



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

Women and the Media

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Women in the media is not top of the agenda

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1. A better knowledge of the situation

The Gender Equality Act¹ passed in Estonia on April 7, 2004 and entered into force on May 1, 2004, the day when Estonia became member of the European Union. It was one of the documents voted in Estonian Parliament after many months of discussions. Parliamentarians could not understand why this Act was so important, they were sure that there were no gender equality problems in Estonia.

At the same time the gender pay gap in Estonia was – and still is – the biggest in the European Union. According to Eurostat, “*in 2016, the highest gender pay gap in the EU was recorded in Estonia (25.3 %)*”². On average, women in Estonia earn just 73 per cent of what men make working in the same position. And despite the fact that this issue is brought up again and again, very little has been done to alleviate it.

The gender pay gap issues have largely been ignored in the Estonian society or even ridiculed by some opinion leaders and some media. Activists stress that the purpose of the Gender Equality Act is to ensure equal treatment arising from the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia and to promote gender equality of men and women as a fundamental human right and for the public good in all areas of social life. The implementing legislation that would specify employers' obligations in upholding gender equality and regulate the framework for collecting data on gender-based employment still has not been adopted.

1.1. Women's misrepresentation in the media

The same as in France, female professionals in Estonia suffer from unequal opportunities within the media sector. Though monitoring and collection of data can still be improved, the current state of affairs reveals the persistence of a glass ceiling for women. But at the same time, most women and men do not understand why gender equality is an issue in Estonia.

1.1.1. Estonian journalists about gender in the media

If we look at some publications about gender and the media, we can find the proof of this conclusion. During her PhD research “Media representation of women in the context of Estonian journalist culture and society”, 2011³, Barbi Pilvre did not find people in Estonian media who complain about gender issues. Women-journalists agree with the fact, that men's salaries are 20% higher in the media sector than

¹ RT 2004, 27, 181. RT = *Riigi Teataja* = State Gazette.

² Eurostat https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Gender_pay_gap_statistics

³ Barbi Pilvre „Naiste media representatsioon Eesti ajakirjandus kultuuri ja ühiskonna kontekstis“ (Media representation of women in the context of Estonian journalist culture and society), 2011.

women's. Estonian society and media organisations do not feel the necessity to have more women in the media.

Women are involved mostly in 'soft' topics and work on less prestigious tasks: they write about health care, education and private life. Women are a minority in all the main functions of TV programmes: news anchors, programme leaders, debate moderators, game leaders and interviewees. Staff number in Estonian TV demonstrates that women make almost a half of creative personnel in ETV (Šein, H. 2002, Rebane, K. 2009), so we can conclude that women do much of the background work in television as editors, producers, assistants, etc., managing the invisible, behind-the-screen 'private sphere' element of TV organisation, whereas men appear in the 'public sphere' element, the television screen. In the context of age, women appearing on television are young and inexperienced, the older the speaker is on the TV screen, the more likely the speaker is a man.

In the book "Eesti Ekspress: Uue elu sümbol" (1999)⁴, Tiina Jõgeda wrote that the first woman editor in chief in "Eesti Ekspress" was a real challenge for all. In summer 1996, the weekly newspaper owner Hans H. Luik decided that the newspaper needed improvement, fresh blood and that the new editor in chief would be former "Kaubaleht" editor in chief Tiina Soon. A woman as editor in chief was a development in the company which seven years ago had started in principle as a 100% men's team".

Märt Masso in the article „Mehed ja naised tööelus“ "Men and women in working life" (*Teel tasakalustatud ühiskonda: naised ja mehed Eestis*, II, 2010)⁵ wrote that occupational segregation of women and men in Estonia is characterised by the development of different professional positions. Women are more in health and social care, in education, accommodation and catering. There are only 36.2% women among top managers, which is less than in the European countries. In 2008, 23% of men and 15.7% of women had management responsibilities.

According to research on women within Estonian economy and politics and gender equality (Soolise võrdõiguslikkuse monitooring, 2009; Masso, 2010; Allik, 2010), women's role in Estonia has remained quite stable and proportionally low in the top positions of the economy and politics during the recent decades.

Regarding those facts, Barbi Pilvre's study of „Eesti Ekspress“⁶ does not support the claim that the increase of women's representation is the result of the growing importance of the role of women in the economic or political life in Estonia since 1995. It does add more confirmation to the claim that the increase of women's portraits in the most recent decades, especially since 1995, can be explained mainly by the processes within media institutions, such as commercialisation, tabloidisation and personalisation, which bring more "soft" human interest themes and female characters into media content.

1.1.2. EIGE survey 2012

Karen Ross, Claudia Padovani, Erzsébet Barát and Monia Azzalini in the "Study on Area J of the Beijing Platform for Action: Women and the Media in European Union

⁴ Tiina Jõgeda. "Eesti Ekspress: Uue elu sümbol". 1999.

⁵ Märt Masso „Mehed ja naised tööelus“. *Teel tasakalustatud ühiskonda: naised ja mehed Eestis*, II". 2010.

