

Introducing Quotas: Discourses and Lobbying Strategies Used by the Women's Movement

Overview of the Session

This session focused on quota discourses and some of the strategies that the women's movement has used to lobby for quotas. It assessed how quotas came to be seen as important instruments to increase the representation of women and how the women's movement has mobilised around the issue of quotas and electoral politics. Examples were drawn from Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia.

Estonia

Ms. Anu Laas provided an overview of the debate on quotas and women's participation in Estonia. Estonia is a new EU member and women in the country are hopeful that the policies and values of the union will have a positive effect and encourage gender equality policies.

Estonia, with 200 women's organizations, has a relatively well-developed women's movement. In political life, women make up more than 50 percent of party memberships. The debate on quotas has been continuing for several years. In 1998, a roundtable for women in political parties was established, but since then the initiative has lost a considerable amount of ground and any attempts to advocate for legislated quotas have failed. The Gender Equality Act was enacted in May 2004 without a quota provision, although quotas appeared in earlier versions of the legislation.

Research conducted by Laas shows that, while the number of women candidates in local elections has increased, this has not significantly altered the proportion of women elected. Women often cite the 'desire to participate in local decision-making' and 'social responsibility' as reasons for running at the local level, being more focused than men on 'here and now' issues. Women candidates state that 'reconciling many roles' and 'difficulties to get [sic] a voice' are the main obstacles to their participation. Developing internal party democracy is a growing concern for women candidates.

Laas highlighted examples of concepts pertaining to gender equality. Many women are unaware of what constitutes discrimination. Frequently, demands for gender equality are seen as 'impoliteness

to men'. A common assertion, furthermore, is that change should occur in a natural and spontaneous manner. An additional source of misunderstanding stems from the difficulty of translating concepts, such as 'gender mainstreaming', into the local language.

Lithuania

Ms. Meilute Taljunaite provided an overview of women's representation in Lithuania and the debates on the introduction of quotas. She opened by stressing that, since women's representation was stable during Soviet times (around 35 percent in Lithuania), most people believe that gender equality existed in practice. Yet, the undemocratic decision-making bodies of the era and the stratification principle (inclusion of women in public life as workers and farmers) challenge the perception. Only those statistics on women's representation compiled since the restoration of independence are valid and meaningful. No clear trend in terms of women's representation can be discerned from the numbers.

In Lithuania, there has been significant resistance to the adoption of legal quotas, and a proposal to incorporate quotas into the electoral law was dropped from the parliamentary agenda prior to discussion. Consequently, the focus is primarily on women's nominations in political parties. The only clear example of party quotas is provided by the Social-Democratic Party, which uses a 33 percent quota for either sex in elected bodies and has used electoral lists since the mid-1990s. All parties in national elections try to place at least three women in the top ten positions on the list. For the first European Parliament election, the tendency was to have one woman among every five candidates. The only exception is the Labour Party, which placed three women among its five European Parliament candidates. The party did not demonstrate the same level of support for women in the national election, though.

Taljunaite noted that political parties are likely to use different nomination strategies for local, national and European elections. In addition, weaker parties tend to have more women on their lists. At the same time, women are often blamed for the weakness of the party and its electoral defeats.

Taljunaite concluded that quotas are a way of

It is important to motivate women at the grassroots level, democratise political parties, strengthen gender lobbying and generate media attention. Women have a huge amount of unused potential that could greatly benefit Estonia's democracy and society.

increasing women's participation in politics. Yet, in Lithuania, different barriers to the implementation of quotas exist. At the national level, despite processes to ensure harmonization with EU equality regulations, there is no legislative basis for quotas. At the civil society level, a lack of solidarity among women's organizations and a shortage of finance hinder gender equality initiatives. Finally, additional impediments are connected to the strength of cultural stereotypes and the difficulties associated with translating 'gender' and 'gender balance' into local languages.

Slovenia

Ms. Sonja Lokar outlined the quota dynamics in Slovenia. As in other countries in the region, Slovenia saw a significant decrease in women's representation immediately after the change of political regime in the 1990s. In the former Yugoslavia, there was an informal agreement within the political establishment to have at least 30 percent of women on candidate lists; in Slovenia, it was respected to a certain extent. In the mid-1980s, 26 percent of women held seats in parliament. Yet, the percentage dropped significantly from 1990. Four parliamentary parties in 2000 and two in 2004 did not elect a single female legislator at the national level. A similar pattern of low representation of women is evident in Slovenia at the local level.

Given the low level of women's representation and erratic compliance with party quotas, efforts have been made to enact gender equality measures under the national electoral law. Seven failed attempts were made in the 1990s. Lokar identified partisan competition between women from different left-wing parties as the major reason for the failures.

"We wanted to have legal quotas as a party success and we did not resort to coalition-building". The lack of success in the 1990s prompted a change of strategy. In 2001, the Coalition for Parity was established, bringing together men and women from different spheres of public life to work for gender equality. The initia-

tive cuts across party lines and involves cooperation among many MPs. Support is greater among left-wing politicians and women. Yet, not all women in left-wing parties support quotas. It is noteworthy that, in Slovenia, women MPs prefer to avoid the word 'quota' and instead use 'special measures'. A minority of Slovenian MPs would like to move along a slower track, seeking to improve first women's positions in the labour market and to advance family-related legislation. The Coalition for Parity has also actively lobbied for a constitutional amendment, which would see the insertion of a 'positive measures' provision in Article 44. Its biggest success is associated with the adoption of the 40 percent gender quota for the European Parliament elections. In 2004, three of Slovenia's seven elected MEPs were women (42 percent).

Discussions from the floor

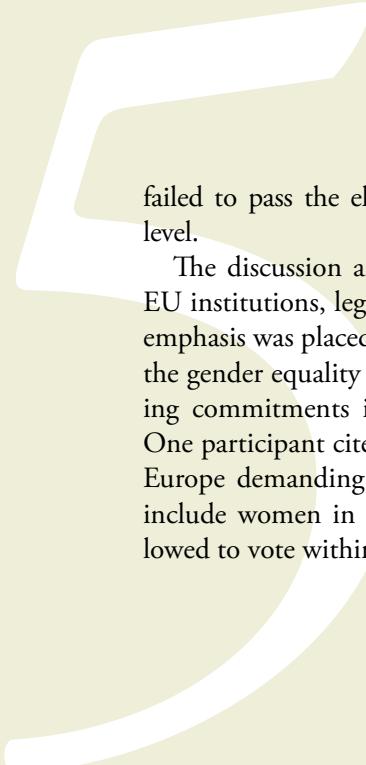
Much of the discussion focused on political party instability in Eastern Europe and differences among the parties with regard to commitments to gender equality. In Estonia, parties do not use quotas and rely on pre-electoral decisions and coalitions for list arrangements.

Internal quotas are used by two left-wing political parties in Slovenia. In 1990, the United List of Social-Democrats introduced a 'soft' quota. In 1996, the party included a 40 percent quota provision in its Statute. According to the electoral law, parties are obligated to follow their own statutory provisions.

In 1992, the Liberal-Democratic Party also opted for a 'loose' quota. In 2000, the party specified an obligatory 25 percent quota and stipulated that it would increase it by three percent in each future election. The promise was respected in the 2004 elections. However, the overall record of compliance with party quotas has been mixed.

The Social-Democratic Party has traditionally elected the most women. The Centre Party, which often wins elections but never governs, as it refuses to form a coalition, also has a good record of promoting women candidacies. In Lithuania, unstable parliamentary coalitions are common and political parties have chameleonic tendencies. Although most political parties in Lithuania dedicate some space to gender issues in their manifestos, politicians use publicity opportunities mostly to talk about socio-economic problems rather than questions related to women's empowerment. In Slovenia, cross-party policy coalitions have enjoyed success on matters of family leave, abortion and childcare. Slovenia has a long

tradition of trying to establish a women's party with all-women party lists. Notwithstanding some partial triumphs at the local level, women's parties have twice



failed to pass the electoral threshold at the national level.

The discussion also addressed the importance of EU institutions, legislation and directives. Particular emphasis was placed on the enlargement process and the gender equality requirements of politically binding commitments imposed on new EU members. One participant cited the example of the Council of Europe demanding that the Slovenian government include women in its delegation in order to be allowed to vote within the Council's bodies.

