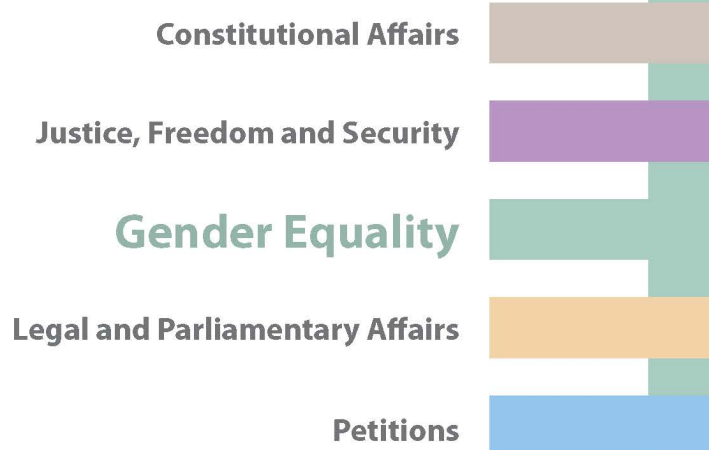


DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES

POLICY DEPARTMENT **C**
CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS



**THE POLICY ON GENDER
EQUALITY IN CROATIA
UPDATE 2013**

NOTE





DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR INTERNAL POLICIES
POLICY DEPARTMENT C: CITIZENS' RIGHTS AND
CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRES

GENDER EQUALITY

THE POLICY ON GENDER EQUALITY
IN CROATIA

UPDATE 2013

NOTE

Abstract

This note updates the overview of gender equality in Croatia from 2011. Apart from providing the history of institutional and political development in Croatia in this area, it illustrates in particular measures taken regarding women's economic independence, the reconciliation of work and family life, women in decision-making, policies against violence against women, and the fight against stereotypes. Moreover, the two controversial issues of sexual health and rights and prostitution are briefly addressed.

This document was requested by the European Parliament's Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

EU European Union

Eurostat Statistical Office of the European Union

IVF In Vitro Fertilization

JAP Joint Memorandum on the Employment Policy Priorities

NGO Non-governmental organization

UN United Nations

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INTRODCUTION

The Republic of Croatia is a **constitutional parliamentary democracy** with a population of 4.4 million.

Article 3 of the **Constitution** of the Republic of Croatia places **gender equality among the highest values** of the constitutional order, thus expressing the political will of the highest legislative body to place Croatia among those democratic countries that base their order on the full recognition and promotion of gender equality as an indispensable precondition for sustainable development. This is the foundation for further legislation with a view to create an environment of equal opportunities for both genders.

By promoting the principle of gender equality, the Republic of Croatia is attempting to **strengthen equality between women and men in all areas of human activity**. This is done by **raising awareness** about the need to act in order to achieve full equality between women and men, by raising the awareness of women in all environments about their real position and the need to adjust it to general human standards, and by **providing support** to women in the realisation of their rights and in the creation of conditions for the efficient resolution of problems.

The international **legal obligations** of Croatia in the area of the protection of human rights and the implementation of the policy of equal opportunities derive from the fundamental international agreements to which the Republic of Croatia is a signatory, that is, from its membership of the United Nations and the Council of Europe.

Furthermore, Croatia recognises that gender equality is one of the basic principles of **European Union law**, and that ensuring equal opportunities and fighting against discrimination based on sex are the overall objectives are a constituent part of its programmes and policies. Consequently, Croatia's strategic approach, among other things, is founded on the obligations arising from the Treaty of the European Union. In this sense, already on its path towards the EU, the Republic of Croatia has invested significant efforts in the promotion of gender equality through national policies aimed at improving the position of women in political, social, economic, cultural and public life. This **integral system of protection and promotion of gender equality** still needs to be strengthened to improve the promotion and protection of human rights of women by creating equal opportunities in the labour market, introducing gender-sensitive education, balancing the participation of women and men in the decision-making processes, combating all forms of violence against women, improving the system of health protection of women, and by further strengthening institutional mechanisms and methods for the implementation of the equal opportunities policy.

