



# The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

**Women in political  
decision-making**  
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Comments Paper - Lithuania



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# Vertical Gender Segregation in Lithuania

Virginija Šidlauskienė,  
Šiauliai University,  
Centre for Gender Studies and Research

## 1. Introduction and relevant country context

### 1.1. Introduction

Women make up 54 % of the total population in Lithuania and the number of women in the labour market is high, but the vertical gender segregation in political decision making is obvious. At parliamentary level it stood at 23.4 % in 2014 and is similar to the EU-28 average: 24.4 % in 2014.

### 1.2. Women and men in political decision making

The representation of women representation in the 2014 EP election results of Lithuania worsened. The representation of women members of the European Parliament for Lithuania declined from 38 % in the 2004-2009 legislatures to 25 % in the 2009-2014 legislatures, and more sharply dropped to 9 % in the 2014-2019. The drop in the number of women Members of the European Parliament points to the fragility of progress in this area. The only one representative of this Party and one women MP was elected in Lithuania in the 2014 EP election out of 12 Lithuanian women representatives. Now Lithuania is represented in the EP by 10 men and one woman (9 %). They collected the most votes of superiority. This can be explained by the increased scattering of votes: parties rarely list women at the top of their lists and when parties receive two mandates at most, Parliamentary positions go to party leaders. Not one woman has managed to achieve the first position of the party list. The highest position was second. This phenomenon is widely known: when the competition is over two mandates, parties do not take risks and do not list less known people, because it might appear unacceptable to voters. The Lithuanian strong leader discourse and its narrative can be perfectly reflected in EP elections on society attitudes.

Secondly, the election system is less beneficial to women, men vote for men in solidarity, while women stereotypically vote for men as well.

The single transferable vote system is less favourable to women due to the unevenness of financing of the election campaign. Men have it easier at the start of their political career because they have better starting positions, i.e. as a rector of a university, if he (man, because we have no women rectors), is standing for candidate, he automatically receives the advantage of being elected. Ministers have preferences (we always have less women ministers), those who are charismatic, all kinds of experts who appear frequently on TV and radio shows also have preferences (Analysis of political parties'..., 2015).

In 2004 even 11.11 % of women candidates and 9.72 % men candidates were elected to the EP, whereas in 2009 – only 1.6 % of women and 6.54 % of men candidates, and in 2014 – again only 1.61 % of women and 6.54 % of men candidates became MEP. However, these figures do not fully reflect the attitudes of

the voters. Even though there were fewer women than men elected to the EP, women candidates received more support from the voters. Women's positions in the party voting lists increased by the average of 0.67 point in 2004 and 1.21 point in 2009 elections, but increased 1,1 point in 2014 to the EP. Meanwhile, the men's positions fell by the average of 0.07 % point in 2004 and 0,43 point in 2009, 0,7 in 2014. This suggests that the lack of women's representation in the EP might be caused not as much by the attitudes of the Lithuanian voters as by the way the lists of candidates are arranged.

The progress in the number of women candidates is fixed. The number of women candidates grew much faster than the one of men. In 2009 the number of women candidates increased to 133 candidates and became almost the same as the number of men candidates which increased to 118 candidates. Within less number (215) of candidates for Lithuania in 2014, the number of women candidates dropped down to 62 candidates (which accounted for 40.5 % of total candidate number) and to 153 (59.5 %) of men candidates (Analysis of political parties', 2015).

Referring to gender statistics in 2012, 33 women and 108 men were elected to the Seimas (Parliament) of the Republic of Lithuania. Women make up almost a quarter of Seimas members. Four women chair Seimas committees. There are four (29 %) female ministers in the sixteenth Government of the Republic of Lithuania; out of 32 vice-ministers, eight (25 %), out of 14 ministry chancellors – 6 (43 %) are women. In the Government of the Republic of Lithuania, female ministers, vice-ministers and advisors to ministers make up about 30 % of all ministers, vice-ministers and advisors to ministers. According to the Labour Force Survey data, in 2014, 39 % of all leaders (legislators, senior officers and managers) were women. At the beginning of 2015, 32 % of diplomatic mission leaders were women.

