



The Czech Republic,
Poland, Slovakia
and Ukraine

1989 
EUROPE ON THE MOVE



Gender Issues 2009: Gender Equality Discourse in Times of Transformation, 1989-2009

 HEINRICH
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The Czech Republic,
Poland, Slovakia
and Ukraine



Gender Issues 2009: Gender Equality Discourse in Times of Transformation, 1989-2009

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Introduction

The year 2009, which is drawing to an end, brought about many recaps and analyses as we celebrated the twentieth anniversary of democratic changes in the old Eastern Bloc. Despite many new studies dealing with the successes and failures of the transformation, an evaluation of the past two decades from the perspective of gender equality was still missing. Looking at the changes initiated in 1989, such as the introduction of market economy and the adoption of neoliberal ideology as the foundation of the new political, economic and social system, it is important to see how they influenced the situation of men and women.

The publication *Gender Issues 2009: Gender Equality Discourse in Times of Transformation, 1989-2009: the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine* is yet another initiative¹ of the Heinrich Böll Foundation regional Office in Warsaw trying to fill this gap and, at the same time, it is also the result of the Foundation's cooperation with partner organisations from Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Ukraine, which, since 2007, have been monitoring the progress of the implementation of gender equality politics and adherence to EU standards in this field. The country reports for 2009, compiled in this publication and prepared by ASPEKT from Bratislava, Gender Studies from Prague, Feminoteka Foundation from Warsaw and Liberal Society Institute from Kiev, are concerned with the changes which took place in the past twenty years in the discourse of gender equality and women's rights. Other areas analysed in the reports include women's political participation, economic situation, violence against women, reproductive and sexual rights, including the rights of sexual minorities. The authors focused mostly on events which they consider to be the milestones of changes; which influenced the situation of women, the language of the debate, the perception of women's rights and their place in social, political, economic and private life.

¹ In 2009 the Heinrich Böll Foundation Regional Office in Warsaw published a book titled *Women in Times of Change, 1989: Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, East Germany and Ukraine*, containing essays by female journalists, writers, academics and activists of feminist and women's organisations. The publication presents their personal views of the past two decades in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, East Germany and Ukraine. The publication is available at the Foundation's website: WWW.boell.pl

Evaluating the facts is cause for reflection. For women in the region the freedom regained in 1989 was connected – paradoxically – to restricting their economic, social and reproductive rights and marginalisation in the political sphere. Even though women constituted the majority in the structures of the democratic opposition in Poland and former Czechoslovakia; even though they carried out many responsible tasks and, just like men, risked their freedom, professional careers and family life, after 1989 they did not find themselves within power structures and had a negligible influence on the decisions made in the following years. Compared to the political representation of women before 1989, the numbers of women in parliament decreased dramatically in the new political reality. During the past twenty years very few women have been members of governments. This phenomenon occurs practically in all the countries. It is pointed out by Olga Krzyżanowska, the first female deputy speaker of the Polish Sejm; Jiřina Šilková, signatory of Charter 77 and well-known Czech sociologist as well as by Jana Cviková and Jana Juráňová, the founders of ASPEKT, the first feminist organisation in Slovakia. Although the transformation process took a different course in Ukraine, it is significant that after the elections in 2007, which resulted in the parliament achieving real power in the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada, only 7.6% of the deputies are female.

The worsening of the material status of women, connected to, among other factors, the rise of unemployment among women, the gender wage gap and horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market on the basis of sex can be seen in all the countries of the region. The feminisation of poverty has also increased. Every third woman in Ukraine receives wages bordering on the absolute biological minimum. In 2008, in Poland 64% of all unemployed persons were female and 21% of the society was living below the minimum subsistence level. Such data prove that the reality is different than the slogans pronounced by supporters of neoliberal free market economy, according to which women have possibilities for development and simply need to learn how to take advantage of them.

The Fourth UN Conference on Women, which took place in 1995 in Beijing, played a key role for many gender equality initiatives. The *Platform for Action* adopted during the conference was an impulse for governments who signed the final document of the conference to undertake – more or less willingly – activities leading to overcoming the discrimination of women. As the authors of the Ukrainian report write, one of the effects was the creation of institutional mechanisms for gender equality and then, in consequence, the adoption of pertinent legislation – for example on preventing domestic violence in 2000 and the law on equal rights and opportunities of men and women in 2005 as well as national action plans.

In addition to the Beijing conference, the process of European integration was a significant impulse for the Czech Republic, Poland and Slovakia. It forced EU candidate countries to make national legislation conform to the standards of the European Union, also in the sphere of gender equality politics. Even though the realisation of any international commitments depends, to a large extent, on the political will of subsequent governments – and in Ukraine, additionally, on the rather unstable political situation – women's organisations have still gained concrete tools in their struggle for the realisation of their demands.

The analyses prepared by authors from the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia and Ukraine also refer to the history, transformation and significance of the women's movement in Central-Eastern Europe after 1989. The development of the women's movement in all the countries was aided by Western feminist and women's rights organisations – from the USA, Germany, Canada and other countries – which actively supported democratic changes from the beginning of this period. Additionally, the beginnings of the women's movement in Poland stand out in a special way. One of the most important impulses for women speaking up on behalf of women was the draft law restricting abortion, submitted in the Polish Sejm in the early 1990s. For most feminist activists restrictions on terminating pregnancies were the starting point of their activity.

The authors of all the reports agree that a significant change has taken place in social consciousness in the past years. Anti-feminist discourse, typical of the 1990s, has

subsidised and the society increasingly understands the need to prevent discrimination on the basis of sex and to improve the situation of women. This change is particularly well visible in the Czech Republic. Whereas the equality of men and women did not use to be an interesting topic for public opinion and the media, for more or less five years, that is since the Czech Republic's entry into the EU, non-governmental women's rights organisations have begun to encounter social support. Businesses are also much more eager to take part in equal opportunities programmes.

The authors of all the reports unanimously claim that one of the successes of the past two decades has been the change which took place in the language of public debate – though, of course, to various degrees. The activities of women's organisations have played a key role in publicising topics connected to gender inequality in the public and private spheres, for example discrimination of women in the labour market, women's unpaid work and women's low participation in politics and public debate. Women's organisations have gradually managed to introduce taboo and controversial themes into public discourse. These include violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights, forced prostitution, sexual harassment and molestation, and sexism in advertising and in the media. These problems had been present in social and political reality before 1989. However, there was no language available to talk about them. After “normalcy” was reinstated, the façade of “socialist emancipation” peeled off to reveal that in spite of apparent equality, the power relations between the sexes had not changed and – preserved by the system of real socialism – revived with huge force after 1989. They became visible because women started talking about them.

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Warsaw, November 2009

Gender Changes in the Czech Republic after 1989

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Kateřina Machovcová,
Linda Sokačová**

1. Introduction

Much has changed for Czech women and men after 1989, both in a positive as well as a negative sense. Many new phenomena appeared, such as unemployment, and much of the early nineties took place in the name of new movements and groups; new environmental, civil rights, women- or gender- or feminist-oriented NGOs were founded. Sometimes they were founded by former women dissidents who were well-known for their work in the political underground, or by women who had encountered feminism and the women's rights movement abroad while they lived in exile.

Many foreigners who came to the Czech Republic in this era, often American women, provided valuable momentum for the emerging women's and gender movements and thus exerted great influence upon what was happening despite resistance on the part of Czech women activists and academics who often criticised the "militant" style of these activists from abroad. The inability to "listen and learn" from each other seems to be a misunderstanding typical of the 1990s. It must be acknowledged, too, that many of these gender activists assumed the superior role of a mentor in their engagements with Eastern and Central Europe. Jana Hradílková, a representative of the Czech women's movement, made the following comment at the time: "Western feminism imitates the eagerness of the male-dominated system to equal the other half of humankind. Czech feminism seeks to avoid this pitfall."

In retrospect, however, the movers and shakers of Czech gender studies today view the historical influence of foreign feminists as positive. "Impulses were coming from abroad and that was an important change," said Petra Štogrová Jedličková of the Institute of Information Studies and Librarianship at the Charles University at a 2009 roundtable,¹ and added: "We had Canadian, American, and German

¹ Transcript of a roundtable discussion with key activists, academics and writers moving the fields of gender, feminism and equal opportunities forward in the Czech Republic. The discussion took place on May 26, 2009 in NGO Gender Studies and was attended by Marie Čermáková, Pavla Frýdlová, Hana Havelková, Pavla Jonssonová, Alena Křížková, Petra Štogrová Jedličková, Jiřina Šiklová, Marie Vavroňová a Alena Wagnerová.

women coming here.” An expert from the Department of Gender Studies and the Charles University Faculty of Humanities agreed on their positive contributions.

Foreign influence was of critical importance to the Czech Republic also because the first financial support for women’s NGOs came from Germany and the United States. NGOs were very diverse in their foci in the 1990s and experienced few restrictions in terms of grant criteria or donor projects. Thanks to the long term support of the Heinrich-Boll Stiftung the Gender Studies NGO, for instance, has been able to work toward a broad range of goals and to address timely issues as they arose in the Czech society; the organisation has not been forced to adjust its programmes to fit the narrowly defined criteria of grant competitions.

On the other hand, there was a strong rejection of feminism in the society in the 1990s, owing partly to celebrities reporting on the negative effects of the feminist movement and on so-called feminist hysteria. Josef Škvorecký, a Czech writer of great moral authority spoke about the dangers of American feminism, for example. Another important reason for popular resistance to feminism was a general opposition to anything that used to be commonplace in the era of socialism. Everything that worked in the socialist system was automatically dismissed after the revolution. Politicians, such as Marián Čalfa, encouraged women to return to the household, which was viewed as exactly what women wanted. “The call for the return of women to the home was presented as progress even though it really meant a big step back to conservatism,” said Alena Wagnerová,² a writer and publicist who has been living in Germany since the 1980s.

Unfortunately, this sweeping renunciation of everything socialist negatively affected kindergartens and nurseries. The high levels of women’s participation in technical and construction professions as well as the high numbers of women in employment in general were also subject to strong criticism. Today,

² Quote from a roundtable discussion held on May 26, 2009 in NGO Gender Studies (same as 1)

upon reflection, we see this as shortsighted, although a deeper critical analysis and evaluation of the position of women and men before 1989 is yet to be made. Alena Wagnerová, made an interesting comment when she wrote that she had felt freer as a citizen in Germany than in socialist Czechoslovakia but as a woman, her position had deteriorated.

1.1. Radical gender change

Gender relations changed dramatically in the Czech (-oslovak) society after 1989. The new political system, capitalist economy, and European trends and values all played a role in the changing of men's and women's social roles, besides the impact of awareness-raising, educational and political activities of the NGO sector aimed at promoting equal opportunities and gender issues.

Similarly to other European countries, statistical inequalities between men and women have now been recorded in the Czech Republic: greater unemployment among women in comparison with men, a gap in women's and men's pay, a growing segregation of the job market and the increasingly less secure work opportunities for women (especially for migrant and ethnic minority women). Socialist heritage in the form of the double shift for women (consisting of women working full-time and also being responsible for looking after the family and the household) has also had an undermining effect. Although the socialist regime had significantly improved the position of women at the job market and developed a system of childcare institutions, it paid little attention to transforming gender stereotypes. Women continued to carry the main burden of care for their families and households. Socialism had eliminated formal rather than practical inequalities among women and men.

Recently, however, public opinion on the position of women and men has been changing. Five years ago, people as well as the media tended to dismiss gender equality. Today, many NGOs addressing discrimination and promoting equal opportunities for women and men meet with interest and support of

the public. The attitudes of employers have also changed. Around the year 2000, companies simply refused to participate in equal opportunity programmes. Today, some are interested in implementing them and others are at least careful and do not explicitly refuse. Equal opportunities have become an inter-generational issue of interest even for young people of both sexes, although women and girls are often more interested as they experience gender-based discrimination more often than men.

1.2. A conservative turn?

Some opinion polls indicate that Czechs would like to see women going “back” to the household, it is not clear how many people really consider this option. In the Czech society, conservative opinions are confronted with the well-established model of two-career partnerships and the model of an active, emancipated woman who prioritises her role as a mother during the first three years of a child's life. This constellation determines the social position of men as fathers: men are under pressure as breadwinners to work extremely hard when their children are little and they are discriminated against as fathers after divorce.

All these attitudes may be a reaction to the great liberalisation and diversification of the woman's role in the society. Women's participation in the labor force, sports, or leisure activities has been growing as fast as women's financial independence. The man's role has been transforming as well although that seems to be happening more slowly and more quietly. This could be the reason why anti-feminist and even anti-women voices are cropping up, going as far as Milan Kubek, the President of the Czech Medical Chamber, for example. Kubek proclaimed the feminisation of medical professions as harmful for the health industry, prompting gender experts to observe a certain turn to conservatism in the contemporary Czech society. As equal opportunities are enjoying more public support as a result of effective awareness-raising of gender-oriented NGOs, conservative political opposition has strengthened. In spite of these forces, wo-

men's active role in the society and in the job market is deeply rooted here and well-respected.

The following articles outline the transformations and developments in the fields of gender, feminism, and equal opportunities between 1989 and 2009. They are published as a collection by NGO Gender Studies³ with the support of Heinrich Böll Foundation. The authors discuss the most important gender issues in the Czech context, such as equal opportunities for women and men in the job market, violence against women, women's participation in politics, the position of the LGBT community, reproductive rights, and the work of non-profit organisations and informal gender initiatives. Although each author approaches the topic in her own style, all contributions include the following elements: the institutional framework for each issue, the differences in the way it is perceived by decision-makers, gender experts and the public, and the effect of media. Each article ends with recommendations for NGOs and other equal opportunity professionals.

2. Gendered job market – discourse shifts

This article describes the development of discourse in relation to the gender dimension of the Czech job market between 1989 and 2009. The first part looks at academic discourse used by two prestigious research institutions: the Institute of Sociology at the Czech Academy of Science and the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs. The second part follows the development of discourse on gender in the job market in the Czech media. The goal of this article is to elaborate on the topics that

³ Edited by Linda Sokačová of NGO Gender Studies.

received the most attention: discrimination, balancing work and family life, and sexual harassment. The analysis focuses also on the most significant changes in these areas.

The main source of data we selected for our analysis was research by the Department of "Gender & Sociology" of the Institute of Sociology at the Czech Academy of Science, which is published through several outlets: the *Journal of Sociology, Gender, Equal Opportunities, and Research* (published since 2000), and the website <http://www.genderonline.cz>. We have also used research reports by the Research Institute of Labour and Social Affairs (VÚPSV), particularly its studies on women and management. Our choice of sources was based on the reputation both abovementioned institutions enjoy. Considered the ultimate experts on the academic understanding of the gender dimensions of the job market by the media and the general public, their research is well-respected, followed and published.

One of our main conclusions about academic discourse in the last 20 years is that the research carried out in the 1990s focused on comparing the pre- and post-1989 periods and on describing the specific features of the Czech context while later research is largely determined by the entry of the Czech Republic into the European Union and the legislative changes that accompanied it. Texts published in the 1990s, often authored by Marie Čermáková, already outlined all the gender problems academics have been focusing on to this date: horizontal and vertical gender segregation of the job market, feminisation of some professions (and one-sidedly viewing gender in isolation), the gender pay gap, gender gaps in access to education, work and career, etc. More recent studies have looked at these same issues at greater depth, particularly at family and work balance, women in business and management, and sexual harassment. We also noticed an interesting difference in the role of inter-textuality played in the two time periods. In academic discourse in the 1990s, Čermáková usually refers to domestic research by

Havelková, Hradecká, Navarová, Tesařová, Možný, and other researchers, while her younger colleagues typically “rely” on research from abroad by frequently referring to research published in English or French.

3. Domestic violence in the context of violence against women

Domestic violence, and particularly its negative impacts on women and children, has received a lot of attention in the last 20 years. The results of a 2003 study by the Czech Academy of Science showed an alarming state of affairs: 59% women respondents had experienced violence at least once in their life and 38% respondents had experienced violence from their partner.⁴

The fact that domestic violence was ignored in the socialist era made it very difficult to raise awareness about it after 1989, as the experience of specialists working on the issue has shown. In 1993, Marie Vavroňová and Zdena Prokopová first founded a group called Club ROSA for single women after divorce. Soon they observed that “rather than from loneliness or problems related to child-raising, the club members suffered from violence they had experienced either during their [marital] relationship or in the course of and after divorce.”⁵ There was little information available on the specifics of domestic violence at the time, or about how to work with victims, witnesses or perpetrators. ROSA was among the first organisations fighting domestic violence. The others were proFem, Bílý kruh Bezpečí (White Circle of Safety) and Poradna pro ženy

⁴ S. Pikálková, „Comments on selected results of international research on violence against women in the Czech Republic“, [in:] *Gender – Equal Opportunities – gender*, 2 – 3, The Institute of Sociology, Praha 2004, p. 22 – 24.

⁵ „15 years of Helping Women Victims of Domestic Violence“, ROSA, Praha 2008.

v tísní (Counselling Centre for Women in Crisis). All the groups sought professional information from abroad, as they were addressing the despair of the victims on the one hand, and fighting people's distrust and ridicule on the other. Not only were there practically no effective tools in place but the Czech society, recovering from 40 years of heavy-handed government encroaching upon people's private and intimate lives, was not ready to seek solutions to social problems that might possibly regulate private lives again.

An essay by a well-known writer Josef Škvorecký also had a lasting impact on the social climate in the 1990s. In this essay, the author ridiculed American feminists and coined the derogatory term "sexuální harašení" as the Czech equivalent of "sexual harassment." By translating "sexual harassment" into a catchy phrase "haraší ti na věži?" (a metaphor for "you must be going crazy" or "you are making up stories"), Škvorecký intentionally ridiculed the meaning of the term and implied that the sanity of the victim ought to be questioned.⁶ In this way, Škvorecký strengthened popular prejudice that feminist initiatives had to overcome in the 1990s as they strove to establish domestic violence and sexual harassment as legitimate public concerns. And even though feminist groups played a crucial role in changing the image of domestic violence and finding ways to address it, they never managed to establish violence as a feminist issue. To date, domestic violence is understood as a conflict between two people, which not only limits the possibilities of personal intervention, but also precludes institutional preventive solutions. Despite continuous efforts to downplay the seriousness of violence, data collected by the Slovak-Czech Women's Fund in 2008 however, indicated that 85% of Czechs do believe that violence is typically perpetrated by men upon women, and that violence against women in the Czech

⁶ M. Marksová-Tominová, <http://www.genderstudies.cz/tiskove-zpravy/tz.shtml?x=220540>

Republic is a real problem.⁷ In addition, the slowly developing legislative measures toward greater victim protection demonstrate that there is a growing understanding of the issue and a willingness to address it.

3.1. Successful lobbying initiatives

When the Czech Republic entered a new era of democracy in 1989, its legal system had no definition of domestic violence. Attorneys and advocates who strove to help violence victims listed all the specific crimes committed in cases of domestic violence (abuse, intentional assault) to bring the perpetrators to justice. Activists also had to repeatedly highlight the problems arising from the legal duty to obtain the victim's permission to prosecute a family member in a criminal lawsuit,⁸ as many women are threatened into withdrawing their permission. This roadblock disappeared in 2004 with the introduction of § 215a, Act 91 of 2004 that defined „abuse of a person living in a shared household (apartment or house)” as a new crime that had not been included in § 163 (Criminal Prosecution with Victim's Permission) in the Rules of Criminal Procedure (Act 141 of 1961).

The next major milestone in increasing victim protection came in 2006 when the option of a temporary restraining order was codified (and passed in 2007). This new development was paralleled by the establishment of County Crisis Intervention Centers funded by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, which offer counselling as well as shelter services and employ social workers. Unfortunately, the accessibility and capacity of the centres remains insufficient.

⁷ Slovak-Czech Women's Fund: <http://www.womensfund.sk/blade/c/418/pr-zkum-o-vni-mani-nasili-na-zenach-v-cechach-a-na-morave.html>, <http://www.feminismus.cz/fulltext.shtml?x=2103958>

⁸ A. Rezková, „Domácí násilí z pohledu českého práva”. [in:] *Ženská práva jsou lidská práva*, ed. J. Tesařová, K. Lišková, Nesehnutí, Brno 2002.

Finally, the next breakthrough in improving victim protection is hopefully coming with the new Criminal Code in 2010. This law will replace the 40-year-old Criminal Code currently in effect. The Code is now going to include the crime of „stalking“, which means incessant tracking of a victim either in person or via communication devices such as telephone, email or others.

4. Public attitudes are changing, reality is not: initiatives for increased representation of women in politics 1989 – 2009)

The political participation and representation of women forms a cornerstone of the gender equality agenda as equal representation of women and men is considered to be a precondition and an expression of well-functioning democracy. Despite the fact that opportunities for political participation are equal *de jure*, women struggle with discrimination more in the field of politics than in other areas of social life. Opportunities for women in politics are not equal *de facto*.

The representation of women in politics in the Czech Republic is low. In its comments on the Czech Republic's 2006 report on CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women), the United Nations criticised the low number of women in managerial positions.⁹ “The Committee reiterates its concern about the continuing underrepresentation of women in Parliament and Government, including in standing commissions and ad hoc committees, at the international level and in the private sector. The Commi-

⁹ U.N. response to the 3rd periodic report of the Czech Republic on compliance with the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

tee¹⁰ is also concerned about an apparent reluctance within Government ministries to apply temporary special measures in accordance with the article 4, paragraph 1, of the Convention and the Committee's general recommendation 25 on temporary special measures. It is also concerned about the suspension of the adoption of the draft election bill that envisaged at least 30 percent representation of either sex."¹¹

The country's entry into the European Union, and the accession process itself, marked a breakthrough in regards to women's participation in politics and the position of women and men in the society in general. The media and the public started taking the issue of underrepresentation of women in public life more seriously, and in the last few years, after the office of the Minister for Human Rights and Minorities was established, women's political participation has been receiving a lot of attention. The current Minister Kocáb and his predecessor Stehlíková have been putting the issue at the top of the gender equality agenda. With the exception of violence against women, also highlighted by Stehlíková, women's participation in public life has pushed other "gender" issues to the side.

Strategies to increase the number of women in politics include legislative measures, internal party regulations, training for women politicians, information campaigns, women's political fractions, networking, working together across political parties, programmes to support politicians' work and family balance, or initiatives to combat gender stereotypes. In the public debate the question of whether quota ought to be mandated by law has been a major one. There are two types of quota systems: quota required by law, with sanctions for failing to meet them, and informal quota that parties volunteer to follow in the process of composing their candidate listings.

¹⁰ U.N. Commission on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

¹¹ Concluding comments of the U.N. CEDAW Committee on the 3rd period report of the Czech Republic in 2006.