To Suspect or Respect? Quota Discourse in Estonia

ANU LAAS

UNIT OF GENDER STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF TARTU, ESTONIA

The aim of this paper is to study the political activism of women in Estonia and attitudes towards gender quotas. An overview of the different discourses used to lobby for quotas is provided, and the reasons for rejecting quotas in the Gender Equality Act of May 2004 are analyzed. As background, there are summaries of women's political representation, the obstacles to women's political participation and the evolution of the women's movement.¹

Women's Representation in Estonia

Being an EU member state grants Estonia the opportunity to participate in European Union politics. Since Estonia is a small country, it holds only six seats in the European Parliament. Of its six Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), two are women (Siiri Oviir and Marianne Mikko). Does this mean that women hold one-third of the decision-making positions in Estonia? Unfortunately, women's representation at the national level is much less than 33 percent. Barbi Pilvre notes that women who make it to the top in Estonian politics are just the 'exception' it is not the result of the systematic promotion of gender equality.²

The evolution of women's political participation in Estonia

Women were granted political rights in 1920, when the first Estonian Constitution was adopted. Estonia enjoyed short periods of independent statehood between 1918 and 1940. In 1991, it reacquired its independence from the Soviet Union.

The 1992 Constitution declares that Estonia is an independent and free democratic republic, wherein supreme power is vested in the people. Citizens exercise this right by electing the Riigikogu or by participating in referenda. As the Riigikogu decides on whether to implement a reform and is the sole body that is directly elected by the people it can be considered as the central point of the Estonian political system. The Riigikogu is a unicameral structure. Its 101 members are elected in free elections, by secret ballot, using the system of proportional representation, with open lists, in multi-member districts.

According to surveys on participation in politics³, the open list feature of the Estonian electoral system

implies that only women who are among the first ten or 20 candidates on a list are likely to be elected. In 2004, women in the Riigikogu comprised 19 percent of all Members of Parliament (MPs), and 28 percent of all councillors in local government (see figures 1 and 2). While the proportion of women in the Riigikogu is modest, the figure has increased from seven percent in 1990 to 19 percent. The percentage of women in local councils has also slowly increased, although there was no rise between 1999 and 2002.

In local elections candidates are nominated by parties, party coalitions and Estonian citizens with the right to vote. Unlike in the Riigikogu elections, independent candidates are allowed to unite and participate using a common candidate list. The latter, allowing for the participation of people from outside political parties, has been a matter of debate in recent years. Independent candidates do not promote solid political identification, producing a less stable political party system.

It is also rare for women to hold top positions in other areas. Pilvre argues that women can acquire high positions in mature organizations with a strong organizational culture and clear procedures and routines (such as Statoil).⁴ However, one does not find women at the top of highly dynamic organizations, where the 'playground' is bigger and where decisions are more innovative and involve a higher degree of risk.

Political participation in Estonia today

In Estonia today, both women and men have little interest in politics: three-quarters of the people aged between 18 and 74 do not belong to any organization. Low social capital is a problem for modern society. Participation in political parties is also low; in 2002, it did not exceed four percent of the total population. Survey data show that active participation in politics is still low, but interest in politics has slightly increased. According to Estonian data from the European Social Survey (2004, Round II)⁵ only 2.5 percent say that they are members of a political party, and 51 percent voted in last elections. In 2004, 36 percent said that they were interested or very interested in politics.

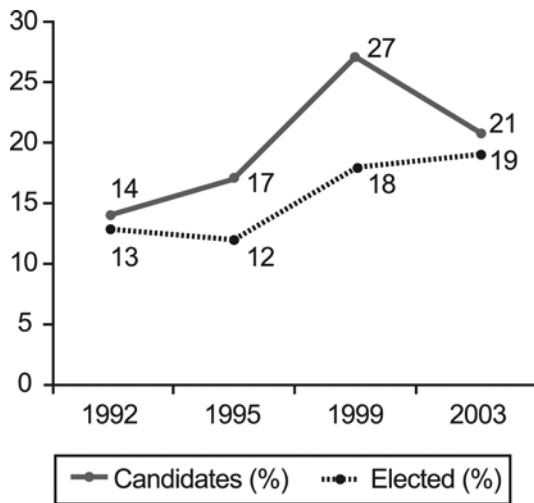


Figure 1. Proportion of women candidates in Riigikogu elections and MPs, 1992–2003

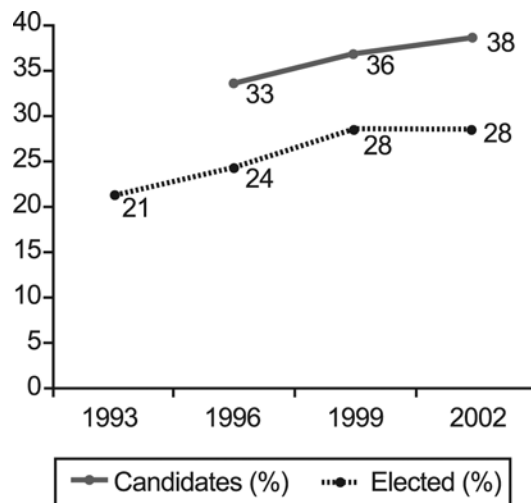


Figure 2. Proportion of women candidates in local elections and councillors, 1993–2002

Men were more interested in politics in all age groups and 61 percent indicated that they were closer to some political party ideas. In 1999, 43 percent of men and 58 percent of women agreed that politics is too complex to understand. Three-quarters of women over 65 agreed with this statement. In 2004, 38 percent of men and 43 percent women agreed that politics is regularly or occasionally too complicated to understand, among them every third man and almost 60 percent women over 65 agreed with this statement.

In the late 1990s, senior women (over 65) were even more visible in the media with respect to political action than younger women.⁶ Between 2003–2004, some female politicians were involved in Estonian politics who served as role models for women under 30. For example, Katrin Saks (the Social Democratic Party), who was has Minister of Ethnic Affairs between 1999 to 2000, is the author of many articles in the national press and has appeared on many TV

programmes. Kadri Must, the Secretary General of the Estonian Centre Party, has given well-received speeches and participated in political debates with well known male politicians. Laine Jänes, Mayor of Tartu, is a member of board of the Reform Party. She has successfully combined a professional career in music and politics.

Tarkmeel has studied the reasons why people seek election to local councils.⁷ She discovered that the main motivations were a desire to participate in local decision-making and a ‘feeling of social responsibility’. In Estonia, members of the elite (MPs, local government councillors) generally perceive democracy to mean freedom of speech—a similar understanding exists among ordinary people. Other factors highlighted by Tarkmeel include the principle of equality, respect for one another and freedom to act in different areas of life.

Estonian psychologist Aleksander Pulver has identified three primary reasons why women enter the field of politics.⁸ These are: a desire for power and validation;

Table 1: Interest in Politics by Gender and Age Group, 2004

	Men				Women			
	15-24 years %	25-39 years %	40-64 years %	65+ years %	15-24 years %	25-39 years %	40-64 years %	65+ years %
Very interested	1.9	3.4	7.5	14.0	4.9	3.4	4.9	6.7
Quite interested	24.1	31.8	39.7	41.8	22.0	24.6	30.2	30.9
Hardly interested	53.0	52.5	42.8	34.0	53.9	57.7	47.0	35.2
Not at all interested	21.0	12.3	10.0	10.2	19.2	14.3	17.9	27.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

financial rewards (the higher salaries paid to MPs and future social benefits); and a desire for personal accomplishment mixed with altruism.

Barriers facing women

Survey data reveal that the main reason why women choose not to participate in politics is their lack of confidence.⁹ Women fear being labelled, being caught in the 'media fire' or giving 'wrong' answers in public debates.

As a consequence of the socialist history of Estonian society, there is great confusion with regard to expectations of both genders.¹⁰ One interviewee pointed out that, 'after re-gaining independence, there was too large a step back towards a traditional arrangement of the society'.¹¹ In addition, women were expected to become more feminine; jobs were split into women's jobs and men's jobs—at every level it was emphasized that differences existed between the genders.

