



Project “More Women in European Politics – More Women in 2014”

Local Action Strategy

Partner 5

REGIONAL SOCIAL WELFARE RESOURCE CENTER Hungary

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LOCAL STRATEGIES

I. Political map of Hungary in 2013 and the possible changes in 2014

I.1 Review of SZEMA

In the spring of 2009 the then only liberal party of Hungary failed the EU elections which determined its future: the SZDSZ party fell apart and could not even get a seat in the Hungarian Parliament at the 2010 elections. It was not only a loss of the liberal community but it meant that the practically only organization standing up for women's rights ceased to exist.

SZEMA- Liberal Party was established in the fall of 2009 to ensure there is a liberal party in Hungary, which supports the country's EU membership and market economy, at the same time stands up unconditionally for minority rights. The biggest minority in Hungary today are women, followed by Gypsies, homosexuals and people with Jewish identity.

SZEMA was legally founded in January 2010, by court order.

Ever since the moment of its foundation and because of its composition SZEMA has guaranteed it will stand up for the rights of minorities. There are Roma civil rights representatives, women – at least as many as men or more – and homosexuals on the (leading) board of the party.

There are two quotas in the constitution of SZEMA: one for women and one for Roma human rights representatives. The board in power will always ensure that minorities are represented in the Board and get nomination – in the ratio of party membership. At present the Board of SZEMA consists of four women and three men. Approximately half of the members are women. The chairperson of SZEMA is a woman and the deputy chairperson is a man.

SZEMA – hoping they could run for the Parliamentary elections in 2010 – completed their political program by the end of 2009. The issue of Roma integration is an integral part of the program.

The issue of women's situation in society and the party's



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suggestions are not written in a separate paragraph in the program; the various policies, however, contain a number of elements that aim at improving women's welfare (maternity benefits, suggestions to augment employment).

The most important point of the political program of SZEMA may be the following:

"The expenditures of the budget should be based on the Parliament's decision on priorities. Whatever is at the end of the list should make do on/with the remnant of the budget."

The first priorities of SZEMA are the following: to ensure the retention of the existing Hungarian and international obligations; to ensure the social care of the poorest of the poor; education; child-protection; health-care; Roma integration programs and to ensure the sources for the judiciary system to be able to operate at a European level."

SZEMA will work out its independent program for women's issues with the help of the present EU tender(ing).

I.2 Review of Parliamentary and other parties

I.2.1 Fidesz-KDNP

In the spring of 2010 the Fidesz-KDNP party alliance acquired a two-thirds majority in the Hungarian Parliament. Contrary to their promises and election program, they immediately started to formulate a new constitution. The new Basic Law (constitution) was enacted at Easter, 2011, and came into effect on January 1, 2012. It mirrors an extinct era. It defines itself as "Christian" but in our opinion it is rather obsolete and discriminative. It declares that women's place is at home with the family, doing housework, raising their children. They define and only accept married heterosexual couples as 'family'. They do not consider people "just living together" as a family.

The Basic Law protects pregnancies since conception. Abortion is not banned yet because the government is aware they would lose a lot of votes if it was. They would ban abortion, however, if they did not want to hold on to their power so much. KDNP pressurizes the government not to let the otherwise legal abortion pill be introduced.

SZEMA has objected this from the beginning.

In the course of the debate about domestic violence, István Varga of



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Fidesz stated in the Parliament that only women with two-three or rather four-five children should be honored, and this would automatically solve the problem of domestic violence. István Varga's speech is worth mentioning because the MP's of Fidesz and KDNP generally agree with it.

The Fidesz-KDNP faction and the government handle other groups of people as well with cynical contempt and disrespect, many times pronouncing them scapegoats.

Disability pensioners and the unemployed suffered most from the attacks of the government, but university students, teachers and professors are also handled disdainfully.

Fidesz began their administration with an attack against philosophers and then they robbed 2.9 million people when they got hold of their private savings and channeled it back to the state retirement system.

The whole politics of Fidesz is based on confrontation. First they fought against internal "enemy" and then they turned against the international ones: the IMF, the multinational companies and the European Union. Fidesz's macho behavior suggests they are the men who should constantly safeguard the country and that they are willing to even go to war for the homeland.