The latter one is considered to be the most effective.¹² Currently, the only party in the Czech Parliament that uses a quota system is the Green Party. In both public and internal elections, the party ensures women assume one third of all positions. The Green Party's bylaws also use gender-neutral language for its quota system by saying that for each three candidates, there must be one person of the opposite sex. The Czech Communist Party has adopted a principle that demands including at least one woman in the first five top candidates. The Czech Social Democratic Party requires internal party organs to reserve one quarter of all the seats for women, although female party members do not seem to find this regulation helpful. Feminist researcher Hana Havelková says that the quota system used by Social Democrats represents the maximum, not the minimum level of representation. It pitches women against each other in their fight for the one deputy seat assigned to women, rather than encouraging them to compete for all the party posts with all the party candidates.¹³

Drafts of the affirmative action law have been proposed both by the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and by the Commission on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women under the Government Council for Human Rights. So far, all of them have been rejected. However, the Ministry of Interior has been assigned with drafting an election law by the end of 2009, which should ensure a 30% representation of each sex on the candidate listings in elections for the Parliament House of Representatives, County Council and the Prague Municipal Council.

The issues of women's representation and participation in politics have been pushed mainly by NGOs since the early 1990s. NGO representatives

¹² P. Rakušanová, *Česká politika: Ženy v labyrintu mužů?* NGO Fórum 50 %, Praha 2006.

¹³ H. Havelková, „Jako v loterii: politická reprezentace žen v ČR po roce 1989“, [In:] *Mnohohlasem: Vydávání ženských prostorů po roce 1989*, ed. H. Hašková, A. Křížková, M. Linková, Institute of Sociology, Praha 2006, p. 25 – 42.

have also played an active role in commissions and bodies proposing legislative changes. NGO groups regularly meet with politicians and other public officials to discuss gender equality issues (violence against women, family-friendly policies, anti-discrimination legislation) and systematically work with the media to raise their visibility.

Still, we also need to keep in mind that higher numbers of women politicians do not necessarily yield political support for equal opportunity policies. In the last 20 years of democracy we have met many women who were not interested in equality and whose actions have undermined the idea. On the other hand, we have met men who have made gender equality their issue. We have learnt that it is important to work with people who believe in equal opportunities regardless of whether they are women or men.

Public opinion polls indicate that voters are interested in seeing more women in politics but political parties seem to pay little heed. In conclusion, we can say that even though the attitudes of the media and the public have been changing, the real number of women involved in politics has not increased.

5. Changing position of the LGBT community

This section outlines the historical changes in the position of LGBT persons in the Czech society since 1989 and their media representation in respect to the development of legislation on same-sex partnerships. It examines three LGBT shows on Czech national TV: *Žijeme mezi vámi ale...*, (*We live among you, but...*), *LeGaTo* and *Q*. These programmes have been the only comprehensive programmes on LGBT issues for both LGBT and mainstream audiences to date and this comprehensiveness in respect to audience and content determined our selection. The analysis is based on the assumption that media discourse and social discourse on LGBT persons are intertwined, and that

the discourse in the media reflects and actively shapes the real position of the LGBT community in the Czech society. In the study, I examine three specific time periods: a period shortly after 1989, next the year 1997 when the law on same-sex partnerships was first proposed, and finally the time period after 2006 when it was passed.

The article shows that since 1989 the LGBT community has gone through a tremendous change of media representation, which was certainly aided by the spread of the internet and the establishment of gender studies. The anti-discrimination law and the law on registered partnerships have been passed and the LGBT community has become a lot more self-confident. What is yet to be addressed, for example, are parenting rights. The issue of parenting continues to stir controversy even though the LGBT community is enjoying growing tolerance. Paradoxically, according to the current law on adoption, a registered LGBT couple is in a worse legal position than it is as two single people wishing to adopt a child. The discussion of homoparentality (parenthood of a homosexual couple) is still taking place only on the margins of public debate and closer analysis reveals the roles different stereotypes play in it.

As far as the representation of the LGBT community to the majority of the population is concerned, we are still lacking people willing to share their daily lives or to be the media face of LGBT. Homosexuality continues to dominate the debate on so-called LGBT issues. Bi-sexual or transgender persons receive only marginal attention and bi-sexuality struggles for credibility both among the heterosexual majority and within the LGBT community.

Not only bi-sexuality is being challenged. The LGBT community is perceived as fragmented and dysfunctional by its members themselves. People who see it as a real entity typically refer to its virtual form. Many LGBT persons do not think political LGBT activism is necessary in the Czech Republic. However, the question of what full life really means and to what extent LGBT people adopt the view of the majority begs further examination. It is

not enough to have freedom of choice, tolerance and protective legislation (still insufficient); it is essential to realise where our ideas of what is acceptable originate. Our sexuality is grounded in a specific model of society – and the LGBT community might consider taking the next logical step and analysing this model more deeply.

6. Abortion in Czech Society: pro-life and pro-choice movements

Abortion became politicised in Central and Eastern Europe after the collapse of the socialist governments.¹⁴ Gender role equality was called into question as a reminder of socialism and some countries began defining women primarily as mothers and calling on them to become full-time homemakers. In the Czech Republic, abortion became a controversial issue at the end of the 1990s. Two hardline approaches came into conflict: the pro-life and pro-choice movements.

In brief, the pro-life movement opposes abortion under any circumstance and demands that it is made illegal. Their approach is ethically grounded in viewing abortion as murder. The movement typically has international ties to the Catholic church or Catholic groups.¹⁵

The pro-choice movement advocates for the woman's right to abortion. The belief that a woman should have the right to make autonomous decisions about her life and body underlies the pro-choice approach. The term *reproductive rights* is central in its disco-

¹⁴ Wall et al. 1999; 443, Kulczycki 1999.

¹⁵ There is no monolithic unity of opinion on abortion within the Catholic church either. Catholics for a Free Choice, for example, is an NGO that advocates for free choice, reproductive rights and gender equality.

urse. The movement is usually associated with feminist and women's rights movements.

6.1. Efforts to change legislation

Due to the long established tradition of legal abortion in the Czech Republic, people believe that women should “naturally” have the right to decide whether to have a child or not. Despite this widespread opinion, pressures to change the existing legislation occurred in the society after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Proposals to amend the existing regulations to prohibit abortion or limit its availability have been coming from pro-life NGOs and the Christian Democratic Party (KDU – ČSL) and its representatives.

In 2001, the alliance of pro-life groups and politicians celebrated its first victory in their effort to restrict abortion. The Pro-Life Movement NGO of the Czech Republic (HPŽ) successfully influenced the language in the final version of the new law on funeral services enacted in the spring of 2001. The law states that: “...the mortal remains that must be buried include a dead body, its parts, or a fetus after abortion.” However, the law was amended later that year and its new version no longer included this caveat.

The next piece of abortion legislation brought up by the pro-life movement concerned the legal prohibition of abortion and it was discussed by the Parliament in the first quarter of 2004. It was proposed by a coalition of MPs led by the conservative politician J. Karas. The law proposed the prosecution of doctors who would carry out abortion with five years of imprisonment, and possibly with a suspension of their license. The law was also to prosecute a person who would incite or aid a woman in abortion. The House of Representatives rejected the proposal on March 30, 2004. The last time the Christian Democrats

took on the issue of abortion was in the context of health care reforms by the then Minister of Health Tomáš Julínek (Social Democrats / ODS) in the spring of 2008. Specifically, they raised objections against the Law on Health Care Services that proposed to make abortion available to foreigners who do not permanently reside in the Czech Republic.

6.2. Is Czech society liberal? Is it going to stay liberal?

Pro-choice discourse is currently the mainstream discourse while pro-life discourse remains marginal, despite its small successes. Historical and social forces (legal and health care systems, public debate, religion) have led the Czech society to view abortion as a “natural” part of life and as a woman’s rightful decision.

Efforts to undermine this common belief began after 1989 and gained momentum at the end of the 1990s. The first and foremost actor in the abortion debate was and is the pro-life movement that advocates the concept of protecting life from the moment of conception until natural death in the areas of political, media and public discourse. The expression of this belief on the practical level is the prohibition of abortion. By defining and presenting issues for discussion, the pro-life movement controls the abortion debate in the Czech Republic. The pro-choice movement has evolved in reaction to the achievements of the pro-life movement. Its main goals are to maintain the existing legislation on abortion and to protect a woman’s right to make decisions about her life and body.

Despite their lack of success in lobbying, the pro-life movement has done well in spreading its ideas among the public, in the media and in politics. Abortion is no longer taken for granted. Nowadays, abortion means more than one thing. To some it means murder and to others it symbolises free choice. And even though the pro-choice movement is currently stronger as far as mobilising its supporters and keeping legislation intact, its awareness-raising among the public and the elites lags behind the pro-life movement. Today we live in a society where pro-choice discourse is mainstream, but as social dialogue continues and different viewpoints compete for the limelight and along with shifting social conditions, we may find ourselves living in a society dominated by pro-life values.

7. Non-profit activities in the fields of equal opportunities and feminist activism 1989 – 2009

7.1. Women's activism and women's initiatives in the 1990s

The totalitarian regime has suppressed civic and political activism; women's activism disappeared entirely for a long period of time. According to Mirek Vodrážka,¹⁶ the discourse on the *woman question* was eliminated not only on the levels of propaganda and ideology, but it was eradicated in the society in general: „as if the founding female subject had fallen into pieces, the original woman's experience had become extinct and her language, behavior, and gestures had disappeared.“ Rejection and belittling of feminist issues was characteristic for the period of transformation in the 1990s when the first women's groups emerged. Even though the social climate has since changed, gender and feminist agendas have not become integrated into the mainstream discourse. On the contrary, negative reactions against feminism, gender and equal opportunities continue to be spread by the media

In spite of resistance on the part of many celebrities as well as the media, tens of organisations and women's groups were created in the 1990s with the support of international organisations and individual feminists who contributed ideas, (wo-)manpower, and funds. The first women's projects were funded thanks to personal contacts with private foreign foundations and bi-lateral agreements on foreign aid from Western Europe, Canada, the USA., and international organisations.

¹⁶ M. Vodrážka. „Aktivismus bez hnutí nebo protohnutí? Ženské organizace a skupiny v ČR v letech 1989 – 2006?“, [in:] Mnohohlasem: Vyjednávání ženských prostorů po roce 1989, (ed.) H. Hašková, A. Křížková, M. Linková, SoÚ, Praha 2005, p. 61 – 80.

7.2. Gender NGOs after 2000

After 2000 new groups were created and existing organisations were becoming professionalised. This process affected organisational structures, employee training and programme planning. On the exterior, organisations grew more professional in communicating with the media and the public and defined their target groups in more precise terms. NGOs have been playing a crucial role in pushing forward the issue of equal opportunities for women and men in the Czech Republic. Non-profit groups raise issues that are important nationally and for the EU and initiate solutions to gender inequality problems. As the main providers of legal counselling for people experiencing discrimination and other services, gender NGOs are also essential in combating gender discrimination on the practical level.

7.3. Cooperation among groups advocating for equal opportunities for women and men

A strong network that would coordinate the activities of Czech gender and women's organisations and that would represent their interests was missing for a long time. There have been two networks – Koordona and the Circle of Prevention of Violence Against Women (no longer in existence) – but both of these focused on domestic violence. In 1999, the Association for Equal Opportunities was founded but this entity no longer serves as a network that coordinates the activities of its members like it used to do in the period following 2000. Its strong point is that it unites a number of small organisations across regions.

Finally, there is the national platform of the European Women's Lobby. The first steps toward its founding date back to the pre-accession period (pre-2004). Since 2008, the Czech Women's Lobby (ČŽL) has been operating independently under the direction of its board. It runs its own projects and besides promoting equal opportunities at national and European levels, the Lobby ad-

vocates for the interests of its member NGOs. The effectiveness of the Czech Women's Lobby has varied contingent on the availability of funds and on the capacity of its member groups. .

7.4. Funding for gender and women's NGOs

Funding has been one of the major obstacles in the work of gender NGOs. It has been irregular and inconsistent. The European Structural Funds have become practically the sole source of financial support. These Funds will only be available until 2017 and if the state does not offer financial support to the non-profit sector, the majority of NGOs from all fields will be forced to either restrict or to end their programmes. The state should fund NGOs for several reasons: NGOs identify the gaps in civil society and address issues ignored by the state, as well as often provide services citizens are not able to find elsewhere.

7.5. Non-institutional feminist initiatives

Informal feminist groups and initiatives have developed in the Czech Republic alongside the abovementioned gender NGOs. These groups are not registered and they do not possess the NGO organisational structure. They operate on a volunteer basis and do not receive grants or subsidies. They often refuse such types of funding because they seek to maintain their independent and critical position toward the state and the European Union. Another element these groups share is their anti-establishment position. They frequently distance themselves from the patriarchy, the state or the capitalist system and assume anarchist or leftist points of view and are associated with countercultural lifestyles and communities.

Bloody Mary and the Anarcho-Feminist Group have been the most influential informal initiatives. The feminist fanzine *Bloody Mary* (BM) has been published since 2000. From its beginnings, it has cla-

imed allegiance to the riot grrrl movement and the position of women in different subcultures and in culture in general constitutes one of its central themes. It also deconstructs and critiques the heteronormativity of the current social system. When the fifth issue of *Bloody Mary* informed about the Global Women's Strike, it inspired some women to organise a similar strike in the Czech Republic. A group with the goal of organising a happening and an information campaign began forming at the end of 2000. Eventually, it started calling itself The 8th of March Feminist Group and it held the first Global Women's Strike on the occasion of International Women's Day in 2001. This initiative has always defined itself as a group with feminist values that rejects the dominant liberal feminist movement established among the majority of Czech NGOs. It has adhered to its principles even after it changed its name to the Anarcho-Feminist Group. Their feminist critique of patriarchal society has been closely tied with a critique of the capitalist system.

8. Recommendations

8.1. **Recommendations in the field of job market (for the academy and NGOs)**

- Make a greater effort to publish research results in the media and to implement them in day-to-day life.
- Collect data and carry out basic research on the gender aspects of the roles and impact ethnic groups have on the job market.
- Carry out a complex analysis of the historical development of gender relations in the Czech job market since 1989 with a focus on its specific local features.

- Continue detailed research on the origins of the gender pay gap and on potential methods of its elimination (including creating pressure on respective political actors), as there appear to be no practical tools available to combat the gender pay gap in the Czech Republic.
- Look closer at the horizontal segregation of the job market and its causes, and at possible methods of de-segregation (including bringing men into professions dominated by women).
- Broaden the scope of analysis of job market discrimination to include new social groups, such as LGBT, the elderly and ethnic minorities.

8.2. Recommendations in the field of combating domestic violence

- Continue expanding the network of organisations working together on violence issues (NGOs, counselling centres, county councils, the police, schools, etc.).
- Conduct detailed analyses of domestic violence (track regional specifics, age, etc.).
- Develop a system of support for children and other witnesses of violence.
- Prioritise design and development of services for perpetrators and make them available instantly after restraining orders are issued.
- Incorporate safety issues in municipal planning.

8.3. Recommendations in the field of political participation of women

For the Government:

- Create a government campaign on increasing the numbers of women in high political offices and target it to political parties.
- Maintain the Committee for Equal Representation of Women and Men in Politics established under the Government Council for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men. The Committee should develop a strategy to equalise the numbers of men and women in decision-making positions.

- Adjust the election law to give greater weight to preference votes.

For Political Parties:

- Define clear criteria for the selection of candidates in municipal, county and parliament election listings.
- Establish internal quota system that ensures that there is one person of the opposite sex for each three listed candidates in any type of election. This system would protect both sexes against discrimination.
- Make it possible for politicians to fully participate in political meetings and negotiations as well as maintain and work-life balance, even in a high political office.

For NGOs:

- Target NGO initiatives at politicians interested in the equal opportunity agenda.
- Lobby political party leadership, not only members.

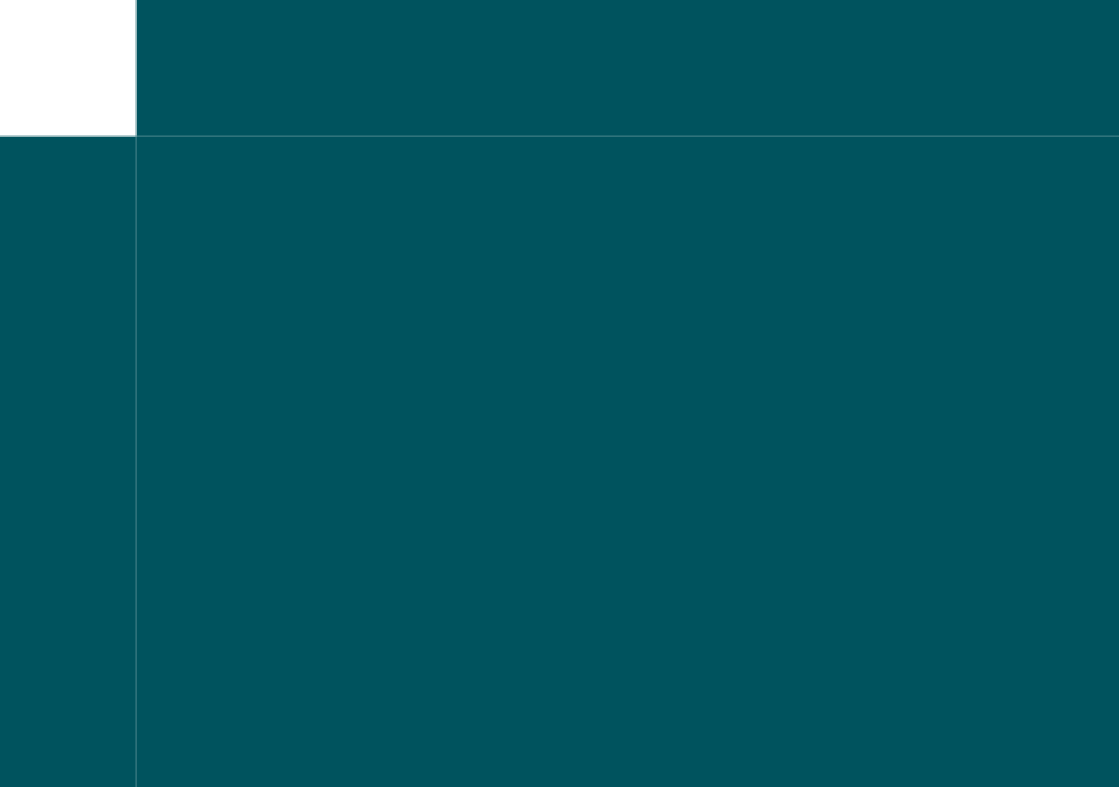
8.4. Recommendations in the field of LGBT's rights

- Systematic lobbying for legislation that would ensure the same rights to LGBT and as it does to heterosexual people (artificial insemination for lesbians, adoption for registered couples, shared property in registered partnership, equal estate tax, the rights of transsexual persons after sex change, etc.).
- Fund projects on LGBT issues.
- Integrate LGBT issues into basic and secondary school curricula with the goal of reducing homophobia.
- Greater and more diverse media coverage of LGBT issues.
- Cooperation among gender and LGBT NGOs.

8.5. Recommendations for gender NGOs

- Build international connections, implement good practices from abroad in the Czech context and share good local practices with international counterparts (such as the knowledge of Czech gender NGOs and experts).
- Expand networking among local groups, especially by supporting an independent network. This is currently the Czech Women's Lobby with useful connections with European structures and a strong membership base. This network is currently well-positioned to advocate for equal opportunities and for the interests of gender NGOs on political level.
- Expand networking with groups working on equal opportunity and discrimination issues nationally and internationally.

Translated by **Kateřina Kastnerová**



Poland: 20 years – 20 changes

Anna Czerwińska

1. Introduction

In the report “20 years – 20 changes”, we focus mainly on the issues we consider to be milestones, in the context of the 20 years of systemic transformation seen from the perspective of women.

Those years had their influence upon the language of debate, the situation of women, the perception of their rights and their place in social, political, economic and private life. Abortion, participation of women in politics, violence against women, feminisation of poverty – those are some of the areas analysed in our report.

We asked activists of women's organisations: the authors of the transformation and of the first campaigns on domestic violence, on human trafficking, on women's unpaid work, on the rights of supermarket workers, as well as politicians, about the last 20 years of changes. We asked them, because it would be impossible to talk about the situation of women in Poland without presenting the development of the women's movement, formed after 1989. It was the women's organisations, feminist academics, writers, artists and politicians, who marked out the map of problems facing Polish women; they pioneered discussion about all those issues, often still unsolved. They gave us the concepts, the names, the legislation, good practices, they created the ground on which we can operate.

Today, public debate in Poland concentrates mainly on two issues: the right to terminate pregnancy and women's participation in politics – the two have always been interconnected. Those two topics have always united women from different political and non-political circles in coalitions for the right to legal abortion (Federation for Women and Family Planning, Pro Femina, Same o Sobie SOS), or for the increased participation of women in political life (as in the case of the Pre-Electoral Coalition of Women, or the Women's Party). They also combined those two issues, since the private is political, of course. According to Professor Małgorzata Fuszara, one of the most important impulses for organised women's

actions was the draft act limiting women's right to abortion, which was presented in parliament. This analysis is consistent with reminiscences of the first feminist activists,¹ for whom limiting the right to termination became a starting point of activism. "On the wall, next to the nearby shop, I spotted a typed note, which read: 'If you are against imprisonment for abortion, come to the manifestation at the Copernicus statue. Saturday, May 6th, 12 o'clock' [1989 – editor's comment]. This small scrap of paper changed my life", recalls one activist.²

2. Women's great failure: abortion

As Elżbieta Matynia observed in her book *Demokracja performatywna*, analysing the famous first election poster of the Solidarity (with Garry Cooper in *High Noon*, who holds a ballot paper instead of a gun), right from the very beginning of the transformation, during the first election campaign, "contrary to the image of the homeland, which has always been feminine, the image of the democratic state of Poland in its brand new institutional framework, the source of social hope at the end of the 20th century, proved to be unquestionably male."³ Not just symbolically. Matynia, having come back from abroad in 1989, noticed that women who had been involved in the independence movement, in Solidarity, withdrew from political life. "Where are the women?", she asks, and answers: "Democratically, but quietly, they were pushed out of the new polis, and sent back home."⁴ The Roman Catholic Church became the chief actor of the political scene.

¹ See in: *Biuletyn OŚKa. Pismo Ośrodka Informacji Środowiska Kobiety*, no. 2 (11)/ 2000, OŚKa Foundation, Warsaw.

² E. Dąbrowska-Szulc, "Wspomnienia feministki ulicznej", [in:] *Biuletyn OŚKa. Pismo Ośrodka Informacji Środowiska Kobiety* no. 2 (11)/ 2000, OŚKa Foundation, Warsaw, p. 4.

³ E. Matynia, *Demokracja performatywna*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Dolnośląskiej Szkoły Wyższej, Wrocław 2008, p. 142.

⁴ Ibidem.

The female “colleagues” from the “underground” did not make a fuss about it. They became preoccupied with the things they had no time for when they were busy fighting for independence. A few reached for power, where they were swiftly put in their new place, and taught which matters were to be important from then on. “First, it was too early for women’s rights, and then it was too late. Immediately after 1989, many MPs were of the opinion that the economy and politics were more important. I thought so too, in spite of being a woman. Because the problems of the transformation concerned everybody, regardless of sex”, says Olga Krzyżanowska, Solidarity activist, MP during the years 1989-2001, deputy Speaker of the Parliament and then Senator, in her interview published in the report.

