



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

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Base Line Study

Partner 7

COALITION FOR GENDER EQUALITY

Latvia

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Base Line Study

Women in Politics (Latvia)

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Cooperation Network
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I Overview of the evolution of women's presence in politics at EP level, national, regional levels- Latvia

1.1. Brief history

Historically Latvia was one of the first European countries, which legally recognized that both genders have equal rights to vote and to be elected for the Public administration and governmental Institutions. Also a great achievement was election of women President- Vaira Vike-Freiberga- first among the Eastern European countries, and due to huge popularity, leadership skills and strong decision making habits, the Latvian “Iron lady” was re-elected for second Presidency period, being President of Latvia in years 1999-2007.



Picture 1. Latvian “Iron Lady”

Being pleasant, however this is exceptional (extraordinary) case, as the average women presence in at all levels- national and regional/local have never exceeded 30%. Analysing figures and data from this research, one shall also remember, the nation thinking is still very masculine, with strong archetypal orientation to Patriarchal society structure model, remembering common version of an old Latvian saying- “You can grant mind to a stone, but never to a woman” (Akmenim tu vari prātu iedot, bet ne sievietei)

1.2. National elections- figures and summary

During all the last elections the overall level of electors’ activity was criticised as usual and media blamed the society for political irresponsibility. However one hardly

Remembers, the Latvia was the first European country ensured the voting rights to women for common and open elections. This event shall be more widely announced, as positive historical fact on the routine of negative news streaming background.¹

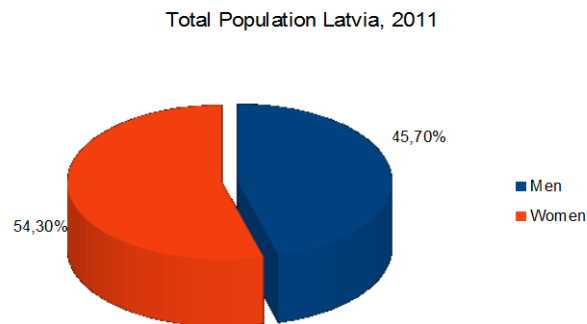


Figure 1. Total Population, by gender Latvia 2011.

According to CSB,² the current (Data published on March 2011) population in Latvia is 2,070,371. From this total figure the 1,124,269 (54.30% of the population) are female and 946,102 (45.70% of the population) are male.

However the current population of the adult working age range between the ages of 20 and 65 is a total of 1,300,531. Of this total population 632,838 (48.66% of the population) are male and 667,693 (51.34% of the population) (2) “Latvia, Women in politics. Gender equality?” *Maiga Dzervite, Inete Ielite, Edite Kalnina* are female, therefore this range is closer to 1:1 ratio than the entire population taken into consideration.

¹ M.Graudins, *Diena* newspaper, July 19th 2013

² Central Statistical Bureau <http://www.csb.gov.lv/dati/statistikas-datubazes-28270.html>,
<http://www.csb.gov.lv/en/dati/data-23959.html>

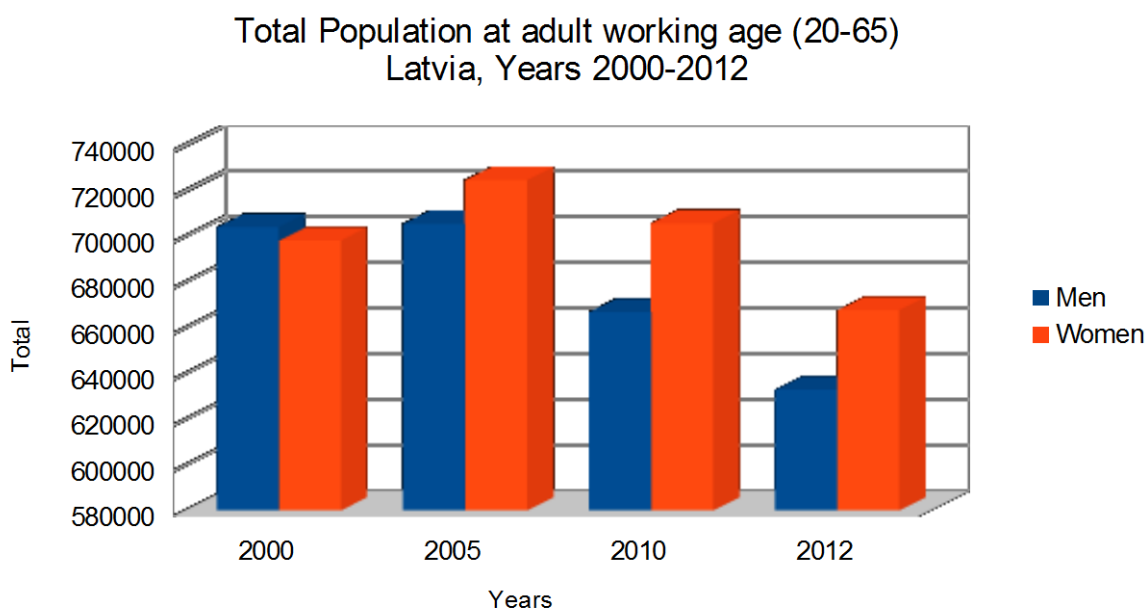


Figure 2. Women at adult working age, Latvia 2000-2012

Despite the fact, that from above statistics one can see the women in population are more than men- in both “Absolute category”, as well in “Working age” category, the women presence in politics at national, regional and EP levels unfortunately shows us quite opposite scene.