The structure of municipalities' councils is changing even more slowly. In 2015, 363 women (25 %) and 1,110 men (75 %) were elected to the Municipal Councils, but just 4 women (6.7 %) became Mayors in 60 municipalities (Women and Men in Lithuania, 2015). Although attitudes towards the participation of women in policy is more and more favourable (twice more women than men) and the number of those who think otherwise is shrinking significantly, the majority of the population thinks that more women in power and decision-making will have no (positive or negative) influence on society welfare. Those, who believe in women's positive influence on society's life, these changes relate only to areas traditionally assigned to women: social security, society's morality, health, culture and education. Factors which have influence to the choice of electorate are ideological, political, socio-cultural and economical. The main obstacle and reasons are the patriarchal ideology, different expectation from women and men, gender based roles, etc. The stereotypes are declining, but slowly.

## 2. Policy debate

Although Lithuania has made a significant progress in implementing equal opportunities in legislation, it is necessary to achieve more rapid progress also in practice. Recent researches show that the low women's participation in policy is the result of political parties' lack of good will. The domination of men could be noticed in political parties. Women occupy lower positions in them. In mass media women are rarely presented as experts or politics, not so commercialised women's electoral campaigns.

The possibilities for women to be elected depend on the system of elections. More favourable for women is a multi-electoral system of elections. One more reason is the attitudes of Lithuanian people (women too) towards the policy itself. The policy (and taking part in it) is the least important thing (in comparing with family, work, leisure time, friends, religion) for Lithuanians. The same could be said about the political parties. For example, one of the reasons of low participation in community-based organisations is their relations with political parties.

Neither political party affiliation, nor “contagion” effects, nor economic and social development related factors increase individual support for gender quotas and women’s representation in the parliamentary arena; the explanatory variable is the gender itself: most women MPs would support special measures (including quotas) for enhancement of women, but not men MPs. Furthermore, content of discourses and discursive resistance (against quotas) varies across the length of democratic experience and depends on the share of women MPs in the actual parliament: the fewer women parliamentarians, the stronger is their support for quotas; the later the period, the less are quotas associated with the despised soviet heritage. The formulation of the problem is a very important aspect of political discourse and the nature of the proposed solutions and measures depends on this formulation. So if the problem is only quantities (as described in documents) the solutions should be relevant to the problems. In this case encouraging women to take part in policy looks like an appropriate measure for the solution of this problem. But we do not question the dominance of men in power and decision-making. We understand it as an acceptable norm. In this case women look like a group which need additional measures to achieve what for men is normal (Gender (in) equality in policy, 2015). It is necessary to solve the problem systematically and on the structural level. And it is necessary to know not only the facts but also the reasons behind these facts. And the solutions depend on reason but not on the fact itself. **So to achieve the effectiveness of implementation of equal gender opportunities policy it is not enough to set only quantities goals. It is necessary to maintain the systemic change and to limit reproduction of patriarchal order.**

***Formal action taken by political parties to secure gender balance.***

Among six most influential political parties only the Lithuanian Social Democrat Party (LSDP) implements special measures to encourage women’s political participation and networking. The LSDP is applying the 40 % gender quota and regulating gender relations. The party organisation structure includes a Union of Women Social Democrats and they eventually had 25 % then 30 %, 33 %, and then 40 % women representation in the candidates’ lists and every time they had to work immensely. The Union has its women clubs in every larger city or town of Lithuania. Activities of the Union: 1) Networking within the party and with women social democrats from other countries; 2) Informational and educational activities for the union members; 3) Political statements and public initiatives on the issues related to women’s rights and gender equality; 4) Monitoring of implementation of the principles of gender equality within the party. However, it is important to stress that most political parties in Lithuania are not aware to secure gender balance in political decision making bodies.

Before 2016 Seimas election Social democrats women activists group “Women2Women” since May 2016 started project # Find time to yourself!  
<https://www.facebook.com/RaskLaikoSau/>

***National action taken by political parties to secure gender balance (e.g. training).***

The third and fourth National Programme on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2010–2014/2015–2021 and its Action Plan financed the Network of “Women in Politics” / “Moteryų politikų tinklas”, which has the aim to inspire women political participation from all political parties during each election campaigns (2014 (EP), October 2016 (Seimas)). But the budgets for this activities are very low and uncertain. The election campaigns were managed by Kaunas Women’s Employment Information Centre. Campaigns “Vote for Women!” in Kaunas, Vilnius, Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Ignalina, Marijampolė Women Politicians clubs were carried out. Really, the number of NGO initiatives in the EP 2014 elections was quite low: <http://lmlo.lt/en/milda/> It is worthy to take notice almost every woman who participated in the EP election rose in their party lists significantly.