Meanwhile, the first, most urgent issue the new authority took care of was not the economy, even less so the politics, but women’s rights, or limiting them, to be precise.

“Ironically (or perhaps not), women’s issues became one of the main battlefields for the last communist parliament and all the subsequent ones, already democratically elected after 1989. This battle, which was part of a culture war, concerned women’s right to self-determination, and in particular, their reproductive rights.”⁵ At the very foundation of the new Polish state, women were shown their inferior position. The power was taken over by the men.

“The anti-abortion law became the first showcase of the insecure, young authority in Eastern Europe. For the time being, nobody knew what to do with galloping inflation, or how to reform the agriculture, but you could always ‘collectivise’ women’s reproduction. Authority needs someone to govern; in order to feel like authority, it needs to subordinate someone. In the democracy after communism, this ‘someone’ happened to be women”, wrote Agnieszka Graff in *Świat bez kobiet* and, before that, in the text⁶ which caused a stir in Polish public debate in the late 1990s.

⁵ Ibidem. p. 164.

⁶ A. Graff, “Patriarchat po seksmisji”, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 19-20 June 1999.

Demonstrations against the restrictive draft acts aiming to limit the right to abortion (some propositions suggested punishing women for terminating pregnancy) started as early as 1989. In November 1992, at the initiative of the Parliamentary Group of Women, a proposition was put forth to carry out a referendum on limiting the right to abortion, signed by 119 MPs. Also in November, the Public Committee for a Referendum on Penalty of Abortion was created, otherwise known as the "Bujak Committee", because of the involvement of this democratic opposition activist. The leading and coordinating role in the Committee was played by Barbara Labuda, leader of the Parliamentary Group of Women. In total, 1.3 million Polish men and women signed the Committee's petition!

This huge public mobilisation was completely ignored by the authorities. The referendum did not take place. The law was changed. Analyses indicate this moment as decisive for the future involvement of Poles in public life. Never again was it possible to collect so many signatures, or gather such huge crowds for demonstrations. The lost battle for the right to abortion resulted in general despondency and frustration. Professor Barbara Stanosz, active in the "Bujak committees", writes: "The state's ignoring of the huge public movement for the referendum on penalty of abortion, and then withdrawing from the attempt to liberalise the act pertaining to the issue, resulted in progressing passivity of the public on the issues of the world-view neutrality of the state. Furthermore, most of the organisations defending the idea went silent or disappeared. This allows politicians to refer to the restrictive anti-abortion act and other laws restricting personal freedom for purely religious reasons, as 'a reasonable compromise'. I am afraid that an equally 'reasonable' (or rather rotten) compromise will end the parliamentary discussion about the proposed act on in vitro fertilisation."

In 1993, it was obvious to researchers, as it was to most women, that the new anti-abortion law would result in deterioration of their reproductive rights, that it was written mainly to reduce the number of legal abortions (creating limitations difficult to circumvent), and that it made women fearful for their

life and health. The researchers had an impression that the act's text "and its interpretation" made women feel helpless.

This sense of helplessness is still expressed today by activists of women's groups and organisations, who consider the issue of abortion to be the Polish women's great failure, a problem, which has its bearing on all others. "This is simply dramatic. Such amount of ill-will and indelicacy on the part of politicians, towards so intimate, so private a woman's business. Every two or three years we begin to talk about uteruses and abortion, or non-abortion. To me, this is something beyond belief! Whenever I think that we, in this underground – because I'm Solidarity's orphan of sorts – fought all our battles for this, I get the chills", says Anna Mieszczyńska, coordinator and originator of the first campaign for remunerating women's housework "Zrobione – zapłacone" ("Done – paid for"). "Those last 20 years cannot be appreciated enough as far as emancipation of women for independence, privacy and certain areas of public life is concerned; however, on the political level, we lost those two decades horribly. Our powerlessness concerning the most crucial issues of political freedoms, i.e. the shamefully lost issue of abortion, is our defeat" – as Teresa Oleszczuk, feminist activist and co-founder of La Strada, bitterly summed up.

We lost this cause not only in the area of legislation, but also by way of the radical change in the language used in public debate, where the Roman Catholic Church won, and started to dominate, in order to subject subsequent areas of life to "Christian values".

Agnieszka Graff in *Świat bez kobiet* calls the process of appropriating the language, which could be observed in the 1990s, the "lost war on language". The way of thinking, talking of and valuing issues connected with abortion, which has been validated in Poland, makes sense only within a religious paradigm. During the last few years, words like "foetus" and "pregnancy" practically vanished from colloquial language. They were substituted with "unborn children" and "protection of conceived life". "Abortion is referred to as 'killing', and a pregnant woman today is simply a 'mother'" – writes Agnieszka Graff. Over the course of

the twenty years which have passed since 1989, the language of those opposed to the right to abortion became a valid language of the media. Importantly, language has become instrumental in shaping policies: the most obvious example is the word “compromise”, used by politicians, journalists and representatives of the church to describe the anti-abortion act. When, in 1993, the new law on abortion was passed, a part of the ZChN Catholic party called the new regulations a “compromise”, because they provided for punishing doctors, and not women; furthermore the ban on abortion was not unconditional. “Compromise” proved a popular choice among the journalists and politicians, who did not want to discuss the subject of abortion, and wanted to steer clear of the “extremities” of feminism and radical Catholicism. On the other hand, since the publication of the Letter of the Hundred Women⁷, feminists have used the word “compromise” to describe the arrangement between the government (led, at the time, by Leszek Miller) and the Church, providing that the Church would agree to support Poland’s accession into the European Union in turn for the government’s refraining from liberal reforms regarding women’s rights.

The language in question dominated the shape of public debate, which is taking place at the moment, pertaining no longer to abortion, but to in vitro fertilisation, called by the Church a “sophisticated abortion”. As Agata Chelstowska writes in the report, “Subsequent governments not only find new ways to limit access to abortion. They go one step further. They introduce new regulations, which enable the authorities to avoid responsibility for not conducting abortions approved by the existing law. The authorities do not merely want to penalise termination of pregnancy; they want to prevent abortions by controlling course

⁷ The Letter of the Hundred Women, initiated by the 8 March Women’s Alliance, was written by Professor Maria Janion. The letter, protesting against trafficking in women’s rights in return for the Catholic church’s support for European integration, was signed by over 100 women from the world of science, culture, business, including Nobel prize winner Wisława Szymborska and director Agnieszka Holland. The letter was broadly discussed by the media.

of pregnancies and checking whether they conclude in birth. New regulations are meant to force women to report their pregnancies to the authorities as early as possible. Having achieved almost everything in the area of criminalising abortion, politicians moved on to a new subject: IVF treatment”.

Debates on “reproductive” topics, and political careers built on them, indicate that in the upcoming decade we can expect new, restrictive regulations concerning in vitro fertilisation. The question remains open what further subjects politicians will bring up to continue demonstrating their power in the area of reproductive policies.

In a survey conducted in 1993, women were asked about the outcomes of the new act. Almost all respondents (80%) were convinced that “the material situation of many families would worsen”. Only slightly fewer women (72%) predicted deepening of social inequalities. In this context, let us quote the number of abortions legally carried out due to the difficult material situation of the woman. Since 1993, it has been 0. This means that between 1993 and 2009, women living in difficult conditions or in poverty had to give birth to unplanned children, whose upbringing they could not afford, worsening their families’ poverty, or they had to terminate their pregnancies illegally.

Abortion is an economic problem, and not just one related to one’s worldview, as was observed by Kinga Dunin in her column *Dwa tysiące za skrobankę*⁸ (*Two thousand for an abortion*). In effect, women who “have dosh” have a free choice.

The law simply does not concern those who are relatively wealthy. They can afford to make autonomous moral decisions – “to use the services of a private medical practice, or to have an unplanned baby with the knowledge that they had another option.”⁹ “Access to state of the art methods of

⁸ K. Dunin, “Dwa tysiące za skrobankę”, *Wysokie Obcasy*, 23 June 2001, quoted after A. Graff, *Świat bez kobiet*, op.cit.

⁹ A. Graff, *Świat bez kobiet*, op. cit. p. 111.

contraception, as well as to healthcare related to reproductive health, including advisory services, is severely limited in Poland; a fact which contributes to accidental pregnancies. This fact is not without influence upon women's situation in the job market and it contributes to women being viewed as 'risky' employees by employers."¹⁰

3. The great losers of the Polish transformation: the economic situation of women

1989 saw the emergence of a phenomenon unknown to the socialist economy: unemployment. Unemployment in Poland (data for both sexes) amounted to: 6.5% in 1990; 16% in 1994, and 20% in 2003. In December 2008, it amounted to 9.5%, but in January 2009, it began to grow again.¹¹ Women's presence in the labour market correlates to the level of unemployment – the employment of women increases along with the reduction of unemployment. Still, if we consider the data for the years 1992-2008, the level of women's employment is currently still lower than at the beginning of the researched period. Never in the period researched by the Central Statistical Office were the figures of unemployment among women lower than the analogical figures for men.

As observed by Kinga Lohman, president of the Karat Coalition, an organisation monitoring the labour market: "Not in all countries of our region unemployment among women was higher than among men. In several countries the situation was reverse, e.g. in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic. Poland,

¹⁰ [www.feminoteka.pl/kobiety i aborcja](http://www.feminoteka.pl/kobiety_i_aborcja)

¹¹ http://www.stat.gov.pl/gus/45_677_PLK_HTML.htm, " Stopa bezrobocia w latach 1990- 2009."

before joining the EU, had had the highest unemployment, exceeding 20%. Once we began to analyse those statistics, it became obvious that women were most affected by the transformation, not even those with lowest education, but those with qualifications which suddenly became outdated, which did not sell well in the new system. Those women did not become unemployed – they were totally pushed out of the labour market.”

Supporters of the free market economy reckon that the capitalist system 20 years after the transformation is full of opportunities for women. The practice looks entirely different. In 2004, almost 21% of the population lived below the subsistence level. In 2003, women constituted 52% of the total number of unemployed, and in 2008, as many as 64%.

The level of awareness regarding valuation of women in the labour market has not changed significantly, which is illustrated by one of many similar examples: “The HR manager smiled: ‘You are looking for a job. Wouldn’t you be better off marrying well?’”¹² In the report, Bartłomiej Kozek draws attention to the stereotypical treatment of women in the labour market and the complete lack of solutions counteracting this phenomenon: “In 2004, when the situation in the labour market was even worse than now, a question was asked as a part of the European Social Survey. 42% men aged 15-65 and 35% married women agreed with a statement that ‘when the situation in the job market becomes difficult, men in that market ought to have priority before women’. In Sweden, the approval rate was merely 5%.”¹³ This shows that there is significant public acceptance for the treatment of women as not fully-fledged participants of the labour market.” In the period of systemic transformation, women encountered previously unimaginable discrimination in the labour market: due

¹² www.rynek%20pracy%20w%20mediach/bezrobotne%202008.html, *Gazeta Wyborcza* on 22.04.2008, Poznań.

¹³ D. Duch-Krzyszczek, A. Titkow, “Polka i jej rodzina na tle Europy”, [in:] *W środku Europy?*, ed. H. Domański, A. Ostrowska, P. Sztabiński, IFIS PAN, Warsaw 2006, p. 127–185.

to sex, age, the state's withdrawal from social services, such as providing free and broadly available childcare. Kinga Lohman remembers this as follows: "The message was: you are 40-45? You are redundant in the job market! The only thing you can do is start a business! This illustrates the trends in the labour market: look after yourself, the state washes its hands clean of everything, gives no guarantees, such are the principles of the new market, we are withdrawing, because we do not want to be a communist welfare state."

Unemployment is accompanied by other phenomena, equally difficult for the people who experience them: "the working poor", i.e. part time workers and insufficient earnings, learned helplessness and long-term unemployment (affecting mainly women), inherited poverty (women as "poverty managers").

Another term, which appeared along with the transformation, was "feminisation of poverty". It had two meanings: firstly, it was women, who constituted the majority of the unemployed, excluded from the labour market; secondly, the labour market offered women jobs in low-paid professions connected with services, care or education, which pushed them into niches on the verge of subsistence level, lack of perspectives for development, and doomed them to poverty after retirement. This situation includes public services, such as healthcare (nurses) and education (teachers). In the private sector, the situation is similar in the growing sector of large area retailing. Those professions are a good illustration of the pyramid model of women's presence – the higher the rank, the less women. It is mainly women who work at cash registers in supermarkets, for which they receive minimal wage. If separate posts for warehouse workers exist, they are usually occupied by men, who get paid more than cash register workers – in spite of the fact, that in many shops, due to permanent workforce shortages, cash register operators must do warehouse workers' jobs anyway.¹⁴ It is hardly surpri-

¹⁴ "Warunki pracy i respektowanie praw pracowniczych w supermarketach z perspektywy równouprawnienia płci", Karat Coalition, Warsaw 2008, available at: <http://www.kobietypraca.org/dokumenty/super1.pdf> (site viewed on 24, September 2009).

sing that the latest Social Diagnosis (2009) brings information that the least happy social group in Poland are the cleaners. On average, they are 44 years old, they practice no sports, they do not use the internet, they know no foreign languages, they get divorced often, and 14% of them have suicidal thoughts.¹⁵

Women's caring functions – looking after children and the elderly, doing the vast majority of housework – not only push women out of the labour market and contribute to “working two jobs”, but they influence women's choices in the job market as well. This is emphasised by Irena Wóycicka: “Observation of women in the labour market leads to a conclusion that they largely remain within the public sector, which on average offers less pay than the private one. A very apparent segmentation of the labour market took place, which may be related to the fact that the public sector gives more security, more job opportunities and often more flexibility. Women consciously choose the public sector, since they have no chance of finding a similar offer in the private one, where the employers' expectations are often lethal to the functioning of the family as a whole, and particularly for women, who remain chief caretakers of the home. The caring roles are still attributed to women, although it seems that certain changes are taking place in the younger generation.”

The novella to the labour code of 1996, and the later ones, of 2002 and 2004, enriched Polish labour law with regulations forbidding discrimination according to sex. However, between 1996 and 2004 there were no regulations allowing for claiming compensation by victims of discrimination, and the burden of proof was on the victim, and not the employer. The anti-discrimination regulations were introduced in accordance with the requirements of the European Union only in 2004. The labour code was expanded to include regulations regarding the definition of, and punishment for sexual harassment, mobbing and other forms of discrimination, and the burden of proof was shifted from the injured party to the perpetrator.

¹⁵ Quoted after: *Polityka*, no. 36, 5, September 2009

Over the last 20 years, women's groups and organisations have shown extensive interest in the changes at the labour market and the situation of women. In their reports, demonstrations, during consultations for new laws, they discussed the issues of: feminisation of poverty, women's unemployment, increasing their professional activity and introduction of equal retirement age for women and men. They introduced the concepts of the glass ceiling and the sticky floor into public debate, they proposed new solutions, and even founded job agencies for women.

Finally, they formed alliances with trade unions. About 2006, activists of the women's movement became involved in the work of the Committee for the Defence and Aid of Repressed Workers (KPiORP); in the same year, thanks to the initiative of the women's movement, miners from the Sierpień 80 trade union took part in street demonstrations concerning the right to legal and safe abortion, and in the 8th of March Manifa concerning unemployment and workers' rights. The following year, also women from Tesco's Sierpień 80 actively participated in women's meetings and demonstrations. In the same year, women's groups joined the unprecedented protest of the National Trade Union of Nurses and Midwives, which lasted for over a month and is now historically known as "the White Town". Meanwhile, the Karat Coalition began to implement projects regarding conditions of work and workers' rights in the clothing industry and supermarkets. The first woman to initiate those actions was a "Biedronka" supermarket worker, Bożena Łopacka, who sued her employer for violating workers' rights. Women's grass-root initiatives facilitated, finally, the use of a new language in talking about trade unions and workers' rights in Poland, because in a free market economy, even in a country where independence is strictly related to workers' strikes, a huge contempt is expressed towards the unions by bankers, economists, presidents of the stock exchange; there are even suggestions of liquidating the unions, which "hinder development of businesses". As Bartłomiej Kozek observed: "Court cases of Bożena Łopacka and 'Biedronka', and the first strike in a hyper-market in Poland, led

by Elżbieta Fornalczyk, were greatly publicised by the media, and were among the few workers' initiatives (next to the nurses' 'White Town'), which were not pigeon-holed as 'claims resulting from demanding attitudes'.¹⁶

4. Violence against women

Systemic transformation, lifting of censorship, the fall of the iron curtain, have brought into light the socially inconvenient topics, masked in communist Poland, such as bullying in the army or the problem of alcoholism, domestic violence, prostitution, human trafficking.

"There is a close link between the demise of national economies and the sudden impoverishment of societies during the first decade of transformation, and the occurrence in this part of Europe of a certain criminal activity yielding speedy profits: trafficking of women" – writes Elżbieta Matynia.¹⁷ Teresa Oleszczuk, founder of La Strada, an organisation fighting human trafficking, gives a straightforward opinion: "Escort agencies, which provide disguise for brothels in Poland, have appeared along with the freeing of structures of the market. An escort agency has a business status, which, on the one hand, proves the freedom, and on the other – the hypocrisy and powerlessness in solving the problem, not only in Poland, but worldwide. Since prostitution is not penalised, but it is punishable to draw income from it or force somebody to it, then perhaps a new form might be required – not prostitution, but a particular kind of escort and other pleasure services. Poland was a country, which needed economic activity, and needs it still; we keep killing ourselves over those indicators of the number of registered businesses. Agencies must have increased those indicators."

¹⁶ There were, however some aggressive comments, mainly from right-wing columnists supporting the governments of the Law and Justice party, e.g. Łukasz Warzecha, *Pielęgniarki vs Policja – 0:1. I dobrze* – <http://lukaszwarzecha.salon24.pl/5125,pielęgniarki-vs-policja-0-1-i-dobrze> (page viewed on 24, September 2009).

¹⁷ E. Matynia, *Demokracja performatywna*, op. cit., p. 147.

Trafficking women and prostitution became a subject of public debate during the transformation thanks to organisations from the Netherlands, which were the first to draw attention to the problem of Polish women “sold to brothels”. La Strada, which has been working since 1995, familiarised the Polish society with the concept of human trafficking, trafficking in women, sexual violence. As Stana Bukowska, president of La Strada recalls: “We soon found out that Poland is not only a country of origin; it is also a transit country and the place of destination for women from the former Soviet Union, Romania, Bulgaria and other neighbouring countries. In the mid-1990s, we were not aware that human trafficking in Central and Eastern Europe concerns forced labour as well, exploitation and so on. We focussed on prostitution.”

But forced prostitution and human trafficking are closely linked not only to the situation in the labour market and economic changes, but to the phenomenon and the scale of violence against women in Poland as well. Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka has a bitter conclusion about her 20 years of working in this field: “We did not do enough, that is obvious. Violence is still of the female gender. If anything has changed, it is public awareness, sensitivity, manner of reacting to family dramas. But we owe this to women’s organisations, not to the authorities.”

In Poland, about 800 thousand women a year experience violence, and about 150 Polish women die as an effect of so-called ‘domestic misunderstandings’.¹⁸ As Joanna Piotrowska writes, analysing the problem of violence against women during the years 1989-2009: “Although the scale of violence against women and girls is huge in our country, the quoted figures seem to make no impression on subsequent governments. Most attempts to introduce a consistent and effective anti-violence system, which would take into account the largest group of violence victims, i.e. women, came to nothing.”¹⁹

¹⁸ B. Gruszczyńska, *Przemoc wobec kobiet w Polsce. Aspekty prawnokryminologiczne*, Wolters Kluwer, Warsaw 2007, quoted after: Joanna Piotrowska, *Przemoc wobec kobiet: 1989-2009*, Report for the Congress of Polish Women, Feminoteka 2009.

¹⁹ J. Piotrowska, *Przemoc wobec kobiet: 1989-2009*, op. cit. p. 229.

Alina Synalkiewicz in her report presents the history of actions aimed at reducing the scale of violence in Poland, from the emergence of the first organisations, through the first public campaigns, to the anti-violence act, with particular focus on the presence of the issue in public discourse. The women's movement for counteracting violence against women developed very dynamically, considering the scale and complexity of the problem. A lot has been achieved, and in subsequent years non-governmental organisations introduced many initiatives aimed at helping victims of violence. But only in 2003 did work, initiated by the Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men, begin on the first government draft act, which was to ensure safety for victims of domestic violence. The draft caused extensive discussion. The most controversial part was the possibility of issuing a restraining order, including temporary eviction from one's dwelling, against the perpetrator of violence. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration at the time, such an eviction order would interfere with ownership rights too much, and the unregulated issue of alternative accommodation for the evicted perpetrators could increase crime. The Ministry of Justice, on the other hand, questioned the idea of such deep interference with family relations. It explained that such regulations could "ruin human bonds".²⁰

The act on counteracting violence in its final form came into power in 2005. It obliges the state to provide all types of assistance to persons experiencing violence, particularly: legal, psychological, medical and social advice; crisis intervention and support, protection from further violence (isolating the perpetrator from the victim); providing a safe refuge in centres for victims of violence. Local authorities are to create communal systems of counteracting violence. However, implementation of the act was broadly criticised by organisations working for counteracting violence (mainly wo-

²⁰ S. Spurek, *Ustawa o przeciwdziałaniu przemocy w rodzinie. Komentarz*, Wolters Kluwer, Warsaw 2008, p. 46-51.

men's organisations). The main objections are: not using the provision about restraining orders in practice, and the lack of specific mention of domestic violence against women in the act itself. According to the act, domestic violence is gender neutral.²¹ In 2009, under pressure from non-governmental organisations, the Ministry of Justice admitted that the actions of the government and the public administration were insufficient and ineffective. It promised to improve the situation and work on a novella to the act on counteracting family violence.²² Similar declarations are made by the present Government Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment, Elżbieta Radziszewska. Unfortunately, no actual action follows the declarations.

As we have mentioned, the involvement of women's organisations in solving this issue is hard to overrate. Unfortunately, there is a negative side to this. Decision-makers, unwilling to notice the problem of violence and not undertaking any effective action, pushed the problem of counteracting violence to non-governmental organisations. This delegation of duties was not, alas, accompanied by funding or favourable legislation. As Synalkiewicz sums up: "In spite of the strategy of burying their head in the sand, presented by the Polish government as far as violence against women is concerned, the issues are permanently present in the Polish media (they pop up in popular soap operas, thanks to which information about victims' rights penetrates to small towns and villages), more and more publications and articles appear on the subject. Opinion polls show that the Poles are aware of the significance of the problem of domestic violence and violence against women."²³ Will the seriousness of the issue get through to Polish politicians?

²¹ A. Mroziak, E. Rutkowska, I. Stefańczyk, *Kogo chronimy przed przemocą. Dwa lata ustawy o przeciwdziałaniu przemocy w rodzinie. Raport Krytyczny*, Fundacja Feminoteka, Warsaw 2007.

²² Quoted after: J. Piotrowska, *Przemoc wobec kobiet: 1989-2009*, op. cit.