1.3. Women political representation at National level

The Saeima (Latvian Parliament) elections are held in five multi-member constituencies – Riga, Vidzeme, Latgale, Zemgale and Kurzeme. The number of members of parliament to be elected from each constituency is determined proportionally to the number of voters registered in each constituency four months before Election Day.

Event	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Total number	Total number	percentage	percentage
Candidates 9 Saeima (Y2006)	269	755	26,30%	73,70%
Elected in 9 Saeima	19	81	19,00%	81,00%
Candidates 10 Saeima (Y2010)	353	882	28,60%	71,40%

Elected in 10 Saeima	18	82	18,00%	82,00%
Candidates 11 Saeima (Y2011)	331	761	30,30%	69,70%
Elected in 11 Saeima	21	79	21,00%	79,00%

Figure 3. Women representation in Saeima

Saeima committees

From 15 Saeima committees in 11th Saeima, 6 or 40% are headed by women, and this figure is well above the average percentage among all MPs, additionally no fundamental decisions made by women- commission leader were criticized.

1.4. Women representation at Ministry level³

Ministers by Year	Women	Men	Women
	Total number	Total number	percentage
2004 (Total 17)	6	11	35,29%
2007 (Total 19)	4	15	21,05%
2009 (Total 14)	4	10	28,57%
2010 (Total 13)	4	9	30,77%

Figure 4. Women representation at Ministry level Y2004-2010, Latvia

Although statistically situation with women in charge of ministries seems satisfactory- around 30% average versus 20-25% in overall women involvement in decision making roles in Latvian politics, women are in charge for welfare, health and culture and with only one case, when women (L.Murniece) was in charge for “power”

³ <http://cvk.lv/pub/public/30491.html>

ministry- Defence ministry,- exception, which only confirms the common rule. In the current Cabinet of Ministers, the Minister of agriculture position- the *masculin symbol* for the first time in Latvian history belongs to women- Mrs. Laimdota Straujuma.

1.5. Latvian women presence in politics at regional (Municipal level).

On June 1, 2013 in 9 cities and 110 municipalities of Latvia local elections took place. 685890 or 45,99% voters cast their votes in the elections. The highest voter turnout – 55,55% – was in Riga. In Vidzeme*, 44,93% of eligible voters participated in the elections, in Latgale - 42,17%, in Kurzeme – 40,51%, but in Zemgale – 39, 39%. (3)

45,99% attendance was the lowest figure since 2005 year elections- 52,85% in 2005; 53,80% in 2009**, showing the decreasing interest of Latvian society in taking part in local political processes and diminishing faith in positive changes among potential voters. Additionally, the reason for decreasing level of voters in regions is the result of migration to the big cities for better employment opportunities, without changing the official declaration address, according to which the general voters lists are prepared. The proportion of voted female and male is almost the same as the total population gender proportion, however the average voter becomes “older”- 48,6% 45 years old or older.⁴ (4)

* Vidzeme, Latgale, Kurzeme, Zemgale- regions of Latvia

** 2009 year Municipal elections were held together with European Parliament elections

Event	2005 year elections		2009 year elections		2013 year elections	
	Total number	Percentage	Total number	percentage	Total number	percentage
Total number of lists	1695		736		589	
Total number of candidates	15682		11210		8725	
Among them women	7109	45,30%	4652	41,50%	3539	40,56%
Total number Elected	4179		1763		1618	
Among them women	1766	42,30%	620	35,10%	531	32,82%

Figure 5. Women representation at National elections level, Latvia, years 2005-2013. Local voting pattern.

⁴ http://www.cvk.lv/cvkserv/PV_2005//apt_vellidzda105.pdf

Looking at the dynamics of women representation at National level, we can regrettably conclude, that women representation have decreased in among both total candidates from all election lists, as well as from candidates elected, from 45,3% (year 2005) to 40,56 (year 2013) accordingly.

One of the reasons of the relatively higher percentage of women candidates in 2005 was the situation before the administrative reform, when smaller districts were united into bigger ones, and changed the situation, when in small regions mostly all the candidates were well known to the voters and evaluated by their performance and accomplished works, not the gender.

