

Evaluation of Gender Equality in Local Governments of Latvia

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The author has carried out a study in regard to aspects of gender equality in politics and public administration in Latvia. The author has questioned 85 women, leaders of local governments, interviewed 20 respondents in Latvia, asked men, leaders of local governments, for their opinion, as well as conducted expert interviews in Finland. Results of the study show that the women, leaders of local governments, acknowledge themselves as leaders and they are such indeed. Majority of them have not encountered gender discrimination. Women leaders have positive attitude towards women organizations. A half of the respondents suggest other women should participate in politics, work in local governments which gives them satisfaction regardless of the fact that the participation in politics affects their family lives, and stereotypes existing in the society about a woman in politics. Results gained from the survey examining men's opinion revealed stereotypical thinking about women holding managerial positions by emphasizing feminine qualities of the women and the role the woman plays in the family. Although it cannot be affirmed that gender discrimination has been ended completely in Finland, interviews with experts in Finland have shown that women's participation in politics, culture and trust in political power are greater in Finland than in Latvia.

Raktažodžiai: *saviraiška, lyčių lygybė, politika, vietos valdžia, lyderiavimas.*

Keywords: *self-realization, gender equality, politics, local government, leadership.*

Introduction

Thus far even in the most developed country women do not have the same possibilities as men. The laws and regulations of Latvia do not stipulate any restrictions on women to exercise and enforce their rights in politics, economics, social life, culture or any other sphere arising out of their marital status [1]. However, currently women are not represented in executive and legislative institutions in proportion to men, despite the fact that Latvia is a country with the largest proportion of women – 54% – and the greatest lifespan difference between women and men (10 years).

There is a common tendency that women are more represented at the lowest levels of politics – local governments. For instance, women account for 41% of all deputies elected to local

governments in 2005, and 36% of heads of local governments are women. However, only 19 women of 100 members of the Parliament elected in 2006 are represented in the Saeima, and two thirds of senior specialists in public administration are women [3].

Unfortunately, political and managerial culture in Latvia is rather low. It could be fostered by increasing the proportion of women in politics and administration.

History shows that women have always tried to find their place next to men in culture, economics and politics. Women inspired by the ideas of emancipation of women conveyed by the New Current (*Jaunā Strāva*) began taking part in political life of Latvia at the end of 19th century [2]. Women's participation in political life was fully legalized in 1920, when the new election law was adopted and women gained right to vote [5].

Such obstructive factors as prejudices and stereotypes can express themselves covertly, thus it may be hard to differentiate between unequal possibilities for genders and free will and choice of a person [4].

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There are several levels in Latvia which allow women to become involved in political activities – take part in political parties, stand for a deputy in a small parish or a big city, become a head of a rural municipality or a city council, be elected to the Saeima, occupy the position of a minister, become the State Presidents etc.

The aim of the study, making use of a quality and quantity study, has been to confirm the hypothesis: “Although in opinion of women leaders certain obstructive factors (such as stereotypes, prejudices, gender discrimination and role conflicts) do exist in Latvia in regard to leaders of local governments, women are ready to participate, besides they are already holding responsible positions in local governments and other public administration authorities”.

The major methods of the study have been questionnaires and interviews. Respondents for interviews were selected according to certain criteria:

- Respondents from different types of local governments (regional, city and parish governments);
- Respondents from different regions of Latvia.

Types of questionnaires used in the study – distributing questionnaires personally, sending them by electronic mail and receiving the answers over the telephone. The author has surveyed 85 women, leaders of local governments (this number accounts for 44% of all women, heads of local governments, as in August 2006 when this study was carried out). When summarizing results, data gained from the questionnaires were entered into the programme SPSS where they were summarized and processed.

Ten women, leaders of local governments, were interviewed within the framework of this study in February 2005, and ten more were interviewed in August and September 2006. A type of structured interviews was used in the study – each of ten respondents participating in the study in 2005 were asked to answer thirteen similar questions which had been prepared previously, while respondents taking part in the extended study in August 2006 were supposed to answer six more questions. Women from all districts of Latvia representing local governments of different levels and importance were engaged in this study. The study has been supplemented with two expert interviews conducted in Finland and a survey examining opinion of men, heads of local governments.

The author has compiled all the tables and figures, therefore no sources have been indicated below them.