When the election time comes more conferences, discussions, sharing of experiences with women politicians and discussions on the role of women in society are organised: <http://lmlo.lt/en/kas-jei-ne-mes-kada-jei-ne-dabar/>

### **3. Transferability aspects**

The discussion paper on Slovenia identified some practices that are relevant also for Lithuania; bearing in mind that the majority of the Lithuanian population are in favour of less radical measures for increasing women’s number in power. Gender quota law or separate women’s participation in elections is becoming less and less popular. Political parties are still dominated by men and serve as gatekeepers to women’s entrance into politics. Political parties do not demonstrate political will to balance women and men representation at all governance levels.

At the moment for Lithuania more acceptable would be such measures as securing a bigger number of women in Parties’ electoral lists and education of society, better understanding of the role and influence of bigger women’s participation in power to welfare of society. The creation of family-friendly policies and working conditions, promotion of gender equality in employment, education and science, increasing of female representation in decision-making process, reducing gap between gender in entrepreneurship and other political legal measures (plans of implementation, programmes, recommendations) were prepared and adopted and the activities and events implemented (The social report 2013-2014).

It should be noticed that temporary special measures should be planned for the concrete place and situation. And the clear goals and aimed results. It is necessary to analyse the situation before the application the quota system and the after it too. Before the application the wide social dialogue and society’s information are needed. Lack of these measures could have negative influence on the success of quota system application and number of women in power and decision-making increasing. The other limits for application could be lack of financial support and human recourses and superficial information on mass media. The developed laws do not contradict the other laws and the Constitution. The responsible institution for the process monitoring should be provided. This institution should be responsible not only for the formal recording the execution of the quota system application, but also evaluate the results methodically, evaluate the effect and the costs of these

temporary measures. (Recommendations for Implementation of Temporary Special Measures, 2012).

For Lithuania, the Slovenian gender equality in politics model suits as a good example for how to systemic and more coherently develop and change the relevant masculine model of political culture supplied with the adequate resources.

Generally speaking, individual women politicians personal characteristics (including political competence), political party behaviour and systems, electoral system and processes, social attitudes including media coverage, situational factors e.g. the need to balance family life with busy political life **are closely intertwined**.

Quantitative balance of women in men in politics is important to the representation of gender equality norm. However this factor is not key. The analysis has revealed that the main obstacles to effectively internalise the gender equality norm scatter and are based on identification (mixture) of gender equality norm and women issues', men issues' assessment failure, the lack of public debate on gender equality, fragmentary representation of men and women interests as well as deficit of institutional support for civil society organisations.

Nevertheless women won the right to vote in 1918 in Lithuania and in France, women only received this right in 1944. Gender parity model as a legislation aiming at electoral gender parity firstly was adopted by France, in 2001. Gender parity model for Lithuania is just a future vision.

## 4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Apart from recommendations or guidelines, there are **no provisions at the European level** to encourage parties to introduce quotas or other positive measures to ensure gender balance on their lists. EU level actors such as **European political parties** and the **Women's NGOs** should:

1. Take action to influence national political parties' candidate **selection processes** including lobbying for them to adopt quotas, rather than relying on strategies to alter public opinion.
2. Work with political parties at very **early stages** in election campaigns so that party lists may be developed with a balance between men and women.
3. Provide support and **training**, particularly around **media** relations, to women candidates and local parties so that they may gain coverage in the press that is favourable.

The underrepresentation **of women in national parliaments is largely due to the underrepresentation of women in the** candidate base. This problem can be addressed by actions of political parties in constructing their party lists:

1. Political parties are the main enablers as well as barriers to women being elected.
2. Women are frequently left out of party candidate lists and, even if they are included, are often given low list positions; this is a key barrier to gender balance in the Parliaments.

3. Political parties often act to 'champion' certain candidates that are frequently male; this can disadvantage women candidates who have often garnered support over many years through grass roots organisations.

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