The survey data obtained by Biin show that women are neither highly motivated nor confident enough to aspire for higher office. The lack of confidence and motivation among female politicians was repeatedly highlighted in interviews.¹²

In earlier work I assessed the reasons for women's passivity and low representation in decision-making structures in the areas of politics and the economy.¹³ At the top of the list of constraints is the belief that women should be responsible for the private sphere (household and family). In second place are economic limitations. Having to work long hours for little or no pay is a major barrier for many women. Survey data from 2004 show a slight trend toward more egalitarian attitudes in connection with household and caring tasks, but women's overwhelming responsibility for family and care work is strongly supported by older respondents and non-Estonians. Younger generations often prefer not to take a position on gendered arenas. High motivation to have a career is expressed by mothers of many children as well as single women.¹⁴

The time needed for social activism and party work competes with the time needed to fulfil family duties. To participate in politics and engage in voluntary work requires that one attend many meetings. These meetings frequently take place in the evening when women have to be with their families. If family relations and life are highly demanding, then women cannot make public life a priority.

Another important constraint centres on women's fear that they will be unable to initiate change and influence decision-making. Women said that they often felt that they did not count or that they were not heard. They think, therefore, that it is wise to maintain some

distance from politics. Unfortunately, these women underestimate the value of networking and dialogue. Capacity-building strategies to ensure success in elections and favourable results in decision-making bodies (such as councils) should be targeted at women.

An additional barrier is that women do not automatically vote for women. Despite almost a decade of campaigning to encourage women to vote for women, this idea is not yet fully accepted. Laas and Lamesoo noted that, in every interview, the point was made that women do not tend to vote for women.¹⁵ When a woman tries to speak out on behalf of other women and to encourage them to vote for women, she is called a 'feminist', which has negative connotations in the eyes of both men and women. Hence, even women who are highly respected tend not to speak out on women's issues.

The Women's Movement

The women's movement in Estonia has not been popular in the past 15 years. It is in quite a fragmented state and regional disparities exist with respect to scale and level of activism. In the late 1980s and at the beginning of the 1990s, women's organizations focused on problems concerning violence in Soviet army, alternative education, reproductive health, home economics and setting up a business.

Between 1995 and 2000, many women became involved in community projects and numerous international projects were initiated. Projects grew in size and women started to create networks. Women's interests in economic issues increased, resulting in changes in society. Job losses led to a need for business training for women.

From 2001–2004, women's NGOs garnered more knowledge of equal opportunities and women's rights. The women's movement became more interested in politics than it had been in the 1990s. Women signed a shadow report presented to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). In autumn 2002, 60 Estonian women's NGOs signed a letter of support for the Gender Equality Bill. In 2003, a number of women's NGOs campaigned for paid mother's/parent's wage for one year after childbirth.

Advocacy, which often relies on cooperation among NGOs, is quite a new area of work for Estonian NGOs. In this new democracy, women's NGOs do not have the experience of cooperation or enough awareness about societal power structures. Many activities are ineffective on a larger scale due to misunderstanding about the real causes of problems.

Estonian women have extremely varied opinions

about the women's movement and activism. Some women in top positions support a professional career and see voluntary work as a waste of time and energy. Women at the top are sure that they have attained a high position because of their knowledge and competence. Some agree that women should have to provide more proof of their capabilities. Many women at the top, though, do not support quotas for women, although they do agree that quotas lead to a change in power relations.

Women who are engaged in gender equality activities believe that the most important gender equality policies are linked to the labour market: the principle of equal pay for equal work and equal career opportunities.

Women agree that inequality has resulted in economic difficulties, social deprivation and health problems for men and women, but many people consider the promotion of gender equality to be a women's issue or an issue to be dealt with only by women's NGOs. In Estonia, there was only one women's NGO that exclusively promotes gender equality.¹⁶ It is unreasonable to expect that one single organization can effectively affect change of the many policies required to promote gender equality.

Accession to the EU represented a major advance in Estonia's history. Women are both happy and fearful about the move. In general, views on the EU are more positive than negative; people hope that membership will bring European values to Estonia, as well as 'European'-style social policy and other policies.¹⁷

Promoting Gender Equality

Equality and gender equality issues are new concepts for ordinary people and decision-makers in Estonia. Estonians have assumed traditional gender roles and are still suspicious of new ideas, and even opposed to gender equality discussions. Despite traditional attitudes, Estonia signed up to many United Nations (UN) conventions on gaining independence in 1991, and has made its national legislation consistent with the provisions of the EU equality *acquis*. Following independence, new laws were prepared and existing laws amended.

Equality between men and women is a basic democratic principle underpinned by the 1999 EU Treaty of Amsterdam. Its incorporation into all policies is no longer an option, but an obligation. In May 2004, the Estonian Gender Equality Act entered into force. Subsequently, the promotion of gender equality and gender mainstreaming has been stressed in national legislation (Gender Equality Act, sections 9–11). However, the term 'gender mainstreaming'¹⁸ is not employed in the legislation.

In December 1996, the Bureau of Equality was es-

tablished in the Ministry of Social Affairs. In 2004, following the adoption of the Gender Equality Act, the bureau was renamed the Gender Equality Department. According to the head of the department, Ülle-Marike Papp,¹⁹ the main responsibility of the department is to coordinate integration of the gender equality perspective into socio-political development.

At the beginning of 2005, the Gender Equality Act has still not been implemented and a national gender equality strategy remains absent. Accompanying governmental regulations have not been adopted and a Gender Equality Commissioner²⁰ has not yet been appointed. The latter, an impartial expert, will independently monitor compliance with the act and perform other functions specified in law. The Commissioner will provide opinions to persons who suffer discrimination and to those who have a legitimate interest in monitoring compliance with the requirements demanding equal treatment. The Commissioner will also examine the effect of equality legislation on men and women in society and submit proposals to the central government and its agencies and to local governments and their agencies for amendments to the legislation.

Gender Quotas in Estonia

Legislated gender quotas do not exist in Estonia. Although different versions of the Gender Equality Act were debated in the Riigikogu for almost four years, quotas have not been a serious issue in parliamentary debates. Only the preliminary version of the Gender Equality Bill (2002–2004) included quotas and the Gender Equality Act (May 2004) rejected them as an instrument for change. Although quotas were not included in the legislation, MPs found themselves clashing over several aspects of the Act, including three articles, which generated considerable excitement among MPs: (1) Committees and councils, inter alia, formed by local or government offices should recruit women and men on as equal a basis as possible; (2) Employers should recruit members of both sexes; (3) Employers should recruit both women and men as equally as possible.²¹

Attitudes towards quotas

Women at the national and local (community) levels differ in terms of their opinions on quotas. Women who are active at the national level and are active party members tend to be more positive with regard to the introduction of quotas than women who are active at the local level or those who are involved in women's organizations.

In general, it seems that women give little thought

to quotas and do not understand them. Women have often said that they do not know about quotas, that they may exacerbate inequality, that they may be unfair, and that they may not have positive effects.

Quotas ignore democracy and increase inequality: Parallels with the Soviet era

Those opposed to quotas argue that they ignore democracy and increase inequality. Parallels have been drawn with the Soviet era, when quotas existed for women deputies in the Supreme Soviet (the highest legislative body in the Soviet Union) and the Soviet Women's Committee. In reality, there were not any women in leading positions in the Communist Party or the Supreme Soviet. Since Soviet-era quotas were further complicated by issues of class, patronage and manipulations of the Communist Party, their effectiveness as mechanisms of inclusion and equality was completely discredited.

A well-known journalist, Pilvre, said that: 'I'm particularly negative about gender quotas. I think quotas are not a sign of democracy ... I remember Soviet times when we had quotas in entering the university'.

A quota woman has no respect and is unheard

The quota issue has been discussed for many years in Estonia. Two key points have emerged from these debates. One interviewee from the 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance' (EGG) project²² summarised the positive and negative effects of quotas by using (overused) Scandinavian examples. On the one hand, some people see quotas as a very positive measure—a greater proportion of women can gain access to decision-making. On the other hand, Danish and Swedish women who have been elected under the quota system have reported that 'some distinction' is made between 'quota members' and 'non-quota members'.

Interviewees suspected that a 'quota member' would not gain the respect of others in Estonia:

'If somebody is not accepted and quotas open a door of membership, we can be sure that such [a] person will never be heard by others. I cannot believe that membership gives acceptance. I do not believe that such [an] artificial measure can function and give positive results'.

Some Respondents also criticised quotas as a policy being imposed as a requirement for membership into the European Union. It was felt that a number of unqualified employees would be hired under new EU directives simply because of their sex.