1. GENERAL PROVISIONS

1.1. Consultation practice

Croatia has achieved some good results in the establishment of mechanisms for improving the gender equality situation. According to the *Codex of good practise about counselling with the interested public in the process of adopting acts and provisions*, before adopting the **4th National Policy on Gender Equality**, a **wide public consultation** has been conducted between January and July 2011. The note refers to **measures** and **institutions/organisations** enhancing the gender equality goals.

By contacting other countries in the region, many non-governmental organizations and conferences are discussing the gender equality situation in each country and many use the positive Croatian experience in establishing the relevant mechanisms. However, the same cannot be said about the practice as the **full implementation of the Law on Gender Equality and of the National Strategy has not been achieved**. A significant **lack of information** and **shortcomings of the Law on Gender Equality** have been identified indicating how much work still needs to be done to raise awareness in society for gender equality issues and the exercise of rights in this area.

1.2. Roadmap of establishing the institutional mechanisms and adoption of documents related to gender equality in Croatia

❖ **May 1996 to 2004 – Government's advisory body: the Commission for Equality Issues/Gender Equality Commission**

Through its activities, the Commission promoted gender equality and empowering of women as a major political issue. The Commission was composed of representatives of the Ministries and other state institutions; the secretariat of the Commission was based in the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. Its goal was the development of a democratic society through advancement and empowering of women in all spheres of public life. In 2000, the Commission for Equality Issues becomes the Gender Equality Commission and is merged with the Government Office for Human Rights.

❖ **December 1997 – Government's first National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (1997-2000)**

The Commission for Gender Equality produced the first National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality by taking as a starting point the Beijing Platform for Action. Following an attentive analysis of the current state of affairs, this first National Policy defined already similar goals and measures as those included in the present National Policy. It was oriented at translating *de jure* equality into *de facto* equality. Many non-governmental organisations dealing with women issues were asked to participate in the preparation of the National Policy, and this launched concrete cooperation between the Commission for Equality Issues and the NGOs for upgrading the position of women and implementing the Beijing platform.

- ❖ **November 2000 – Following the amendment of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, gender equality is included among the highest values of the Croatian Constitutional order**
- ❖ **March 2001 – The Committee for Gender Equality in the Croatian Parliament is established**

The Committee was composed by a President, a Deputy President and 11 members. The President was female, and Deputy President a male. The Committee was composed of 5 men and 6 women.

Box 1: Committee for Gender equality

Committee for Gender Equality of the Croatian Parliament

The Committee still has 11 members plus the President and the Deputy president and they are both females. At the moment there are 7 female members and 3 male members (one member still has to be elected).

The Parliamentary Committee for Gender Equality has the **same powers and the same number of members as other Parliamentary Committees**. The scope of **activities of the Committee** involves **determining and monitoring** the policy implementation. In designing the proposals of laws and other legislative acts on gender equality and in **adopting legislation** and other relevant provisions, it has the rights and obligations of the main working body to promote and monitor the enforcement of gender equality principles in all related areas of the Croatian legislation. Especially, it encourages the signing of international agreements on gender equality and monitoring of the implementation of the provisions contained in these Conventions. The Committee **participates in drafting, implementing, and analysing the results of the National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality**. It cooperates with relevant stakeholders and defines measures and activities with a view to upgrade gender equality rights. Other activities are: proposing programmes or measures for eradicating gender based discrimination; promotion of equal representation of both sexes in working groups and parliamentary delegations; implementation of measures for gender mainstreaming according to the standards of EU legislation and programmes; introduction of the equality principle in education, health, public information, social policies, employment, entrepreneurship, decision-making processes, family relations, and other areas; and fostering cooperation between the Government, the Committee for Gender Equality, NGOs, and other institutions.