1. Analysis of the questionnaire

Completed questionnaires were received from 85 women out of 190 women that are leaders of local governments (a number of women, heads of local governments, as in August 2006). Out of this number 70 women are heads of rural municipalities, but 15 women are heads of city councils. A number of statistical regions in the study correspond to the number of planning regions, since the head of the Riga City Council was/is a man, therefore not included in the group of respondents.

The planning region of Riga consists of two statistical regions: statistical region of Riga and statistical region of Pierīga. Boundaries of planning and statistical regions for other four regions are the same. The planning region of Riga was represented by 7 respondents, planning (statistical) region of Vidzeme – by 25 respondents, planning region of Kurzeme – by 23 respondents, planning region of Zemgale – by 9 respondents, and planning region of Latgale – by 21 respondents that participated in the questionnaire.

Data about respondents themselves reveal that none of the women is under 30 years of age, while the numbers in age groups from 30 to 39 years and above 60 years of age are quite similar, i.e. 10 and 7 respondents respectively. Almost half of the respondents (49%) belong to the age group 40 to 49 years. As regards the question about length of service numbers are quite similar in all the groups of variants offered. In most cases (57%) respondents are in charge of the work of local governments for 10 to 30 years already, moreover, it should be noted that almost 30% of the women have been in charge of local governments for four periods and more. 28% of the respondents occupy this position for the first time, while 23% and 14% of the respondents hold this post for the second or the third time respectively. The major part of respondents (81%) has higher education. 91% of respondents were elected to the city councils or municipalities according to the lists of electors' unions, while only 8 women out of the total number of respondents were on the lists of political parties. In most cases women manage the work of local governments of parishes where political parties are not very active.

Seven possible answers were offered to the question regarding length of service of the women (see Figure 1): numbers are quite similar in all the groups of variants offered, however, the length of service 5-9

years should be marked out, since this variant was chosen by 25% of women, and it is the largest number compared with the figures in other groups. Answers to this question draw attention to the compe-

tency and extensive experience of the respondents, thus providing additional credibility to the study, for the answers received from the women have arisen from certain experience.

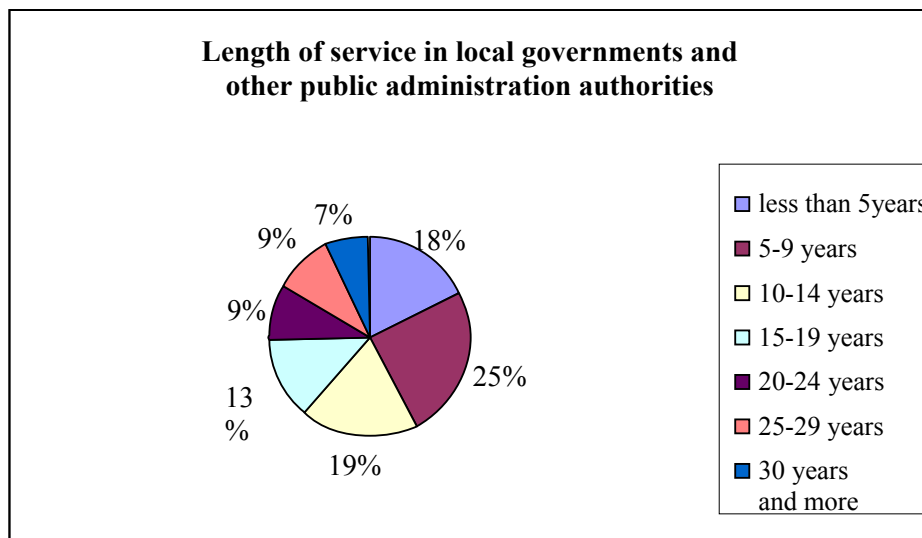


Figure 1: Length of service of respondents in local governments and other public administration authorities

A considerable number of respondents (45%) think that society sometimes has prejudiced attitude towards women and men in politics. Yet it should be indicated that comparatively large number of respondents believes that both genders in politics are accepted and regarded similarly – this is a view of 33% of women. The last fact is in contradiction with the analysis of interviews, which reveals that women in politics are faced different attitude both from the side of public and other heads. 22% of respondents confirmed existence of different attitude, therefore it can be concluded that this problem is still a topical issue in the society. As regards regions answers are similar to those regarding the country in general.

Almost half of the respondents have answered affirmatively that they regard themselves as leaders; however, comparatively large number of women is in doubt and has selected the answer “partly”. Although this number is quite small (11%), yet there are still women, leaders of local governments, that do not consider themselves to be leaders (see Figure 2).