Lobbying for quotas

Estonian women have not been effective in lobbying for gender equality. The media, though, made some attempts to speak out in 1993–1994 on behalf of women—not only famous foreign women, but also Estonian women. It will be a great success when the Estonian media speaks out on women's legal rights and employment and health problems; awareness makes effective lobbying possible.

Some of the research has drawn attention to more radical voices. A Report from the project "Mass Media in (Re) Distribution of Power"²³ has pointed out that radical women politicians are of the opinion that election laws do not need changing, but instead the statutes pertaining to political parties need changing. Gender quotas should be applied to all elected positions, including the election of party leaders. Such changes would be difficult to accept by many Estonian feminists and mainstream women politicians, not to mention the electorate at large.²⁴

'Even among women that dare to call themselves feminists—and there aren't many—are those that oppose quotas'.²⁵

Conclusion

The main challenge in introducing quotas is changing societal values. One female politician said:

'As a woman, I feel that the problems women face in politics are with equality issues. And my joining the women's movement was a conscious choice. I saw in women a huge unused potential for promoting Estonian democracy'.

The variety of research conducted in Estonia shows that work with grassroots women and, at the same time, democratization of political parties is important. It has also been suggested that the media has a vital role to play in educating citizens about the process of democratisation and gender equality. The media project, conducted by partners from Denmark, Estonia and Latvia, produced several recommendations for the advancement of gender equality in politics and the media. The Media were seen as vehicles for raising awareness about gender equality and promotion methods (i.e. quotas), and as forums for debating rigid gender roles. Training for politicians, journalists, and specialists from advertising agencies was said to be important, as well as initiating a forum for media ethics. The project recommended drawing to the attention of 'the Parliament and the parties that inclusion of gender quotas in the statute on political parties would be a radical and effective step in the direction of actual gender equality in the

parties, elected offices, and in politics and Estonia as a whole. Political parties are the key institution in effecting gender equality, but they do not acknowledge their role.²⁶

When one male Dean from the University of Tartu read an article about female scientists in Estonia I wrote,²⁷ he was surprised and asked: 'Is the position of women in science really so dramatic as it is written here?' By contrast, a female Dean said after competing for the post of Rector: 'I was sure that I can reach everywhere, but I have really experience[d] a glass ceiling ... [A]fter participating in the Enwise conference in Tallinn²⁸ I am certainly for gender quotas and if there is a need, I can say it loudly'.

Endnotes

1 The data presented in this paper are derived from a variety of sources including:

- a) Estonian parliamentary debates on the draft Gender Equality Bill that took place in 2002–2004.
- b) Data obtained from interviews carried out as part of the European Union (EU) 5 Framework Program project entitled 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance' (EGG). Interviews were held with six women politicians, organization leaders and state officials, seven women and men who are members of the inter-ministerial committee responsible for improving gender equality, 18 women who are councillors or members of women's organization, and six civil servants. The interviews were conducted in 2003–2005 and lasted for approximately one hour. Interviewees were asked about cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the government, as well as about campaigns and issues in which women have been actively involved.

Interview data, valuable information derived from the answers provided in 2003 by 92 female scientists to a set of structured questions. Laas, A. 2004. 'Women in Science About Themselves'. *Innovaatika* 38 (71), 9: 2004. Archimedes Foundation, p. 3-7.

- c) The work of Helen Biin in an unpublished thesis written at the Central European University. Biin, H. 2004. *Women's Presence in Estonian Parliament: The Influence of Political Parties*. Thesis produced for the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies. Budapest: Department of Gender Studies, Central Euro-

pean University

- d) The EGG project data and the surveys by Biin and Laas offer some insight on attitudes towards quotas at the local and national levels and in academia.
- 2 Pilvre, B. 2003. 'Juhuslikud naised' (Random women). *Eesti Ekspress*. 10 April 2003.
- 3 Raitviir, T. 2000. *Participation in Politics. Towards a Balanced Society. Women and Men in Estonia*. Tallinn: Open Society Institute. pp. 58–65.
- 4 Pilvre. op. cit.
- 5 European Social Survey (ESS) is designed to chart and explain the interaction between Europe's changing institutions and the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of its diverse populations. Now in its third round, the survey covers over 20 nations. Estonia participated in the Round II in 2004 (N=1989)
- 6 Laas, A. 2000. *Eesti naised uuel aastatuhandel. Uuringu aruanne* (Project: Women in Estonia in a New Millennium). Unpublished study report.
- 7 Tarkmeel, A. 1998. *Eesti kohalik poliitiline eliit. Bakalaureusetöö. Tartu Ülikool* (Local Political Elite in Estonia). Unpublished dissertation for the degree of Masters of Arts in Sociology. Tartu: Department of Sociology, University of Tartu.
- 8 Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. 2004. *Research on Governance: Women and Men Politicians' Equality*. Tallinn: Ministry of Social Affairs. Compiled by Tiina Raitviir http://www.medijuprojekts.lv/uploaded_files/3_Estonia_ResReport_governance_ENG.pdf.
- 9 Laas, A, and K. Lamesoo. 2005. 'Identifying Barriers'. Work Package 5. EGG project, Tartu. Unpublished document.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ibid, p. 5.
- 12 Biin. op. cit. p. 54.
- 13 Laas. 2000. op. cit.
- 14 Estonian data from the European Social Survey (ESS), N=1989
- 15 Laas and Lamesoo. op. cit.
- 16 MTÜ Võrdõiguslikkuse Noorteühing [NPO Young People for Equality] was established in 2003, was closed by members themselves in 2004 due to lack of time for voluntary work. This NPO got media attention and was visible in society. The Estonian Women's Studies and

Resource Centre (ENUT) is project based and their activism is dependent on activism of the women's NGOs. The latter ones are good in social projects, but promotion of gender equality is not a priority (it is often ignored or not welcome by unpopularity)

- 17 Interview data from the EGG project
- 18 'Gender mainstreaming' has 'official' translation into Estonian as 'soolise võrdõiguslikkuse süvalaiendamine' is quite confusing
- 19 Kadi Viik has become the head of the department in 2005
- 20 Est 'soolise võrdõiguslikkuse volinik'. <http://www.legaltext.ee/>
- 21 Gender Equality Act, entered into force 1 May 2004, (§ 9, p. 4), (§ 11, p. 1), (§ 11, p 2)
- 22 Op. cit.
- 23 'Mass Media in (Re)Distribution of Power', one of projects under the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005). Published by the Ministry of Social Affairs of the Republic of Estonia. 2004. *Research on Governance: Women and Men Politicians' Equality*. Tallinn: Ministry of Social Affairs. Compiled by Tiina Raitviir, http://www.medijuprojekts.lv/uploaded_files/3_Estonia_ResReport_governance_ENG.pdf
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- 25 Ibid. p. 37.
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- 27 Laas, A. 2004. Women in Science About Themselves. *Innovaatika* 38 (71), 9: 2004. Archimedes Foundation, p 3-7
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The Women's Movement in Lithuania: Discourses and Lobbying Strategies

MEILUTE TALJUNAITE

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, MYKOLO ROMERIO UNIVERSITETA, VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

Introduction

Like other countries in Europe, the participation of women in politics in Lithuania has ebbed and flowed. In Soviet times, more than 35 percent of all deputies in the former Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR) were women. However, this institution had no real power and there were very few women in other administrative structures like the supreme bodies of the Communist Party or the Council of Ministers.

Like many other countries in the former Soviet block, women's representation dropped in the first post-communist multi-party elections. In Lithuania, quotas were partially lifted in the 1989 parliamentary elections, and consequently, the proportion of women deputies fell from 36 percent (in 1984) to 16 percent in 1990. Since then, women's representation has continued to climb, with 21 percent female members of parliament in 2004. This case study examines the political participation of women, gender quotas and the women's movement.

The Electoral System

The first democratic parliamentary elections, in 1990, employed electoral rules inherited from the Soviet era, that is, the majority/plurality formula, combined with an element of competition achieved through the liberalization of nomination procedures. Political organizations, social movements and community entities had the right to nominate electoral candidates; the number of candidates was unlimited.