- ❖ **December 2001 – The second National Policy for the Promotion of Gender Equality (2001-2005)**

The **goals** of the National Policy for Promotion of Gender Equality are: **promoting** women rights in all spheres of activities; **raising the awareness** of women in all segments of the society on their real position and on the need to harmonise it with the basic human standards; **creating the preconditions** for an efficient solution of identified problems; and providing **support to women** in enforcing their rights. In order to reach these goals, a programme had to be prepared which could define the activities needed which were related to a **clear agenda** to allow for measurable results. At that time, **three crucial areas** in which women need to be guaranteed the full enforcement of their rights were identified: family, working environment and

society. The idea prevailed that the woman would be the one executing all these tasks and not the objects on which these tasks are realised.

The **priorities of the agenda** included: gathering data on the situation of women's rights in Croatia; education of women in all segments and all levels of the society; forming a network of Committees and fostering their cooperation; ensuring the financial means to achieve the tasks set out by the agenda; planning the promotional activities on all levels; evaluating the implementation of the programme; designing the legal framework for enforcement of women's rights; and encouraging higher activities of the media with the goal of raising the awareness in public on women's rights.

❖ **July 2003 – The first Gender Equality Law which was later declared to be void**

The Law had been adopted with a view to realise adjustments and harmonisation of Croatian legislation with regard to EU standards. Questions remained about the declaratory character of the law and the lack of vision on how it should be implemented. Consequently, the Law was declared void by the Constitutional Court due to its formal inconsistencies with the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia.

❖ **February 2004 – Establishment of the Government Office for Gender Equality**

Through a Regulation based on the 2003 Law, the Gender Equality Office was established and replaced the Gender Equality Commission. Its task is still to provide **expert and administrative services to the Government** related to achieving full gender equality in Croatia. The establishment of the Office can be regarded as the **institutionalisation** of gender equality. This Government Office is equal to other Government Offices. It has its president who performs this duty professionally, meaning this is her only job. The Office also has more funds at its disposal.

❖ **October 2006 – The third National Policy on the Promotion of Gender Equality (2006-2010)**

- ❖ Starting from the positive examples of two former national policies, and their **identified shortfalls and difficulties**, this National Policy concentrated on **singled out critical areas** chosen with respect to the **actual possibilities of application** of measures and activities, both in terms of content and the necessary timeframe. The approach to the design of measures for improving the position of women in the political, social, economic, cultural, and public life is first and foremost **oriented at upgrading the whole system of protection and promotion of gender equality in order to achieve the overall goals of the National policy**.

❖ **July 2008 – The Anti-discrimination Law**

This Law guarantees the protection and promotion of equalities as the highest value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia; it lays down the **preconditions necessary for achieving equal opportunities** and it regulates the protection from discrimination on a number of grounds: race, ethnic origin, skin colour, **gender**, language, religion, political or other type of orientation, national or social origin, socioeconomic status, trade union membership, marital or family status, age, health, disability, genetic heritage, **gender identity**, expression, or

sexual orientation. Discrimination, for the purposes of this Law, means making a distinction, in favour or against, in the treatment of any person or of persons connected by family or other types of relations, on the above mentioned grounds. Discrimination also means making a distinction in the treatment of a person on the ground of a **wrong assumption** regarding these grounds.

❖ July 2008 – The present Law on Gender Equality

The 2008 Law defines the basis for the protection and promotion of gender equality as a fundamental value of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia. It defines and regulates **protection from gender based discrimination** and it lays down the **preconditions necessary to create equal opportunities for men and women.** The Law defines the terms of gender equality, **direct and indirect discrimination**, mobbing and sexual harassment, and other special measures. One of the basic goals of this Law is oriented at the whole set of **social areas where discrimination most frequently occurs.** Therefore, this Law defined the following areas to which it applies: 1) Employment and work, 2) Education, 3) Political parties, 4) Media, and 5) Official statistics. The new law allowed concluding the negotiations with the EU on the chapter of social policy and employment and reflects provisions of the relevant EU Directives¹.