It was also made clear during the interviews that women do not like to praise themselves, first of all they think about their subordinates and residents of the parish paying less attention to them. As regards regions none of the women in Riga and Vidzeme region has answered “No”,

therefore it can be concluded that women in those regions have higher self-confidence, while the women in Latgale region have given the answer “No” more than women in other regions.

The study also revealed that majority of women believe there are no stereotypes about women in politics, and no prejudices against women holding managerial position exist in the society. Nevertheless, a part of women have noticed existence of stereotypes – respondents in Vidzeme region have encountered stereotypes more often than women in other regions, but women in Zemgale region have faced stereotypes less often than others. The answers divided by regions are given in Figure 3. Women in Kurzeme believe in non-existence of stereotypes rather in their existence.

After summarizing the results from the answers given by the respondents it turned out that majority of women believe that women’s participation in politics affects family life only partially. Probably women think so because they have been successful in combining both things. None of the women in Riga, Kurzeme and Zemgale regions considers that political activities do not have any impact on their family lives. Most of affirmative answers “considerable impact” have been received from women in Kurzeme (16 women).

The question about reasons why there are fewer women than men in Latvian politics can be regarded as one of the main issues addressed in the study of the author. The women could answer the question by giving several answers; none of the respondents selected “other variant”. Answer

variants for the question included those which are regarded as most common reasons for minority of women in politics. Women from Vidzeme and Kurzeme regions were most active in giving more than one answer by indicating that usually there are several reasons for the minority.

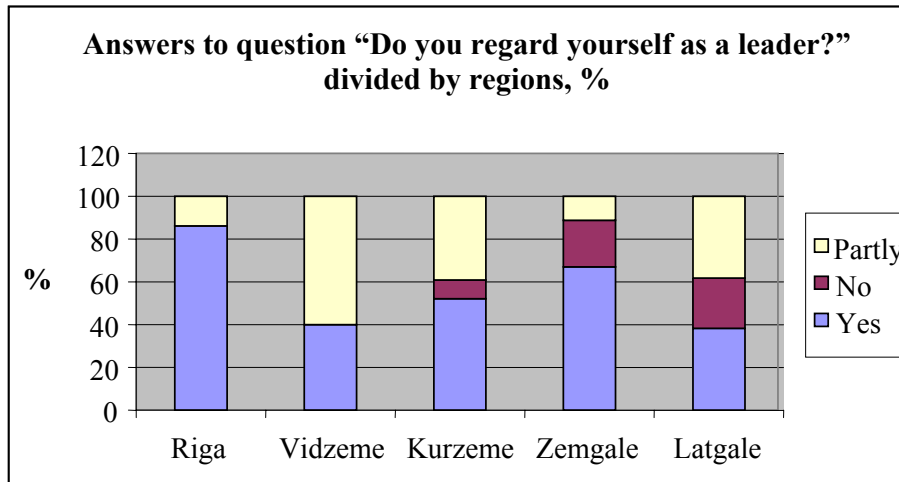


Figure 2: Self-esteem of women divided by regions

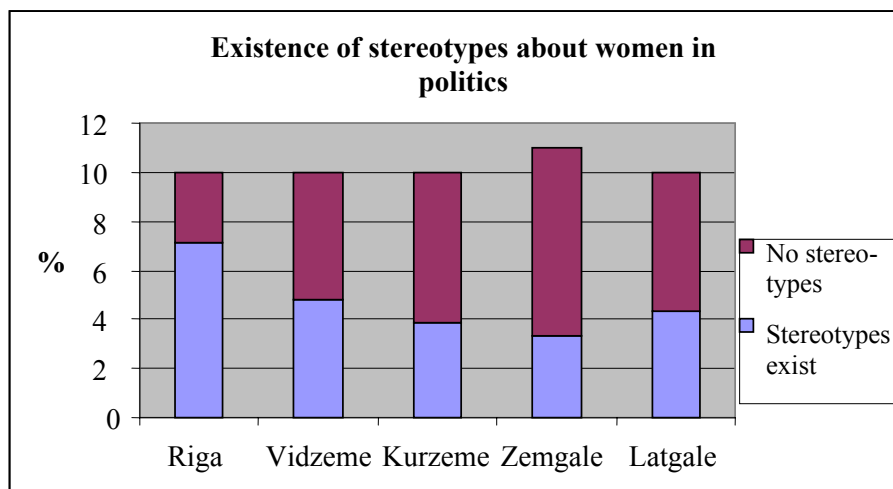


Figure 3: Answers to question “Are there any stereotypes in the society of Latvia?” divided by regions

Summarizing the answers provided by the respondents results reflected in Figure 4 were obtained. Women have named public attitudes, which are more negative than positive in this case, as the most important reason. Numbers of other selected answers are quite similar which proves that any of those reasons can impede women’s participation in politics.