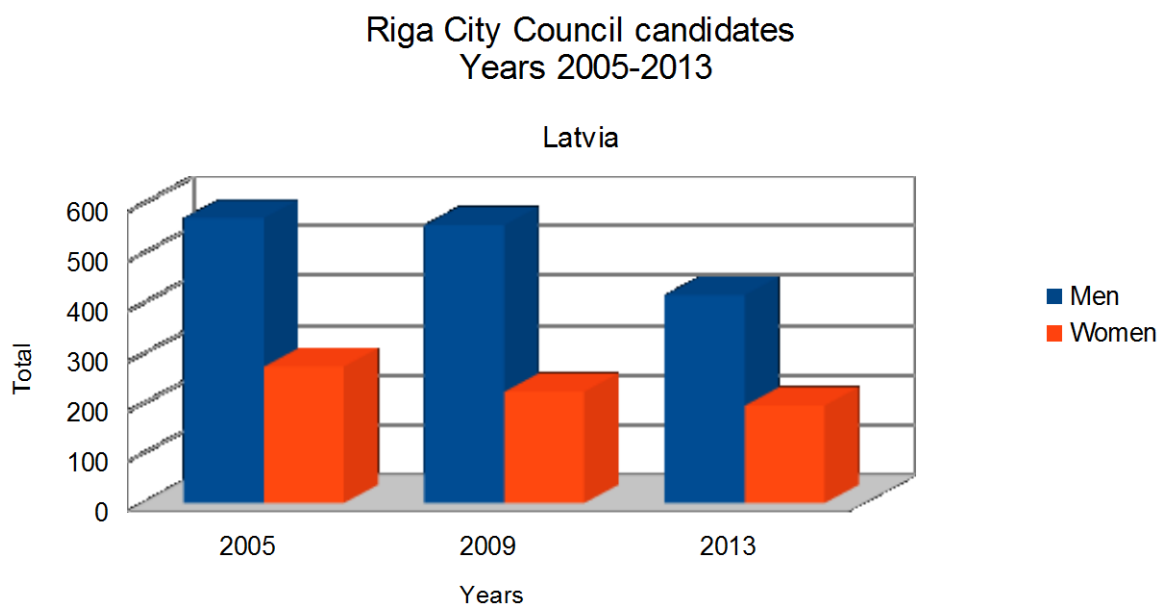


Figure 6. Riga City council election candidates 2005-2013.

Riga City Council election results Years 2005-2013

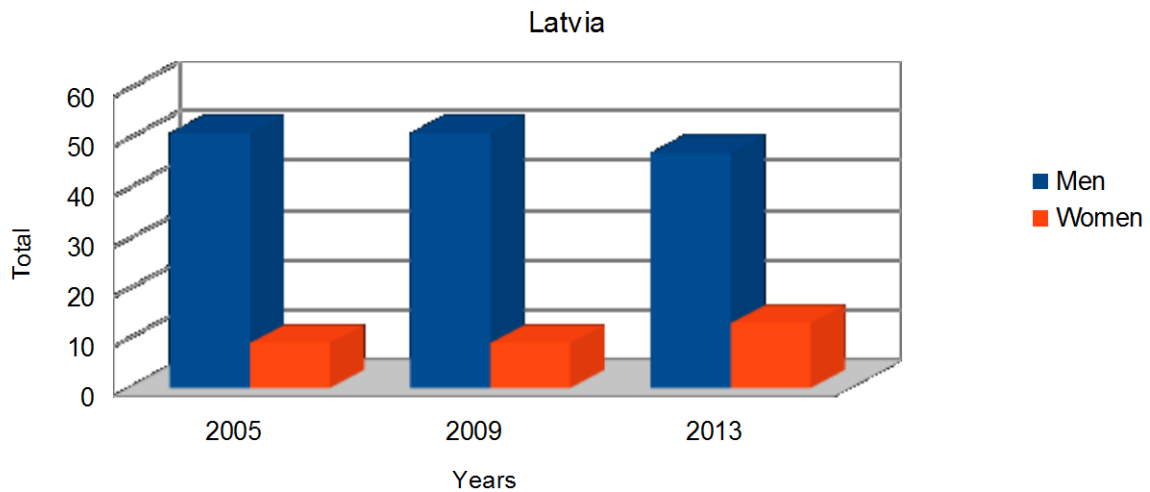


Figure 7. Riga City council elections 2005-2013.

Voting at both national and municipal level, every voter may not only choose the particular political party list, it is also possible to draw + (promote) or – (demote) the particular candidate. Analyzing the data from the biggest municipality- capital Riga, we can see that women held 3 places, including first two, from the top 5 among the demoted candidates (Figure 8).

No.	Candidate	Demotions (-)
		Total number
1	S.Ēlerte (Vienotība)	7829
2	B.Rozentāle (SC- Gods kalpot Rīgai)	5860
5	E.Aldermane (SC- Gods kalpot Rīgai)	4293

Figure 8. Demotions among elected Riga municipal election candidates, 2013 ⁵

From the tables and charts 6-8, one can see that there is no statistical valid pattern between registered women candidates (32,4%, 28,6%, 31,9%) for the years 2005,2009

⁵ <http://www.pv2013.cvk.lv/ResNovElectedMemb-7.html>

and 2013 respectively and the number/percentage of elected members (15%, 15% and 21,7%).

Of course the negative perception of women candidates could only partly be explained by their gender, more objectively this is the public reflection of their previous political and professional career, however the fact still remains women are evaluated more strictly, as men ministers and MPs for the reasons mentioned above are criticised much more politely, reflected in less demotions in election lists.

1.6. European Parliament situation

In European Parliament despite the fact, we have observed the percentage of European Parliament women members doubled during 30 years (since 1979), men still gather majority in total figures.

Latvian MP's elected by Year	Women	Men	Women	Average EP
	Total number	Total number	percentage	percentage
2004-2009 (Total 9)	2	7	29,00%	31,00%
2009-2014 (Total 9)	3	6	33,00%	

Figure 9. Latvian MP's representation at European Parliament.