Consequently none of the laws was preceded by real consultation or debate. There have been pro forma talks but it is Fidesz who picks the partner they sit down with, they decide which NGO exists for them or which religious community they will grant the status of being a church.

Fidesz-KDNP play the father, the bread-winner of the nation; "he" knows everything better than his wife, his children, since he is the one who makes the money, he is strong and he can give the biggest slap in the face. And he is ready to do if "necessary", for "the good" of the abused, of course. Fidesz-KDNP is like an abusive spouse or parent for the Hungarian society.

So much so that when one of the representatives of Fidesz turned out to actually have abused his life companion, it was not until days later that his colleagues distanced themselves from him. Although he was excluded from the faction, he was not required to hand in his resignation as an MP.

Fidesz fell in love with being in power. That's why they eliminated



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the system of checks and balances and left Constitutional Court with minimal elbow-room.

New election laws were formulated simply in order to audaciously consolidate their own power. It is a mixed system which means there is going to be a list as well as individual candidates. There will be 106 individual electoral districts and an additional 93 MP's can get mandates in the Parliament from the list. It is going to be a single-ballot system so the person having the relative majority vote will win in each district.

According to opinion polls Fidesz still has the lead. It means that in order to defeat Fidesz various scattered democratic opposition forces must go into an alliance for the time of the elections.

1.2.2. Democratic opposition within the Parliament

In 2010 the democratic opposition within Parliament consisted of the socialists and the green LMP. (Jobbik is an openly anti-democratic party in the Parliament. They consider themselves 'radical' and 'right wing' but we prefer to call them neo-Nazi.)

After 2010 the first party to split was MSZP. Ferenc Gyurcsány, former party chairman and PM of the country, founded a new party and "modestly" named it Democratic Coalition. Their members became independent MP's in Parliament. Later on LMP ('Politics can be Different') split in two; the members leaving LMP founded a new party called Párbeszéd Magyarországért (PM, Dialog for Hungary). All representatives of LMP and PM are considered independent now because they are too few in number to form a faction.

1.2.3. Democratic opposition outside Parliament

After Fidesz got into power some former trade union leaders launched Solidarity Movement. In 2013 the Solidarity Movement, the Union for the Haza and Haladás (Patria and Progress) – which is lead by Gordon Bajnai, the last Prime Minister before the Fidesz era – and the Milla Association – which is a civilian association founded by the organizers of a Facebook page with more than one hundred thousand followers – started a new party, "Együtt 2014" (Together, 2014). Looking at the founders of the new party we can see a sad picture: there are only 6 women out of the 30 founders. At the round table talks of the opposition, however, they as



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well as MSZP supported the idea of introducing a quota for women.

'PM' party – with members formerly in LMP – entered into an alliance with Együtt 2014 for the elections.

I.3. Demonstrations, new movements: Nők Láadásá

There are a number of civilian associations in Hungary and some of them represent women. The most important are the following: Nane (Women for women against violence), Mona (Foundation for the women of Hungary), Patent (Association against Patriarchy), Női Érdek (Women's Interest). The latter is an umbrella organization. Altogether there are several dozen women's organizations, most of them local clubs.

For civilian initiative they collected nearly one hundred thousand subscriptions for a petition demanding that domestic violence be a separate item in the Penal Code. The Parliament decided to discuss the matter late at night. That's when István Varga of Fidesz-KDNP – speaking for his faction – said women will be appreciated more if they have 2, 3 or more children.

The next morning a lot of people protested. Civilians as well as SZEMA started a FB group immediately and another homepage called Nők Láadásá (Revolt of Women). (<http://www.facebook.com/groups/noklazadasa/>, <http://www.facebook.com/noklazadasa>). The operators of the homepages decided to organize a demonstration on September 16, 2012. Two parties – SZEMA and LMP – as well as more than 40 civilian organizations joined the demonstration.

Among the organizations there were some prestigious professional associations as well as other organizations supporting the cause like some human rights organizations defending the rights of gay and lesbian people and other organizations concerned for the state of democracy.

The day before the demonstration Fidesz issued an announcement saying they will – contrary to their original refusal – support the aim of the demonstration and will accept the proposal to recognize domestic violence as a separate finding of fact. Later it turned out, however, that it was only a trick on Fidesz's part, like in a number of other occasions. In spite of this a good number of people turned up at the demonstration and it had a wide media response.