The novelty of the Law is the **introduction of sanctions for discriminatory conduct of the employer.** Furthermore, the Law defines separately the provisions on misdemeanour with a view to **sanction** every legal and physical entity not respecting the provisions contained in this Law. Consequently, it is seen as contributing to the eradication of discrimination in the area of gender equality and in raising awareness in the public on unacceptable gender based discrimination.

❖ July 2011 – The 4th National Policy for Gender Equality (2011-2015)

This fourth National Policy **defines new national priorities and modes of implementation** taking into account the progress achieved and remaining challenges in accomplishing gender equality. The Policy includes **7 particular activities** and obliges the Republic of Croatia to **incorporate the gender dimension into every field of politics** through 1) Promoting the human rights of women and gender equality, 2) Generating equal opportunities at the labour market, 3) Enhancing the functioning of gender sensitive education and upbringing, 4) Balancing involvement of men and women in the process of political and public decision making 5) Eliminating all forms of violence against women 6) Promoting international cooperation and gender equality outside of Croatia 7) Further enhancing of institutional mechanisms and methods of implementation.

There are three **novelties** in this Policy: **implementing the chapter connected to international issues** because of the possibilities of pursuing the activities and cooperation with the main international and regional institutional actors and organisations including **UN WOMEN** and **EIGE**; **enhancing the mechanisms for implementation of gender equality on the national and local level** and the enforcement of their activities such as by providing the financial needs for their implementation. Responsible for this measure will be county assemblies and county

¹ Directive 2000/78/EC, Directive 2002/73/EC, Recast Directive 2006/54/EC

comities for gender equality; and the implementation of the chapter on improvements of the **position of women in sports**.

- ❖ **July 2011. – Government's National Action Plan for implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace, and security which has also effect for other UN resolutions on similar issues (2011 – 2014)**

Less than a week after adopting the National Policy for Gender Equality, the Croatian Parliament adopted the implementation of the same measures for the area of international politics and cooperation, one of the 7 fields covered by the 4th National Policy.

THEMATIC PROVISIONS

1.3. Equal economic independence for women and men

Economic independence is regarded as the foundation of genuine equality of women, their self-esteem and existential security. Therefore, the question of equity in the labour market is an important issue of equality between women and men.

1.3.1. Employment

Croatia's **unemployment rate is higher** than in many other EU countries². Women in the labour market face **multiple discrimination**.

- ❖ ***The National Employment Promotion Plan for 2011, 2012 and 2013***

This Promotion Plan incorporates measures to increase the employment rate of vulnerable groups of people on the labour market which were created according to the Joint Memorandum on the Employment Policy Priorities (JAP). Measures are directed at increasing the employment rate of **women**, older people and young people, the long-term unemployed, members of national and ethnic minorities, such as the Roma, people with disabilities, and defence war veterans who are singled out in the Plan.

1.3.2. Gender discrimination on the labour market

A study conducted in 2009, commissioned by the Office for Gender Equality, as well as the 2010 study of the Croatian Employment Service showed that women are discriminated against in employment. Although both women and men have to answer **questions about their marital status**, the **number of their children**, and their **intention for future procreation**, the same answers are positively interpreted by employers when given by a man and negatively when given by a woman, whatever the content of the answer. When

² Eurostat 07/2013: 16,7%, women: 16,8, men: 18,1.

employed, women are discriminated against when it comes to opportunities for further education, advancement in career, and better remuneration. According to the Croatian Central Bureau of Statistics, the **pay gap** between men and women performing the same job is around **11%**.

It can be concluded that there are **very resistant stereotypes about male and female roles** in the labour market. Financial penalties for the employers' discriminatory conduct were first introduced by the new Law on Gender Equality in 2008 but the problem lies in the **lack of implementation of these legislative provisions**. One of the reasons for the ineffectiveness of legal mechanisms for protection is also the disastrous fact that **two thirds of Croatian citizens do not know that Croatia has a Law on Gender Equality**³.