1.7 Actions at Legislative level (Quota) and its sufficiency

There has been a compulsory quota introduced to help increase the number of women board members in European businesses. In addition, EU Parliament has also continually called for legislation on equality between men and women. In its resolution on women and business leadership on 6th July 2011, EU Parliament called for a binding minimum quota of 30% by 2015 and 40% by 2020. The sufficiency of this call for legislation was not vast as they then felt a desire to reiterate the call in a further resolution on equality between men and women on the 13th March 2012.

1.8 Activities at EU level

The EU Parliament have introduced the 'PROGRESS' programme. This programme consists of 5 key elements that it focuses on. The main one that is important to our study

is the equality between men and women. This element is created to support the implementation of the principle of gender equality and promote gender mainstreaming in EU policies by:

- Improving the understanding of the situation in relation to gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming, in particular through analysis and studies and the development of statistics and indicators, as well as assessing the impact of existing legislation, policies and practices;
- Supporting the implementation of EU gender equality legislation through effective monitoring, holding seminars for those working in the field and networking amongst specialised equality bodies;
- Raising awareness, disseminating information and promoting debate about the key challenges and policy issues in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming among the social partners, NGOs and other stakeholders;
- Developing the capacity of key European level networks to support and further develop Community policy goals and strategies on gender equality.

The element of equality between men and women will receive 12% of the budget for this programme – making it the fourth most important element within the programme.

1.9 Results in brief

EU Parliament met on 11th March 2013 to discuss gender equality, in a plenary session. The session was based on reports drafted by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), which are not legally binding, like most of the reports penned by the FEMM MEPs.

“The EU has been a prolific communicator on gender equality and women's rights, with major events like ‘One Billion Rising’ in the Parliament, or the awareness the report on the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Gender Equality. But enforcing equal pay and prosecuting violence against women are issues politicians at EU level seem wary of – as much as their national counterparts.” (Dyon, F. 2013)

However, When Commissioner for Justice Viviane Reding announced she would draft a proposal to enforce an “under-represented gender” quota on non-executive boards of

listed companies, EU officials, Member States and the private sector alike was up in arms. As a result, the draft proposal is heavily watered down.

1. 10 Proposals for changes

“Quotas attempting to maximise the number of educated and skilled women in executive positions could improve corporate performance and help raise national productivity. But doing so will depend on keeping ambitious, well-qualified women moving up the management ranks. Gender quotas will encourage more women to pursue education and career options leading to the top of executive positions. Quotas create incentives for women to adapt their job preferences to the more accessible boardroom positions and develop necessary skills which would reduce the need for positive discrimination in the future. Encouraged to develop relevant skills, women will contribute to the long-term talent pool and the economy. According to McKinsey report, women’s interest in being leaders increases as they progress from entry level to middle management” (Barsh, J., 2013) , which is exactly what the principle behind quotas aims to encourage - more women following professional career development.⁶

1.11

Summary

content

⁶ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/summary.do?id=1238027&t=d&l=en>

The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality adopted the report drafted by Kartika Tamara LIOTARD (GUE/NGL, NL) on eliminating gender stereotypes in the EU. The report stresses that despite some progress having been made in many Member States, many women continue to carry a disproportionate share of the burden when it comes to raising children and domestic responsibilities hence hindering the achievement of equality in the labour market.

Despite the EU's commitment to equality between men and women, there is still a gap in legislation providing for non-discrimination against women and gender equality in the areas of social security, education and the media, employment and wages. The report emphasises the need to step up implementation of existing legislation in these areas and bring in new legislation.

In this context, the Commission is called upon to:

- mainstream the issue of gender equality in all policy fields;
- make efficient use of available EU funding for this purpose;
- support measures by Member States to eliminate stereotypes and promote stereotype free access for all to education and employment;
- develop strategies that attack the root causes of discrimination and violence against women.

In addition, the Members call on the Member States to recognise the **urgent need to consider the introduction of a regulatory framework which prohibits the way girls and women are displayed as sexual objects by the alcohol industry.**

The report also focuses on key issues with a view to eliminating stereotypes:

- **Media and culture:** highlighting that in the media and in particular in advertising, 60% of the roles portrayed doing housework or looking after children are in fact women, Members call on the Commission, the Member States, civil society and advertising self-regulatory bodies to cooperate closely in order to combat such practices, notably by using effective tools which guarantee respect for human dignity and probity in marketing and advertising. Member States are called upon to conduct **training and awareness training actions with media professionals on the harmful effects of gender stereotypes and good practices in this area.** Awareness campaigns on zero-tolerance across the EU for sexist insults or

degrading images of women and girls in the media should be established. The report points out that a policy to eliminate stereotypes in the media will of necessity involve action in the **digital field**.

Members also call for the: (i) establishment of independent regulation bodies with the aim of controlling the media and advertising industry and a **mandate to impose effective sanctions on companies and individuals promoting the sexualisation of girls**; (ii) implementation of positive action measures to ensure that more women have access to management positions in the media, including top management positions; (iii) compilation of comparable data concerning women and the media.

- **Education and training**: Members stress the need for special career guidance courses in **primary and secondary schools and higher education institutions**, in order to inform young people about the negative consequences of gender stereotypes. In this context, they stress the importance of promoting equality between men and women from a very young age in order effectively to combat gender-based stereotypes, discrimination and violence. There is a need for a gender mainstreaming process in schools and for them to design and implement awareness training exercises and practical exercises designed to promote gender equality in the academic curriculum. Training courses for teachers, supervisors, head teachers and all other people involved in children's education should be established.