The group Nők Láadásá, the FB page and the organizers of the



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demonstration decided in October, 2012 to found an association which they did in November of that year. Their goals are the following:

“The goal of our group is to increase women’s activity in public life. We would like to see a pluralistic, democratic and tolerant public life in which women can take part much more effectively and women are able to stand up for their rights and express their opinion in all public matters especially the ones that impact their own lives.

In order to achieve our goals, the Association organizes social, cultural, educational and charity programs, publishes and supports the publication of various brochures and engages in an active public life by explaining their standpoint.”

The group has initiated two flash-mobs since its foundation; one was against the Fidesz MP who abused his wife and later – after several days of hesitation - he was dismissed from his faction but is still a member of the Parliament. He stated he did not beat up his wife but she fell over their old, blind dog. That’s how her body got bruised. The name of the demonstration was: Walking the dogs together – the dog is innocent! One could demonstrate with or without a dog. (<https://www.facebook.com/events/442050625885710/>)

They are organizing the fourth demonstration right now. The government filed a draft for a law about domestic violence which lacks the necessary expertise; it does not improve the elements of the present laws in the Penal Code. The representatives of the governing party keep on talking about women’s issues in a derogatory way; they consider women ‘livestock’ to be used for child-bearing. The name of the next demonstration is: Nők Lázadása Again – We want a European law against domestic violence in Hungary! (<https://www.facebook.com/events/371367099640603/>)

The Nők Lázadása Association first made an alliance with SZEMA and then with the Solidarity Movement. The agreement between SZEMA and Nők Lázadása is the following:

“The aim of the co-operation is to play an active role in democratic public life, a distinct political representation of women, which makes it essential for women to join forces and co-operate.

Both SZEMA and Nők Lázadása think it is important that women take part in public life on a much larger scale, they speak up for their rights, express their views, not only in connection with women’s issues but in all public



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affairs.

Their aim is to address women voters, support their activity, and increase their capacity to exercise their rights and secure their political representation. The two organizations will work out a comprehensive program for women in the fields of law, employment, education and other special issues in the future, and will work for establishing the position of a women's ombudsman in the Parliament.

Their common aim is to increase women's representation in the Parliament to at least 30%.

SZEMA – Liberal Party is planning that half their delegates will be women and – according to present agreement – they will choose female candidates together with Nők Lázasása.

Nők Lázasása and SZEMA will make further efforts to develop co-operation with other opposition forces and to achieve their goal that male and female candidates be listed one after the other, respectively. The two organizations mutually support and help each other to co-operate with other democratic opposition forces.”

Nők Lázasása then made an alliance with the Solidarity Movement. Here is a short detail of their agreement:

“That is why the Hungarian Solidarity Movement and the Association ‘Nők Lázasása’ – initiating a process – made an agreement of co-operation so that they can stand up for one of democracy's important factor, gender equality, with the involvement of the people concerned.”

I.4. Round-table talks of the Opposition and some results

Following the initiative of the Socialists, the opposition within and without Parliament started talks on restoring the constitutional state and democracy. Originally MSZP invited Együtt 2014, Democratic Coalition, the Social Democrats and a party called SZEM (Together for Hungary in Alliance). After the first meeting SZEMA joined the talks. Nők Lázasása and some other NGO's were present as observers. Full text of the final document can be found in the following homepage:

<http://www.szema.hu/index.php/sajto/673-zarokoezlemleny>



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*“Constitutional protection of human dignity is the starting point of recognizing basic human rights. Human dignity comprises of **securing equal treatment for people, as well as facilitating equal opportunities especially that of women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities**. Diminishing their disadvantages is the duty of both the state and the community.....” “The government favored themselves when restructuring the electoral system. Although they have given up – following the decision of the Constitutional Court and the pressure from the society - the most revolting curtailment, the obligation for preliminary registration, the new election laws substantially distort democratic decision process. **We need an election system that will more accurately mirror the intention of the voters and – in order for involving more women in political life – a women’s quota should be introduced.**”*

The highlighted paragraphs were suggested by SZEMA, Nők Lázadása and the party SZEM (which, in the meantime, merged into the Social Democratic Party). This way they made sure that the first really serious concerted document of the opposition mentions the issues of women and introducing a women’s quota.