²³ *Polacy wobec zjawiska przemocy w rodzinie oraz opinie ofiar, sprawców i świadków o występowaniu i okolicznościach występowania przemocy w rodzinie*, TNS OBOP, Warsaw 2007.

5. Women in politics

After 20 years, the new Polish democracy remains incomplete – women are still unable to decide about themselves. Men still prevail in the public domain and, continue to retain monopoly over setting the hierarchy of importance of topics and problems to be dealt with. They create governments, and in informal groups, behind closed doors, decide about the composition of electoral lists. Women, if they are admitted into the exclusive club of politics, usually reach a line they cannot cross. It is not defined by competence, and competence is not decisive when lists of candidates are composed before elections, or when the winnings are divided afterwards. This barrier is sex.

Obviously, women do not remain passive. They want to enter politics and they want power, because they are aware of its attractions. In order to achieve it, they overcome social or moral, as well as economic barriers, they must face stereotypes, they have less experience than men. The breakthrough of 1989 did provide an impulse for their increased activity. The history of this awakening can be illustrated by certain facts from the last 20 years, which were most significant from the perspective of women's participation. No Polish woman has ever become a president, though two – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz in 1995 and Henryka Bochniarz in 2005 – did stand for the post. Only one – Hanna Suchocka in the years 1992-93 – ever led the government. Four times women were nominated as deputy prime ministers: Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka in Marek Belka's first government (2004) and in his second government (2004-2005); and Zyta Gilowska in the governments of Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz and Jarosław Kaczyński. None of them ever became the speaker of Parliament, though some were nominated as deputy speakers: Olga Krzyżanowska, Teresa Dobielińska-Eliszewska, Genowefa Wiśniowska and Ewa Kierzkowska in the present term. Only once a woman headed the upper chamber of the Parliament – her name is Alicja Grześkowiak. Deputy speakers of the Senat were Zofia Kuratowska, Jolanta Danielak and Krystyna Bochenek.

Women are practically absent from top positions in political parties (with the exception of non-parliamentary parties: the Zieloni 2004, the Democratic Party, the Women's Party). When listing female political personalities, we cannot omit the Government Plenipotentiaries for Equal Status of Women and Men.²⁴ Izabela Jaruga-Nowacka (2001-2004) and Professor Magdalena Środa (2004-2005). An important role was played by Joanna Kluzik-Rostkowska during her work at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the Department for Women, Family and Counteracting Discrimination.

Women's representation in the parliament has been relatively stable (though low), at the level of 20%. Right from the very beginning, women in the Sejm wanted to unite around women's issues. The women we talked to, activists of non-governmental organisations, attribute great significance to the Parliamentary Group of Women, founded during the first term of the Parliament by Barbara Labuda, who believed that women can cooperate on the issues important to them, regardless of their party allegiance. As Magdalena Kicińska wrote: "The Parliamentary Group of Women, designed to initiate a Polish pro-women lobby, is an informal group inside the Parliament, formed at the beginning of each new term of the Sejm and the Senat. Its origins can be traced back to the Contractual Parliament, and it was most active during the initial terms of the Sejm. In those days, it used to organise press conferences, national and international meetings, it issued stances on current affairs and worked for increased public activity of women. It consisted of female MPs and senators from different parties. Beginning with the term of 1997-2001, the PGW began

²⁴ The Plenipotentiary's office underwent changes as well. In the years 1997-1999, in Jerzy Buzek's cabinet, there was an office of government plenipotentiary for the family, headed by Kazimierz Kapera. The Office of Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men was established on 17, December 2001, by Prime Minister Leszek Miller. Such office was demanded by the European Union. Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's government liquidated the Plenipotentiary's office on 3, November 2005. Once again, in a changed formula, the office returned by Donald Tusk's decision in March 2008. The post was taken over by Elżbieta Radziszewska.

to lose its politically heterogeneous character; women MPs increasingly rarely expressed their shared opinions. For the last two terms, the PGW has been invisible; there is practically no information about its activity of any sort, and the media begun to speculate about its dissolution.”²⁵ The weakening activity of the PGW and its eventual marginalisation on the political scene meant that non-governmental organisations lost valuable contact with politicians, potential allies in the struggle for women's rights. Organisations have less access to information, they find it hard to lobby, they lost their network of contacts, which used to be helpful while monitoring legislative processes, and they lost the forum for discussion, where they could present their experiences and recommendations to female MPs.

According to Agnieszka Grzybek, a lot of positive changes have taken place in the recent years as well. To begin with, the issue of political participation of women has become present in the media; secondly, the public's attitude towards the presence of women in politics has changed significantly; thirdly, the women's lobby for increasing female representation has been strengthened; fourthly, each election brings higher numbers of women standing for parliament and in local elections; number five – parties have begun to pay attention to women's issues, and some introduced 30% quotas on their electoral lists (the Labour Union, the Democratic Left Alliance, the Freedom Union); the Zieloni 2004 party was created – which has 50% parity on their electoral lists and on leading party positions, – as well as the Women's Party.²⁶

The image of female politicians in the media has evolved to a certain extent. Until the breakthrough of 1989, women were a rare sight in politics. The systemic transformation has increased their numbers (and consequently the

²⁵ More about the Parliamentary Group of Women in: M. Kicińska, “Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet – lobby kobiece w polskim parlamencie”, *Gendermeria – równościowy monitoring, Raport z wyników monitoringu 2008*, Feminoteka.

²⁶ A. Grzybek, “Polityka a pleć”, [in:] *Polityka a pleć*, ed. A. Grzybek, J. Piotrowska, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Office in Poland, Warsaw 2006.

frequency of their appearances on television, radio or in the press). Unfortunately, this does not translate into objectivity and material character of comments accompanying the actions of female politicians. Often, what they are wearing is more important than what they have to say. They encounter a condescending tone, remarks on their appearance or private situation much more often than men. Their achievements are often dismissed. However, it would no longer be possible for the media to dismiss the questions from the Pre-Electoral Coalition of Women (PKK), as was the case in the first, most intensely active year of operation of this coalition of non-governmental organisations and women's groups for increasing the participation of women in politics. This is how Agata Teutsch, the first coordinator of the PKK, which was founded in 2001, describes her experiences: "The difficulties began when we attempted to ask questions during pre-election meetings with individual candidates. A planned scenario for such meetings clearly did not provide for any surprise questions from the public, but if someone did ask them, they were ridiculed by the audience or ignored by those they were addressed to."²⁷ Now, merely a few years later, such situation seems unimaginable. The role of the Pre-Electoral Coalition of Women in increasing the knowledge and awareness about women's rights among women, politicians and the media was huge. Thanks to its actions, the number of women in the Sejm and the Senat increased to 22% in the election of 2001, from 13% in the previous term. Never again was the campaigning and the lobbying for increasing the participation of women in politics so intense, and never again were so many women elected.

Women's organisations have developed a broad range of methods and strategies to increase the political participation of women. They are listed by Mi-rella Panek, a long-time activist of non-governmental organisations in this field: "educating voters, encouraging women to stand in local and national elections,

²⁷ A. Teutsch, "Studium przypadku: Przedwyborcza Koalicja Kobiet", [in:] *Polityka a płeć...*, op. cit. p. 66r.

supporting the candidates, who include in their programmes the issues of gender equality, conducting campaigns against the policies contrary to women's rights and supporting programmes supporting women's rights at the level of candidates and parties."

In June 2009 the Congress of Polish Women was held in the Congress Hall in Warsaw. It was initiated by women from different circles: Henryka Bochniarz, president of the Polish Confederation of Private Employers "Lewiatan", former First Lady Jolanta Kwaśniewska, and Magdalena Środa, feminist, professor at Warsaw University and former Plenipotentiary for Equal Status of Women and Men. The Programme Council of the Congress included prominent women from the world of art, media, business and non-governmental organisations, trade unions and the academia. The objective of the Congress was to create a lobby independent of political membership and allegiances, aimed at increasing women's activity.²⁸ The result of the Congress was, among other things, the largest ever media debate on the issue of parity on electoral lists – one of the postulates of the Congress – with the participation of journalists, politicians, organisers of the Congress, in which the government had to participate as well.

Parity became another important subject of the public debate in Poland. The struggle for full political representation of women, and a place for them in the process of taking crucial decisions, was and remains the most important postulate of the feminist movement, or more broadly, the women's movement (next to the right to abortion). After the Congress of Women, the first large-scale campaign for introducing obligatory parity on electoral lists is under way. "One of the postulates of the women's movement is close to becoming reality. I am talking about gender parity on electoral lists, for which the women's circles have been calling for almost 20 years. For several months, the issue was present in press headlines, in the main editions of news programmes on public and

²⁸ http://www.kongreskobiet.pl/readarticle.php?article_id=4 (30, September 2009).

private TV stations, it became a subject of public debate. All of it in earnest", writes Joanna Piotrowska in her article entitled "Parytet -bohater 20-lecia" (Parity – the hero of the two decades).

The Civil Committee "Time for Women" was registered and commenced the action of collecting signatures in support of the citizens' draft act on gender parity on electoral lists. The act provides for amendments to the electoral law regarding the elections to the Sejm, the European Parliament and to communal, local and regional councils, in order to ensure at least 50% presence of women on electoral lists.²⁹

The women's movement is facing another challenge, as do the politicians – will they ignore the citizens' initiative so broadly discussed by the public?

6. Twenty changes

Since the mid-1990s, women in Poland have managed to leave, as Matynia put it, "the fenced-off playgrounds and kindergartens, where women could do whatever they wanted, but they could not advance." And they managed to enter the public domain. Matynia gives the example of taking over the universities (creation of gender studies at many colleges), the media, "for which women designed strategies of active presence by writing, discussing, "familiarising" feminism. Women began to actively participate in art and run medium-sized businesses.³⁰

In the issue of *Societas Communitas*, the semi-annual publication of the Institute Of Applied Social Sciences of Warsaw University (No. 2(6) 2008), en-

²⁹ According to the act on the citizens' legislative initiative, the committee has three months to collect 100 thousand signatures for the draft to be presented in the Parliament as a citizens' initiative.

³⁰ E. Matynia, *Demokracja performatywna*, op. cit., p. 156-157.

titled *Kobiety, mężczyźni, płeć* (*Women, men, gender*), in the opening discussion, Professor Krystyna Slany indicates an important change, which took place in Polish science over the last 20 years: "The consequence of the new knowledge and new explanations, is the mass of works written by students. Nobody would have expected it ten years ago. The popularity of, an willingness to write about gender and feminist issues, or even appreciating the importance of gender in research by young sociologists, has been unprecedented."³¹

Quality of public debate significantly differs from what dominated in the 1990s. As Matynia writes, "In the first years of the transformation, there was large social and cultural pressure both from men and women, to ignore, diminish, even ridicule those trying to raise the issue (of gender)."³² The researcher draws attention to the fact that in those days, more than anything else, there was no language in which one could talk about women's rights.

20 years later we do have the language. Many concepts, which entered the language of public debate, we owe to countless actions and publications of women's organisations and movement: reproductive rights, violence against women, parity, feminisation of poverty, human trafficking, the glass ceiling, the term *gender* itself, herstory, discrimination, equal status, stereotypes etc. The problems which were first brought to light in Poland by the women's movement include: discrimination in the labour market, family violence, forced prostitution, sexism in advertising, the effects of the anti-abortion law, the lack of sex education, domination of the Roman Catholic church in public debate and politics, workers' rights of women, equal retirement age for men and women, unpaid women's work, sexual violence: rape and sexual harassment, political participation of women, unequal pay, the state of maternity care etc. It is difficult to imagine all this was lacking! Nobody used those terms, nobody named the

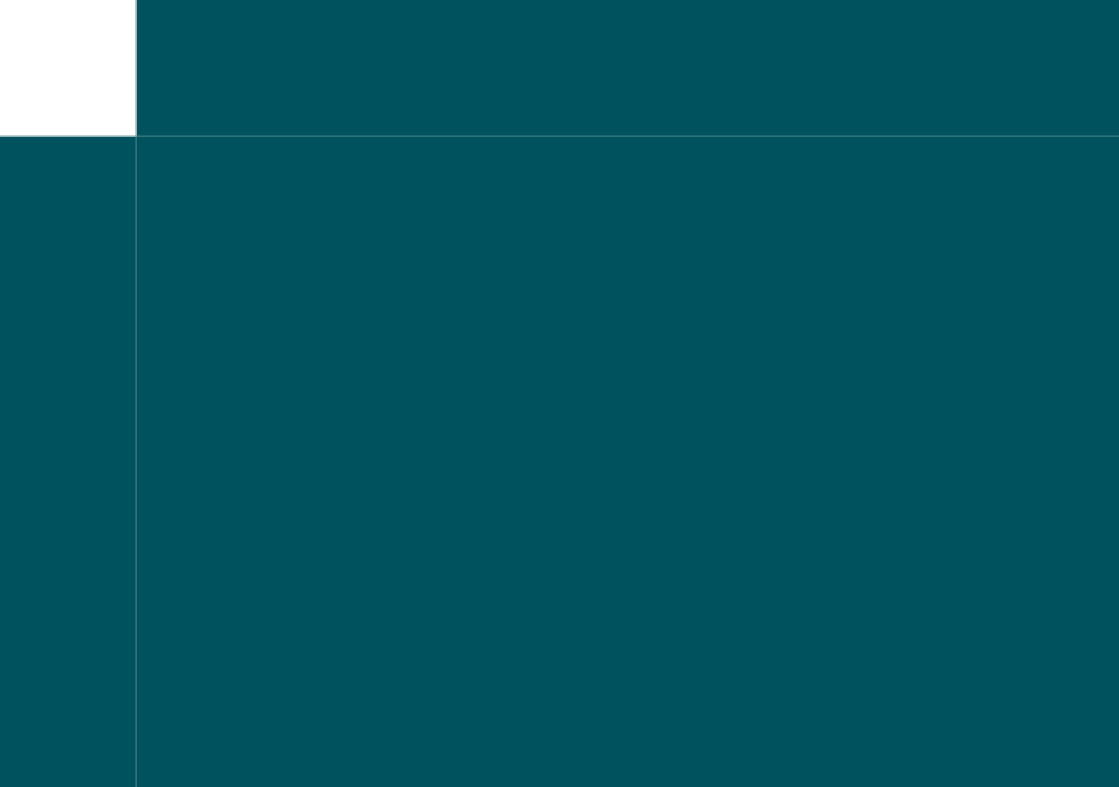
³¹ *Societas Communitas*, no. 2(6)2008, Institute Of Applied Social Sciences, University of Warsaw, 2008, p. 16.

³² E. Matynia, *Demokracja performatywna*, op. cit., p. 143.

phenomena concerning half the population. The image of a feminist has been disenchanted as well. In the last few weeks a statement from the conservative Ombudsman that he “does not like feminists, because they are unfulfilled women” was met with fierce criticism from the media and politicians of all sides of the political scene. This shows most clearly how many things the feminist movement has gained and changed.

The situation is similar in the case of the LGBT movement. Lambda activist Yga Kostrzewa comments: “Everything or nearly everything has changed. Twenty years ago nobody was seriously interested in the issue: there were no debates, organisations, public campaigns, articles in the press, programmes on television with lesbians, gays or transsexual people in them, no parades and marches for equality. There were no openly homosexual or bisexual celebrities. There were no meeting places, or they were hidden. Politicians did not deal with those issues at all. Today, we have national debates, popular programmes with the participation of lesbians and gays, famous people openly declaring their homosexuality, a significant number of publications, books, films, over a dozen LG organisations. Although, obviously, we still strive for further improvement, if we look back at those 20 years, the changes are striking.”

Translated by **Katarzyna Nowakowska**



Feminisms for Beginners. Aspects of the Origins of Gender Discourse in Slovakia

Jana Cviková, Jana Juráňová

1. Introduction

This summary is meant to be a brief commentary on a collage of texts containing fragmentary round-table musings and reflections of feminist “beginners” in Slovakia, analyses and text-documents related to the period, and so on. The collage is part of the project “20 Years Later: Gender Aspects of the New Public” and names some aspects of the origins of gender discourse in Slovakia after November 1989. This project, carried out in the year of the 20th anniversary of the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution, strives to summarise and analyse several themes important from specifically women’s and gender viewpoint. It mostly touches upon the media and partly also political presentation of first concrete themes of gender discourse as public issues.

Gender discourse in Slovakia has been interlinked with the rise of the gradually pluralising public, or publics, after the Revolution and the discussion about feminism became its component at the beginning of the 1990s. At the end of the nineties and the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, before the themes related to EU accession came to the media, project and institutional scene, four big themes had sprung up in public gender discourse in Slovakia: violence against women, women’s reproductive rights, women’s political participation and the rights of sexual minorities.

This publication is a reminder of the fact that gender issues and perspective have been an important part of the democratisation process. It is crucial not to forget about those initiatives which stood at the beginnings and which introduced gender discourse also in Slovakia.

When working on this collage of texts, we¹ took into account the existing academic papers and analyses, various documents, media monitoring etc.

¹ In this publication we use the perspective of our experience. In this sense “we” in this text does mean authors and editors of this publication: Jana Cviková and Jana Juráňová. We are aware of this individual personal perspective, and we tried as much as possible to complicate the picture with the reflection of other women – beginners.

We tied this work up with our long-term project “Women’s Histories”.² “In our understanding of the project, history is not just a sum of important events or personalities (...) it is also our experience and the source of legitimisation of what we are doing and what we have done.” Similarly to the abovementioned project, our starting point here is the fact that “‘the ASPEKT framework’ is a framework of political feminism, and in a sense it is a continuation of what women in the past strove for and what they have been striving for in the present: to place their thinking about gender dimensions of society in the context of either the really existing and/or desired distribution of power.”³

Together with historian Gerda Lerner we understood political feminism as that moment of development of feminist thinking when women started to articulate their claims consciously as political claims.

This publication is authored by those women who accepted the invitation of ASPEKT to take part at a round table meant to stimulate recollections about beginnings of feminisms in Slovakia. The representatives of ASPEKT, its founders, collaborators, supporters, those women for whom ASPEKT had been an impulse for their own activities, all were remembering their beginnings – the beginnings of beginners in feminism. What followed from the discussion was, among others, that it was not just these women who participated in founding and the life of the organisation, which has encompassed many projects and initiatives. ASPEKT was not just the first feminist organisation; it is also an organisation most publicly present in the 1990s – be it through its activities, or through its reactions to concrete social and political events in the country. This is the reason why a lot has been derived from ASPEKT – while we do not want to belittle the importance of other feminist and women’s NGOs or

² One of the outputs of this project was the cited publication: J. Cviková, J. Juráňová, L. Kobová (eds.): *Histórie žien. Aspekty písania a čítania*. ASPEKT 2006.

³ J. Cviková, “Histórie žien. Aspektovský rámec a rámec politického feminizmu”, [in:] *ibidem*, p. 6 – 7.

individual personalities and concrete impulses and activities. After all, the round-table discussion also revealed that much of what has been done has its origins in ASPEKT. Therefore, the recollection of the beginnings of feminism related to ASPEKT is also the recollection of memories about and reflections upon a broader context.

And last but not least, this publication is part of cooperation of partner organisations from the Czech Republic, Poland, Ukraine and Slovakia with the Heinrich Böll Foundation, which this year focused on mapping the development of gender discourse in these countries after the year 1989. This publication – after the analyses “Equal Pay for Equal Work? Aspects of the Gender Pay Gap”⁴ and “Education through the Prism of Gender. Aspects of Key Risks”⁵ – is the third contribution to long-term efforts to map and reflect upon gender discourse and gender relations in Slovakia.

2. The public against violence

2.1. Gender as a foreign word

When we want to talk about the development of gender discourse in Slovakia, especially about the sensitisation of the society to the gender perspective in the last twenty years, we must talk about the very beginning of the change itself – about the so-called Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. Of course we must keep in mind that in Slovakia and in former Czechoslovakia under communist rule, as well as in the early 1990s, the word *gender* was not known and it was

⁴ J. Cviková(ed.), *Áká práca, taká pláca? Aspekty rodovej nerovnosti v odmeňovaní*, ASPEKT 2007.

⁵ J. Cviková, J. Filadelfiová, *Rodový pohľad na školstvo. Aspekty kľúčových rizík*, ASPEKT 2008.

used in the sense of *social sex* or *cultural sex*.⁶ It was used only to refer to *women* and *men* and to talk about the *socialist emancipation of women*.

The term gender started to be used through translations from the German and, especially, the English language. In the Slovak language we started to gradually use the Slovak word *rod* in the same sense as the English word gender, so the original meaning of this word was broadened.⁷ This word has been a part of the domestication of feminisms and the gender perspective in Slovakia. The search for adequate expressions in the Slovak language was important due to the fact that in our efforts to discover and propagate feminisms in Slovakia we would often be reprimanded for importing (into our society) “foreign” useless and unusable ideas and approaches. The idea that feminism is something foreign to “our women” has been around since the 19th century.

It is important, from the perspective of the origins and further development of gender discourse in Slovakia that the issue of gender relations and gender equality was from the very beginning intensely treated from explicitly feminist positions – it was the case of the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt* as well as lectures at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University. Some researches published in those times as well as official (state and political) approaches using

⁶ However, the word *feminism* was known mostly as an insult; its true meaning was not known. See e.g. the text by Marta Frišová “Slúžtičky” in the first issue of the *Aspekt* magazine 1/1993; the editorial by Jana Cviková and Jana Juráňová to *Aspekt* 3/1994 on the topic of *Feminisms*. Also the diploma thesis of Veronika Wöhrer deals with the analysis of usage of the word feminism ‘Das verfluchte Wort Feminismus’: Eine Deutungsmusteranalyse zu Feminismus-Begriffen slowakischer Wissenschaftlerinnen, Universität Wien 2001.

⁷ From the onset, we deem as gender themes those themes which under this label entered the public discussion, while we are also aware of the fact that all and especially all important themes – such as the economic and social situation – include an important gender dimension. However, it is important to highlight the fact that e.g. unemployment has not been seen through the gender lens and the difference in the rates between men and women has been negligible, and analyses have not taken into account hidden unemployment of women – at least before accession to the European Union (see e.g. gender aimed projects from EQUAL Programme).

the gender terminology without internalising its feminist basis occurred later – especially after the accession of Slovakia to the EU in 2004.

The concept and the term gender stabilised gradually in the second half of the 1990s. Actors and subjects who embarked on the issue (e.g. women's human rights organisations, the public administration and academics) mostly accepted and adopted the Slovak translation of the term gender. The terminology related to feminist and gender theories and praxes was further developing and finding its place in the Slovak language; one of the outcomes and also contributions to its formation was the *Glossary of Gender Terminology* published in 2003.⁸

One very important part of the whole process of gender sensitisation is the coining and cultivation of gender sensitive language; i.e. the search for new expressions that would as closely as possible convey the gender symmetry of the message.

2.2. “Learned helplessness” and the “Sleeping Beauty”

In November 1989, the Velvet Revolution started and communist rule was gradually tumbling down. This was a process formally going on for several months, but the democratic transformation of society is still unfinished. At the beginning the key word of the whole process was the *public*. Also the first political and civic movement (not a party at that time) was called *The Public against Violence*. Until the split of former Czechoslovakia it had been the political partner of the Czech political and civic movement Civic Forum.