Members call on the Member States to **assess the syllabus and content of school textbooks, with a view to a reform leading to the integration of gender issues into all education material as a cross-cutting theme, in terms of both eliminating gender stereotypes** and making women's contribution and role in history, literature, the arts, etc. more visible, including at the earliest school levels.

- **Labour market**: Members stress the impact of gender stereotypes on education and training has strong implications for the labour market, where women still face both horizontal and vertical segregation. This contributes to certain sectors still being considered 'male' (with more than 85% men) and their pay levels consequently being higher than those of sectors considered 'female' (with more than 70% women). The report draws attention to the growing concern about the negative influence of gender stereotypes on the **gender pay gap of 16.4%**.

To combat gender pay discrimination, Members calls for a series of proposals which may be summarised as follows: (i) awareness-raising activities in order to inform employers and

employees of the link between gender stereotypes and the gender pay and job gap; (ii) review wage structures in female-dominated professions and occupations as a means of breaking down gender stereotypes anchored in the pay gap problem; (iii) establish policies to increase the number of inexpensive and high-quality childcare facilities available to working parents; (iv) provide flexible working opportunities and suitable forms of parental leave for both men and women.

Members call on the Commission to **promote gender quotas in occupations that are traditionally considered as 'male' or 'female'**, since stereotypes also come from the scarcity of women or men in certain positions. The report reminds the Commission that elderly women are particularly affected by the gender pay gap as it also affects **pensions**, which increases the risk of extreme and persistent poverty once women have reached retirement age.

- **Economic and political decision-making**: the report states that, in 2012, in the European Union, women represented 14 % of the board members of the largest listed companies, suggesting the existence of a so-called '**glass ceiling**' that makes it difficult for women to secure top management jobs and equal opportunities for promotion. Members urge the introduction of awareness and incentive campaigns, encouraging women to be more politically active and to run for local or national government.

At EU level, they call on Member States to support parity by proposing a **woman and a man as their candidates for the office of European Commissioner**.

Recalling that in 2010, only 12% of the members of management boards in Europe were women, Members support the Commission's desire to establish binding quotas for women in posts of responsibility in the largest listed companies.

Lastly, the committee proposes a series of actions including to combat violence against women, to promote further research on the root causes of gender stereotypes and the impact of stereotypes on gender equality; to exchange new ideas and research on best practices with a view to eliminating gender stereotypes in the Member States and the EU institutions; to develop safeguards (in the form of ombudspersons or media-watch authorities incorporating gender equality experts) in order to ensure that industrial codes of conduct include a gender equality perspective and are adhered to.

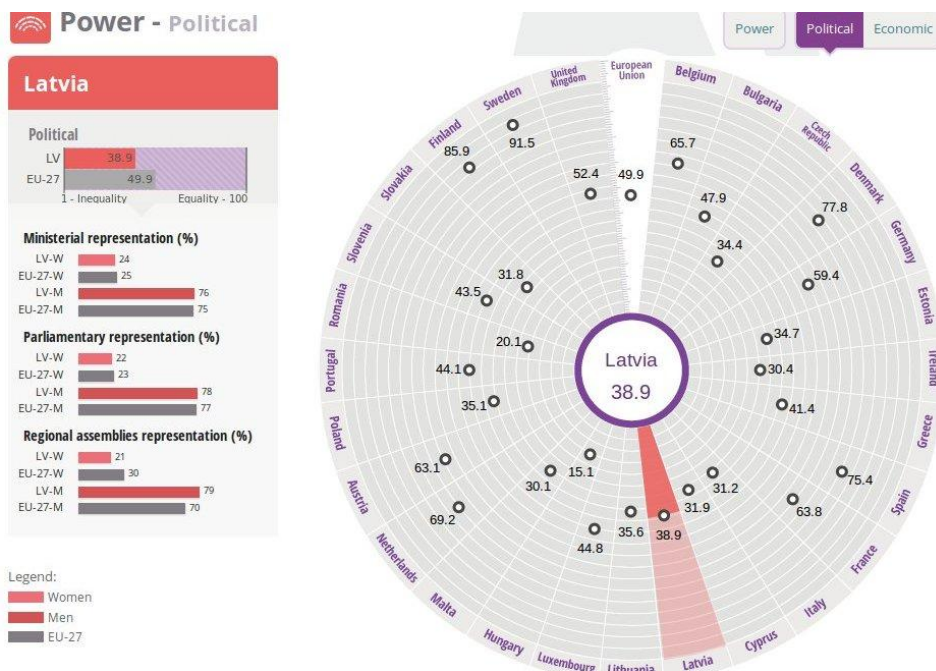


Figure 10. Evaluation of Overall Latvian women representation in Politics, comparing with EU performance. ⁷

In general, according to Gender Equality Index data⁸ the “Political power” figure for women in Latvia- 38,9% is about 10% below the average in European Union (49,9%), which, in terms of weighted evaluation is about 3/4 away from the desired 100% equality situation.