By asking the question about the respondents’ attitude towards women organizations the author wanted to find out whether there are any women organizations in local governments managed by the

women, as well as clarify the respondents’ attitude towards such gatherings. Most local governments (54%) whose leaders participated in the study have their women organizations, which is a high percentage. Overwhelming majority of respondents (93%) support such organizations.

The quality study revealed that women highly appreciate activities of those organizations that often increase level of welfare in the whole parish. The most active women that tend to engage in such organizations live in Vidzeme and Riga regions, which could be explained both with geographical

location of their regions (more near to Riga) and more effective information exchange.

As regards the question about cooperation with other heads the author wanted to clarify whether the women tend to “divide” their cooperation partners on the basis of their gender and whether they prefer cooperating with women rather than men. This question also proves that the gender aspect is

of no importance when the head is dealing with other leaders. Only 4% of women made no secret that it is easier for them to cooperate with women than men (Vidzeme, Latgale), while 18% of respondents (mostly in Latgale) revealed that they prefer cooperating with men. Probably the most significant aspect in this case is personality rather than geographical region.

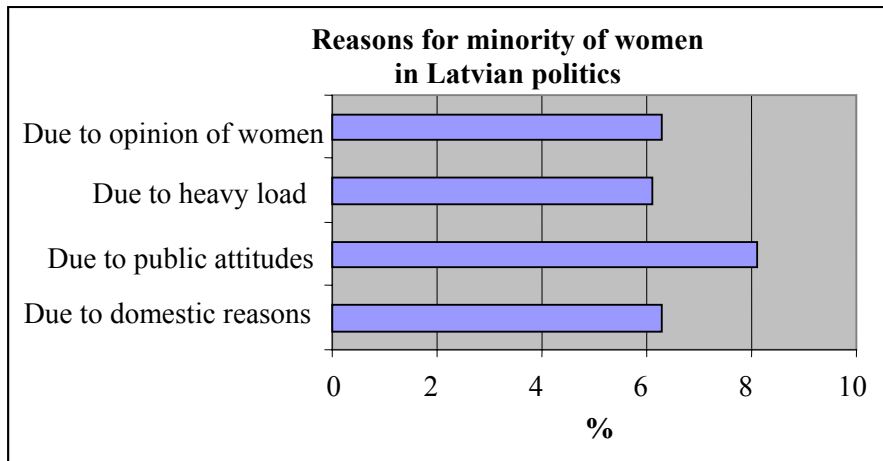


Figure 4: Reasons why there are fewer women than men in Latvian politics

The author of the study tried to find out whether respondents believe in existence of women solidarity in Latvia – providing support and encouragement to each other. This question was divided into two levels: evaluation of solidarity in the field of local governments and in the country in general. The following data have been gained:

In the field of local governments: Median: 6. Most of respondents (18 women) have given 5 points for this question, but the smallest part of respondents have selected 1, 2 and 10 points. Fifteen respondents evaluated the existing situation by giving 7 points. The mean for this question is 5.98. In author’s opinion this question shows that even on a scale of small local governments women solidarity is not very developed, yet in some cases it can be regarded as satisfactory.

In the country in general: Median: 5. Most of respondents have chosen 5 points; 18 respondents have given 6 points, while only one respondent has evaluated the existing situation in Latvia by giving 9 points (in Latgale). 10 points have not been given. 11 respondents have selected 3 points. The mean for this question is 5.15. Women solidarity can be regarded as satisfactory also in the country in general, thus revealing the problem which should be solved on the national level – women should be encouraged to support each other.

The following results were gained from the answers to the question how women regard prestige of their positions, whether they are proud of their positions and regard their posts as important also from the view of public opinion: the mean: 6.58 and mode =7. Most of women (33%) have answered that the prestige of the head of local government can be evaluated with 7 points. Such evaluations as 1 and 2 were not marked in the questionnaires. Only one respondent (from Latgale) has given 10 points. It should be pointed out that in general women regard prestige of their positions as good.