⁶ Barbi Pilvre. „Gender aspects of media tablorization process in Estonia“. 2009

EIGE/2012/OPER/07” wrote that *“the small number of women occupying senior positions in media organisations has been a cause for concern for several decades.”*⁷

The results of a survey made in Estonia in 2012 in the framework of the EIGE study show that there were no women in the top decision-making positions in any of the organisations surveyed in Estonia, but there were more women being promoted to the executive management level. The four sampled organisations were: the public service TV broadcaster ETV, the public service broadcaster Eesti Radio and the private newspapers Eesti Ekspress and Postimees.

For the combined public service broadcaster, the most significant decisions are taken by the Board of Directors where all four directors are men, but on the executive editors’ level on ETV and Eesti Raadio on ETV1, ETV2, Vikkerraadio, Klassikaraadio, Raadio 2, Raadio 4 and Raadio Tallinn all are women as has been the case for the past 10 years. Turning to representation and the media monitoring phase of the project, women were found to be in a minority in all of the main functions of TV programmes: news anchors, programme leaders, debate moderators, game leaders and interviewees.⁸ In the biggest Estonian daily newspaper “Postimees” there were more men than women on the directorate level (4 of 5) and there were more women on department level (9 of 13). The editor in chief was a woman that time, now it is a man.

It is difficult to identify all numbers as they do not appear in official data. Working contracts are confidential and women cannot speak about their salaries and other working conditions.

1.1.3. Global Media Monitoring Project results 2015

In 2015, women made up only 24% of the persons heard, read about or seen in the newspapers, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010.

As GMMP 2015 showed, only 37% of stories in newspapers, television and radio newscasts are reported by women. The situation in Estonia in 2015 was better than average in the world, 44% of reporters were women but news subjects about women were only 22% (about social and legal issues 17%, crime and violence 38%). There were no news about women celebrity, women in art, media and sport on GMMP monitoring day in Estonia at all. Politicians, ministers and spokespersons-women were 11% and government employee or public servant 9%, expert or commentator 26%. Only in 20% women appeared on photos in printing press.

Women as subjects in the news about politics and government in Internet and Twitter in Estonia were only 14%, in economy, health and science 25%.

As monitoring showed, 44% of reporters in print media in Estonia on the monitoring day were women, in radio 78% and TV 24%⁹. Younger presenters on screen were predominantly female, but the scales tipped dramatically at 50 years old when men

⁷ European Commission Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, Opinion on “Breaking gender stereotypes in the media”, Brussels, European Commission, 2010b.

⁸ Ruta Pels. From Background Work to Decision-Making in the book “Gender Equality and the Media. A Challenge for Europe”. Edited by Karen Ross and Claudia Padovani. 2017, pages 98-99.

⁹ Global Media Monitoring Project. <http://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp/gmmp-reports/gmmp-2015-reports>

begin to dominate the news-anchoring scene. This tendency is clear in Estonia the same as in Europe.

1.4.1. Women media

Women-media industry in Estonia include mostly women magazines such as "Cosmopolitan", "Eesti Naine", "Mood", "Naised", "Jana", also newspaper "Naisteleht" and few web-magazines. Most of them write about family and home, fashion, food and specific women's interests.

2. Government and civil society

The gender equality portfolio in the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs was rearranged in 2004, so that the Bureau of Gender Equality became the Estonian Gender Equality Department, and the number of staff working in the field of gender equality increased. There is a position of the government's gender equality Commissioner in the Ministry.

A significant development in gender equality institutions took place in Estonia in October 2013 when the Estonian Government established the Gender Equality Council, an advisory body to the Government. The tasks of the Gender Equality Council are advising the Government in matters related to strategies for promoting gender equality, approving the general objectives of gender equality policy and giving opinions to the Government concerning the gender mainstreaming of national programmes.

In specific relation to legislation that covers the media industry, the Broadcasting Act regulates the broadcasting system in Estonia. This law guarantees freedom of operation, protection of information sources, the right to register an objection, morals and legality, etc. The same fields in the print media are legally unregulated in Estonia. The main document for media regulation is the Code of Ethics for the Estonian Press, where the rights and obligations of women and men journalists are equal. In addition, there is an Advertising Act, which regulates all forms of advertising.

Civil society in Estonia plays an important role in tackling the issue of women. ENUT-Eesti Naisuurimus- ja Teabekeskus (The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre) – organises projects. Eesti Ajakirjanike Liit - Estonian Journalists' Union has developed a Code of Ethics.

3. Conclusions

Although Estonia has established institutions for promoting gender equality and adopted specific gender equality legislation, the challenge has been to fully implement the legislation. The main obstacles have been low awareness of gender equality issues and a lack of interest among different stakeholders (e.g. employers, employees, legal professionals and civil servants).

Over the last few decades, Estonia experienced important political, cultural and economic changes, but gender equality and particularly women in media issues still are not at the top of the political agenda.

The challenge in Estonia is that people who are involved in solving gender issues (Ombudsperson in the Ministry of Social Affairs, ENUT) and the media industry don't

have any specific inter-linkages. In other words, these two spheres function in parallel – gender and media.

There are no active experts working in the field of media and gender. There are no current surveys in the field of media and gender at my knowledge.