II Tendencies and women election dynamics at Saeima and Municipal elections (2005-2013)

2.1. Voting patterns for political Parties at Saeima and Municipal elections.

⁷ <http://mk.gov.lv/en/mk/sastavs/?lang=1>

⁸ <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index#/domain/power?country=LV>

There are 5 leading political parties, represented in Saeima⁹ and the biggest municipalities. (Figure 12) In the Saeima elections, votes are cast for candidate lists submitted by political parties or associations of political parties. A candidate may be included in only one candidate list distributed in only one constituency. In order for the party or the association of parties to be represented in the Saeima, it must receive at least 5% of the total number of votes cast in all five constituencies. In the 11th Saeima elections (September 17th, 2011) total number of 13 Parties took part, 1092 candidates, and 5 lists of them were elected, 100 MP's. Voter turnout in the 11th Saeima elections was 59.45 percent or 917 713 voters.

According to the election result five parties and associations of parties gained seats in the 11th Saeima: the Association of Political Parties “Harmony Centre” (Politisko partiju apvienība “Saskaņas Centrs”), “Zatlers’ Reform Party” (“Zatlera Reformu partija”), “Unity” (“Vienotība”), National Association “All For Latvia!” - “For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK” (Nacionālā apvienība “Visu Latvijai!” – “Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK”), the Union of Greens and Farmers (Zaļo un Zemnieku savienība).

Political party at Saeima 11th (2011)	Women	Men	Women	Women	Men	Women	Women
	Total number	Total number	percentage	election lists	election lists	election %	lists, % elected from lists
Vienotība	7	12	36,8%	33	82	28,7%	+ 8,1%
VLI/TB- LNNK	3	10	23,1%	27	88	23,5%	- 0,4%
Reformu partija	6	10	37,5%	35	79	30,7%	+ 6,8%
Saskaņas centrs	3	28	9,7%	23	92	20,0%	- 10,3%
ZZS	3	10	23,1%	25	90	21,7%	+1,4%
Other	1	7	12,50%	N/A	N/A		

Figure 11. Political parties distribution by gender at 11th Saeima elections.

⁹http://titania.saeima.lv/Personal/Deputati/Saeima11_DepWeb_Public.nsf/structureview?readform&type=2&lang=LV

Political parties at Riga Municipal elections 2013	Women	Men	Women	Women	Men	Women	Women
	Total number	Total number	percentage	election lists	election lists	election lists, %	% elected from lists
Vienotība	2	7	22,2%	22	41	34,9%	- 12,7%
VLI/TB- LNNK	2	10	16,7%	13	50	20,6%	- 3,9%
Alliance of political parties "Saskaņas centrs" and "Gods kalpot Rīgai"	9	30	23,1%	16	47	25,4%	- 2,3%

Figure 12. Political parties' distribution by gender at recent Riga Municipal elections June, 2013.

The tendencies reflected in the Figure 12, where we can see the percentage of elected women was less, comparing with women percentage figures for all parties, elected- from minus 2,3% for Alliance of political parties "Saskaņas centrs" and "Gods kalpot Rīgai" to minus 12,7% for "Vienotība".

According to the numbers shown at Figure 12, we can see, there was typical average representation of women in the voting lists 26,3%, but the percentage of elected women was much less for every party, passed the threshold to be elected. This again is caused by two main reasons already mentioned-

- 1) Despite the fact that parties include higher percentage of women in their lists, as a common practice, they are located in the "cellar" part of the list, without any relevant chance to be elected.
- 2) The voting pattern shows us even less optimistic scene- from the total estimated percentage of all women voters- 55%, only about less than 40% from them voted for women-candidates, taking the assumption that all women and men voted for their gender candidates, which is statistically correct.

Due to the lack of statistical breakdown of women voted for the particular political party and their gender based preferences, it is impossible to evaluate exact voting pattern figures for each one of them, however fact remains- statistically from 55% of women voted, the overall percentage of women elected shall be around 30%, instead of real life figure- 20,3%, or about 10% less. Patterns similar to this were spotted at all local election subjects both in big cities (Daugavpils, Ventspils, Jelgava, Liepāja) and small regions.

According to the research¹⁰ among women- heads of the local authorities the women leaders are more tended to adopt reconstruction and rebuilding leadership style, whereas men- the one of commanding. Women leaders unlike men:

- 1) Are more likely to share information and power, thus improving faithfulness atmosphere at work;
- 2) More often refuse to use privileges, provided by service status;
- 3) More often highlight dependent input in common work result, thus diminishing her own input.

In order to understand tendencies of women becoming politicians it is critical to follow the whole route "travelled" by particular women- leader and her current perception of self-realisation in politics. Looking along every particular case, we can follow the roots of every respondent political competencies and how they've reached the current position and status. Ironically, but not accidentally, the answers of women leaders they also support the stereotypic gender role division and indirectly they stimulate gender discrimination in Latvian society.

One of the most important characteristics for women in politics is ability for leadership, but not dominating as for men politicians, but more personality oriented. Being asked about family role in becoming and maintaining political leadership status, the majority of respondents stressed out the importance of family support in their political carrier and denied the assumption, the family could be an obstacle for successful political career. There are more and more cases of young, family women join the political environment, they are ready to undertake responsibility, organize their time schedule, and firmly hold seized positions in political activity over an extended period of time.

III Participation of women in political parties of Latvia, practices undertaken to attract more women in politics.

3.1. Overview of practices carried out by political parties to attract more women into politics.

As a general rule none of the parties have stated or announced the gender equality, regarding the politics as their priority task either by the reason there are too many more

¹⁰ Agate Zaķe, "Self-expression possibilities for women in politics in Latvia"

important issues to take care about or they do not observe any specific problem, believing the current situation with the women involvement into political decision making is close to optimal.