I.5. Present and future co-operation of the opposition

SZEMA has so far worked in co-operation with Solidarity, Nők Lázadása, Milla and the party Dialogue for Hungary at various levels. They have an agreement of co-operation with Solidarity and Nők Lázadása. Solidarity and Nők Lázadása also signed a similar agreement between them. While this summary was being written, a new conservative liberal party as founded: Movement for Modern Hungary which we have already contacted. All these organizations participate in talks in the countryside together, they inform each other about their programs, and their country members keep contact with each other.

Between SZEMA and Együtt 2014 – that consists of Milla, Solidarity and Home and Progress Foundation – do not have a formal agreement for co-operation yet. Együtt 2014 only has such an agreement with the PM party.

Although the socialists and Együtt 2014 do have informal political talks, officially they will only start negotiating after the closing of this Summary.

Since Fidesz-KDNP created an election law which makes it necessary for the opposition to co-operate – and, in case of individual candidates, to make an alliance for the elections as well – the two strongest participants of



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the opposition must come to an agreement. As they promised, they will reach an agreement with small parties afterwards, too.

In the course of the first three months of this year, participants of democratic opposition reached an agreement regarding the revision of the legal system but they will also have to agree that the opposition should only have one single candidate in each election district. There can only be one candidate nominated by the opposition because it is going to be a single-ballot election and the candidate with the relative majority will be the winner. According to opinion polls if there were elections in Hungary tomorrow, Fidesz would win. However, half of the responders – representing 4 million out of the potential 8 million voters – did not reply. In Hungary, about two thirds of eligible voters usually go and take part in the elections. So there is no information about the intentions of about 15%, **almost 1.2 million people**. Pollsters say at least 600-700 thousand people are “hiding”. But even the answers of those who responded are not definite. Public servants and civil servants have become intimidated citizens. The administration monitors the phone calls of civil servants and tails them without any particular reason.

If we had an election tomorrow, Fidesz would probably be much weaker and the opposition would much stronger than what opinion polls indicate. But as long as it is not obvious that Fidesz can be defeated by individual parties, the opposition must work out an extensive program for co-operation at the elections.

Fidesz is going to cut the number of MP's in half from the next term, which makes small parties' situation very difficult and the big opposition parties are reluctant to admit that it is necessary to work out an extensive co-operation. They think it is enough if they give all the candidates.

In the new system of utilizing fragment votes, the individual winner takes a significant part of the votes - exactly as many as the second best – to his or her party's list. So it is not irrelevant at all how many candidates a party can nominate.

In this quite hopeless situation, SZEMA has to see to it that their own female candidates and those of Nők Lázadása are among the candidates at the next elections in the spring of 2014. At the same time, SZEMA needs to convince the bigger parties to have more female individual candidates and more women on their list of nominees.

In 2014, the most important goal is to defeat Fidesz so the person having the biggest chance to win over the local Fidesz candidate should be the individual nominee. Since women in Hungary have a tendency to vote for male candidates, the task is almost



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hopelessly difficult.

European parliamentary elections will also be held in 2014, according to the procedure for **voting** by list. Traditionally, the socialists have more women nominees at EU elections than at home. Even Fidesz sends more female representative to the EU than to the Hungarian Parliament.

In 2014, MSZP and Együtt 2014 will probably have separate lists at the EU elections. Együtt 2014 and Dialogue for Hungary (PM) may as well have separate lists. PM is not measured by opinion polls right now because they run for parliamentary seats with Együtt 2014. It makes it very difficult for them to run for EU seats separately because of the threshold. If they were measured, most probably they would not reach half of the threshold. Just like SZEMA.

For SZEMA, there are four options:

1. SZEMA can run for the 2014 EU election independently, together with its allies that do not belong to Együtt 2014. Such allies are Nők Lázadása and some Roma organizations with whom SZEMA has already started talks about co-operation.
2. SZEMA can run jointly with Párbeszéd Magyarországért party, Nők Lázadása and some other organizations to be contacted later, providing Párbeszéd Magyarországért is open to this option and their agreement with Együtt 2014 does not include this election.
3. SZEMA and Nők Lázadása officially join the Együtt 2014 – PM election alliance, and they run together for both EU and Hungarian parliamentary seats. In this case it would be relatively easy to achieve a 50-50% gender quota in both elections because political involvement of women is just as important for Párbeszéd Magyarországért than it is for SZEMA.
4. SZEMA and Nők Lázadása only enter into an alliance with Együtt 2014 and PM for the EU elections.