The author wanted to clarify whether the women feel satisfaction when holding this elected post and fulfilling professional responsibilities. Majority of respondents gain satisfaction in occupying the position of heads of local governments. Positive answers have been received from 52% of women. Rather significant part of respondents (45%) only sometimes feels satisfied with the job, while 3% of the leaders of local governments do not feel satisfied at all (respondents from Latgale).

Only 14% of respondents think that their salaries correspond to amount of their work, 46% of women are partly satisfied with their salaries, but more than a third of all women are

not satisfied with the remuneration for their work. This question highlights the problem – the leaders of local governments are entitled to set amount of their own salaries, which is later voted for or against by the deputies, therefore the question arises: if the women are not satisfied with existing salaries why they do not demand higher salaries. The quality study – interviews – also revealed that men, leaders of local governments, are more courageous to demand the salary which is even twice as big as their

existing one than the women in the local government with similar conditions.

The only respondents that would not advise other women to participate in politics are one respondent in Vidzeme and one in Kurzeme; those women have probable come across negative examples during their work. Yet almost half of respondents (45%) would still advise every woman not to stop because of stereotypes and other obstacles but continue cutting her way to a high position in politics. The answers are reflected in Figure 5.

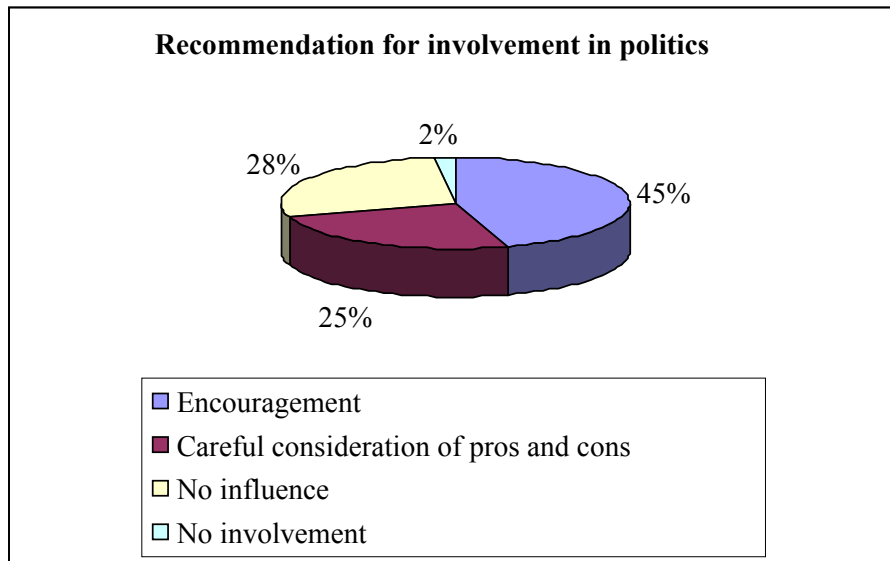


Figure 5: Recommendations of respondents for involvement in politics

Tables 1 and 2 reflect proportions (%) of negative and positive answers and balance of answers by separate questions, as well as values of balance of answers for five most significant questions and confidence indicator in Latvia in general and planning regions. Percentage points of balance of answers are calculated by deducting the proportion (%) of negative answers from the proportion (%) of positive answers. Proportions of average or neutral answers directly affect balance value.

In order to calculate the confidence indicator of answers given by women, heads of local governments, (see Table 2) the author has chosen five, in her opinion the most important, indicators: whether the women, heads of local governments, regard themselves as leaders; their attitude towards women organizations; whether the women support direct elections of local government leaders or reject this idea; whether the women would advise other women to become involved in politics; and whether their work in local governments give them satisfaction.

As we can see from Table 2, the balance of answers for all five major indicators is positive in Latvia in general, i.e. the proportion (%) of the positive answers is larger than the proportion of the negative answers. Therefore the confidence indicator is high as well – 61. The balance of answers for all five indicators is positive also in all the five planning regions. The highest confidence indicator is in Riga region, the lowest – in Latgale.

The confidence indicators do not differ considerably among planning regions, except Riga region from which the number of respondents was comparatively smaller.