3.1.1. Saskaņas centrs¹¹

Within the political party, the women leaders club „Women for harmony" is established. The club has carried out a number of conferences- among which “Women for the future of Latvia” (2011), “Latvian women and demography problem” (2013), with participation of MP's, NGO representatives etc. financed by SC itself.

3.1.2 National Union “Visu Latvijai! - Tēvzemei un Brīvībai/LNNK”¹²

No particular activities spotted, as their main target audience is youth and seniors, although there is almost 50% rate between women and men party members, still no women among 13 party board members.

3.1.3. Vienotība (Unity) - currently leading political party in Latvia¹³

Currently do not see any problems with women involvement in politics in Latvia, situation is better than average in EU. Lot of women among party member and there is no obstacles for them to be promoted for party leaders - let us not forget the part Chairwomen and Saeima speaker is Solvita Aboltina herself; among 15 party board members 7 (47% !!!) are women.

Currently they promote more active women involvement in politics, by asking popular women politicians (not only from they own party) and celebrities to meet women from regions with common message to join political and commercial environment. Used communication channels were more in form of targeted discussions about women role in society and participation in political processes, rather than extensive meetings. These types of events are usually organised by Party office as “Open door” activity by Vienotība - at their regional branches in Cesis, Jelgava, Jurmala. As mentioned these were relatively

¹¹ http://www.saskanascents.lv/lv/musu_programma/

¹² <http://www.nacionalaapvieniba.lv/programma/>

¹³ <http://www.vienotiba.lv/plani-un-paveiktais/programma/>

small scale activities, financed by the Party itself, with mostly Party women members as speakers and role models. Attendance shown- mostly young women.

Party members are divided 46% women and 54% men; Saeima representation (Figure 4) 7 women 12 men.

3.1.4. Reformu Partija (Latvian Reform Party)¹⁴

Founded in year 2009, as stated in the name of the party to conduct the reform processes in Latvian political and social scope, including the gender equality issues. 5 of 16 or 31% of Party board members are women, however 0 women from 5 ministers representing the Party in Minister Cabinet.

Reform Party ideology states movement “to reduce inequality and people's life chances disparities”

3.1.5. Latvijas Zaļā Partija (Latvian Green Party)¹⁵

In order for women to be involved in political decision making and increasing the chances of being elected, LGP stresses out the art of introducing herself, good performance skills as well as public speech experience. Also importance of media and social advertisement involvement in women/politics promotion campaign

3.1.6 Latvijas Zemnieku Savienība¹⁶

Quoting Artūrs Graudiņš, the Secretary General of Latvian Farmers Union, about 50% of party members are women. The party absolutely supports the gender equality, but or because of the current situation among the party members no particular activities are scheduled or planned.

IV Overview of particular practices to attract more women into politics

¹⁴ <http://reformupartija.lv/valde-un-komisijas/>

¹⁵ <http://www.zp.lv/lv/sabiedriska-darbiba/aktivitates-un-akcijas/>

¹⁶ <http://zzs.lv/index.php?p=6505&lang=1281>

4.1 Saeima and NGO forum on *Stability, Partnership, Development (May, 2013)*

The forum was opened by Solvita Āboltiņa, Speaker of the Saeima, and Andris Gobiņš, President of the European Movement – Latvia.

The forum consisted of three parallel working sessions. In the first session, politicians, representatives of society and experts discussed the National Development Plan, EU's Structural Funds and the role of NGOs in implementing both.

The second session was devoted to Latvia as a part of the core of the EU and to Latvians abroad.

The third session covered topical issues of social welfare, including the involvement of social and other cooperation partners in facilitating youth employment.

The working sessions were co-moderated by the chairpersons of the Saeima committees and representatives of the non-governmental sector. In the conclusion of the first part of the forum, reports from the working sessions were presented.

In 2006 the Saeima adopted a declaration on cooperation with NGOs, which sets forth principles for cooperation between the Saeima and NGOs, as well as tasks for improving this cooperation. Since then it has become a tradition to hold an annual forum of the Saeima and NGOs. This year the forum was held for the 7th time

4.2. Practices carried out by official bodies (Ministry of Welfare)

Recently initiated by the Ministry of Welfare and accepted by Saeima changes in legislation, dedicated to more active men (father) participation in raising and educating their children, thus eliminating the major obstacle for successful women participation in politics and professional career. An important part of the newly accepted law is men's right to use paternity leave, as well as parents leave according to spouse choice. Beginning from 3rd quarter of 2013 special benefits are introduced for the families, whose children in the age group of 1,5 - 4 years are not provided with state kindergarten places. This and similar benefits represent the real helping mechanisms for women "outside family", including political activities. The possibilities for more equal input distribution of children and household care between both parents, guaranteed by the state are impeded by various disputable stereotypes- i.e. good and critical impact of mother care in children development from birth up to 6-7 years of age.

More relevant practices of children education and family role distribution could be adopted by organising practical trainings and courses by state and municipal bodies for the young families and secondary school graduates. This, of course would require the involvement and coordination of various ministries, however such cooperation often is facing the complications due to different political background of the ministers responsible for particular decision making. This would be the ideal case for the women MPs from various Parliament fractions to take the step forward and to overcome internal contradictions inside Governmental coalition to solve this matter.