The first option is very dangerous because there is little chance for SZEMA and their allies to independently reach the entrance threshold. The second option is very attractive, it could be worked out with a lot of work. The third option would be the most effective and offers success. At present, however, the obstacle is Együtt 2014 itself because it does not seem to be open to it. The fourth option is also in the hands of Együtt 2014.



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II. Main points of strategy SZEMA wants to carry out before the elections

Based on the above SZEMA has to work out projects that could be attractive for women voters and turn the parties' attention towards potential woman representatives.

It is important, of course, to create an independent program for women. But it is equally important that women voters be motivated in seeing more women among members of the parliament. In this respect Hungary keeps lagging behind. The situation is only worse in Ukraine. Having surveyed the changes in neighboring countries, the most effective example seems to be the situation in Poland.

II.1. Women's Shadow Government

By what was set forth so far, SZEMA's actual and potential strategic partners are Nők Lázasága, Solidarity, PM and Movement for Modern Hungary. Solidarity is already a part of the Együtt 2014-PM alliance.

With the idea of establishing a shadow government of women – slightly modifying the Polish idea of bringing about a congress of women – SZEMA first contacted Nők Lázasága. They support the idea and are willing to participate.

SZEMA then contacted PM, Solidarity and MoMa. At present SZEMA has already fixed the date of the first consultation; Erzsébet Pusztai of MoMa, Tímea Szabó and Rebeka Szabó of PM, Anna Lovas Nagy, Éva Novák and Gitta Rajnai of Nők Lázasága will be there for sure. Solidarity and Haza és Haladás did not give positive answers.

What is the aim of a women's shadow government?

Parties in Hungary do not delegate enough women saying women also prefer to vote for men. Social prejudice and ingrained stereotypes will not change unless someone is willing to work hard for changing them.

Single parties, by themselves, seem to be unable to do the task. It can only be carried out if political parties and civilian organizations join forces, take action and demonstrate that women politicians are worth voting for. Such a combined effort by itself can carry the message that the opposition is able to co-



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operate, work together and carry on the dialogue with the NGO's.

II.1.2. Recommendations of SZEMA for the organizations supporting a women's shadow government

SZEMA made a proposal for the first meeting about the reasons of setting up a women's shadow government, the organizations involved, the structure and the composition of the government and the way they are supposed to operate. We have already described the first two points, so we don't repeat that. A possible structure, working method and composition is the following:

There is no prime minister so there is no executive board, either. The meetings are chaired by the ministers, rotating. The order of rotation should be fixed at formation of the government.

The present government combined education, culture, health and social ministries, this way diminishing their significance. SZEMA maintains that they should be separate ministries again. There should be an independent ministry for equal opportunities or a ministry for gender- and Roma issues.

At the same time, law enforcement issues (military, police, national security, fire department) could belong to one ministry.

Portfolios would not be assigned on parity basis but the appropriate persons would be agreed upon by consensus.

Before going public, the head of each portfolio makes an evaluation of the present ministry, which will be discussed by the shadow government.

At the beginning, each minister tells about the already accepted evaluation. It is important because later on we won't have to deal with Fidesz politics any longer but we can concentrate on our own ideas and conception about the future.

Nők Lázadása would nominate the Minister of Equal Opportunities /or Gender and the Minister of Culture. SZEMA would name minister of economy and the minister of justice. PM, which is a green party, would appoint the head of the ministry of environment protection and ministry of agriculture. MoMa would give the minister of public health. But they could appoint people for other posts, too. E.g.: PM could give the minister of social affairs. Spokesperson(s) would be appointed by Nők Lázadása. The rest of the ministries would



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be headed by civilians, by consensus.

Each organization would keep its own identity. Every time someone speaks it should be made clear which organization delegated her and whose point of view she represents.

SZEMA is confident this project can be carried out with the potential participants. If, however, it does not work out, the Women's Shadow Government should be put together anyway, with new people, even with "only" civil organizations.