The new Seimas Election Law, passed on 9 July 1992, introduced a mixed voting system for parliamentary elections in Lithuania. Seventy-one deputies are elected by direct vote in single-member constituencies based on the number of inhabitants and administrative-territorial divisions, while 70 deputies are elected via party lists (multi-member constituencies).

The Election Law was amended on 16 March and 27 June 1996. The nomination procedures remained virtually unchanged, except that political movements lost the right to put forward candidates for election in the single-member and multi-member electoral districts. More substantial changes were made with regard to seat allocation in multi-member districts. The electoral thresh-

old was divided into two parts: five percent for single parties; and seven percent for party coalitions.

Local and parliamentary elections were held in Lithuania in 2000, in March and October respectively. In the 2000 polls, open lists were introduced for the first time, meaning that people could vote not only for a party, but also for the candidates they most liked and trusted, with the possibility of changing the ranking of candidates on party lists. Prior to the elections, a few attempts were made to alter the significance of the rankings, but they were unsuccessful.

Electoral Quotas for Women

The laws of the Republic of Lithuania do not provide for quotas for women on election lists or in the administration system. At present only one political party, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, has introduced a quota, stipulating that no more than two-thirds of persons of any sex can be on its election list and or elected to its internal bodies. The 33 percent quota has been in effect since the mid-1990s.

In accordance with the Lithuanian Women's Advancement Programme, efforts will continue to be made to achieve a gender balance with respect to the election lists of parties and to ensure that representatives of one sex do not make up more than two-thirds of all commissions and committees formed by the government.

In spring 2004, Lithuanian parliamentarian Birute Vesaitė unsuccessfully attempted to put the matter of quotas for women on to the agenda of the Seimas with the aim of changing the Election Law or even the Constitution. The introduction or question of quotas has not been attempted since the spring of 2004.

The National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2003–2004) is fully oriented towards implementing a gender mainstreaming strategy. It encompasses new guidelines established in European Union (EU) directives, as well as in other international instruments. Government departments are the main implementing agents, and the Commission of Women's and Men's Equal Opportunities is the primary coordinator. The programme includes a separate Chapter on Policy and Decision-making. Local- (municipal) and governmental-level measures are discussed. Quotas are not mentioned at all.

Table 1: Women's Participation in the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas)

Soviet period				Since independence was restored									
1980		1985		1990		1992		1996		2000		2004	
W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
125	225	125	225	14	126	10	131	25	114	15	126	31	110
36%	64%	36%	64%	10%	90%	7%	93%	18%	82%	11%	89%	22%	78%
N=350		N=350		N=140		N=141		N=139		N=141		N=141	

Sources: Šeduikienė J. (2000), Women in the Parliament of Lithuania, *Woman's World*, 2000, No. 3-4. Women and Men in the Baltic Countries (2002). Vilnius: Lithuanian Statistical department, p. 61.

The Representation of Women in Politics

Table 1 illustrates the changes in the position of women in politics since 1980. Twenty-five women (18 per cent) were elected to the eighth Seimas in 1996 and 29 women (21 per cent) in 2004.

Women have also played an active part in local municipal elections. In 1995, the lists of nominees for election to municipalities comprised 24.3 per cent of women; 19.42 per cent were elected. In 1997, the list of nominees for election to municipalities consisted of 30 per cent of women; 22 per cent was elected. Of the candidates in the local elections that took place on 19 March 2000, 38.5 per cent women; 17.6 per cent was elected. It is obvious that women's organizations have done a lot to encourage women to seek leadership posts. Until the local elections on 19 March 2000, there were only two women were among 56 Mayors of Lithuanian municipalities.

Quotas in practice

Parties have different attitudes and strategies towards women's representation—there is no direct correlation between a party's success and the number of women candidates on its lists. A common perception is that parties that have a bigger representation of women are 'weaker' at the polls—the more women, the weaker party'. In the 2004 election, the only party to have introduced a quota, the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party, was split into two coalitions: the Coalition of Algirdas Brazauskas and Artūras Paulauskas 'Working for Lithuania'; and the Lithuanian Social Democratic Union. The latter (the Lithuanian Social Democratic Union), included the principle of women's quotas (32 per cent of party candidates were women), but did not win any seats.

Table 2 illustrates that the strategies of parties, which placed women among the first ten places on electoral lists, are very similar. Usually the lists of

these parties comprise two or three women among the top ten candidates.

Lithuanian women were more successful in ensuring representation in the first elections to the European Parliament in June 2004: five women were among the 13 individuals elected to the body (38.5 per cent). The names of five candidates were printed on voting bulletins. Only the Labour Party put forward three women candidates. There were a few parties, including the Liberal and Centre Union that did not include any women among their five candidates.

One can sum up the situation by saying that different parties have used different strategies towards women's representation in different elections (national, municipal and European).

Table 3 shows how many women were elected by the different electoral formulae, either through the party lists, or directly elected in the single-member districts, since 1992. While more women are typically elected through political party lists, it is apparent that women are able, and have won, seats in single member districts. The introduction of open lists in 2000 has positively affected women in a significant way. While open list voting means that some women candidates were displaced upwards or downwards on the party lists, there were some positive results. For example:

- In June 2004, Ms. Laima-Liucija Andrikiene was elected as one of two representatives of her party to the European Parliament after she moved from fifth position on the list of the Homeland Union to second.
- Ms. N. Steibliene was re-elected to the new Seimas in October 2004 after she moved from forty-eighth to fifteenth on the candidate list of the Coalition of Algirdas Brazauskas and Artūras Paulauskas 'Working for Lithuania'.

Table 2: Women on Candidate Lists vs. Women Elected to the Seimas, 2004

Name of Political Party/Coalition	Total candidates on lists	Women on the lists (%)	No. of women among the first ten candidates	Total Number of mandates (W = mandates won by women)
Labour Party	141	18.4	3	39 (W=8)
Coalition of Algirdas Brazauskas and Artūras Paulauskas 'Working for Lithuania'	140	26.4	3	31 (W=6)
Homeland Union (Conservatives, Political Prisoners and Deportees, Christian Democrats)	96	20.8	3	25 (W=5)
Liberal and Centre Union	141	17.7	2	18 (W=2)
Coalition of Rolandas Paksas 'For the Order and Justice'	139	12.9	2	11 (W=2)
Union of Farmers' Party and New Democracy Party	116	37.1	3	10 (W=3)
Electoral Action of Lithuanian Poles	128	32.8	2	2 (W=1)
Independent candidates				5 (W=2)
Christian Conservative Social Union	39	20.5	2	-
Lithuanian Christian Democrats	73	26.0	2	-
National Centre Party	37	35.1	1	-
Republican Party	28	25.0	2	-
Lithuanian Social Democratic Union	31	32.3	4	-
Lithuanian Freedom Union	29	55.2	4	-
National Party 'Lithuania's Way'	24	41.7	3	-
Lithuanian National Union	31	19.4	2	-
				141 (W=29)

W=women

* Source: Krupavičius A. and I. Matonytė. 2001. 'Women's Political Recruitment and Representation in Lithuania'. *Viešosios politikos studijos*. No. 1/1. Kaunas: Public Policy Research Centre. p. 14.

Initiatives by Non-Governmental Organizations

The Lithuanian National Women's Forum (Board) was re-established only at the end of April 2003, serving as the consultative board of the parliament. Today it plays rather an important role in coordinating and initiating various actions involving non-governmental organizations (NGOs), parliament and government.

In February 2004, the 'Vision of Development of Egalitarian Society in Lithuania Until 2014' (prepared by volunteers Ina Dagitė, Esmeralda Kuliešytė, Giedrė Purvaneckienė, Ramunė Trakymienė and Vilija Vasiliauskienė) was adopted. The same group of volunteers is currently preparing a strategy to encourage cooperation between NGOs and governmental structures.

