false neutrality' or 'gender blindness'. The reasons behind this situation were complex: reluctance to adopt solutions known from the communist system where parliaments were brought close to 'sociological representation' and the expectation to have an unrestrained political freedom, including the freedom to establish and shape political parties—something that was not allowed under communism. However, failure to appreciate the importance of gender equality turned out to be an important factor. Therefore, one of the important missions of the then-fledgling women's movement was to mainstream gender equality into political debates, which proved difficult in all countries and took a somewhat different course in each case. In Poland, the debate initially focused on reproductive rights whereas in the Balkans, including Macedonia, the participation of women in political representation and attempts to increase such participation through quotas was the mobilising issue.

The presence of women among MPs and barriers to women's involvement brought an interesting differentiation in gender equality discourses in the three countries under study. Based on the analysis of events and their perceptions by MPs one may say that we are dealing with highly divergent situations. Interviews in Latvia still reflect a discourse which can be described as 'gender blind'. Latvian politicians do not see the need to introduce quotas and believe that barriers and difficulties faced by women stem from conservative attitudes in the society and virulence of the media rather than from the absence of equality and from gender relations within bodies of power. Latvia was the only country where an interviewee (a male MP) described the concepts of gender equality and feminism as inauthentic and 'imported' from the West and another respondent (a female MP) claimed that some areas were 'excessively feminised'. Quite a different situation was observed in Macedonia. Gender equality has been successfully incorporated into the official discourse: international cooperation in this field is valued and the outcomes of the quota system are viewed as positive. Poland seems to have the most complicated situation. While equality solutions are hard to introduce, women's mobilisation around shared goals is strong and lasting. Also, a change in discourse is evident: some years ago, when women's rights were discussed by the parliament, the subdivision into right wing and left wing was revived. Left-wing MPs, both female and male, firmly raised the issue of discrimination against women and the need to combat it (however, they did not introduce major solutions in this sphere when at power), whereas right-wing politicians negated the fact of discrimination. At the moment, discrimination is discussed by both left- and right-wing politicians (Fuszara 2006) and while introduction of gender quotas is difficult, the need to promote women in the public sphere is increasingly noticed by politicians of all persuasions.

The absence of equal opportunities in politics is reflected not only in underrepresentation of women in parliaments but also in barriers which hinder women' entry into the realm of politics and their effectiveness there, thus obstructing the exercise of civil rights by women. As those barriers occur at the stage where women and men

run for the parliament (a lower share of women on candidate lists, less advantageous positions for women on such lists, poorer access to media campaigns etc.), quota systems are designed as a preventive measure. Such barriers also occur once women have already made it to the parliament: they face barriers because of their gender (e.g. women's competencies are questioned, their appearance is critically assessed, their positions are diminished by diminutive forms of address, they may be viewed merely as 'embellishments' or those who 'soothe the savage beast') and encounter difficulties when trying to represent women's interests.

While those barriers were mentioned in all countries, they were raised more often in Poland and Macedonia whereas Latvian interviewees talked about them less often and perceived them as a less pressing. Local female politicians in Latvia had talked about their experience of discrimination equally rarely in earlier studies conducted in that country (Zake 2007). One may assume that the description of barriers is part of the gender equality discourse: in a country with hardly any such discourse, barriers faced by women are rarely mentioned, even though it is hard to imagine Latvia as an exception in this respect.[17] Presumably, the very deep and significant divide between Latvian-speaking and Russian-speaking population, which entails the division into citizens and people with no citizenship or those who have to prove their 'Latvianness', has superseded all other social divides. This subdivision which, according to Latvian feminists, makes it very hard, and sometimes even impossible, for women to work together, may have another consequence, i.e. serious difficulties in building a powerful, focused women's movement aiming for a shared goal, eventually undermining the gender equality discourse in Latvia.

While differences between countries and their equality discourses are, indeed, conspicuous, there are still certain beliefs that are common and shared by all of them. Among them is the belief that a woman needs to be a few times as good as a man to achieve the same. This refers us to the notion of 'patriarchal dividend' proposed by R.W. Connell (1995) in the description of the relationship between the sexes. Patriarchal dividend entails various types of benefits (honour, prestige, power, material gains) which all men enjoy due to their privileged position, no matter if they support such privileges for their group or if they are of feminist persuasion. Connell is of the opinion that social inequality between the sexes is structural: it offers privileges to men who, hence, defend the status quo whereas women strive for change since the balance of gains and losses is different for each the two groups. Connell's claim is confirmed when we look at women who take steps for gender equality in politics, seeking male allies for their cause. A picture that emerges clearly from the opinions expressed by female and male MPs is that men enjoy the patriarchal dividend in the public sphere due to their gender whereas women face specific barriers in their roles as political representatives. Consequently, it is harder for women to become politicians, and those who are successfully elected as MPs struggle to include women-specific problems and interests among issues to be addressed by parliaments.

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[17] Barriers faced by women MPs were discussed in interviews in all other countries at a much greater length than in Latvia.

Pierre Bourdieu (2004), who analysed various dimensions of masculine dominance, emphasises that the greatest change which occurred in this respect in recent years is the fact that masculine dominance is no longer imposed as obvious. This obviousness is questioned, which goes hand in hand with radical changes in the position of women. Despite the aforementioned barriers and difficulties faced by women in exercising their right to be a representative and to represent women's interests, changes in this sphere are clearly noticeable. This is clearly demonstrated by the increasing share of women in descriptive representation, by gender equality being mainstreamed into political representation, by issues of particular sensitivity for women being placed on the parliamentary agendas. Such examples also manifest women's ability to exercise their civil rights not only in the theoretical but also in the practical dimension.

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