Consequently, the Report of the **Ombudsperson for Gender Equality** (2010) indicates that a number of **judicial cases**, opened with the view of reducing discrimination and inequality on the labour market in line with the legislation in force, were withdrawn because of a lack of information on the side of employers, employed, and unemployed women. Besides, Croatian courts do not publish their decisions which hampers access to information on the concrete subjects of the lawsuits. Consequently, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, in her report for the year 2012, has given a recommendation for those decisions to be published at the Internet pages of the courts.

1.3.3. Women entrepreneurs

From the year 2004, the Ministry of Entrepreneurship has been providing programs for enhancing women entrepreneurs by having special programmes only for women entrepreneurs. **Last year (2012), women entrepreneurs were given a total of 58 grants and the whole amount was 8 million kunas. 2013 is the first year in which such programs do not exist** but the novelty is that women can now compete in every program and they get extra credits for being women entrepreneurs. Presently, it cannot yet be evaluated if those new measures and programs have been more successful than the previous ones.

❖ **March 2010 – Government's Strategy for the Development of Female Entrepreneurship in the Republic of Croatia (2010-2013)**

This Strategy was adopted with the intention to **decrease the number of unemployed women** through encouraging women's entrepreneurship and self-employment, and by generating a favourable environment for entrepreneurship. However, the financial crisis highlighted the **absence of a consistent policy** to close the gap between participation of men and women in entrepreneurial activities and the insufficient connection between the implementation of various activities for entrepreneurial capacity development on the national and the local level. It should be noted that, for specific goals of the Strategy, financial support is allocated from the State Budget.

³according to a research conducted by the Office for Gender Equality of the Croatian Government

1.4. Equal representation in decision-making

When it comes to women's participation in the legislative, executive and judicial authorities, the data of the recent mandate show that of the total number of members of the Croatian **Parliament established in 2011, only 24% are women. There are only 4 women members of the Government.** As far as the County councils are concerned, women account for 20.69% and as members of the Councils. In Cities and Municipalities, they are represented with 17.90%. **Only 7.03 of Mayors are women.**

However, there is a **high representation of women among judicial professions** (even though figures are smaller when it comes to the highest Courts): 70.4% among the municipal judges are female, 72% of Magistrates, 81,8% of the judges at Administrative Courts, 48.8% at the Supreme, and 38.5% at the Constitutional Court.

Regardless of the measures contained in the National Strategy and the Gender Equality Law, **political participation of women in senior decision-making positions has not increased.** One of the reasons is certainly that legal provisions on party quotas with a minimum requirement of 40% of women represented on the electoral lists were not implemented and will probably be revised.

1.5. Eradication of all forms of violence against women

1.5.1. Domestic violence

Legal framework and policy

The oldest provisions stem from the PENAL CODE adopted in October 1997 which was amended in 2008. It includes gender issues in:

- Chapter 10: through sanctioning acts against life and body
- Chapter 13: protecting values addressed by international laws (prostitution and rape during war times), covers also international prostitution
- Chapter 14: covers sanctions for gender-based violence (rape, forced sex acts, and abuse of a powerful position)
- Chapter 16: sanctions against acts violating marriage and family (violation of family duties and violation of alimony).

A new Penal Code is in preparation at the moment and it is going to include sanctions for rape within marriage.

The Croatian public seems today aware that women suffer from violence and this is primarily due to the recognition of domestic violence, which is called here family violence. The **number of reported cases is higher** than it was 10 years ago but that does not mean that violence is increasing. It rather means that there is greater awareness and that the civil organizations, the state, and the local communities are involved in solving the problem.

The following legal **actions** address this issue:

- ❖ **October 2009 – The new Law on Protection from Family Violence**

The Law builds on the first one from 2003 and defines family violence, the members of a family for the purpose of this Law, the measures of protection for family members, and the type and purpose of sanctions for the offenders.

Box 2: Rules of Procedure in Case of Domestic Violence

September 2005 – Government’s Rules of Procedure in Case of Domestic Violence

The Rules of Procedure, along with the obligation of informing the public of their existence, provide an effective protection to victims of family violence. They were adopted by the Government in 2005 and are based on laws and secondary legislation and on the contents and obligations defined in previous acts. They lay down **provisions on the obligation of the competent authorities and other stakeholders to participate in the detection and eradication of violence and in the provision of assistance and protection to persons exposed to domestic violence**; Furthermore, forms, ways and content of this cooperation are set out as well as the **procedures**.