II.2. A possible women's program

In order to draw women voters attention, SZEMA of course needs an articulate women's program as well. In paragraph III, we review the activity of the present government, and then we draw up the action plan of the next government. The alternative CEDAW report, written by Magyar Női Érdekvégyesítő Szövetség (Hungarian Association for Exercising Women's Interests) and Európai Roma Jogok Központja (Center for European Roma Rights), will be of great help for us:

<http://noierdek.miria.hu/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Noi-Erdek-ERRC-UN-CEDAW-Alternat%C3%ADv-Jelent%C3%A9s-1.pdf>

II.3. Addressing women voters

SZEMA and Nők Lázadása decided on launching an internet and paper poster and flyer campaign which targets women voters to call their attention to vote for women candidates and those parties which have enough women candidates.

III. Strategic points SZEMA wants to realize after the elections

In 2010 the previous government accepted a long term strategy called National Strategy for Supporting Social Equality of Women and Men – Directions and goals, 2010-2020.

The strategy consisted of 6 priorities in areas where achieving social equality of women and men needs firm action taken by the



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government. These were the following:

- Creating an equal economic independence of women and men; eliminating disproportion in wages and employment, taking into consideration the issues of women and poverty, women and health.
- Supporting a more effective harmonization of professional, private and family life.
- Reducing disproportion of representation of women and men in political and economic decision-making as well as in science.
- Making the necessary arrangements against and to prevent violence.
- To support reducing gender stereotypes.
- Professional groundwork to support the policy of gender equality in society (education, institutions, gender-sensitive budget, data collection for genders).

The present government basically ignores this strategy and adopts different policies in practically every respect. It also means the government breaks international agreements and contracts.

The most striking thing is the re-definition of the family: they only consider the marriage of two people of the opposite sex a family. This way, a significant percentage of Hungarian population is excluded from being a family.

They want to herd women back to the kitchen and the children's room. Each gesture and utterance of the government and the MP's of the ruling party proves that. While one could consider it as a positive sign that the government extended the duration of maternity welfare system again, we know that they actually want to keep mothers away from the labor market. There are contradictory regulations as well: while mothers returning to their jobs from maternity welfare leave (GYES, GYED) are under protection, pregnant women can easily be fired from their workplace.

The most unacceptable step of the government is keeping up and consolidating segregated education. Roma women get the least education in the country. Roma men also suffer all kinds of disadvantages, mostly as a consequence of racism in society. The situation further deteriorated when a far right wing, neo-Nazi part appeared in the Parliament. The governing parties hardly ever put them in their places and they don't really distance themselves from the far right; similar voices can even be heard from their side. Several times the arrangements Fidesz



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makes match to Jobbik's program.

Fidesz has nationalized education in every way. They not only rendered schools under government control, they changed curriculum, introduced mandatory religious /moral philosophy education and lessons from morning till late afternoon. Children are obliged to go to school at the age of 4 but schooling is only compulsory until the age of 16. This is an arrangement taken against Roma children, many of whom will not even be able to finish elementary school before they are expelled and pushed to the labor market without any vocational training, without any hope to find a job. Girls, who become mothers very young, later will have no chances at the labor market.

Fidesz refuses to sign or ratify a number of international agreements, like the Istanbul treaty or the recommendation of EU to enhance women's participation in the economy.

Media-policy of the government and Fidesz represent the same attitude: instead of trying to eliminate stereotypes they emphasize the importance of family; the state television, state radio and state news agency broadcast centralized messages.

World view of Fidesz and the government harks back to the first half of the last century. They want to introduce a strong patriarchic model in family and society as well.

We are aware of the fact, however, that they always beat a retreat in women's issues when there is a demonstration, they always take half a step back and make half a gesture. They expelled the woman basher from the faction and violence within the family became an independent state of affairs. Although the law is of low standards professionally, penalties are going to be stricter.

We can declare that the government is afraid of one group of voters: women – probably because of their number. Women should continue the struggle and take heart from the smallest success. SZEMA, together with Nők Lázadásá and trade associations, should write Hungary's program for women. The first step should be to return to the 2010 program, the second is to carry out recommendations of CEDAW and the trade associations.



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