The name of the civic movement *The Public against Violence* reflects people's reaction to violence against students and other citizens during the demonstration in Prague on the 17th of November 1989, but this violence was also perceived as various forms of oppression committed by the totalitarian

⁸ See “Glosár rodovej terminológie”, accessible at glosar.aspekt.sk.

state on its citizens – from incarcerations to restrictions on freedom of speech. Not in the least, this was an important signal that this civic movement favoured a non-violent regime change and a non-violent way of dealing with the past. The word violence was understood as violence in the *public* sphere and it was very important to stand against it as the *civic public*. Many years had to pass till violence against women in the private sphere started to be formulated as a public and not just a private problem; this was the outcome of the feminist approach to the issue, which led to national campaigns at the end of the 1990s and in 2001.⁹

At the beginning of the 1990s it was absolutely crucial in both parts of the former Czechoslovak Republic to start to revive and build the civil society. The concept of the public as a place of association and discussion based on the principles of participative democracy started to be the key point of the new post-socialist society and at that time it was very new. Therefore, it was also talked about the “new public” that citizens were to represent. During the communist regime the *public* was extraordinarily controlled not only through censorship. Feminist philosopher Nancy Fraser, when speaking about the public in the really existing socialism, writes that “the conflation of the state apparatus with the public sphere of discourse and association provided ballast to processes whereby the socialist vision became institutionalised in an authoritarian statist form instead of in a participatory democratic form.”¹⁰ State control was absurd and sometimes funny, but most of the time frightening. People were socialised to absolute passivity and lethargy. Also because of this, the term “learned helplessness” was used to express the nature of the people in post-socialist Slovakia. As sociologist Zora Bútorová claimed in the first sociological research in our country that used the gender perspective, as concerned women it was a “specific *feminine variant of learned helplessness* that characterised political culture during the era of

⁹ The initiator of the public discussion about violence against women was the coalition of five feminist NGOs The Fifth Woman.

¹⁰ N. Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy”, [In:] *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed.C. Calhoun, 1992, p. 110.

real socialism. If the general syndrome of learned helplessness is the willingness to leave the representation of citizens in the hands of 'experts', its specific symptom related to women was, and still is, to delegate these powers and competencies to men."¹¹

After 1989, the public was often compared to the *Sleeping Beauty* from a fairy tale; when she woke up after many years it was not only a happy ending, but also the beginning of a very different story. Sleeping for such long time is not the best activity to prepare the "Beauty" for the coming turbulent days of social transformations.

This traditional patriarchal example of a sleeping woman and a "wakeful" man is unconsciously very typical for the gender order of society in Slovakia. To wake up the Beauty a Prince is needed. But after he fulfilled his role and the fairy tale is over nobody knew what the continuation would look like. It can be said that the "princes" on speakers' tribunes at mass public demonstrations had awakened the sleeping society, but the continuation was vague at best.

Nevertheless, the public was starting to be awake. There were several key points in this process, e.g. so called round tables on TV, which were very important because they were accessible also to the people living outside of the capital city of Bratislava. This radical change in Slovakia is also called "the television revolution", because of the key role of these discussions.

At the time when the public was starting to form, not many people noticed that this public was mostly male. Most of us perceived the public as gender neutral. Squares and streets were full of people of both sexes. Down below, in front of speakers' tribunes there were both men and women, but it was mostly men who were standing on the tribunes. Also the TV round tables were full of men. Only after several years did some women start to reflect on this phenomenon.¹² It can be said that the

¹¹ Z. Bútorová, et al: "Ona a on na Slovensku. Ženský údel očami verejnej mienky", *Focus*, 1996, p. 169.

¹² It was symptomatic for the situation in Slovakia that the first one to write about the absence of women on the tribunes of the Czechoslovak Velvet Revolution (and also about risks of the return of traditional gender stereotypes) was the expat writer Irena Brežná in her article "Schreckliche Rache" originally written for the German feminist magazine EMMA 4/1992 (it was published in the Slovak translation as "Strašná pomsta" in the first issue of *Aspekt* 1/1993).

lack of consciousness among women was at that time a negative testimony to the socialist emancipation of women. Had the emancipation been really genuine, the women would have immediately noticed this asymmetry of power. It was evident that the socialist emancipation – in spite of the fact that education and paid employment of women was commonplace – had not left any trace in the minds of the population – no awareness of the problem of gender inequality – by both women and men. The paradox of the minimal transformation effect of the socialist emancipation in terms of the reflection on gender relations and the gender power asymmetry was first manifested during socialism in a simplistic rejection of feminism as a “bourgeois aberration”, and after its fall as a “totalitarian communist ideology”.

2.3. Feminism and socialism

*Our History with Socialism and Feminism*¹³ – that was, in 1993, the title of a conference and publication of the German feminist foundation Frauen Anstiftung. It was symptomatic that this conference and the publication were initiated by western feminists; Slovak authors would usually look back at the past regime only when inspired to do so by their western colleagues, especially in the first years after 1989.¹⁴ In this case the impulse came from leftist-oriented, politically active women around the Foundation close to the Green Party who did not want to be just observers of the lives of women in post-socialist countries, but who, after the fall of real socialism, wanted to come terms with their own socialist ideas and their ideas concerning the status of women in

¹³ P. Sammler, C. Sperling, *Unsere Geschichte(n) mit Sozialismus und Feminismus. Dokumentation eines internationalen Seminars der Frauen Anstiftung Hamburg*, Frauen Anstiftung 1994, December 1993.

¹⁴ The first publication about the lives of women under socialism was published later, preceded by several years of research by the Center of Gender Studies. Zuzana Kiczková(ed.), *Women's Memory. The Experience of Self-shaping in Biographical Interviews*, IRIS 2006.

socialism.¹⁵ This international conference attested to the fact that they strove to start a real dialogue, while keeping in mind equal value of their different experiences – despite the fact that Western women had an advantage given their long experience with theoretical, practical and political articulation of their situation in a patriarchal, but still democratic and pluralistic society. We succeeded in overcoming our lack of experience with public discourse by using the method of biographies of the participants in our approach to the main theme of the conference.¹⁶

The first feminist activities in Slovakia had nothing to do with the former Socialist Union of Women; if it was mentioned at all then it was mostly to answer questions from the West. This organisation was one of the symbols of totalitarianism and, as we perceived it, it had nothing to do with us. Feminism came with an offer of openness, plurality, reflection on gender relations, i.e. with something completely different than the mandatory and uniform socialist emancipation.

2.4. **Personal is political**

The relation between the personal and the political is one of the key issues in the feminist movement and feminist theory. The dichotomy of the private vs. public sphere and overcoming this dichotomy also became the theme through which theorists from post-socialist countries often differentiated themselves from their western colleagues and underscored the argument of different experiences in the context of real socialism. In

¹⁵ One of the initiators of the conference Heidi Burmeister articulated her disappointment about the fact that socialism had not become a more just alternative to capitalism: "From my perspective, socialism has not fulfilled its promises. (...) Feminism was also discredited because it calls into question the power asymmetry of gender relations. But also because it measures the claim for freedom and human dignity (...) against the real situation of women.", [in:] Ibiotem, p. 9.

¹⁶ The participants from Slovakia were Anna Daučíková, Jana Cviková, Zuzana Kiczková.

this place we do not want to deal with this rather broad theoretical discussion, and we do not want to deny the difference in experience related to the different geo-political space. In the background of one of the main contradictions of this discussion we strive to pinpoint the motivation that gave rise to the first feminist activities in Slovakia.

For instance, Czech feminist philosopher Jiřina Šmejkalová in her study "Gender as an Analytical Category of Post-Communist Studies" writes that "for those who had spent their entire lives protecting the dignity of personal space from the aggressive intervention of the political sphere, the feminist slogan 'the personal is political' sounded like a bad joke."¹⁷ The reason was the experience of people with intrusions upon the private space (wiretapping, spying and other techniques), as well as the lack of political consciousness due to the fact that there was only one *proper politics* – that of the communist leaders. These were the causes behind the special experience with politics as such. Only after some time was it possible to talk about politics and about the private and the political, and about the private in the political. But on the other hand, the concept was revolutionary for women who understood it albeit intuitively. We felt very strongly that our lives were a part of the public, that we were the public; politics influenced our lives and formed them. Later we started to comprehend the complexity of the slogan and it helped us to formulate our positions and our claims, it helped us to understand how to take advantage of our freedom after November 1989 – how to take freedom not just as an abstract ideal (as it sometimes sounded from former male anti-communist dissidents), but as practical freedom, as freedom to work on new issues and topics which were important to us. The possibility to express our own feelings, needs, and deficits was the starting point for the first feminist activities in Slovakia: a series of lectures on feminist theories at the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University (which later developed into the Gender Studies Centre) and the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt* (which later developed into the first feminist organisation ASPEKT with broad publishing and educational activities).

¹⁷ J. Šmejkalová, "Gender as an Analytical Category of Post-Communist Studies", [In:] *Gender in Transition in Eastern and Central Europe: Proceedings*, ed. G. Jahnert et al, Trafo Verlag 2001.

In former Czechoslovakia as well as in all post-socialist countries, politics and the public were defined from the male point of view and through male experience. This experience was considered to be neutral and to be good both for men and women. But we felt very much that this experience was not ours. At the beginning this grasp of the relationship between the political and personal was more intuitive than conscious. Only after several years were we able to look at this issue from a feminist point of view.¹⁸ On the occasion of recapitulating the past two decades we gathered at a round table of “beginners” to speak about our memories. We agreed that this knowledge that the personal is political had really empowered us and given us the courage to take a political stance, in the sense of civic political action. All “beginners” at the round table stressed the high critical potential of feminist thinking and action. Artist Anna Daučíková even explicitly recalled that in the political and social situation in Slovakia after 1989 for her “feminism was the only opportunity to take a critical stance”.

And we had often realised that the political is personal. But from the very beginning we have not identified this political with the state, but with our own activity, our own power to name and define, with our own construction of the public space – i.e. with politics as action. At the same time, our public activity has been very closely interlinked with our personal (professional and private) motivations.

3. “The feminism of ASPEKT was anti-nationalist from the very beginning...”

3.1. Slovak-Czech feminist magazine *Aspekt*

Even though the road was difficult and not short (more than two years passed between the birth of the idea and the publication of the first issue of *Aspekt*) it

¹⁸ The theme of “the Personal is Political” was, among others, tackled in one whole issue of the *Aspekt* magazine 2/1999.

was very inspiring and fascinating. After the fall of communist rule women who founded the ASPEKT project, as well as some other women's groups, started to see politics and the public space in a new way. We examined the concept of "the personal is political" in our first-hand experience (through our personal as well as professional interests) as it was formulated in the second wave of feminism (in German *Neue Frauenbewegung*). We learned a lot from women from the West (European – mainly from the Vienna University and from the Hamburg feminist foundation *Frauen-Anstiftung*, the USA, etc.) and the East (mainly from the Polish feminist Foundation *eFka*, Gender Studies Prague, etc.).¹⁹

In autumn 1991 women editors from the prestigious literary journal *Slovenské pohľady* invited other female authors to prepare a "women's issue" of the journal. A group of women (from the field of literature, art, cinematography etc.) started to meet more regularly. After some time more women joined this informal group; later these women felt the need to work on some concrete project. They started to prepare the 1st issue of the feminist cultural magazine *Aspekt*. In that period of time, publication possibilities were narrowing because nationalist tendencies were growing stronger. The first impulses came from abroad – mostly from Western Europe and the USA – but these were not the only impulses. When journalists asked us why we were feminists our answer was always something like: "And why are there so many women confronted with the reality and with feminist ideas who have not become feminists?" There was so much information, so many books and possibilities to study new materials. The period after 1989 was very turbulent, and many women around ASPEKT were active in the public sphere. Some of them where confronted with the specifics of their private lives (maternity, etc). We started to study, to self-improve through self-education. At the same time we felt very strongly the turbulences of the time, one of which was the splitting of Czechoslovakia in

¹⁹ See also the publication *Prelude* about feminist projects in Central and Eastern Europe prepared by ASPEKT for the foundation *Frauen Anstiftung* in 1995.

1993, which we found very frustrating. In that year we published the first issue of the *Aspekt* magazine.²⁰ It was published in Bratislava. We defined it as the Slovak and Czech magazine to make a stance about cultural continuity against the division of the republic. As time went by it was not so important to define ourselves also through national identities – the feminist identification of the group of women around ASPEKT started to be much more important. Vivid contacts with authors from the Czech Republic continued, as well as with the first Czech feminist organisation Gender Studies in Prague. In the 1st issue (*Aspekt* 1/1993) Germanist Jana Cviková (together with Jana Juráňová – editor in chief of the magazine) wrote the editorial for the Slovak side, former dissident and sociologist Jiřina Šiklová (founder of Gender Studies in Prague) for the Czech side. We declared our disagreement with nationalist tendencies.

The 1st issue of the *Aspekt* magazine was published in October 1993 with the financial support (only for printing costs) from the Frauen Anstiftung, Pro Helvetia and the “old” Heinrich Böll Foundation.

3.2. Feminism and nationalism

A very important milestone on this road to the first issue of the *Aspekt* magazine was the first event organised in Bratislava by the German feminist foundation Frauen-Anstiftung with the cooperation of the informal group of women around *Aspekt* – the conference “Feminism and Nationalism”. It took place in Bratislava in June 1993. As Jana Cviková wrote in a short note in the 1st issue of the *Aspekt* magazine: “From the 11th to the 13th of June 1993, German, Croatian, Serbian, Czech and Slovak women gathered in Bratislava at the conference *Feminism and Nationalism*. The topics discussed at the conference were in particular aimed at how the well-

²⁰ The public presentation of the first issue took place in Bratislava on the 11th of October 1993.

established structures and instruments of power (originally patriarchal and reproducing patriarchy) are misused in the present-day world; what the routes of feminist work are, how to interfere with the things around us under particular conditions of concrete countries, social and professional groups and personalities. The feminism of ASPEKT was anti-nationalist from the very beginning and in this regard we were in consent with all women on the conference."²¹

It was the first big and notable feminist official meeting of women from Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Germany and other countries that took place in Slovakia. We regarded the problem of nationalism as very important and at the same time very dangerous. People living in the post-socialist part of Europe were shocked by the phenomenon of nationalism.

The collection of texts from the conference *Feminism and Nationalism* contained all contributions as well as the transcript of the discussion. It was published in a Slovak and German version in the same publication. This conference looked at nationalism as the crucial problem of post-socialist society and interlinked it with patriarchy (most explicitly in the paper by Zuzana Kiczková "Image of Ourselves – the Picture Unified, True, Objective and Patriarchal"²²) and that was the key approach to nationalism for those of us who identified themselves as feminists. Nationalism was the problem of our everyday lives as well as the problem of political elites, the problem of presentation of Slovakia abroad. The topic of nationalism in the conference was set down by the women from the West, but it resonated with our experience. From that point of view, the conference was a very memorable beginning of articulation of issues as well as a very memorable point of meeting with feminists from Germany and feminist lesbian women who openly declared their lesbian orientation, which at

²¹ J. Cviková, "Prvé feministické stretnutie na Slovensku", [in:] *Aspekt* 1/1993, p. 89.

²² Z. Kiczková, "Slovensko. Obraz o ,nás' – obraz jednotný, pravdivý, objektívny, patriarchálny", [in:] *Feminizmus a nacionalizmus*, Frauen Anstiftung 1993.

that time was taboo in our part of the world. We also met with women from former Yugoslavia, where nationalism divided the feminist movement.

The concept of the Slovak-Czech magazine *Aspekt* was introduced at this conference (and in the related publication) as “the magazine aimed at the woman-specific problems”, in which “we decided to take on a feminist standpoint”.²³

3.3. “Splitting” of pro-democratic forces

The elation of November 1989 very soon vanished and the first wave of revolutionary enthusiasm disappeared. From 1993 till 1998, nationalism was one of the big problems of political representation in Slovakia. That meant that ASPEKT as the first feminist project was functioning for the initial five years in a not very favorable atmosphere of the non-democratic government of Vladimír Mečiar. At that time disapproval of our work was expressed numerous times by our mostly male friends and former colleagues – intellectuals, writers, etc. They told us that we were splitting the forces of resistance against Mečiar and other non-democratic actors. Our answer was something like: “We are doing our work, we are doing what we think is very important for democracy in this society.” We slowly formulated what we strongly felt at that time: There is no democracy without democracy for women; there are no human rights without women's rights and without rights of children, rights of sexual minorities and others. But for pro-democratic intellectuals in Slovakia, feminism was the splitting of forces, weakening of arrays of true democrats. This was very painful for us because these democrats and intellectuals were a kind of avant-garde of our society. But we felt that their concept of democracy excluded many and among them also us – women who defined ourselves as

²³ J. Cviková, “List z Bratislavy: pokus o postsocialistický feminizmus”, [in:] Ibidem, p. 104-105.

feminists. We were no former communists; we were enthusiastic about the change taking place in our society, we were against nationalism. On the other hand, we were uncomfortable with a model of democracy that excluded us. What we found extraordinarily important, they presented as anti-democratic. We perceived democracy as plurality of opinions and we claimed to present our interests, not interests defined by others.

On the 16th of December 1994 a conference of writers' organisations devoted to the 5th anniversary of November 1989 was held in Budmerice in the Home of Slovak Writers. The text presented there by Jana Juranova was later published in *Aspekt*. At the conference Juranova also said: "Yes, there is a latently present reproach aimed at us, sometimes it is even spoken out very loudly, and the reproach is that these days in Slovakia we have a lot of other problems and we need not be occupied with some feminism. I hear that reproach and my answer is: I strongly disapprove. We must deal with everything in Slovakia; with everything what we have neglected for the last at least twenty years. (...) In my case that (...) means that I must and want to be occupied by the phenomenon called feminism."²⁴

4. The round table: persons and topics

4.1. Feminists - beginners

To commemorate the beginning of the process and its continuation it is very important to benefit from the memories of women who started the process in Slovakia in the early 1990s. We named all these women including us (Zora Bútorová, Jana Cviková, Anna Daučíková, Hana Fábry, Katarína Farkašová, Mo-

²⁴ J. Juráňová, "Bez kontextu", [in:] *Aspekt* 3/1994, p. 4.

nika Grochová, Jarmila Filadelfiová, Jana Juráňová, Zuzana Kiczková, Oľga Pietruchovej) “the beginners”, which does not mean only that we had started thinking about feminism and gender in Slovakia in the early 1990s, but also that we ourselves had been beginners in the topic. In this sense we were the beginners for quite a long time and in some sense we still are beginners, even today.

We invited the “1st generation” of feminists who were active from the very early 1990s. To stimulate the discussion we chose several motivational questions, e.g.: How do you remember your first encounters with feminism, your beginnings? What has happened in Slovakia in the field of feminism and gender issues since the beginning of the 1990s and how? Where do you see the positive and negative sides of the process? The questions were not very concrete; the goal was to recall those times and to talk about them as much as possible.

ASPEKT as the first feminist organisation in Slovakia (officially founded in 1993, but working more than one year before that) was the initiator of the debate, because it was and still is one of the starting points of feminist and gender thinking in Slovakia, as well as of civic activism and NGO networking in all relevant topics of the feminist and gender discourse. The other very important activity in the early 1990s was a feminist course of lectures which started at the Comenius University at the Department of Philosophy in 1991 (initiated by philosophers Zuzana Kiczková and Etela Farkašová). ASPEKT had very close contacts with them almost from the very beginning.

Many other future activities in the feminist field in Slovakia were derived from ASPEKT, which was a kind of basis for networking and introduction of new activities.

The initiators of the round table were the women from ASPEKT – **Jana Cvíková** and **Jana Juráňová** – the co-founders of ASPEKT and the only ones who have been working in ASPEKT continuously from its start. The women invited to the round table to talk about their common memories about the onset of feminism in Slovakia were (in the alphabetical order): **Zora Bútorová** (sociologist dealing with questions of public opinion; she started to cooperate with the Alliance of Women in 1995, later also with ASPEKT on sociological researches seen through the prism of

gender; nowadays she is a key person in the Institute for Public Affairs); **Anna Daučíková** (artist, one of the co-founders of ASPEKT, she worked in ASPEKT till the spring of 1997; she introduced to ASPEKT the theme of sexual minorities, later she was very active as an LGBT activist, e.g. the Q-archive in Bratislava; now she is a vice-rector of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Bratislava); **Hana Fábry** (lesbian activist, worked in ASPEKT for several years as an office manager, inspired by *Aspekt* journal she was the editor-in-chief of the LGBT journal *Attribute*); **Katarína Farkašová** (the head of the Alliance of Women, women's NGO dealing with the theme of violence against women and working with victims of violence and trafficking and many other topics); **Jarmila Filadelfiová** (sociologist devoting herself to the question of the family, gender, population, violence against women; she is now working at Institute for Public Affairs and cooperates with NGOs, e.g. with EsFem and ASPEKT); **Monika Grochová** (specialist on the issue of violence against women, she had founded the very first mothers' centre in Slovakia – FENESTRA in Košice, Eastern Slovakia – in the middle of the 1990s, it was later transformed into an organisation providing support and help of all kinds to women suffering from violence; nowadays she is working as a trainer in the business sphere); **Zuzana Kiczková** (philosopher; co-founder of the courses on feminist philosophy and gender studies at the Comenius University in the school year 1990/1991, the course was later transformed into the Gender Studies Centre at the Department of Philosophy and History of Philosophy of Comenius University in Bratislava); **Olga Pietruchová** (for many years the leader of the organisation "Pro Choice"; started to collaborate with feminist NGOs after 2000; when, in February 2001, the Pro Choice organisation began to function as an umbrella organisation of many NGOs she was working as a liberal politician; today she is working also as a gender expert, she is the head of Women's Lobby Slovakia).

4.2. Foundations and continuations

The memories recalled at the round table revealed also that most of the women had had the first contacts with feminism from abroad; not only from the Western

countries, but also from the East (e.g. Jana Cvíková visited the 1st feminist seminar in Krakow, Poland). Whether it was the feminist conference (Vienna as it was the case of Zuzana Kizzková), or friendly contacts in some foreign country (Italy for Anna Daučíková, the USA for Jana Jurášová), or living somewhere abroad for some time (Germany for Olga Pietruchová), all these impulses were strong and as such they were the beginning of the feminist orientation of particular women. Nevertheless, women who met at the round table were not the only ones travelling abroad at that time; it means that the experience of contacts with foreign feminists, feminist ideas, must be matched with some life experience or special sensitivity to the gender asymmetry in society.

One of the key activities of Slovak feminism – the gender course at the Comenius University, was started by philosopher Zuzana Kizzková, philosopher and writer Etela Farkašová, and later the course was joined by philosopher Marianna Szapuová. All three of them are still the main actors of feminist philosophy and gender studies in the Slovak Republic. The gender course existed for ten years and then, in 2001, it was transformed into a more official Gender Studies Centre at the Department of Philosophy and the History of Philosophy.²⁵

Zuzana Kizzková appreciated that ASPEKT had published the feminist magazine and later also books,²⁶ which were according to her of high quality. The editing of texts – both translations and those written in Slovak – was also superb. This created the possibility for women philosophers to work with students on textual analysis of feminist and gender theories.