❖ February 2011 – Government’s National Strategy on Protection from Family Violence (2011-2016)

The strategy is supposed to implement the Law against Family Violence. The impression is that this Strategy is at best the same like its forerunners but it can rather be seen as a **step backwards**. Violence is **not defined as gender-based**, but the definition involves children and the preservation of the family nucleus. The **sources of information are not defined nor the main beneficiaries**. Consequently, it is not clear who will be performing certain activities, the ministries or the local communities. The work of NGOs is promoted on a declarative level but there is no mention of financing of their work. Moreover, the introduction does not state the reasons why certain measures contained in the previous strategies were never realised.

Shelters

In Croatia, there are two types of **shelters** for women victims of family violence: those established by the **local communities** and those set up by **non-governmental organisations** which are today funded from the state budget as well as counties’ and cities’ budget. This form of financing is a very good model but the Croatian government is thinking of stopping to subsidise NGOs.

In October 2004, the Croatian Parliament adopted the Decision on celebrating a National Protection from Family Violence Day

1.5.2. Sexual Violence

On 18 October 2012, the Women’s Regional Lobby organised a conference on women building peace. At this conference, which was held under the patronage of the President of the Republic of Croatia, the Croatian Minister of Defence emphasized that within a year, the Ministry of Defence would make a proposal for an act which will be able to **protect war victims of sexual violence**. Victims of sexual violence during the civil war would get the status of a war victim. He also said that raping women during the war in Croatia was

remote unlike in Bosnia and Herzegovina where raping women during the war was systematic.

Box 3: Protocol procedure in case of sexual violence

November 2012 – Government's Protocol procedure in case of sexual violence

On 29 November 2012, the Croatian Government adopted the protocol procedure in case of sexual violence. The aims of the Protocol are: **implementing standard procedures towards victims of sexual violence**, standard ways of collecting documentation, and standard archiving of the material evidences. Actors on behalf of the Government, institutions, bodies, and NGOs should be acquainted with their rights, obligations and possibilities in the area of sexual violence. They should ensure the right care so that the **victim receives emotional support**, to lower the risk of further development of stress trauma, and to ensure the **quality of medical care** to protect the sexual violence victims during medical exam and treatment and in accordance with the medical status of the victim. The multidisciplinary approach should serve both giving aid to the victim and to **secure the collected information**.

However, such coordination of services has been identified internationally as a challenging task. Besides, although this Protocol has been initiated by NGO, not everyone is aware of its existence, and the procedures laid down in the Protocol are not followed up by all institutions involved, yet.

1.5.3. Trafficking in human beings

As a measure to confront international organized crime, Croatia adopted a **National Strategy against trafficking**. Also, in the year 2002, the National Committee against trafficking of 4 members has been formed as part of the Strategy.

The newest **National Plan against trafficking** has been adopted in February 2012 and it covers the period from 2012 to 2015. Special attention of this Plan is given to strengthening further cooperation between the State Attorney and the Ministry of Internal Affairs on criminal cases of trafficking to enhance the methods of the identification of victims and to ensure the best interest of victims of trafficking. Such provisions are in line with EU Directive 2011/36/EU which had to be implemented by Member States until April 2013.

Besides, the Ministry of Internal Affairs adopted the procedure for handling victims of trafficking which is part of the National Plan. There are two shelters funded and run by the State for minors and adults, and 3 acceptance centers for victims of trafficking. They are of course, anonymous.

However, a certain lack of activity can be noticed regarding the realization of the National Plan. For example, only 10 victims of trafficking have been reported in 2013. And the conviction rate for trafficking is zero. From TIER 1 Croatia has been rated now with TIER 2⁴.