A Ministry of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men is mentioned at the end of the Vision docu-

ment. Also mentioned is an Ombudsman for Women and Men, separate from the Ombudsman for Equal Opportunities. 'One of the main spheres of its activities is the improvement of women's status in society and receiving gender statistics from the employers. All employers will account for statistical indicators about women's progress in their annual reports'.¹

The number of women's organizations has increased significantly; they have also become more powerful. As of October 2004, 63 women's organizations are active in Lithuania. Women's organizations played a key part in the drafting of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women. They can be divided into two groups: women's groups within political parties; and public women's organizations. Five of the biggest political parties in Lithuania have women's groups: Lithuanian Centre Union's Women's Section; Lithuanian Democratic Women's Group (within the

Table 3: Women Elected by Electoral Formulae Type

Electoral Formula	1992*		1996*		2000*		2004	
	No.	W%	No.	W%	No.	W%	No.	W%
Party lists (Multi-member electoral districts)	5	7.1	14	20	9	12.8	16	22.9
Single-member electoral district	5	7	11	16.2	6	8.4	13	18.3
Total	10	7	25	18	15	11	29	20.1

W=women

* Source: Krupavičius A. and I. Matonytė. 2001. 'Women's Political Recruitment and Representation in Lithuania'. *Viešosios politikos studijos*. No. 1/1. Kaunas: Public Policy Research Centre. p. 14.

Lithuanian Social Democratic Party); Lithuanian Social Democratic Women's Union; Union of Women Conservatives (Homeland Union–Lithuanian Conservatives); and the Women's Section of the Lithuanian Christian Democratic Party.

Many of the NGOs were established as interest groups. According to the Directory of Women's Organizations of Lithuania, in 2000, 20 NGOs cited policy and decision-making as their primary area of concern. The size of the membership of Lithuanian women's organizations varies greatly, ranging between nine and 10,000.

Public women's organizations are very diverse. Seventeen are active at the national level, while a number of others operate at the regional or city levels, or within other organizations (such as women's study centres in universities). Some of these organizations have set a very clear goal of equal rights and opportunities; others are focussed on assisting women or uniting women on the basis, for example, of profession, religion and nationality. Cooperation among women's organizations is strong, as exemplified by the relationships among elected women, NGO's and the Department of Lithuanian Statistics. In addition to Lithuanian organizations, ten international women's organizations have stepped up their activities (for instance, Soroptimists and Zonta).

The Women's Issues Information Centre, supported by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), is among the strongest of the women's organizations in Lithuania. It collaborates closely with the Prime Minister's Office. The centre assists other women's organizations in trying to find solutions to critical problems and coordinates common initiatives. It initiates projects that seek to address women's issues, organizes conferences, seminars, workshops and training courses to raise awareness and to improve understanding of gender equality, and aids educational institutions in circulating information on gender equality matters. The centre's publications are disseminated all over the country

and help women to understand their rights and to acquire knowledge on how to implement these rights in the real world. Its monthly magazine, *Woman's World*, is available free of charge and in two languages, Lithuanian and English. The centre also collects gender-related statistical data and classifies the findings of social studies.

Public education and advocacy campaigns before elections seem to have an impact. For instance, 'Women voting for Women', a campaign organized by NGOs (through the internet and printed materials) encourages political party leaders to include more women on candidate lists.

Barriers to the Implementation of Quotas

The 2004 study, 'Enlargement, Gender and Governance' (EGG), highlighted certain political barriers as instrumental in the resistance to quotas. The study on 'The Civic and Political Participation and Representation of Women in the EU Candidate Countries,'² identified the following barriers:

At the state level:

1. Absence of coordinated strategy and common understanding about a quota policy. Although there have been a few attempts by individual parliamentarians and NGOs, the lack of a common concept or a coordinated strategy to debate and establish quotas provides a barrier to their introduction.
2. Frequent government changes, mostly in the first decade of independence, preventing sustained and consistent policy debate.
3. Too short a time between municipal elections (2.5 years) to discuss and to create gender policy.
4. Lack of information.
5. No strategy or policy to involve other social partners.

6. With the introduction of democratic multiparty elections, the number of women in national parliaments has been drastically reduced across the former socialist countries.³ One reason for this decrease lies in the abolition of the unwritten quotas for elections to the Supreme Council during Soviet times. There is very strong resistance towards quotas system. One of the arguments of the critics is that we had this system in the Soviet times, and it neither worked nor changed the status of women.

At the government level:

1. Strong forms of stereotyping and the highly patriarchal attitudes of responsible people in authority.
2. No clear financial support strategy.
3. Very few officials involved in gender policy formation and implementation.

At the civil society level:

1. Lack of solidarity among women.
2. NGOs remain isolated as a result of limited cooperation and sector-wide initiatives, and do not receive the official support and public attention that they deserve.
3. Financing is one of the main challenges facing Lithuanian NGOs.
4. Fundamental to success is effective management of an NGO, as well as attracting good personnel.

Endnotes

- 1 'Vision of Development of Egalitarian Society in Lithuania Until 2014', <http://www.lygus.lt>.
- 2 Enlargement Gender and Governance project co-ordinated by Queen's University at Belfast, available online at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/egg>.
- 3 Women in Transition (1999), The Monee Project, CEE/CIS/Baltics, Regional Monitoring Report – No.6.- UNICEF.

A Short History of Quotas in Slovenia

SONJA LOKAR

CHAIR, GENDER TASK FORCE OF THE STABILITY PACT FOR SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

The Communist-dominated Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was formed after the Second World War. Slovenia became the most developed of its six federal republics, gaining independence in the early 1990s. This case study looks at the participation of women in Slovenia before and after the break-up of the Former Yugoslavia, and examines the evolution of quota provisions that have been implemented to secure women's participation in decision-making.

Background

Women in Slovenia were granted the universal right to vote for the first time in 1945, along with equality with men.

At the beginning of the 1970s, some of Yugoslavia's strongest Communist women leaders were deeply involved in the preparations for the first United Nations (UN) World Conference on Women in Mexico. They were clever enough to persuade old Communist Party leaders, Josip Broz Tito and his right-hand man Edvard Kardelj, that the introduction of the quota for women—with respect to the decision-making bodies of all political organizations and delegate lists—had implications for Yugoslavia's international reputation.¹ Communist women leaders worked hard to make Socialist Yugoslavia a role model (in terms of the emancipation of women) for all members of the non-aligned movement. Although a 30 percent quota for women was never incorporated into law, and was never applied to the most powerful executive bodies of socio-political organizations or governments, it was integrated into the statutes of socio-political organizations and formally agreed rules governing the creation of electoral lists from 1974 onwards.² In Slovenia, the quota for women was only fully respected in the early years; the closer we got to the end of the 1980s, the less faithfully it was adhered to.

Women were extremely under-represented in the bodies that wielded real political, economic and cultural power in the socialist system: the national executive forums of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia; the executive branch at all levels; and management structures in important enterprises and public service institutions. Additionally, they were not allowed to launch any truly independent political initiatives and they were not free to organize politically.

Until the mid-1980s women in Slovenia made up 46 percent of the full-time and socially well-protected workforce. The differential in terms of wages for men and women with the same level of education and doing the same job was around 14 percent. Women made up more than 50 percent of all new secondary-school graduates, as well as more than one-half of all new university graduates. Yet women were engaged in less well-paid professions, including tourism, agriculture, human services and administration. Women comprised more than 40 percent of the total membership of the League of Communists of Slovenia, close to one-half of the membership of the trade unions, and nearly 30 percent of elected delegates in legislatures at all levels. These successes were the result of so-called state feminism³ and constant work by women activists in the communist-controlled umbrella women's organization, the Council for Socio-Political Activity of Women, the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia and Yugoslavia.

Political Reforms

Slovenia started to move decisively towards a market economy, a parliamentary democracy and an independent state in 1986. This complicated process involved the liberation of the media, the development of new and closely interconnected civil society movements, the mushrooming of new political parties and reform of former key political actors: the League of Communists of Slovenia, the Socialist Youth League, the Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia and the Alliance of Socialist Trade Unions.

Between 1986 and the end of 1990, a number of crucial independent women's organizations were set up and became highly active in the civil society sphere, including the Initiative Women for Politics and the Prenner Club (calling for women's human rights to be respected in the political and economic domains, for instance). Most of these organizations had close connections with other new civil society movements, especially peace and ecology groups. They were dealing with the same issues as the most developed women's movements in the West, but were also engaged with matters related to the disintegration, modernization and democratization of socialist Yugoslavia.

Slovenia's separation from Socialist Yugoslavia and its transition to parliamentary democracy and a market economy gathered new momentum following the first multiparty elections in April 1990. A coalition of right and centre-right parties, named Demos, won the first general elections.