ASPEKT with its publication and educational activities can be labelled as the key actor, first of all because of the overall goal of its activities: gender sensitisation of society. All themes through which we have tried to reach this

²⁵ All three teachers prepared the collection of translations of philosophical texts *Štyri pohľady do feministickéj filozofie* (Four Looks into Feminist Philosophy; Archa 1994). Philosophers Herta Nagl-Docekal and Ingvild Birkhan from Vienna University consulted the selection of the texts in this first Slovak book about feminist theory.

²⁶ Also the first original Slovak book from the field of feminist theory – specifically ecofeminism: Z. Kizzková, *Priroda: vzor žena!? Hľadanie alternatív v ekofeminizme*. ASPEKT 1998.

goal (these were also the main topics of individual issues of the *Aspekt* magazine) have thus far been relevant: the beauty myth, motherhood, women and power, the personal is political, fears and barriers, women's writing, feminist philosophy, feminist pedagogy and many others.

4.3. Political participation

The issue of political participation has always been present in our work, sometimes indirectly. It was contained in topics of *Aspekt* magazine like "Personal is Political", "Women and Power", "Fears and Barriers", "Patriarchy", "Women's spaces", etc. We covered the topic in many media presentations in the 1990s and after 2000 and were active in formulating the principles of women's politics; this theme was mostly stimulated by the media, and we were "just" answering their questions. Our role in the discussion was not simple. On the one hand, we were supporters of women in politics, on the other, not many female politicians in the Slovak Republic in the 1990s and later were worth of supporting. (Also because they were mostly fulfilling the tasks of their party leaders; they often played a service role in this male-dominated sphere.)

The theme of political participation started to be really relevant to the general public before the parliamentary election in 2002. Although we had reacted to this issue in the media also before 2002, what we, in general, deem to be more important is the quality of female politicians and the quality of women's and feminist agenda in political programmes, rather than just formal participation of women in politics. Activities of NGOs (associated in the Forum of Women and supported by the Coordination Committee for Women's Issues and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs SR) were limited to the quantitative side of women's representation in decision-making positions and did not create a chance of a more in-depth public reflection on the social problem of the male-female asymmetry. Although they were referring to human rights by citing

the CEDAW commission (which, in its comments to the Slovak report, recommended using quotas in Slovakia) they never took steps to discuss the context of gender stereotypes, gender division of labor and the like, which are issues explicitly mentioned by the CEDAW. This way they avoided conflicts without which a real change in the gender order can hardly take place. This way they let the discussion focus on whether women belong in politics at all, what they can contribute, and they examined the very legitimacy of women's presence in politics or their "quality". Feminist and women's NGOs,²⁷ have reflected on the situations that were, given the social context, new (female candidates running for president, female candidates in the parliamentary elections, etc.).

4.4. Public opinion

Awareness in the sphere of political participation of women or the lack of such awareness is connected with public opinion in Slovakia. **Zora Bútorová** recalled that the person who had stimulated research using the gender perspective in the 1990s had been her colleague Tatiana Rosová (nowadays a Member of the Parliament of the Slovak Republic for the SDKU – Slovak Democratic Christian Union). Rosová had come back from a conference abroad and asked Zora Bútorová to cooperate on sociological research conducted from a gender-based perspective. Information on the first stage of the research and its findings (focus groups of women) was published in the *Aspekt* magazine 3/1994.²⁸ This was the preparatory stage of the later research, which resulted in the publication *She and He in Slovakia* (1996).

²⁷ We differentiate between feminist and women's organisations; feminist organisations are also referred to as human rights women's organisations.

²⁸ T. Rosová, *Ženy na Slovensku*. "Vyhodnotenie výsledkov kvalitatívnej sociologickej sondy", [in:] *Aspekt* 3/1994, p. 113-116.

Zora Bútorová was the leader of the research and the editor of the book.²⁹ She recalled that just after the downfall of communist rule in the early 1990s she had not been interested in gender. The topic of the family and women (as related to it) was absolutely repugnant to her as a sociologist; during socialism the topic had been connected with minor social critique, permitted by the authorities. For Zora Bútorová this was not a topic she would want to be engaged with after the fall of the system. At that time she was interested mostly in the research of public opinion. Only later did she realise that the gender view on sociological data was very inspiring and needed. After the book had been published, Zora Bútorová as the author (with others) met with a negative reaction of some of her colleagues. She was quite sensitive to this irrational negative critique and she understood that the topic was important. In the next years she was the main consultant for very important publications of the Institute for Public Affairs (published annually since 1996). In *A Global Report on the State of Society* there were also chapters devoted to gender issues.³⁰ In 2002 there was a chapter on the issues around sexual minorities and a public opinion poll related to it.

²⁹ Partial results were published in *Aspekt*: Z. Bútorová et al, "Žena v rodine, práci, spoločnosti", [in:] *Aspekt* 2-3/1995, p. 228-244; Z. Bútorová, "Homosexualita vo svetle verejnej mienky", [in:] *Aspekt* 1/1996, p. 161-162.

³⁰ Gender issues (in the form of a "special" chapter) were covered in the publications of the *Global Report*, see: Z. Bútorová, J. Filadelfiová, P. Guráň, O. Gyárfášová, K. Farkášová: "Gender Issue in Slovakia", [in:] *Slovakia 1998-1999. A Global Report on the State of Society*, ed. G. Mesežnikov, M. Ivantyšin, T. Nicholson, Institute for Public Affairs 1999; professional critiques: J. Cviková; A. Daučíková, Z. Bútorová, V. Wallace-Lorenková, "The Status of Sexual Minorities", in the *Report on the State of Society* compiled by the same editors and published by the Institute of Public Affairs in 2003; J. Filadelfiová, Z. Bútorová, O. Gyárfášová, "Women and Men in Politics", in the same volume; Z. Bútorová J. Filadelfiová, O. Gyárfášová, J. Cviková, K. Farkášová, "Women, Men, and Equality of Opportunities", [in:] *ibidem* and Z. Bútorová, J. Filadelfiová, "The Equality of Women and Men", [in:] *Slovakia 2006. A Global Report on the State of Society*, ed. M. Bútorová, M. Kollár, G. Mesežnikov, Institute for Public Affairs 2007.

Even though the findings of these researches were not very optimistic (on sexual minorities, on the division of labour between men and women), these publications were crucially important; it can be said that these researches changed the consciousness of people very much, because the population learned many unpleasant things, and opinions started to change, at least formally.

Zora Bútorová continued to work on gender topics in many other publications, e.g. the book of interviews with women active in the public sphere *Krehká sila* (Fragile Power, 2001). The Institute for Public Affairs also carried out a project aimed at elderly women "Women plus 45+" within the EQUAL Programme; the research part of the project was realised by Zora Bútorová and **Jarmila Filadelfiová**. For Filadelfiová, just like for Bútorová, the topic of the family and women was not interesting at the beginning, but later she started to collect data and to follow the issues around the family, gender, gender policies, political tools, etc. Nowadays, she is a specialist in this field working with data from the gendered perspective.

In the discussion both sociologist Zora Bútorová and Jarmila Filadelfiová recalled they felt the lack of this kind of sociology in Slovakia. In comparisons with some other post-socialist countries, also with the Czech Republic, in Slovakia there is no feminist or gender sociology; there are just some sociological views on some specific gender problems.

4.5. Political participation – the presence of the theme in ASPEKT

The issue of the *Aspekt* magazine devoted to the topic of "Women and Power" (2-3/1995) was the first publication discussing women in the public sphere. Also the issues of the *Aspekt* magazine with the topic "Personal is Political" (2/1999), and "Patriarchy" (2/2000-1/2001) were published afterwards. In 2002 the anthology *Hlasy žien. Aspekty ženskej politiky* (Voices of Women. Aspects of

Women's Politics, eds. Jana Cviková and Jana Juráňová) was published with many texts on political participation, suffrage, relations between the public and the private sphere, etc. Some texts in the book were "recycled" from *Aspekt* magazine and placed in a new context of the political situation, this publication and also in the context of the common campaign "Hlasy žien" (Women's Voices) organised by the umbrella organisation *Možnosť voľby* (Pro Choice) before the parliamentary elections. The campaign targeted primarily female voters with an appeal "Ženy, kto rozhoduje za nás?" (Women, who decides for us?) to make a decision about themselves by going to the ballots.

Another publication – the translation of the book by Barbara Stiegler *Ako uplatňovať rodové hľadisko. Aspekty stratégie Európskej únie* (Gender Mainstreaming and How to Use It. Aspekts of European Union Strategy, 2002) was the first publication on gender mainstreaming in Slovakia. Also the booklet *Na ceste do Európskej únie. Sprievodkyňa nielen pre ženy* (On the Way to the European Union. A Guidebook Not Only for Women, 2002) published in cooperation with the Heinrich Böll Foundation and partner organisations from Poland and the Czech Republic was the first one on women in the European Union – it utilised materials of the European Women's Lobby and was partly devoted to the topic of political participation of women.

We pursued the issue of political participation of women in several other projects, e.g. the publication *Kradmá ruka feministky rozvažuje za plentou. Aspekty parlamentných volieb* (The Sneaky Hand of a Feminist Ponders over a Polling Booth. Aspekts of Parliamentary Election, 2006). In the publication the authors Ľubica Kobová and Zuzana Maďarová analysed the parliamentary election in 2006 (candidate lists, media depictions of women and men, etc.) from the feminist and gender point of view and gave recommendations for gender-sensitive ways of writing about female politicians in the media.

Direct recommendations for gender (sensitive) politics are given in the already mentioned analyses; in the introduction to *Equal Pay for Equal Work?*

*Aspects of the Gender Pay Gap*³¹ and *Education through the Prism of Gender. Aspects of Key Risks*.³² The first publication deals with the problem of equal pay. This theme was not raised in Slovakia as a problem which ought to have been solved before the Slovak Republic entered the European Union. The problem was present, also some sociological researches pointed to it, but it was publicly recognised and acknowledged only several years ago. The second publication based on the research and the publication *The Teaching Profession. Aspects of Gender Equality in School*³³ which was realised in cooperation with the Institute for Public Affairs as part of the project focusing on gender sensitive education pinkandblueworld.sk (financed through the EQUAL Programme; carried out by ASPEKT as leading organisations and partner institutions – the human rights organisation Občan a demokracia /Citizen and Democracy/, Bábkové divadlo na Rázcestí /Theater on the Crossroads/ and Škola základ života, n.f. /an elementary school/).³⁴

4.6. Sexual minorities

The theme of sexual minorities has been present in ASPEKT almost from the very beginning – through Anna Daučíková, the co-founder of ASPEKT. In 1996 she initiated the lesbian issue of the magazine *Lesbická existencia* (The Lesbian Existence) as well as the anthology of texts *Lesby-by-by. Aspekty politiky identity* (Lesby-by-by. Aspects of Identity Politics) published in 2004. *Aspekt* was the

³¹ For the English summary see http://www.aspekt.sk/download/summary_web_new.pdf.

³² For the English summary see http://www.aspekt.sk/download/Gender_Sensitive_Pedagogy.pdf.

³³ J. Filadelfiová, *Učiteľské povolanie. Aspekty rodovej rovnosti v škole*, ed. Jana Cviková, Jana Juráňová, ASPEKT 2008. For the English summary see <http://www.pinkandblue-world.sk/en/hlavne-menu/read/the-teaching-profession--aspects-of-gender-equality-in-school>.

³⁴ More information about this project on the webpage www.pinkandblueworld.sk.

medium in which all important information on activism related to sexual minorities was published when it was relevant. The issue of sexual minorities and sexual “otherness” is one of the topics which diversify rigid gender stereotypes; at the same time it is a topic which is both very personal and very political.

At the round table **Anna Daučíková** recalled that for her feminism in the early 1990s had been the political alternative in the situation when former Czechoslovakia and later also Slovakia had started its new era but with the people from the old era, which had been, according to her, unbearable. As she said, it had not been possible for her to hold the position of the conservative “right” with their traditionalist attitudes to women, and it had also been impossible for her to be on the position of post-communist leftists or nationalists. As she said, feminism had been the only opportunity to take a critical stance.

Anna Daučíková brought to ASPEKT her intellectual input and she was also the one who introduced us to the ideas of Italian feminism of difference which (in particular at the beginning) we found as very close to our positions and we perceived it as an alternative to equality propagated by the communists which in reality had often meant sameness.

During the discussion Daučíková said she greatly appreciated cooperating with ASPEKT. She literally said that she appreciated the fact that Jana Cviková and Jana Juráňová had not rejected the topic of sexual minorities and had not excluded it from their work. They even spoke about it on TV shows, which in the mid-1990s was quite crucial. Since feminists were maligned as “abnormal” women it was not acceptable to us to legitimate ourselves through references to our own obligatory heterosexuality. As Daučíková said ASPEKT was mostly heterosexual, but nevertheless it gave a lot of space to lesbian women whenever it was needed and, according to her, this had been a specific phenomenon of the 1990s. The introduction of the topic of sexual minorities was very important for the further presentation of this issue and also for further activism. ASPEKT was a target of unpleasant attacks of the media also because of this issue. Paradoxically, some politicians and some media attacks on lesbians

and gays later stopped, and it was not so important to talk about lesbian and gay rights activism at the time when these groups started to raise the issue of the same-sex registered partnership in the late 1990s. **Hana Fábry** mentioned during the discussion that she had started to be interested in feminism as a lesbian woman. She cooperated with ASPEKT for a short time and later she became engaged in lesbian activism. She was involved in working on the lesbian issue of *Aspekt*. She then started to publish the LGBT magazine *Atribút*. Nowadays she is still involved in lesbian and queer activism and she even was the first non-heterosexual independent candidate in the elections to the European Parliament in 2009 for the Green Party of Slovakia.

4.7. Violence against women

Also topics like violence against women and reproductive rights, although very crucial and very confrontational, have been very significant for the work of ASPEKT. The theme of violence against women was present in our work very early. Even though we published a special issue on violence against women only in 1998, the topic was present in many materials in other issues, and the same can be said about reproductive rights. In 1998 we published the 1st *Aspekt* on violence (the 2nd issue was published in 1999 with the topic violence against women and children).

Violence against women is one of the key themes for ASPEKT and many other NGOs, as well as for the coalition "The Fifth Woman". On the one hand, the theme was very painful, but very important, and till the 1990s it had mostly been dealt with by tabloids and not by the serious media. Two national campaigns, both with no state support, were very important in changing the public's perception of the issue. The campaigns were organised by the network of NGOS grouped under the umbrella initiative "The Fifth Woman".³⁵ During this

³⁵ The 1st one took place from November 23rd 2001 until February 28th 2002; the second one took place from November 25th 2002 until February 14th 2003.

period more organisations focusing on helping abused women were created (e.g. Alliance of Women, Fenestra, Pro Familia). ASPEKT published several publications on violence against women.³⁶ The possibility to publish the magazine was a very good starting point for educational activities and later for networking of organisations with similar educational interests. We cooperated with the media; we contacted journalists and educated them to be more sensitive to the issue of violence against from the feminist perspective.

Not all important and relevant personalities could be at the meeting at the round table dedicated to recalling our beginnings in feminism and the gender equality agenda. There are several significant women who have done a lot of work in this field, among others, Eva Sopková, who has been very intensely devoted to the issue of violence. She is the head of the NGO Pro Familia and a center for battered women. She was the only psychologist who reacted to ASPEKT's appeal for collaboration. Later, she started to be involved in the topic of violence against women and cooperated with ASPEKT on preparing two issues of the magazine about violence (3/1998, 1/1999). She is one the most competent experts on violence against women and children; she has initiated many educational activities on this topic, and was involved in preparation of the publication *The Fifth Woman* published on the occasion of the national campaign to stop violence against women. In fact, her cooperation facilitated the opening of this theme.

³⁶ Judith L. Herman, *Trauma a uzdravenie (Trauma and Recovery)*, 2001; E. Fröschl and S. Löw, *Konať proti násiliu na deťoch (Take Action to End Violence against Children)*, 1999; E. Fröschl, S. Löw, *Konať proti násiliu na ženách (Take Action to End Violence against Women)*, 2000, 2008; L. L. Heise, J. Pitanguy and A. Germain, *Násilie páchané na ženách. Skrytá ujma na zdraví (Violence against Women)*, 1998; A. Jones: *Nabudúce bude mŕtva (Next Time She'll Be Dead)* 2003; G. Braun, D. Wolters, *Proti sexuálnemu zneužívaniu dievčat a chlapcov. Príručka pre matky a otcov (Against Sexual Abuse of Girls and Boys. A Handbook for Mothers and Fathers)*, 1999 – all in cooperation with Pro Familia; J. Cviková, J. Juráňová, L. Kobová (eds), *Žena nie je tovar. Komodifikácia žien v našej kultúre*, 2005; J. Cviková, J. Juráňová (eds), *Ružový a modrý svet. Rodové stereotypy a ich dôsledky*, 2003, 2005; J. Cviková, J. Juráňová (eds), *Piata žena. Aspekty násilia páchaného na ženách*, 2001.

In the discussion at the round table there were **Monika Grochová** and **Katarína Farkašová** – two women also dealing with violence against women. Monika Grochová founded a Mothers' Centre in Košice in Eastern Slovakia, the first one in Slovakia. The impulse for this was a bulletin in Czech about mothers' centres in Germany, sent to her from ASPEKT. The Mothers' Centre called Fenestra began operating in 1996 and was one of the first partner organisations of ASPEKT. After several years, Fenestra transformed from a Mothers' Centre to a Centre for Abused and Battered Women. Monika Grochová was the leader of the organisation for several years and gained significant experience in this field. She was one of the women (together with women from ASPEKT and Pro Choice and other NGOs) who initiated the very first media campaigns on the problem of violence against women.³⁷

After some years many mothers' centres were established in Slovakia and nowadays there is also the Union of Mothers' Centres in Slovakia. However, at present, these Mothers' Centres are not based on feminist grounds; only several women working there hold feminist positions. Mothers' Centres as such are still quite traditional in their understanding of motherhood. Fenestra's groundbreaking role in setting up Mothers' Centres is not acknowledged.

Katarína Farkašová is the head of the women's NGO Aliancia žien (Alliance of Women). The organisation was founded in the early 1990s by biologist Ľuba Lacinová, who then left for Munich to pursue her scientific career and Katarína Farkašová continued in her work at Aliancia žien. This organisation initiated the 1st sociological research realised from a gender perspective. The research was carried out by the agency FOCUS and the publication with the research findings *Ona a on na Slovensku* (She and He in Slovakia) was published in 1996; later it was published also in English. The research had many short-

³⁷ Although the campaign was initiated and officially organised by FENESTRA, other NGOs of the coalition *Piata žena* actively cooperated and some of them also worked on the organisation of the campaign: Aspekt, Pro Familia, Fenestra, Aliancia žien Slovenska, EsFem (formerly Eset), Možnosť voľby, Podisea.

comings because of the lack of gender-oriented sociologists, but still it was the first step in this field. In her later career, Katarína Farkašová has also dealt with violence against women, trafficking in women etc. The Alliance of Women, as well as other feminist NGOs (ASPEKT, Fenestra, Pro Familia, Pro Choice, and others) is in the coalition “Piata žena” (The Fifth Woman) and “Možnosť voľby” (Pro Choice).

4.8. Reproductive rights

Another issue which has always been important for all feminist NGOs is reproductive rights. As the topic has been present in political discourse in Slovakia since the early 1990s, all feminist NGOs have reacted to it in many ways and in many situations: in newspapers, discussions, etc. The most relevant point for their identification with the issue was the impulse from the Christian Democrats in 2001 when they proposed to change the Constitution. At that time the initiative Pro Choice arose very spontaneously as the reaction of many women to the politics of the Christian Democrats. The Pro Choice organisation began operating as the umbrella for all organisations interested in reproductive rights of women. Their activities were more aimed at politics; their reactions were very concrete. Women who reacted to the politics of the Christian Democratic Party were exposed to many public attacks. In that period several events were organised, e.g. an international conference, seminars, etc. ASPEKT published the book *Pro Choice. Aspects of Rights and Responsibilities*.³⁸

Oľga Pietruchová, nowadays the head of the Pro Choice organisation entered politics in the late '1990s as a member of the liberal party ANO (The Alliance of New Citizens). Also in politics her agenda was reproductive rights. She was active in public discussions. The umbrella NGO Pro Choice was

³⁸ J. Cviková, J. Juráňová (ed.), *Možnosť voľby. Aspekty práv a zodpovednosti*, ASPEKT 2001.

founded in ASPEKT in late 2001. Olga Pietruchová later took over the management of the organisation. She was also active in the coalition The Fifth Woman dealing with the problem of violence against women.

5. Conclusions

The four big themes through which we, in this publication, evoke the shifts in gender thinking in the past two decades emerged in public discourse through various channels. While the theme of sexual minorities and women's reproductive rights entered it through reactions to violations of rights or to the efforts to introduce repressive laws, especially on the part of conservative and traditionally oriented politicians (and it was not only NGOs who reacted to these efforts, but also various emerging civic initiatives), the path of the theme of violence against women to public discourse was solely from the bottom – through the work of NGOs and the national campaigns they organised. The theme of women's political participation would come both from the bottom (through initiatives of some women's NGOs) and from the top (through political circles mainly after the Beijing Conference in 1995). While the NGO actors who raised the issues around violence, sexual minorities and reproductive rights were clear in formulating their views and claims, and did not fear to engage in conflicts with official power structures, the actors around the issue of political participation of women strove to avoid any conflicts.

At present, the circle of organisations and individuals who deal with concrete gender issues is growing. Some of them base their work on gender-sensitivity and realise its feminist and human rights context. However, there is an increasing number of those who understand gender studies in a purely "academic" fashion – they refuse and ignore its history and social context. At present, there also is a tendency to understand gender studies as a chance to embark on an international career a hence to separate them from activities of NGOs or

from the public discussion about gender issues. This is probably also a result of the non-existence of feminism as a large-scale social movement in Slovakia.

Despite all problems and limitations, the shifts in gender discourse over the past two decades are more than visible. Nevertheless, the question remains to what degree this shift has been taking place just within the existing gender stereotypes and to what degree it takes into account the historical context and, hence, also its feminist foundations. Although the shift in the extent and frequency of thematisation of gender issues is significant, the cultivation of gender sensitivity (to all issues) is still mostly the domain of cooperation of feminist NGOs (ASPEKT, Aliancia žien Slovenska, EsFem, Fenestra, Možnosť voľby, Pro Familia and others), the Gender Studies Centre at Comenius University and individual university teachers in Prešov, Banská Bystrica and other places.

At first sight it today may seem that the gender agenda comes to Slovakia mostly from the European Union as a result of its pressure, and hence it focuses on questions of employment and the labour market. Therefore, we decided to start at the beginning and record and document the story of the origins of gender themes stemming from the feminist foundations. We follow their road to the public and the modes of their articulations. In this publication we look mostly at the work of women's rights NGOs and personalities from the academia and other spheres as we consider these to be more relevant (especially in the first phase) for the creation of the gender-sensitive perspective in Slovakia than official institutions of public administration.