4 US State Department, Trafficking in Persons Report, 2013:
<http://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2013/210548.htm>

1.5.4. Other forms of violence against women

Other forms of violence against women are not receiving adequate public attention because of a lack of institutional mechanisms and awareness raising. Other types of violence include: **double discrimination** when it comes to women with disabilities or members of minority groups but also **mobbing** as form of violence in the labour market, public administration, sports, etc.

Violence at the workplace

❖ January 2011 Labour Code

The Labour Code from 2011 covers sexual harassment and mobbing, however, more softly than the one from 2003, as these offenses are now also covered in the Discrimination Act and the Gender Equality Act.

Sexual harassment and the prohibition of sexual harassment are covered in chapter 5. Other gender issues that are covered in this code are: the **protection of private life and related questions during the job interviews; pregnancy; and overtime work**, and **night shifts** by parents of young children.

This code protects pregnant and nursing women in a way that they can not be fired. There is a financial penalty for employers violating these rights.

1.6. Reconciliation of private and professional life

This issue is important for Croatia because Croatian women must work in order to contribute to the family budget. Moreover, 11.2% of Croatian women have a college or university degree (according to a research by the Croatian Institute of Statistics in 2011) which is partly thanks to the former system of education which was completely free and allowed education to everybody.

Women in Croatia have difficulties in reconciling their professional and private lives as it is generally considered that **housework, child and elderly care are exclusively women's tasks**. According to a survey conducted in 2009 by the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, 87% of women perform most of the housework even when they are employed. About 75% of women are in charge of child care, while job and career are higher on the list of priorities for men than for women. Approximately 45% of major decision-making and money managing is in the hands of men. The survey further showed that experience of gender inequality in the family derives more from the parents than from the partner, indicating that stereotypes are passed on from generation to generation.

Infrastructure, such as nurseries and kindergartens or single-shifts in schools should be combined with measures such as flexible working hours, job-sharing, financial incentives for employers who care about gender equality, a legal obligation for fathers to share the use of maternity and parental leave and, ultimately, raising awareness that the family responsibilities should be shared by both partners to create an environment which would make it easier for women to coordinate professional obligations and family life. In order to harmonize the private and professional lives of women in Croatia, it is necessary to change the society, and the everyday practices and priorities.

1.7. Breaking down gender stereotypes

Croatia is a traditionally conservative country. The problem of gender equality was not recognized at all during the transition. Also in Croatia, the eradication of stereotypes is a very slow process and the established mechanisms are not effective enough.

However, the public perception has changed in some areas. For instance, **domestic violence is now an unacceptable** behaviour and in that sense no person could keep a public position if proven guilty of domestic violence.

Other stereotypes which are typical for Croatian society can be seen as generally accepted with mild disapproval. Possible reasons for their persistence could be **sexism in advertising, the presentation of women in the media, or inappropriate jokes in public places**, etc. While disparaging women in the political discourse has disappeared and gender equality is accepted as a political issue, this seems only to be true on a formal level. There is **mounting pressure from non-governmental organizations on men**, who are public persons, to defend gender equality and women's rights to enhance democratic behaviour. Likewise, the media should blame those who tolerate discrimination.

Discrimination and violence in sport

For the first time, Croatia has included measures concerning women in sport in its National Strategy for Gender Equality. It has been recognised that ignoring violence, inequality, and discrimination in sports would perpetuate just another stereotype. Through different measures, the strategy seeks the same infrastructure for practising sport for women and men, equal opportunities in education, and greater female participation in sport management. The aim is to ban any form of violence against women in sport, including sexual violence, and to introduce sanctions for particular cases. Sportswomen will be trained on these topics.

Stereotype pictures hamper women's full access to economic activities

As already mentioned, women are not receiving enough incentives from the State to engage on the **labour market** because of strong stereotypes on women as mothers and carers. Also due to stereotypes, women cannot get **loans** leading to only 2% of the total assets being registered by women. These stereotypes must be eradicated and it must be shown that women are capable entrepreneurs. Therefore, a range of measures should be taken to **give women entrepreneurs the opportunity to prove their abilities**.