The 1990 election, political parties and quotas

From the point of view of gender equality, Slovenia started out as a crippled democracy. In putting together their lists of candidates for the 1990 election, all political parties more or less ignored women. Newly formed right-wing and centre-right parties, even the newly established Social Democratic Party (SDP), openly attacked the quota inherited from the socialist period, describing it as a 'shameful communist invention to promote token women'. These parties openly rejected the very idea of the quota.

It was rather a different story as far as the parties that emerged out of the socio-political organizations of socialist times were concerned. The *Liberal Democrats* (LDP) (formerly the Socialist Youth League) proclaimed gender equality to be a core value, although they did not bother to formulate a quota. The *Socialist Party of Slovenia* (SPS) maintained the 30 percent target from the era of the Socialist Alliance of Working People, emphasizing that it would be foolish to throw the baby out with the bath water.

From 1989 the *Party of Democratic Renewal* (PDR) (formerly the League of Communists of Slovenia) has sought to become a member of the Socialist International (SI). In the 1980s, the Socialist International Women (SIW) had strongly recommended that all SI member parties establish women's organizations and set gender targets or employ a quota.⁵ Women belonging to the Party of Democratic Renewal therefore used the recommendations of the SIW, as well as the example of quotas introduced by the Nordic social democratic parties, to persuade their male colleagues that the quota for women employed in the one-party system would yield totally different results in a democratic multiparty system. So the 30 percent target remained on the statute books.

Neither the SPS nor the PDR, however, respected their quota rules when constructing candidate lists for the elections in April 1990,⁶ meaning that centre-left and left-wing parties tacitly abandoned the drive for gender equality in politics. At the last moment, leftist women from civil society put together an independent 'Only Women Citizen's List' in a desperate attempt to address the marginalization of women in

all political parties. However, their list did not receive enough votes to surpass the 2.5 percent threshold required for a seat in parliament.

The percentage of women parliamentarians therefore fell from 26 percent in the mid-1980s to 18 percent in 1990.⁷ The establishment of the Parliamentary Commission for Women's Politics served as a fig leaf, concealing the drastic defeat suffered by the modern feminist movement in Slovenia.

The 1992 election, political parties and quotas

Women activists from the PDR were the first to understand what a backlash might mean for the position of women in a society in transition.⁸ In autumn 1990, therefore, 100 women from the PDR set up the first formal women's party organization in Slovenia, the Women's Fraction (sic). In 1991, the SPS, and in 1992, the three other parliamentary parties, the LDP, the SDP and the Slovene Christian Democratic Party (SCDP), followed suit.⁹

In 1992, before the second democratic general elections, the PDR entered into a coalition with several smaller left-wing parties, known as the United List of Social Democrats (ULSD)—later to become the only left-centre-left party in Slovenia. Although the ULSD had a 30 percent target for men and women on candidate lists, it did not respect it. Meanwhile, for the first time, the LDP incorporated into its statute a 30 percent minimum target for men and women in all party organs and on candidate lists, but it too did not respect it.

As a result of the parties' failures to respect their own quota provisions, and the failure of parties without quota provisions to promote women candidates, the 1992 elections saw the proportion of women parliamentarians fall from 18 percent to 13.3 percent. It was clear that as party-based quotas and targets did not work, that women activists would have to work towards a legislated quota.

Efforts to Implement Quotas

After 1992, there were several attempts to enact quotas¹⁰ in order to achieve gender equality in politics in Slovenia. These attempts moved along two parallel paths.

- Women activists from three different parties, the ULSD, the LDS and the Slovenian People's Party (SPP), tried to convince these parties to incorporate firm quota rules for candidate lists for elections to party organs and for general elections into their statutes.

- At the same time, women and some male allies from different parties tried to introduce the quota for candidates on electoral lists by amending electoral legislation.

Six attempts were made between 1994 and 2004 to introduce the quota or some other positive action measures to combat the structural inequalities between men and women in politics. All of them failed.

- In 1994, an amendment to integrate a 40 percent quota for men and women into the Law on Political Parties was rejected. An amendment was accepted, however, that stipulated that 'all parties should enact, in their statutes, their own method for ensuring equal opportunities in nominating their candidates for elections'. No penalties were imposed, however, for non-compliance.
- In 1995, following a study of the statutes of all parliamentary parties, it became obvious that the parties did not seriously respect the law. New amendments calling for 30 percent and 40 percent quotas for men and women were proposed in May 1996, as well as an amendment outlining financial incentives for parties to bring more women into parliament. None made it past the Commission on Home Affairs and all were rejected by the National Assembly.
- Even a modest request, made the same year, for parties to detail clearly the concrete steps that they were taking to achieve gender equality vis-à-vis their nomination processes was turned down.
- A similar request was declined in 1998.

During the parliamentary and public discussions that took place after 1990, the following arguments were made against incorporating the quota into law.

- Quotas are a communist invention to guarantee 'token' women a presence in politics. They have nothing to do with the statutes of democratic parties and even less to do with modern, democratic European electoral legislation (argument from right-wing parties).
- Parties have the right to decide freely how they will select candidates for party posts or for their electoral lists. The Electoral Commission has only to make sure that they fulfil the provisions of their own statutes (argument from different parties).
- There is no need for any quota regulations whatsoever as our party respects gender equality and offers capable and willing women every opportu-

nity to participate (argument from one right-wing party).

- First we have to create social conditions that permit women to enter politics. At the moment they are too busy playing the triple role of mother, housewife and breadwinner (argument from right-wing parties).
- There are not enough competent and willing women in our party to satisfy a quota of 30–40 percent (argument from right-wing and centre-right parties).
- Women should not be forced to work in this dirty and competitive environment. They will lose their femininity by running in elections (argument from most male party leaders and male parliamentarians belonging to far-right parties).
- I achieved whatever I wanted to in politics without the quota. The quota is offensive to capable women in politics (argument made by several women parliamentarians from different political parties).
- Enactment of the quota would violate the Slovene Constitution, which stipulates full gender equality and prohibits any discrimination on the basis of sex. The quota would discriminate against women (limiting their representation to only 30 percent) and would also discriminate against more capable men, according unjust priority to less capable women candidates only because of their sex (argument from legal experts in government and parliament).
- Voters should decide who becomes a member of parliament (MP), local councillor or mayor (argument from right-wing party leaders: in the context of the proposal to replace Slovenia's mixed but proportional electoral system with two round system or a first-past-the-post majority electoral system).

The 1996 election: Learning from defeat

In the 1996 general election, the ULSD had 42 percent of women on its lists, but not one of them was elected (The ULSD lost one-third of its support in this election). Women representing six other political parties that were opposed to the quota also did terribly. Only one woman was elected from each of the parties. In total, only 7.8 percent of women were elected to the national parliament in 1996. Moreover, it would be a further three years before a woman re-entered the cabinet.

The defeat suffered by the ULSD in 1996 amounted to a collective defeat for all women in politics. In early 1997, the ULSD Congress announced that the defeat was due primarily to having ‘too many ... unknown women on the party lists’. In 1997, therefore, it decided to abandon the firm party quota and to re-adopt a soft target, lowering the minimum threshold to 33 percent.

At the same time, this defeat provided opponents of the quota in centre-right and right-wing parties with plenty of ammunition. After initially abandoning a quota amendment to the party’s statute in 1997, the Slovenian People’s Party finally put the rule of parity (50/50) in its Party Action Plan for Gender Equality in 2004. This quota should come into force for the national elections of 2008. Even in the 2004 elections, the defeat of the ULSD served as an argument to the LDS Congress to establish their first firm party quota, with a meagre minimum of 25 percent.

The main reasons why women failed to do well in the 1996 polls are set out below.

- The existence of a mixed electoral system. Women candidates from all parties had to compete in less popular single-mandate districts with their party’s most well-known male MPs. Women also had to compete against mayors of local communities in the best single-mandate districts.
- The small number of women MPs was extremely dependent on old boys’ networks within the parties. Because of the relative weakness of women’s organizations within the political parties most women MPs and leaders of women’s groups within the parties believed that it was safer to remain silent than to push for quotas.
- Women’s organizations within the parties could not ensure that women candidates received an agreed percentage of the best electoral districts in which to compete. In the case of the ULSD, it was clear that several women candidates were given second-best districts. These districts were not considered “safe seats” given that the party had lost one-third of its electorate and didn’t have a realistic chance of winning in the second-best districts.
- There was fierce competition between LDP and ULSD women over which party would be the one to introduce the quota into law. Women in all parties have found it difficult to learn that it is more important to get the quota enacted than to make its enactment a great success for one woman MP (me) or one party (mine).