Translated by **Eva Riečanská**

Five Years after the Orange Revolution: a Gender Analysis

**Oksana Kisselyova,
Natalia Moussienko**

1. Introduction

The rigged 2004 presidential election in Ukraine sparked massive peaceful protests, which have become known to the world under the name of the Orange Revolution. According to the Freedom House ranking, In 2006 Ukraine was considered the only democratic state in the post-Soviet world (except the Baltic states). The Orange Revolution has had impact not only on Ukraine, but also on all states of the former Soviet Union.

After the Orange Revolution, Ukraine took course towards strengthening the stability and effectiveness of institutions which guarantee democracy, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as the basis for strengthening the overall rule of law in Ukraine.

Having decided to opt for European integration, Ukraine adopted the EU-Ukraine Action Plan for 2005-2007 as well as the EU's Strategy for Ukraine for 2007-2013.

After the Orange Revolution, Ukraine started to enjoy greater interest of international partners, especially the European Union (EU). The new Association Agreement should be signed between the European Union and Ukraine in 2009. The EU-Ukraine policy is aimed at introducing good governance, strengthening democracy, respect for human rights, reducing poverty etc.

Establishing gender equality is one of the main factors for ensuring good governance, strengthening democracy, establishing the rule of law and respect for human rights. Integrating gender priorities into policies is crucial for reducing poverty and improving social services and healthcare. Moreover, ensuring gender equality is one of the six Millennium Development Goals for Ukraine, according to which the gender ratio of at least 30 to 70 should be ensured in representative ruling bodies and higher ranks of executive power; and the pay gap between women's and men's salaries should be reduced by half.

The aim of the present report is to conduct an analysis of changes that have influenced the introduction of gender equality in Ukraine before and after the Orange Revolution. The report analyses the changes which occurred in the

political and economic life, in the protection of reproductive and sexual rights of women and men, as well as in the sphere of preventing violence against women; it includes a content analysis of state programmes, statements of known politicians and media publications; it investigates how gender issues gained political significance and entered public discourse. The report includes excerpts from interviews with known experts on gender issues.

2. Ensuring gender equality in Ukraine after the World Conference on Women in Beijing

In Ukraine, as in the other countries of the former Soviet Union, the problem of reaching gender equality was brought onto the agenda only after the World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). Due to the fact that in the Soviet times women had equal constitutional rights to men, there was a common misconception that there was no gender-based discrimination. Even the very notion of gender entered the public discourse only after the Beijing conference.

From 1996 on, the national government of Ukraine, with the support of international organisations and with the participation of civil society, has made some steps towards integrating gender priorities into policies. Several laws ensuring gender equality were adopted, as well as state programmes on strengthening the opportunities for women. We also saw the creation of state institutions to draw up and implement gender policies. In 1996 the Ministry of Family and Youth was created, later transformed into the State Committee for Family and Youth (in 2000), then in 2004 into the Ministry of Family, Children and Youth and finally into the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport in 2005. This institution, known under several constantly changing names, obtained the mandate to develop and implement gender policy. However, a separate institution at the level of national government has not been created.

The principal international legal document for the protection of women's rights in Ukraine is the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ratified by Ukraine in 1980. The main provisions of the Convention have been enshrined in a series of legislative documents, presidential decrees, government's resolutions aimed at solving gender-related problems. Thus, in 2000 the "Family Code" was adopted in Ukraine, together with the Law "On Preventing Family Violence". In 2001, the President of Ukraine issued a decree "On Strengthening the Social Status of Women in Ukraine". These legislative documents tend to present women as objects in need of consideration and protective measures on the part of the state; they do not present women as equal social partners.

Article 24 of the Constitution of Ukraine provides that "Equality of the rights of women and men is ensured: by providing women with opportunities equal to those of men, in public and political, and cultural activity, in obtaining education and in professional training, in work and its remuneration; by special measures for the protection of work and health of women; by establishing pension privileges, by creating conditions that allow women to combine work and motherhood; by legal protection, material and moral support of motherhood and childhood, including the provision of paid leaves and other privileges to pregnant women and mothers".

After the Beijing conference two National Action Plans on improving the status of women were developed and adopted – for 1997-2000 and for 2001-2005. In addition to conducting mass cultural events, they provided for: reducing the unemployment rate among women, creating centres and services which provide medical, psychological and social assistance to women – victims of violence; organising trainings for those who work with women – victims of violence, conducting social information campaigns on preventing trafficking in women etc.

On 1 January 2006 the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" entered into force and opened up new opportu-

nities for the development of institutional mechanisms. All normative legal acts of Ukraine have to be verified or amended for conformity with this Law; acts which fail to conform to the provisions of this Law have to be abolished.

Currently, the implementation of gender policy is in the competence of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport. But gender policy is only one of the many other tasks of the Ministry – developing and implementing the state policy on family, children, youth, physical education and sport, demographic processes, supporting the development of different kinds of sports in Ukraine, etc.

In order to coordinate the work of the state on gender equality, the Interdepartmental Coordinating Council on Family and Gender Policy, Demographic Development and Preventing Human Trafficking was created in September 2007 at the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. The Council has to hold its sittings at least once every three months.

The Subcommittee on International and Legal Issues and Gender Policy was created within the Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and International Relations of Verkhovna Rada – the Ukrainian government.

Working groups on introducing gender approaches were created in the central and local bodies of executive power with the participation of scientists and representatives of non-governmental organisations. The creation of such working groups is supposed to help implement the goals described in the Law “On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men” as well as in the UN Millennium Declaration.

If we analyse the process of creating institutional mechanisms and their functioning over the past 12 years, we can see both positive achievements and negative phenomena. The first positive achievement is the vast legislative framework in Ukraine, which guarantees the lack of gender-based discriminatory attitudes. Undoubtedly, this is a direct result of the functioning of institutional mechanisms currently in force in Ukraine. Developing two Action Plans concerning the improvement of women's situation as well as the State Programme on strengthening gender equality in the Ukrainian society for the

period until 2010, gender-sensitive review of legislation, setting out gender millennium goals and indicators according to which the gender process is to be evaluated in Ukraine, the cooperation with non-governmental women's and youth organisations – all this shows some progress in the implementation of the idea of gender equality.

In other words, the institutional mechanisms in force today have, more or less, been successful in adopting anti-discrimination laws and legislation which ensure equal opportunities; they have also been successful in conducting educational activity, implementing programmes and projects on improving the status of women. An important shortcoming is that these institutional mechanisms have failed in monitoring how the existent laws are implemented. This is why, despite the existent anti-discrimination legislative framework, women have to face discrimination in economic, political and social spheres.

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving true equality is the fact that the status, mandate and activity of the abovementioned institutional mechanisms continue to depend on the changes in the Ukrainian government. Secondly, these mechanisms tend to focus mainly on work-related and social problems, concentrating their efforts on protecting mothers and children as well as protecting women's employment. Thirdly, "improving the status of women" remains the main catchphrase under which the policy of gender equality is carried out. As a consequence, the task which should be performed by institutional mechanisms in the contemporary world – playing a political role – is put off into some unspecified future.

If we analyse the obstacles which prevent the institutional mechanisms from performing a political role – being a catalyst for integrating gender issues in the administrative system as a whole – we can point out, first of all, that despite numerous legal documents, the problem of gender equality has not been politically recognised as one of the basic tasks of the Ukrainian government. Male predominance in the leadership of Ukrainian society makes it even more complicated for the idea of gender equality to pervade into the decision-making sphere. The political responsibility of the Ukrainian government for the imple-

mentation of gender equality is usually limited to ensuring equality in the face of law, whereas social and cultural changes in this area remain beyond the scope of this responsibility.

Among the obstacles to the activity of institutional mechanisms we can also point out the lack of evaluation mechanisms and indicators of success in the sphere of gender equality. Another impediment is also the lack of a clear mandate, the shortage of both financial resources and qualified specialists in the activity of institutional mechanisms.

To sum up, we can draw a conclusion that the main reason why the problem of gender equality has not yet gained political significance is that it has not gained recognition as a component of the process of democratisation and realisation of human rights.

3. Changes in gender equality and public discourse on gender issues after the Orange Revolution

3.1. Participation of women in the political sphere

After the 2004 Orange Revolution, the President Victor Yushchenko issued a decree "On Improving Central and Local Governments' Performance in Promoting Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" (decree No. 1135, issued on 26 July 2005). The decree made the deputy heads of central and local bodies of executive power responsible for performing the duty of ensuring equal rights and opportunities of women and men.

On 8 September 2005 the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted a Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men", which has become the main normative legal framework for achieving parity of women and men in all spheres of social activity as well as eliminating gender-based

discrimination. It sets out the main objectives for the state policy on ensuring equal rights and opportunities of women and men, and it is the first to include the definitions of such terms as *gender-based discrimination*, *sexual harassment*, *gender equality* etc.¹

As for the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, in July 2006 it approved "The Concept of the State Programme on Strengthening Gender Equality in the Ukrainian Society for 2006-2010²", and then in December 2006, the resolution was adopted.³

3.2. Gender assessment of the national legislation

The adoption of the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" put new responsibilities on executive bodies. Article 4 of this Law provides for conducting gender and legal analysis of the legislation in force as well as of draft normative legal acts. On 12 April 2006, the government adopted Resolution No. 504 "On Conducting Gender-Legal Analysis". Under this act, such an analysis in all spheres of legislation concerning human rights and freedoms should be carried out by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine.

Such an analysis has been carried out since 1 July 2006.⁴ First of all, it has provided conclusions about the Law "On the Election of National Deputies of Ukraine". The Law needs to be amended to include a gender dimension, since the provisions of the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men" (second part of Article 15), according to which political

¹ Act No. 2866 of 8 September 2005. Government Courier. 2005, 19 October, p.8.

² Directive No.384- of 5 July 2006. Official Journal of Ukraine. 2006, No. 27, p.1972.

³ On adopting the State Programme on Strengthening Gender Equality in the Ukrainian Society for the period until 2010: Resolution No. 1834 of 27 December 2006. Official Journal of Ukraine. 2007, No. 1, p. 91.

⁴ Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine. Resolution No. 504 of 12 April 2006. Official Journal of Ukraine. 2006, No. 15, p. 1113.

parties and electoral blocs appointing candidates for the general elections in a multi-candidate nationwide constituency should ensure that both women and men are represented in respective electoral lists, turn out to be insufficiently effective in ensuring equal representation of women and men in the only body of legislative power in Ukraine.

As a result of the 2006 general elections (carried out using the proportional voting system), the number of women in Verkhovna Rada increased to 8.5%. However, the list of national deputies of Ukraine elected in the pre-term election of 30 September 2007 shows that the proportion of women dropped again to 7.6%. Such statistics demonstrate a lack of balance in ensuring equal rights and opportunities of both sexes in the political sphere. In general, the current composition of Verkhovna Rada is characterised by a lack of gender balance, which reveals that positive measures need to be taken in order to reach a balanced representation of women and men in the only body of legislative power in Ukraine.

In its report "On the Elections of National Deputies of Ukraine", the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine draws a conclusion that there is a need to improve the situation of gender imbalance in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. The issue of ensuring equal representation of women in the authorities is currently one of the most crucial ones for the development of Ukrainian democracy.

3.3. Parliamentary hearing "Equal rights and equal opportunities in Ukraine: reality and prospects"

In November 2006, Verkhovna Rada's Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and International Relations, with the support of the UN Equal Opportunities Programme and in cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport, conducted a parliamentary hearing under the title "Equal rights and equal opportunities in Ukraine: reality and prospects". The aim of the hearing was to develop strategies, plans and mechanisms to ensure gender equality.

The participants of the hearing – both men and women – reached the conclusion that the essential problem lies in the fact that gender equality and women's rights are supported only formally. The actual situation is strikingly different from what the legal norms advocate. The majority of the population still holds stereotypes which picture women as weaker than men, and as second-rate persons in social, political and economic life. But the stereotypes are evolving, especially under the influence of information campaigns on gender issues carried out by non-governmental organisations.

Men dominate in the Ukrainian parliament, accounting for 91.3% of deputies, with women constituting 53% of the population. One of the most critical gender problems which remain unsolved in Ukraine is the lack of equal participation of women in decision-making processes at the level of higher bodies of executive and legislative power. Introducing quota for women can be a temporary measure not so much for reaching gender equality, but at least for increasing the level of female representation in the structures of power.

While in 2005-2006 we could witness a consistent movement lobbying for the introduction of gender parity in the bodies of power, in 2007 the process stalled. On 12 January 2007, the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada **did not** adopt the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights of Women and Men in the Electoral Process".

3.4. Content analysis of media publications

The need for women's presence in political life as well as for their active involvement in public life is widely discussed in the media. Different publications stress that the role of women in socio-political life is still underappreciated, while old gender stereotypes about the role of women persist in social consciousness. According to opinion polls, one Ukrainian in two acknowledges the existence of gender inequality in the society, while 62% of respondents believe that women's rights are being

restricted. Ukraine ranks 110th among almost 180 countries with reference to the rate of women in the legislative body (8% of deputies are women, compared to the world average of 17%). Moreover, the higher the level of management, the lower the rate of women represented (women account for only 14% of higher level managers). At the same time, almost 50% of men and 65% of women believe that women's participation in legislative bodies could have a substantial positive influence. Thus, 62% of Ukrainian voters first vote for men and then complain about women not being represented in the authorities.

However, the Ukrainian society has grown ready for qualitative changes. Thus, according to a 2006 survey, 85% of Ukrainians consider women suitable to become MPs, 45% would even be able to see a woman as the Speaker of Verkhovna Rada. 64% of men think that women's potential is not used effectively enough in the structures of power. Among women, this percentage amounts to 73%.

The following reasons for the lack of gender balance are quoted in public discourse:

- Social stereotypes of male priority in socio-political life and the secondary role of women;
- Time constraints on the participation of women in the socio-political life due to the fact that they have to deal with most household duties and bear children;
- Women's worse access to economic resources, which are an indispensable condition for participating in political life.

According to public opinion, these factors are historically motivated and fairly resistant to political measures meant to change them.

3.5.

Conclusions

After the 2004 Orange Revolution the following steps were taken to address the issue of gender parity in the legislative bodies in Ukraine:

- On 26 July 2005, the President of Ukraine passed a Decree "On Improving Central and Local Governments' Performance in Promoting Equal Rights and Opportunities for Women and Men".
- On 8 September 2005, the Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada adopted the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities of Women and Men", signed by President Victor Yushchenko.
- The Ukrainian government adopted the State Programme on Strengthening Gender Equality in the Ukrainian Society for 2006-2010 (2006).
- The Ukrainian Verkhovna Rada held a parliamentary hearing "Equal rights and opportunities in Ukraine: reality and prospects" (November 2006) and adopted the Recommendations of this hearing through the Resolution of 27 June 2007.
- The Ministry of Justice of Ukraine approved the Concept of Gender-Legal Analysis and conducted it with respect to a series of laws and resolutions (2006-2009).
- For the first time a woman became Prime Minister— Yulia Tymoshenko in 2005 and again in 2007.
- For the first time a woman became Secretary of National Security and Defence Council – Raisa Bogatyrova in 2007.
- For the first time a woman became head of the office of the President of Ukraine – Vera Uliachenko in 2009.
- For the first time a woman became the President of Kyiv Oblast State Administration – Vera Uliachenko in 2006.
- The President's spouse – Kateryna Yushchenko takes active part in political life (2005-2009).
- Since 2005 the issue of introducing quotas for women's representation in the authorities and society's attitude towards it has been analysed.
- Ukraine continues to infringe upon the UN-recommended principle of gender parity. Women account for as little as 5% of deputies in the Ukrainian parliament.

4. Participation of women in the economic sphere

After the 2004 Orange Revolution, the problem of reaching gender equality between men and women in the domain of economic relations remains vital and unsolved.

The Gender Gap Report was first presented at the World Economic Forum in 2005. Since the first Report, the economic gender gap in Ukraine has grown. According to the *Gender Gap Index*, calculated by the World Economic Forum, Ukraine's rank keeps falling:

2.06:..47th place

2.07:..57th place

2.08:..62nd place

In 2008 Ukraine dropped to 62nd place in this world gender equality rating. It was overtaken by its closest neighbours, such as Moldova (20th place), Belarus (33rd place), Russia (42nd place) and Poland (49th place).

The economic component is the one which plays the primary role in estimating the gender gap. Gender inequality in the workplace can be limited thanks to clear and purposeful measures of national policies, aimed at: increasing the prestige and pay level in the traditionally "female" spheres; fighting gender stereotypes which limit the scope of professional choice both for women and for men, first of all due to the education obtained; broadening the opportunities for lifelong learning.

The obvious inequality in women's and men's position on the job market has led to the *feminisation of poverty* in Ukraine. Currently one woman out of three obtains a salary at the level of minimum subsistence. Women constitute the majority in the most socially unprotected categories such as pensioners, the unemployed and employees of the public sector. The complex material situation often forces women to work abroad – they decide to move, usually illegally, to Western Europe, leaving their underage children with relatives, which quite often leads to child neglect, and sometimes even homelessness.

Sociological and economic research shows that economically women are worse off than men: there are more women among the unemployed; women more often than men are forced to go on an unwanted leave; most part-time workers are women; performing maternal duties tends to be an obstacle for women's professional careers and further social protection; women face discrimination in the hiring process; there are fewer women than men in the management positions.

The average life expectancy for women is longer than for men. This influences the amount of pension received by women and men with equal pension contributions. Statistics show that salaries obtained by women are lower than salaries paid to men. Also, in most cases, women's insurance period tends to be shorter than men's and the amount of premiums lower, because of motherhood.

In addition, there is the problem of protecting men, whose life expectancy is 10-12 years shorter than women's. Pension schemes are usually directly related to the labour law. In order to receive social security benefits (such as a pension), one has to work first.

In Ukraine women control only 5-10% of economic resources. They account for 38% of entrepreneurs who conduct individual business activity, they are in charge of 26% of small enterprises, 15% of medium ones and 12% of big ones. Only 2% of industrial companies are run by women. Salaries paid to women constitute, on average, 68.6% of men's salaries.

Women account for 30% of all entrepreneurs. They tend to work in small and medium enterprises. In big enterprises women are an exception. Setting up of women's companies in most cases occurs thanks to women's initiatives, not as a result of the activity of special state programmes. Companies owned by women usually focus on retail trading, medicine, culture and science.

Salaries are also an indicator of discrimination among employees and women usually earn 2/3 of men's earnings. Gender inequality in remuneration directly infringes on the principle of equal pay for equal work. Women occupy low-paid positions in practically all spheres of the national economy. Over all

these years, there was another noticeable tendency on the job market: women being squeezed out by men from well-paid positions.

Gender problems in the Ukrainian job market are demonstrated by the imbalance between the access of men and women to decent work. Women with high education and qualifications are often forced to realise their professional ambitions in lower-prestige positions, which require lower qualifications, are less well-paid and offer only limited opportunities for career and promotion.

Although currently women constitute 75% of the total number of civil servants, among the civil servants of the 1st category (the highest one) they account for only 7.8%, although 80% of adult women in Ukraine have higher education. There is also the common practice of discriminating single or recently-married women – the employers make them sign contracts according to which they can be dismissed in case of pregnancy.

In April 2009, the International Labour Office and the European Union launched a new project “Gender Equality in the World of Work” in Ukraine. Its main objective is to strengthen the capacity of key state bodies and social partners to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment in the world of work by developing, implementing and monitoring gender-sensitive employment policies and programmes. Ukraine receives constant support from international institutions for achieving gender parity.

4.1. Conclusions

- Gender-based discrimination is common in the Ukrainian job market.
- Since 2006 the gender gap in Ukraine has increased.
- Ukraine faces the problem of the feminisation of poverty.
- Public opinion acknowledges the need to increase social awareness and sensitivity concerning gender issues through informing the society and developing gender-sensitive programmes and supporting the creation of the State Gender Office.

5. Reproductive and sexual rights of women and men

5.1. State programmes on reproductive health

On 26 March 2001, the State programme "Reproductive Health 2001-2005" was adopted by a decree of the President of Ukraine. The content-analysis of the Programme demonstrates that human beings, their lives and health are considered the greatest social values of the State, as enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine. The Programme draws on the analysis of the qualitative features of society and points out that Ukraine is currently undergoing a period of serious demographic crisis, characterised by depopulation, aging of the population and lowering of the average life expectancy. This has a negative influence on the development of productive forces, on the level of the population's prosperity and the overall economic situation in the country.

After the Orange Revolution, the State Programme "Reproductive Health of the Nation for 2006-2015" was adopted and approved by the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine of 27 December 2006. The Programme states that "the sustainable development of any country's society depends to a great extent on demographic prospects, set by the ability of the society to simply renew or replace the population figure of the older generation by the generation of their children. The lasting trend of reducing the population figure due to the lower birth rate and increasing mortality rate threatens the future of the nation. In Ukraine over the past decade the average life expectancy has considerably fallen because of the deteriorating state of health, including reproductive health. The low birth rate and high mortality rate of the population place the problem of reproductive health and life expectancy among key national problems, and protecting reproductive health ceases to be a solely medical issue and becomes a national, cross-sectoral problem."⁵

⁵ The State Programme "Reproductive Health of the Nation for 2006-2015".

The gender gap in life expectancy has grown in Ukraine: it constitutes almost 13 years compared to 5-6 in the EU member states. According to the latest data of the Gerontology Institute, the average life expectancy in Ukraine is 74 years for women and 61 for men. Compared to the European average, Ukrainian women live 8-9 years less and men 12-13 years less than women and men in the European Union.

The state of reproductive health raises particular concerns as it constitutes an integral part of the nation's health in general. The main issues of concern for reproductive health are: mortality among mothers and small children, a high abortion rate, miscarriages, high level of pregnancy and childbirth complications, widespread infertility among women and men, sexually transmitted diseases in the population, including HIV/AIDS, tumours of the reproductive system.

The content-analysis of two state programmes on reproductive health shows that they indicate the problem of demographic crisis currently in place in Ukraine and quote the medical and statistical data on average life expectancy, the mortality structure of the Ukrainian population, the problems of reproductive health of women and the health of children, the growing problem of abortions. The programmes also define the measures designed to improve the reproductive health of the society. However, these programmes do not even mention the reproductive and sexual rights of women and men, including the rights of sexual minorities. The very notions are absent from the texts.

5.2.

Parliamentary hearing “Ways to reform healthcare and medical insurance in Ukraine”

The parliamentary hearing “Ways to reform healthcare and medical insurance in Ukraine” took place on 20 May 2009.⁶ One of the opinions

⁶ The parliamentary hearing “Ways to reform healthcare and medical insurance in Ukraine”. http://portal.rada.gov.ua/rada/control/uk/publish/article/news_left?art_id=156725&cat_id=46666

voiced during the hearing stated that the problem discussed should become a subject for a nationwide Ukrainian debate and that the problem of the protection of the Ukrainian nation – from physically dying out and from moral degradation – has to become a national objective. Especially in view of the fact that the main provision of the Constitution, stating that human beings, their life and health are the highest social value of the state, is completely neglected.