2. Analysis of the interviews

After having analysed the results gained from the interviews with women, heads of local governments, it can be concluded that although the women consider that they have not encountered gender discrimination and unequal opportunities, their answers and experience indicate something else

Table 1: Calculation of balance of answers

<i>Question</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Partly (sometimes, rather hard)</i>	<i>Balance of answers (% points)</i>
1. Does the public opinion about women and men in politics differ?	22	33	45	-11
2. Are the women, heads of local governments, leaders?	49	11	40	38
3. Is it easy to combine managerial work with characteristics of women?	70	16	14	54
4. Does the women's participation in politics affect their family lives?	31	15	54	16
5. Do the stereotypes about women in politics exist in our society?	46	54	-	-8
6. Have you encountered gender discrimination in your career development	2	57	41	-55
7. What is your attitude towards women organizations?	93	1	6	92
8. Have the principles of gender equality been followed while carrying out administrative-territorial reform	57	34	9	23
9. Do you support direct elections of local government leaders?	92	8	-	84
10. Would you advise a woman to become involved in politics?	45	28	27	17
11. Does the work in local government bring you satisfaction?	52	3	45	49

Table 2: Balance of answers for five major questions and confidence indicator in Latvia in general and planning regions (percentage points)

	<i>Latvija in gen- eral</i>	<i>Planning region of Riga</i>	<i>Planning region of Vidzeme</i>	<i>Planning region of Zemgale</i>	<i>Planning region of Kurzeme</i>	<i>Planning region of Latgale</i>
1. Are the women, heads of local governments, leaders?	39	86	40	43	45	14
2. What is your attitude towards women organizations?	92	100	88	100	89	85
3. Do you support direct elections of local government leaders?	84	100	95	83	100	95
4. Would you advise a woman to become involved in politics?	42	57	48	35	22	38
5. Does the work in local government bring you satisfaction?	48	71	52	39	78	34
Confidence indicator (percentage points) (sum of balance of all five answers divided by 5)	61	83	65	60	67	55

The respondents emphasize that men like to “appear on the stage” more than women, while women have to do the “donkey work”. It is perhaps only strong-willed women with forceful characters that are able to find self-realization possibilities despite any opposition from the society. This assumption is accepted also by a respondent from Latgale: *“I have a very strong character; I do not let others neither to humiliate, nor to push me away if I believe I am right. I did not allow men to command me.”* Other respondents also have very vivid examples regarding this issue: *“I have experienced a special attitude of men towards women holding managerial positions: men are more restrained and self-controlled in front of a woman.”* Another leader admits that, *“I have heard comments that a man would do my work in a different, probably better, way.”*

The women shared their experience of being acquainted with such comments as *“what’s that crone/lass doing there”, “guys can’t deal with that hag”, “what a witch”, “men can afford to do more!”*, etc.

Some respondent, a leader of local municipality in rural area, shares an interesting observation saying that, *“there have been meetings where some of the people present have not heard anything what I talked about because of taking notice of what I was wearing and what kind of hairstyle I had.”* Other leaders of local governments, especially those living in parishes, have noticed the same.

In most cases women in politics are regarded as domineering and firm persons having spine and able to speak strong words. Nevertheless, the negative attitude of the public towards women in politics is not a rare phenomenon. Such an attitude is reality, and women must try especially hard in order to achieve something in politics, since this place is more readily available for men.

Two respondents have mentioned that the President of Latvia is an excellent example of a woman in politics, and emphasized this as a positive stereotype, because, by virtue of her success, the public change their attitude towards women in politics, and it becomes more easier for the society to accept and put up with women’s participation in politics.

It can be resulted from the above-mentioned example that women, brilliant politicians, are those that can change the attitude of public towards self-realization possibilities for women in Latvian politics by developing trust in those women.

These particular respondents have not strongly felt the negative impact of stereotypes on their ca-

reers; two women even said that there are no such stereotypes.

Yet it cannot be denied that unequal attitude towards women and men in politics do exist in Latvian politics, therefore the author asked the respondents why such a situation has originated in the society and why the women are in the minority in Latvian politics, what the reasons for this are, and what favours this unequal proportion.

None of the respondents denied that the real situation in Latvia is such that the men are in the majority in politics, however, different situation can be noticed in parishes – these are the areas where men are in the minority in politics, since they spend most of their time and energy for their own business.