Stereotypes in education

Although opportunities for women in the educational sector are wide, the selection of occupations is not. The reasons for this segregation of the labour market are manifold, however, the stereotyping representation of women in school textbooks certainly contributes to its continuation. The analysis of a textbook for the third grade of primary school showed that mothers and wives are depicted beside the stove in the kitchen holding a broom, or as bakers, while fathers and men are portrayed as pilots, engineers, doctors, etc. Consequently, it is recommended to select authors and illustrations more carefully for better educated future workers.

1.8. Controversial issues

1.8.1. Sexual health and rights

The "Health Education" programme, which includes some sexuality education, in schools is controversially debated, inspired by the Catholic Church and right wing politicians, and had been annulled by the Constitutional Court in May 2013 because of a procedural mistake (lack of a public debate). However, in June and July, the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport organized a public debate and a couple of public forums. Consequently, the "Health Education" programme (in a slightly different form) has entered the regular school program for the year 2013/2014.

While condoms are more broadly available, other contraceptives are less easily accessible. In any case, there is not enough education on the use of contraceptives. Although also controversially discussed, abortion is legal in Croatia until the end of the 10th week of pregnancy. Afterwards, abortion has to be medically justified and authorized.

Croatia has public campaigns for early discovery of breast and cervical cancer.

In 2012, a new Law on In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) was adopted which considers, primarily, the situation of the woman and her wellbeing. New elements of the law are the possibility of treatment for unmarried couples, that women can have 6 IVFs reimbursed by the State until they are 42 years old (before only 3 attempts were reimbursed), and that embryos can be frozen for IVF attempts, not just egg cells.

1.8.2. Prostitution

In Croatia prostitution is not legal. The Criminal Code in force since 1 January 2013 treats prostitutes as if committing a misdemeanor while the exploitation/organisation of prostitution is a criminal offence. Previously, prostitutes and organizers were treated equally. However, someone offering his/her body in an advertisement is regarded as being an organizer of prostitution.

In Croatia, the question whether prostitution should be legalized or not remains an issue of political discussion. There are some initiatives for decriminalizing prostitution from the right wing of the political spectrum while there is an NGO initiative in favor of fully decriminalizing the prostitute but to sanction the customer (Swedish model).

There are no special programs to exist prostitution, a situation which is seen as favoring trafficking.

CONCLUSION

Croatia has established relatively good institutional mechanisms of laws and measures for achieving gender equality since the establishment of the Commission for Gender Equality in 1996. However, the effort to regulate this area with a series of measures, protocols and laws is not yet completed. The main problems of gender equality can be illustrated by four indicators of inequality between men and women, namely: under-representation of women

in political and public decision-making, a disadvantaged position of women in the labour market, various forms of gender-based violence, and the existence of stereotypes. These four indicators have not changed despite the intense work on institutional mechanisms and adopted legal documents. One of the problems is the **continued insufficient awareness** of the society and the **non-existing education in terms of anti-discriminatory behaviour**. The biggest problem, nevertheless, is that what is enacted at the national level does not come to life in local communities, and that the contents of the **Law on Gender Equality are not in line with other laws** it refers to.

One of these challenges is tackled by the present National Policy on Gender Equality which seeks to **improve the cooperation between the national and the local authorities** (see above). Regarding the adjustment of the Gender Equality Act to other legislation, the competent Ministry of Justice is expected to act soon, certainly as the new left wing government is confronted with high expectations related to gender equality while efforts and results are not visible, yet.

The position of **women on the labour market should be one of the most important issues** certainly regarding the poor economic situation in the country. Mainly, the Government is expected to protect certain categories of women against precarious work.

When it comes to family violence, some progress like the inclusion of the financing of the safety shelters for victims of domestic violence in the regular budgets of the cities and counties can be observed with the consequence that these **shelters can operate under better conditions**. At the same time, there is still a lack of recognition of other forms of violence, such as structural violence, certainly in the general public.

It should be considered to enlarge the issue of gender equality by making it an issue about equal opportunities.

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