The participants of the hearing stressed that the main objective of social development in any country should be protecting people's health, preventing the development of diseases and disabilities, because health takes a special place in the system of human values: when it is lost or when it deteriorates significantly, everything else loses sense.

The majority of participants of the hearing stated that the state of health of the Ukrainian population remains unsatisfactory. According to them, the reason for such a negative state of affairs can be seen in the state of the healthcare system, which remains neglected despite numerous plans to reform it. The system is considered unsatisfactory by the Ministry of Health, the population in general and by patients. The healthcare system is out of balance and needs reorganisation and a rational use of the available resources.

An important component of the parliamentary hearing was the issue of medical insurance, which was discussed as a promising, indispensable element of a complete programme of healthcare reform. In the parliaments of the fourth (2002-2006) and fifth (2006-2007) convocations there were eight draft laws presented concerning this subject. However, each and every one of them was severely criticised, also by the government. The government, however, did not present its own draft law.

The speakers stressed that only a clear definition of the model of national healthcare system in Ukraine as well as developing an appropriate material base can truly help in solving the system's problems and carrying out effective, not fictional reforms.

5.3. Content-analysis of media publications

In Ukrainian press there is a vivid debate concerning the issue of health and reproductive health of the Ukrainian nation, as well as the healthcare system and ways to reform it. The media feature national statistical data, which inexorably show a negative demographic situation, spreading of serious diseases and mortality, unsatisfactory state of health of women, men and children, shortening of the average life expectancy, aging of the population and other unoptimistic indicators. Such data is no longer indicative of an illness of a single person or population group – it points to the illness of the whole society.⁷

The debate also touches upon the factors which indicate the negative state of health of women and the whole family. The following factors are indicated: low level of awareness of matters concerning health, growing incidence of sexually transmitted diseases, growing number of endocrinological disorders in women of reproductive age, early age of sexual initiation, which increases the likelihood of cancer at a young age, termination of pregnancy (especially in the case of first pregnancy, and at a young age).

The press also discusses the state of health of the rural population and the healthcare system in rural areas. It quotes data according to which in small villages (up to 50 inhabitants), we can see an extraordinary demographic situation: the ratio of births to deaths is 1:23, while in bigger villages (over 500 inhabitants) it is 1:5. The rapidly deteriorating state of reproductive health of women and men is a cause for concern.

The problem of cancer, especially of breast cancer is also the subject of many publications. “One in seven Ukrainian women is at considerable risk of developing cancer”, Ukrainian oncologists say. According to the data provided by the Ministry of Health, almost 16 thousand cases of cancer are diagnosed every

⁷ Y. Sokolova, “Changing the medicine as a means to change the society”, *Dzherkalo tyzhnia*, No. 41 (720) 1, 1 November 2008. <http://www.dt.ua/3000/3450/64526/>

year. 40% of women contact a doctor when the disease has already progressed to the 3rd or 4th stage, when treatment is very difficult or virtually impossible.”⁸

Another problem that has sprung up during the past decades is the problem of late motherhood. The number of women who give birth to their first child past the age of 35 is rapidly growing. Only during the last decade the level of late pregnancies has grown by 50%.

Men's health is not neglected in Ukrainian press. It is pointed out that “if the current state of health of the population, especially of men, remains as it is today, in 10-20 years Ukraine will become a country of widows. According to statistics, 30-40% of men reach retirement age. And the decreasing number of men is another cause of the demographic crisis.”⁹

Recently, the issue of in vitro fertilisation or other assisted reproductive technologies (ART) which enable women to become pregnant, is more and more widely discussed in the press. In 2005 almost one thousand babies were born in Ukraine thanks to these modern technologies, despite the fact that until 2005 artificial insemination (or in vitro fertilisation) was carried out only in private clinics. However, according to the state programme introduced in 2004, one attempt at in vitro fertilisation can be covered by the state.

6. Reproductive and sexual rights of sexual minorities¹⁰

The research carried out in March 2007 by the sociological company “TNS Ukraine”, commissioned by the “Our World” Centre, showed that only 1/3

⁸ Olga Skrypnik, “A cause for anxiety, not a verdict”, *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, N 41 (670), 3, 10 November 2007. <http://www.zn.ua/3000/3450/60955/>

⁹ “Lack of reproductive health”. *Lvivska Hazeta*, 6 July 2006, No. 119 (926). <http://www.gazeta.lviv.ua/articles/2006/07/06/16492/>

¹⁰ The charter is based on the analysis “Ukrainian homosexuals and society: mutual pervasion. An overview of the situation: society, the state and politicians, mass media, legal situation, gay community.” ‘Our world’ centre, K: Atopol, 2007, p. 88.

of Ukrainians believe that homosexuals should have equal rights with other citizens of the country, while 2/3 are against equal rights for homosexuals or refrain from presenting any opinion on the subject.

Since the middle of 2006 Ukrainian media started to feature a great number of statements by politicians concerning the rights of sexual minorities. Most of these statements showed that the Ukrainian political elite is characterised by overt or covert homophobia. Answering a question about same-sex marriages, Oleksandr Turchynov from The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc said: *"We are definitely against! It's a great sin"*.¹¹

Yulia Tymoshenko herself used to pronounce politically-correct views on the matter. In 2004 she said: *"I would prefer men to love women and women to love men. But if it happens otherwise, I think everyone should have the right to choose their own fate"*.¹²

During an internet conference on 14 December 2006, the President of Ukraine was also asked the question "What is your attitude towards legalising same-sex marriages in Ukraine?". Victor Yushchenko answered: *"Can I give a one-word answer? Complicated."* And he added: *"Although with such an answer, I would not like to give any other judgment than expressed by the society and by the law"*.¹³

Answering a journalist's question about the possibility of adding the words "sexual orientation" to the anti-discrimination article of the draft Labour Code of Ukraine, Vasyl Khara (Party of Regions), MP and member of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Social Policy and Work, said: *"Personally, I think that gays and lesbians violate all moral norms. It's a physical condition that has to be hidden, not advertised all around. On the other hand, their demands are a European standard, so it seems*

¹¹ Interview given to the Internet newspaper *Ukrainska prava*, 22 August 2007.

¹² Chat-conference, 5 April 2004.

¹³ Internet conference, 14 December 2006.

that such a provision will remain in the draft code, although privately I'm against that."¹⁴

The most aggressive attitude towards homosexuals was recently presented by the Head of the Verkhovna Rada Committee on Human Rights, National Minorities and International Relations, Leonid Hrach, a communist. In November 2006 he stated that *"homosexuality is an anomaly caused by immorality and depravity of humans"*.¹⁵ In the opinion of the deputy, *"the state should protect the society against evil and violence, including such evil as homosexuality, lesbianism, etc."*¹⁶

The number of negative statements of politicians towards homosexuals has increased in the run-up to the 2007 pre-term general election.

6.1. Content analysis of media publications concerning sexual minorities

In 2005-2006 there was a sharp rise in the number of homosexual and anti-homosexual initiatives, which drew the attention of the press. Several newspapers featured articles covering the conference on homosexual issues which took place in Kiev in the autumn of 2005. There were several new articles about same-sex couples living as a family – including descriptions of the life of such actual couples, presentations of legal regulations of same-sex partnerships and marriages existing in other countries and the analysis of the possibility of introducing similar solutions in Ukraine – for example the articles in two issues of "Ekspres" journal ("Lesbian family", 10-17.02.2005 and "Same-sex marriages", 2-3.08.2005).

¹⁴ Interview given to *Kommersant-Ukraine*, 16 February 2007.

¹⁵ Interview given to *Kommersant-Ukraine*, 17 November 2006.

¹⁶ Statement of the press-service of L. Hrach given to the information agency "REGNUM", 9 February 2007.

In 2006 most articles on homosexual issues in the Ukrainian media were sparked by the debate between homosexual organisations and the All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations, which on the initiative of the cardinal Huzar, issued an address to the state authorities appealing not to allow any form of official recognition of same-sex families in Ukraine. The attention of the press was drawn not only by the Council's appeal, but also by the open letter of lesbian and gay organisations appealing to the state to pay attention to the problem of ensuring equal rights for homosexuals, as well as the official answers of the state authorities to the letter.

The undisputable leaders in the number of publications on issues related to homosexuality during the period in question were *Korrespondent*, with its internet-edition *Korrespondent.net*, as well as the *Segodnya* newspaper. While *Korrespondent* usually limits itself to short scraps of news, *Segodnya* publishes lengthy feature articles presenting the issues in a more comprehensive and thorough way. Both newspapers have the ambition to present an unprejudiced attitude towards the subject.

6.2. Reproductive rights of sexual minorities

Homosexuals seeking medical assistance in clinics cite examples of their rights being violated. For example, 13.5% of them state that information on their state of health or sexual orientation was revealed by the medical personnel to third parties.

According to the data of the Ministry of Health, 12 sex reassignment surgeries were carried out in Ukraine in 2005, and 2006 – 16.¹⁷ In Ukraine, sex reassignment is subject to Article 51 of the Law “On Healthcare” (sex reassignment in the case of intersexuality and transsexualism) and to decree No. 57 of 15 March 1996 of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine – “Treatment of People in Need of Sex Reassignment”.

¹⁷ Letter of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine, No. 3, 51-58/640 of 25 May 2007.

6.3. Conclusions

- Although Ukraine adopted two state programmes on reproductive health (2001-2005 and 2006-2015), the state of health of the population is steadily deteriorating.
- The measures described in the State programme on reproductive health for 2001-2005: introducing medical insurance, introducing the institution of family doctors, systemic reorganisation of healthcare etc – have not been implemented.
- The state programmes lack such notions as “reproductive and sexual rights of women and men”, also with reference to sexual minorities.
- The media feature national statistical data, which inexorably confirm the negative demographic situation, spreading of serious diseases and mortality, unsatisfactory state of health of women, men and children, shortening of the average life expectancy, aging of the population and other unoptimistic indicators.
- There is a public debate about the factors which cause the negative state of reproductive health of the population, various forms of cancer, especially breast cancer, abortions, the problems of late motherhood, male infertility, artificial insemination and assisted reproductive technology (ART).
- Current Ukrainian legislation does not protect the rights of sexual minorities, such as reproductive and sexual rights.
- In Ukraine, the level of tolerance towards people of homosexual orientation remains on a dramatically low level.
- There is no political force with a consistent attitude towards sexual minorities. The statements of different politicians usually have a private character and represent their own views.
- The problem of improving legislation protecting the rights of sexual minorities is considered to be imposed by “EU requirements” and not in line with the needs of the Ukrainian society.

7. Violence against women

For a long time, the problems of domestic violence were not actively discussed in the Ukrainian society. It was human rights organisations, especially women's organisations, who not only initiated the protection of victims of violence, but also lobbied the state authorities to create the indispensable legislative framework to strengthen the national system of protecting victims of violence.

In 2001, the Verkhovna Rada passed the Law "On Preventing Domestic Violence" and the Law "On Amending the Code of Administrative Offences of Ukraine" on the responsibility for perpetrating domestic violence or failing to adhere to a restraining order. Adopting a legislative framework for preventing domestic violence moves this problem from the sphere of private problems to a state level.

We have to notice that enforcing the Law "On Preventing Domestic Violence" is quite complex, despite the existence of appropriate subordinate acts and a network of centres providing necessary assistance. In the opinion of human rights activists, the main reason for this situation is the lack of appropriate goal-oriented programmes at national and regional levels.

7.1. Parliamentary hearing "Status and Challenges in Prevention of Gender-Based Violence"

The parliamentary hearing "Status and Challenges in Prevention of Gender-Based Violence" took place on 21 November 2006. The participants of the hearing (both men and women) stated that violence is a significant obstacle to ensuring human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is women who tend to suffer most from violence. Violence makes women vulnerable to other kinds of abuse and is an obstacle to overcoming the inequality of men and women in society.

The participants believe that adopting the Law "On Preventing Domestic Violence" in 2001 was a landmark event. This was the first specialised law

devoted to combating violence against women in Central and Eastern Europe and in CIS countries. The adoption of this law confirmed that preventing gender violence was integrated into the state policies.

The participants of the hearing also stressed that the activity of the bodies of executive power in the sphere of preventing domestic violence needs to be significantly improved. In most regions there are no centres for victims of domestic violence, crisis centres or centres of medical and social rehabilitation for victims of domestic violence.

The quality of social campaigns on preventing domestic violence is not very high. Informational and educational activities need to be significantly improved. Interdepartmental cooperation in preventing domestic violence is not very developed. There are no statistical reports in this domain. There have even been cases of the police refusing to record incidents of domestic violence.

The practical application of the Law "On Preventing Domestic Violence" needs to be improved. There is a problem with isolating perpetrators of domestic violence from their victims. The use of sanctions for committing domestic violence and failing to adhere to a restraining order needs to be adjusted to include an individual approach.

7.2. The national campaign "Stop Violence!"

In 2008 within the UN Secretary-General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women and the Council of Europe's Campaign to Combat Violence Against Women, including Domestic Violence, a group of non-governmental and international organisations, in cooperation with the Ukrainian Ministry of Family, Youth and Sport, launched the national campaign "Stop Violence!" on combating violence against women, children and domestic violence in Ukraine.

Among the organisations which supported the Campaign were: the UN Development Programme, the Delegation of the European Commission to Ukraine, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, the International Women's Rights Centre "La Strada – Ukraine", the International Non-Governmental Organisation "School of Equal Opportunities", the Inter-

national Humanitarian Centre “ROZRADA”, the International Jewish Women's Organisation “Project Keshet”, the All-Ukrainian Public Centre “Volunteer”, the Information and Consultation Women's Centre and other.

The National Forum “Stop Violence!” was held in Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, on 16-17 October 2008. More than 300 representatives of central and local bodies of executive power, non-governmental and international organisations, researchers and experts from all regions of Ukraine took part in the forum. Participants noticed that overcoming gender-based violence is a prerequisite for sustainable development of the Ukrainian society based on democracy and respect for human rights. To carry out international commitments, Ukraine uses legislative, administrative, informational and other measures, aimed at preventing gender-based violence and ensuring gender equality.

Participants of the Forum adopted the National Action Platform as well as a detailed plan of its implementation. They also discussed the development, adoption and introduction of the minimal standards of assistance that should be provided to victims of violence. The Action Platform embraces the most important issues, strategic goals and measures, financial and organisational mechanisms that can be used both by state institutions and by non-governmental organisations in order to prevent and eradicate domestic violence.

The strategic goals and measures include: preventive programmes, eradicating violence, working with victims of violence as well as with perpetrators of violence, developing mechanisms of cooperation between different bodies and institutions in the sphere of preventing violence against women, children and domestic violence. A special chapter is devoted to the organisational and financial mechanisms to pursue the goals set out in the document.

25 November 2008 (the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) marked the beginning of the nationwide campaign “16 Days Against Gender-Based Violence”. The campaign coincided with the 16-days of the UN Human Rights Campaign carried out within the “Human Dignity and Justice for All of Us” programme. The events also coincided with a whole series of important UN dates and continued till 10 December – the Human Rights Day.

During the World Campaign, several non-governmental organisations contacted the Ministry of Ukraine for Family, Youth and Sport with the initiative of conducting in Ukraine the National Campaign Against Violence against Women and Children "Stop Violence!". The Ministry supported conducting the campaign, which started on 15 May and will continue until 25 November 2009.

Towards the end of July 2009, the National Campaign "Stop Violence!" featured billboards and citylight ads with a social campaign against domestic violence, which appeared in cities all across Ukraine. The campaign called on women not to remain silent in the face of violence, but to seek aid by calling a hotline phone number.

On 4 March 2009 within the National Campaign "Stop Violence!" a national network of men opposing violence was created in Ukraine. The network was created in order to draw the society's attention and to overcome the infamous phenomenon of violence. The network was joined by renowned Ukrainian politicians, athletes, artists and activists who actively engage in the public life of the country.

7.3. Content analysis of media publications

Recently, there have been more and more publications on the subject of violence. The publications tend to have provocative titles: "Hitting means loving?",¹⁸ "A women not hit is like a house not kept tidy",¹⁹ "My mum beat me... with a metal bar",²⁰ reflecting certain patriarchal stereotypes existing in the society.

¹⁸ M. Naboka, N. Sherstyuk, "Hitting means loving?".
www.radiosvoboda.org/content/Article/1352936.html

¹⁹ <http://h.ua/story/123364/>

²⁰ M. Tkachuk, "My mum beat me... with a metal bar." (The title draws on a popular folk song).
<http://www.umoloda.kiev.ua/number/1271/188/44990/>

The publications quoted several statistics: in 2007 in Ukraine law enforcement officers carried out preventive registration of almost 88,000 perpetrators of domestic violence, that is either people who hit their spouses or abused them psychologically or economically. Ten thousand of the perpetrators were women, but the overwhelming majority – almost 78,000 – were representatives of the stronger sex. According to the data of the Kyiv City Centre for working with women, each year there are over sixty women and twenty five children in the shelter for persons experiencing domestic violence. During the first 10 months of 2006, 83,000 people were brought to administrative responsibility for perpetrating domestic violence, 7,000 more than in the previous year.²¹

According to the statement of the Minister of Internal Affairs, Kateryna Levenchenko, only during the first 9 months of 2008, law enforcement officers carried out 84,000 interventions in response to reports of domestic violence, 62,000 official warnings were issued, and over 83,000 people were registered for perpetrating domestic violence, with 50,000 recorded in the register for the first time in 2008. The number of cases of domestic violence is visibly increasing – each year by 10% on average.²²

Causes of violence include lack of awareness and indifference of society and authorities to the problem of violence, social and economic factors, socio-cultural stereotypes.

The traditional way of life, poor socio-economic conditions and alcoholism are the main causes of domestic violence, says Yaryna Trokhym, expert on monitoring from the West Ukrainian Centre “Women’s Prospects”.²³

The publications address the problem of psychological violence and the inability of Ukrainian women to protect themselves against it, because they do not realise that moral pressure also constitutes violence. Ukrainian women seek help only in the case of physical violence.²⁴

²¹ M. Naboka, N. Sherstnyuk, *ibidem*.

²² M. Tkachuk, *ibidem*.

²³ M. Naboka, N. Sherstnyuk, *ibidem*.

²⁴ L. Merlyan, “Ukrainian women do not realize that psychological abuse also constitutes violence.” human-rights.unian.net/ukr/detail/186646

The media also inform that in practically all regions of Ukraine special institutions providing assistance to victims of domestic violence have started to function, such as crisis centres, centres of social and medical assistance, which provide comprehensive psychological, legal, social and medical assistance, information, counselling and also, if needed, ensure a temporary shelter (up to three months), especially to women and children suffering from domestic violence or women in crisis situations. At the end of 2007 in Ukraine there were 22 social and psychological assistance centres, 16 centres for medical and social rehabilitation of victims of domestic violence, 2 shelters for women, 11 shelters for children. Civil society organisations also provide active assistance to people experiencing domestic violence.²⁵

However, experts point out that despite certain positive shifts concerning the problem of violence, the mechanism of legal and social protection of victims of violence remains unsatisfactory: there are not enough specialised institutions providing assistance to victims or specially qualified experts in the prevention of violence; the system of early warning about cases of domestic violence is ineffective, just like the system of using sanctions against the perpetrators of domestic violence.

7.4.

Conclusions

- For a long time the issue of domestic violence was not actively discussed in Ukrainian society.
- Human rights organisations, especially women's organisations not only initiated the protection of victims of violence, but also lobbied the state authorities to create indispensable legislative framework to strengthen the national system of protecting victims of violence.
- Ukraine has ratified a number of international documents, ensuring the indispensable normative and legal framework, based on the standards of international human rights protection law.

²⁵ N. Romanova, T. Semyhina "Providing assistance to victims of domestic violence: legal aspects", *Social policy and social work*, No. 2, 2008, p. 58-70. <http://www.dipsm.org.ua/all/797>

- Ukraine adopted a legislative framework for preventing domestic violence, which moves this problem from the sphere of private problems to a state level.
- Despite the existing legislative framework and some positive shifts in the society concerning awareness of the problem of violence, there was no significant fall in the number of cases of violence over the past years.
- Enforcing the Law “On Preventing Domestic Violence” is quite complex, despite the existence of appropriate subordinate acts and of a network of centres providing necessary assistance. In the opinion of law enforcement officers, the main cause of this situation is the lack of appropriate goal-oriented programmes at national and regional levels.
- After the Orange Revolution, civil society organisations launched a large-scale national campaign “Stop Violence!”, supported by the key Ministries.

8. Recommendations

8.1. **In order to overcome the lack of gender balance in the political sphere, it is necessary to:**

- Analyse and publicise gender-sensitive statistical data on the representation of women in all structures of power.
- Use legal measures to introduce gender quota ensuring gender balance in the decision-making sphere.
- Develop and provide financial support to state programmes promoting the participation of women at all levels of decision-making.
- Support the initiatives of women putting forward their candidacies for managerial posts.
- Organise special training seminars and conferences for women-politicians on integrating gender priorities into policies.

8.2. In order to overcome the lack of gender balance in the economic sphere, it is necessary to:

- Use international standards and indicators to investigate the economic status of women.
- Investigate the influence of the global economic crisis on the economic status of women in Ukraine.
- Introduce special programmes on training and providing micro-credits to women in business.
- Balance the level of pay in the public and private sectors.
- Develop and ensure the mechanisms of transparency in the budget process.

8.3. In order to ensure reproductive and sexual rights of women and men, including the rights of sexual minorities, it is necessary to:

- Ensure the implementation of the State Programme "Reproductive Health of the Nation for 2006-2015".
- Introduce the system of compulsory medical insurance in Ukraine.
- Introduce the institution of family doctors.
- Increase state allocations for healthcare to the amount of at least 5% of GDP.
- Launch a large-scale campaign promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- Legally ensure the protection of reproductive and sexual rights of sexual minorities.
- Promote a tolerant attitude of the society towards sexual minorities.

8.4. In order to fight violence against women, it is necessary to:

- Develop the state programme on preventing domestic violence with appropriate financial support.

- Develop a package of subordinate acts necessary to implement the Law “On Preventing Family Violence”; develop appropriate definitions and terms and develop a mechanism of isolating the abuser from the family.
- Regulate a series of other legal issues, especially providing special mandate to social workers when it is necessary to carry out effective intervention in a crisis family situation.
- Increase the awareness of the population that violence against women and children constitutes a violation of human rights.
- Promote lack of indulgence for any kind of violence in all groups of the population.

Translated by **Natalia Kertyrzak**

About the Authors

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The Heinrich Böll Foundation (**Heinrich Böll Stiftung**), with headquarters in Berlin, is a German political foundation linked to the Bündnis 90/Die Grünen party. The Foundation's basic objective, both in Germany and abroad, is civil education aimed at supporting formation of democratic attitudes, social and political activism and understanding between nations. Its key values are: ecology, democracy, solidarity and nonviolence.

The Foundation is particularly devoted to building a democratic society based on respect for the rights of immigrants and the principles of gender democracy, understood as a domination-free relation between women and men. Both those principles constitute a basis for cooperation inside the Foundation, as well as in all areas of its public operation.

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