In general, summarizing the results from the answers it can be concluded that the respondents’ opinions on this issue are very similar, i.e. in their opinion there are less women than men in Latvian politics because:

- It is a tradition – it has been historically established that the residents trust men occupying managerial positions more than women holding the same posts;
- The women are more aware of the burden of responsibility which would fall on her after becoming a politician;
- The women might face a problems to find a new job in case of not being elected to the city council or municipality again, while for men it is not so difficult;
- The women are afraid of assuming responsibility, moreover they are not so ambitious, but men have more time;
- The main obstacle is stereotypes, however, as generations change the existing situation will change as well;
- Perhaps it was due to other women but I have faced the situation when I was not elected to a high position because of being a women, this means that gender discrimination either subconsciously or consciously does exist in our society;
- Taking into account psychological and human aspects it is more difficult for women to come down in favour of their career, women tend to place family before career;
- A woman is perceived as a gentle creature, while a man is taken as a head of the family and local government.

Family ties, fear of responsibility and uncertainty about the future – in case of not being elected again –

have been mentioned as the major reasons for women's passive involvement in politics.

The woman that has decided to become involved in Latvian politics should take into consideration that she must always be ready to take a firm stand, she must be ready not only to win but also to lose, besides the woman should know that there will always be someone that would criticize her and try to place obstacles in her path. Deciding on taking part in politics the women must reckon not only with the pleasant things but also with the dark and ugly side of politics.

3. The survey of men

The men have not been very responsive in terms of participating in the survey examining men's opinion (16 men have reflected common opinion of men). Judging from the passivity of sending answers (in total more than 300 questionnaires were sent electronically to men) it can be concluded that the men do not regard this question as a topical issue, besides in most cases their opinion on this issue is constant and dogmatic. The men were asked to answer only one question: "Why do men hold the position of local government leaders more often than women?"

In most cases the men emphasized the dark side of the position of local government leader, by indicating that "it is too hard for a woman to take up this post", since "this job is not the easiest and most attractive one". The men also stressed that "in addition to political problems, many economic issues concerning men must be solved during the process of work", "it is necessary to have understanding not only about culture, sport and social sector but also economic and legal matters", "if the women were willing to assume the burden of leaders no one would object, surely the woman should convince the elected deputies that she is the best candidate". These answers reflect stereotypical thinking by separating a women sphere from a men sphere.

Prejudices can also be noticed in the comments made by men: "Women do not want to take up managerial positions, since they are more occupied with the family". Some respondent has admitted that "for a woman carrier and social status will never be as important as they are for men". In reality the number of women standing as candidates for local governments is smaller than the number of men doing the same. Apparently, the women are not willing or able to stand as candidates, although no one pays special attention to the gender when compiling lists of

candidates but takes into account the willingness to work having the public interests at heart. The men participating in the survey also emphasized non-existence of women solidarity, for example, both a man and a woman stood as candidates for a position of the head of the Alūksne District Council, however deputies (12 women and only 6 men) voted in favour of the man.

Some respondent has also indicated that women and men with similar intellectual potential and education can be regarded as equal; yet, situations which are not favourable and equal for both genders arise due to traditional stereotypes existing in the society.

Two types of reasons why the women are in the minority in Latvian politics were set out: 1) a large part of women thinks that this job is more appropriate for a man and is not willing to stand as candidates for this position; 2) calmness and strategic thinking are characteristics more common to men, yet there are still women who are good at it either.

During the study the problem connected with the negative attitude towards women in politics or women holding managerial positions appeared on the surface. The men admitted that, "Electors do not really like women as leaders of local governments, therefore election lists putting women forward as heads of local governments often lose elections" or "residents of the parish must feel the strong hand of a master and taking into account psychological factors a man as a master is accepted more willingly".

While participating in the survey the men often stressed that women are not suitable for politics: "Local elections, especially in the largest cities, involve a lot of dirty politics and, to my mind, women are not so ready to take part in it".

Some respondent offered an answer which in simple words explained opinion of the majority of men, "The women should deal more with women matters and think about children and us, men".

The respondents emphasize that women's participation in active politics of Latvia is quite a recent phenomenon, since during the Soviet occupation of Latvia the patriarchal system dominated in the society. Today many things have changed in favour of gender equality and provision of equal rights.

Women become engaged in politics and socioeconomic processes, as well as spheres where they have not been represented until now due to prejudices of the public. Yet, the public consist not only of women but also of men, and the public opinion is expressed from viewpoint of both

genders. Different studies say that most women vote for candidates who are men when electing deputies of local governments. Moreover the women are the most active voters (according to the last data obtained from the Central Election Commission).

There is an opinion which constantly dominates in the answers of all men – the women have been created to perform the role of mother and their family commitments are and should always be their top priority.

None of these opinions is right or wrong; they simply reflect view of a large part of the society – view of men on the problems of gender equality.