- The inability of advocates of the quota to keep the media¹¹ on their side and to prevent male leaders of all political parties from convincing some of the most visible women in their parties and governmental legal experts to make public statements against the quota.
- Lack of support for the quota among rather weak women’s groups in civil society and women activists in trade unions.

However ineffective quota experiments and exercises have been, they have played a crucial role in raising the awareness of women in all political parties, and in forcing all of the main parliamentary parties to organize their women’s organizations, to find more women candidates and to invest at least a little in their political education. It took the women of Slovenia five years to draw the conclusions from the events of 1996 and to start to develop new strategies.

The Sandwich Strategy¹² in Slovenia: Amending the Constitution

In 2001, aware of positive developments in neighbouring countries, and encouraged primarily by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, women leaders and some outstanding male intellectuals from different parties, trade unions, NGOs and academia decided to form a Coalition for Parity. This informal network of visible public personalities was put together for one reason: to secure women equal representation in all decision-making bodies.

This cross-party coalition became a driving force behind the amendment of the Constitution and the enactment of the 40 percent quota for all electoral lists for the European Parliament elections held in Slovenia in June 2004 (this does not apply at the state level).

Constitutional change

The coalition immediately got involved in the process to change the Constitution to satisfy EU accession criteria, formulating a proposal to allow for the temporary use of legally binding positive measures to guarantee the equal representation of women in politics. (Arguments used to change the French Constitution in the 1990s were employed in the advocacy process.) The final wording of the amendment was by women MPs from the three governing parties—who worked together with parliamentary legal experts. They called on the male leaders of their parties to be the first to sign the proposal. Next women MPs lobbied parliamentarians

from all parties, asking them to sign the amendment. Before the start of the parliamentary discussion, 72 out of 90 MPs had signed the proposal. The constitutional amendment was endorsed in autumn 2004 after a number of complications had been resolved.¹³

The quota and the European Parliament elections

By autumn 2003, all of Slovenia's political parties were putting together their candidate lists for the European Parliament elections. It was obvious that women were being ignored once again. The CEE Network for Gender Issues encouraged women leaders from the different parties involved in the Coalition for Parity to inform all other party organizations at the European Parliament level about the situation and to ask for their help. Party leaders from the Party of European Socialists (PES), the European People's Party (EPP) and the Liberals (LDP) sent letters to all of the national party leaders of their sister parties, asking them to ensure that the percentage of women Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) did not fall below 30 percent in the forthcoming European elections.

In December 2003, the Slovene parliament started the process to make modest amendments to the country's European Parliament Electoral Law. The Coalition for Parity immediately got involved, proposing that a quota be introduced stipulating a minimum of 40 percent of men and women on candidate lists and

the use of the zipper system for candidate placing (one woman, one man). The crucial arguments made were that partial use of the party quota in the last national and local elections had not been successful, and that Slovenia was supposed to observe the terms of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), as well as Council of Europe and EU Directives, with respect to this issue. The Women's Forum and women and men MPs from the ULSD urged their ministers to make sure that the government included this amendment proposed by the Coalition for Parity. Next women MPs from different parties persuaded the majority of parliamentarians to ratify the article stipulating a 40 percent quota for men and women on candidate lists and that both sexes have to be represented in the first three positions on the list.

The pressure exerted by the Coalition for Parity was not enough to get a woman candidate placed at the top of any of the lists of the parliamentary parties, but it was enough to force all of the four parties that got at least one MEP elected to put a woman candidate in second place on their open lists to respect the provisions of the quota. This is how three women from three different parties were elected—in 2005, therefore, women make up 42.9 percent of Slovenia's seven-strong group of Members of the European Parliament.

Table 1: Women MEPs from Slovenia, 2004

Parties that had at least one MEP elected	Woman candidate in first place	Woman candidate in second place	Use of zipper system	Number of elected women MEPs
LDS (2)	No	Yes	No	1
Slovene Democratic Party (2)	No	Yes	No	1
New Slovenia (2)	No	Yes	Yes	1
ULSD (1)	No	Yes	Yes	0

Table 2: Women MPs in Slovenia

Year	% of women MPs	No. of parliamentary parties	No. of parliamentary parties without a woman MP	Quota in party statutes
Best result in the 1980s ¹⁴	26.0	1	0	30% quota for delegates' lists—morally binding political agreement
1990	18.0	9	2	Two parties with a soft target of 30%
1992	13.3	8	2	Three parties with soft targets
1996	7.8	7	1	One party with firm quota; one party with a soft target
2000	13.3	8	4	Two parties with soft targets
2004	12.2	7	2	Two parties with soft targets; one party with a firm quota; one party that has promised to achieve parity by 2008

The struggle continues at the state level

The attempt by several parties to change the electoral system for national elections and to make it truly proportional with open or closed party lists and with several big electoral districts, along with the attempt by the government to introduce a 40 percent quota for men and women and zipper placement rules, had sadly failed by the end of summer 2004. There is no legislation governing quota implementation for state elections.

Some parties, however, were concerned with gender equality. In November 2004, six out of eight parliamentary parties had organized women's sections and three had incorporated candidate list quotas into their statutes—two respected them and one brought 30 percent of women into parliament without any quota regulations. Those parties that had fully or almost fully implemented a firm party quota or soft target (the LDS (25 percent) and the ULSD (29 percent, instead of 33 percent) lost the polls. With the reduction in the number of seats these parties held, came a reduction in the number of women elected. Consequently, women comprise only 12.2 percent of the new parliament.

The Coalition for Parity was not strong enough to force political parties to change the electoral law, but it did present fresh and solid arguments why the electoral system needs to be changed and why parity (50/50) and zip placing rules have to be enacted. The coalition has already launched a new parity campaign, aiming this time for an equal proportion of elected women.

Endnotes

- 1 The same arguments were employed with respect to the enactment of the 1974 Constitution, when the state was called on to support family planning, including the right of women to a free and safe abortion.
- 2 Socialist Alliance of Working People of Slovenia 1974. 'Agreement on the criteria for the candidate lists for the delegates'. Archive of Slovenia. Box SZDL.
- 3 See texts by Dr. Vlasta Jalušič and Dr. Maca Jogan.
- 4 Other organizations included the SOS Lifeline (focussed on battered women and children); Lilit (a lesbian group demanding freedom of sexual orientation); the Association Women's Initiative of Koper-Capodistria and Women with Ideas (a section of the Managers' Association concentrating on women in business).
- 5 See the SIW website at <http://www.socintwomen.org.uk/CONTENTS/ENGLISH.html>.
- 6 The PDR, for example, placed only one woman in first place on its eight lists for the most important political chamber of the new parliament.
- 7 All information on women in elections in this paper is based on data available from the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, <http://www.stat.si>.
- 8 All information on party quotas is from relevant party statutes or from the publications named *Women in Slovenia* from June 1998, and *Wom-*

en and men in Slovenia from 1990s. Ljubljana, Governmental Office for Gender Equality

- 9 See 'Preliminary CEDAW Report of the Republic of Slovenia', Office for Women's politics, Ljubljana, May 1993, pp. 53–55.
- 10 See the article of Antić, Milica G. and Maruša Gortnar. 'Gender Quotas in Slovenia'. *European Political Science*. Summer 2004. Issue No. 3.3.
- 11 At the beginning of 1996, the mainstream media and the general public were very supportive of the ULSD idea to introduce a quota for men and women. But public displays of total disunity among women politicians resulted in them giving more and more time and space to arguments against the quota.
- 12 The best way to get national party leaders, parliaments and governments to accept the highest international standards with respect to gender equality and to enact positive measures to ensure gender equality in the political domain is to apply top-down pressure (EU accession process) and bottom-up pressure (the strong cross-cutting women's movement)—this is the sandwich strategy. This strategy works only if the women's movements are strong enough and if they know how to jump into an ongoing parliamentary debate on important legislation.
- 13 For more information, see Lokar, S. 'Gender Equality Breakthrough in the Nineties in Slovenia'. Website of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, CEE Network for Gender Issues. http://www.europeanforum.net/gendernw_home.php.
- 14 When the League of Communists enjoyed a monopoly on political power.