4. The study in Finland

In Finland the author interviewed two experts – politicians (a woman and a man). The author conducted structured interviews by asking the same questions she asked in Latvia. The main difference in the results of the study carried out in Finland can be described using the following answers:

- Politics do affect the family life of a woman. But so do politics affect the family life of a man. The woman involved in politics must have a good husband that takes care of children, yet the same concerns the man. This does not depend on a gender;
- For a man it is easier to be free in order to become engaged in politics. A woman is a person that should naturally take care of a house and a family;
- When my son was one month old I stayed at home while my wife finished her studies. I took my son to the university so my wife could feed him and then returned back to household chores;
- I believe in politics in Finland and think that our politics are rather open. I believe that no corruption exists in our country because our laws and regulations turn against it by imposing severe penalties;
- Here in Finland we believe that our country is standing on “our side”, not against us, and this is a huge difference from other countries.

Conclusions

After analysing the situation it can be concluded that successful implementation of gender equality is impeded by insufficient understanding and stereotypical views of the public, as well as the low capacity of institutions involved in implementation of the policy of gender equality and

lack of political support for introducing integrated approach of gender equality in sector policies. Taking into account the fact that changes in the field of gender equality can be expected only along deepening of the public understanding and changes in the public attitude, great emphasis should be put on informative and educational activities, such as seminars, discussions, booklets, advertisements and educational and teaching materials. Experience and questionnaires show that changes in the public opinions occur very slowly, therefore it is necessary to keep carrying on the educational work.

After having analysed the obtained results the author came to the following conclusions:

1. In Latvia, after regaining independence of the State, observance of gender equality principles in politics is still in the process of developing and improving.

2. From a viewpoint of feminism women in politics are not regarded as better politicians than men, instead the struggle for equal possibilities of becoming leaders and equal rights to make political decisions is underlined by stressing dominance of men over women (from the perspective of the conflict theory).

3. Statistical data show that there is a tendency for proportion of women in Latvian politics to increase; however, it is not considerable enough to ensure sufficient women’s involvement in decision-making process.

4. The women, leaders of local governments acknowledge themselves as leaders and they are such indeed.

5. Politics mainly involve women, leaders, who are ready to assume responsibility, are good at time management and receive support from their families by keeping their positions in the political field for a long period of time.

6. The conflict of roles in politics has caused stratification of women by dividing them into three groups: a woman in a family (no involvement in politics), a woman in politics (no family) and a woman that becomes engaged in politics only when her children have grown up.

7. The women, leaders of local governments, have not encountered gender discrimination, they have positive attitude towards women organizations, and they advise other women to become engaged in politics, their work in local municipalities give them satisfaction regardless of the fact that participation in politics affects their family lives, and stereotypes existing in the society about a woman in politics.

8. Women's self realization in politics is impeded by such factors as stereotypes, prejudices, conflicts of roles and discrimination occurring covertly.

9. In order to achieve gender equality in politics it is necessary to change the traditional roles of men and women in the family, and this can be done with the help of socialization process which is one of the most crucial factors to fulfil the aim.

10. It is recommended that local governments hire experts in gender equality that would help the local governments by carrying out analysis of the current situation, planning measures, as well as organizing educational programmes for employees and deputies in order to support them in

learning necessary skills and methods, as it is done in Nordic countries.

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Lyčū lygybės Latvijos vietos savivaldoje vertinimas

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojama lygčių lygybės politikoje ir viešajame administravime Latvijoje problema, remiantis Latvijos vietos savivaldybių vadovių apklausos rezultatais. Lyginamajai analizei pasinaudota Suomijos ekspertų apklausos rezultatais. Akcentuojama, jog Latvijos savivaldybių vadovės mano, kad jos yra tos veiklos lyderės, ir jos nepatiria diskriminacijos dėl lyties. Moterys lyderės teigiamai atsiliepia apie moterų visuomeninės organizacijas ir norėtų, kad jose dalyvautų daugiau moterų. Tyrimo rezultatai rodo, kad, nepaisant to, jog darbas savivaldybėse keičia šeimos gyvenimą ir nėra palankūs stereotipai apie moteris politikės, dauguma moterų lyderių patenkintos savo darbu savivaldybėse. Tačiau kartu pabrėžiama, kad moterų dalyvavimas politikoje, politinė kultūra ir pasitikėjimas jomis Latvijoje iki šiol yra menkesnis negu Suomijoje.

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