4.3. Pre-election advertising campaigns, Saeima Y2009 (Experts) ¹⁷

At Saeima elections campaign no party presented any colourful accents underlining idea of women-politician. At very seldom cases women appears on some heavyweight party pre-election poster, but more just to dilute 100% masculine team idea, without any especial message, almost lost among men-politicians and without an attempt to play out their gender as a trump. Although one of the political parties allocated first positions in election list for women it has not changed the overall advertising style and dominating message. Thus the possible range of women-politicians role is deliberately narrowed.

Comparing with previous national level elections there were much more women observed in advertisements, pre-election debates, interviews, etc., however in election lists women presence was 0,96% less than 4 years before (Figure 3) (17). On the other hand women are not only decorative element to refresh solid raw of male party members, but announcing themselves as serious politicians being ready for power re-distribution.

Political parties mainly concentrate on *national questions*, and show no respect to the equal gender representation topics in their political programmes, most probably considering the minor importance of such topic for their electorates.

The intensity of women involvement in politics in Latvia at all level has always been lower than one for men. The good means for changing that and ensuring more equal female/male distribution- advertisement messages of political parties- kept fulfilling the opposite function in all recent Saeima pre-election campaigns (2004-2011)- to confirm to both gender voters and beginner women-politicians that decision making in politics is still responsibility area for anybody but women, thus, excluding part of our society for making politics possibly better and more balanced.

¹⁷ <http://politika.lv/article/politika-joprojam-istu-vecu-spele>

4.4. Thematic discussions and workshops

In order to understand the outcome of the large scope of seminars and workshops organized in Latvia over the last decade it is critical to evaluate the contents and participants of the said events, especially- were there representatives of professions and organizations capable to diminish the obstacles for involving more women into politics and fighting the existing stereotypes. Very promising direction in this context would be the seminars for the journalists as target audience- if and how women-politicians (MPs, Municipal leaders, etc.) are presented to the public, especially the results of their previous activities, obstacles overcome, positive experience, peculiarities of the family life.

There are various numbers of discussion and workshops held in order to promote women role in politics and political leaderships (2005-2013), i.e. "Women in politics. Gender equality?", "Vote for woman", participations in thematic workshops at international level, etc.

The general idea of such activities is to increase the recognition and identification of women-candidates in election lists, to stimulate overall activity of voters and make their final vote deliberative and responsible. The only way to increase women authority and influence in Saeima is strengthen women solidarity inside political parties, develop women-politicians collaboration and finally vote for women from the particular election lists.

4.5. Gender Equality Award ¹⁸

Gender Equality Award is introduced by Latvian Women NGO Network (WCNL) since 2006. The idea is to evaluate Latvian politicians on the input of men and women living and working conditions in improving and promoting gender equality. Candidates are nominated by Latvian Women NGO Network (WCNL) member organizations, they evaluated a panel comprised of independent experts and a network board member.

Aim of the award is to promote public awareness of gender issues and to evaluate the MPs and Cabinet members contribute to gender equality. The prize is awarded every

¹⁸ <http://www.esmaja.lv/zinas/tiks-pasniegta-dzimumu-lidztiesibas-balva>

second year and among winners are famous Latvian politicians, both women and men denying stereotype it is just women duty promoting gender equality issues on the top level.



Picture 2. Gender Equality Award 2008.

4.6. European Academy of successful women (2012-2014)¹⁹

During years 2012-2014 the Mentoring Model to Progress Young Women into Leading Role in Different Areas (enterprises, not-for-profits, politics) – European Successful Women’s Academy is due to be organised organised, with the following objectives:

- 1/ To popularize mentoring idea in Latvia and establish mentoring model which could be used in a number of female organisations and implementing with a limited resources;
- 2/To promote development of leadership skills by creating an opportunity for women of different age groups, backgrounds and professions to share experience, know-how and create cooperation Network;
- 3/ To promote development of female careers and progressing female into leading roles in different areas (enterprises, not-for-profits, politics etc.)

¹⁹ <http://esmaja.lv/eiropas-veiksmigo-sieviesu-akademija/veiksmigo-sieviesu-akademijas-dalibnieces-pateicoties>

4.6.1. Rationale for Project

Women's representation in top roles in EU member countries still is weak – only 10 % of the board members are women and only 3% of them – chairperson of the boards. Although latest statistics shows that situation in Latvia is slightly better, only 25% female are present at the boards of companies.

Research confirms that women's participation in management structures improves efficiency of organisations and better business results and financial gains. Taking into account a high number of women with a higher education degree one would predict that high numbers of women in the leading positions. Reality is not so rosy – the higher the hierarchy, the less visible women are. Women are well represented in the lower and medium level of management. Current dynamics shows that situation is not improving or it happens very slowly.

There are several factors highly linked with work obstacles, and create barriers for the growth of female professional careers. To name child care and upbringing, difficulties combining work/ family life, flexible work arrangements. Female are facing difficulty to get professional mentor advice, as well financial crisis has hit the women harder in some countries,

Still career of women are impacted by gender stereotypes and biases and women have no motivation to get over the challenges to progress their career.

In order to overcome barriers, networks should be created and promoted outside formal structures and female participation promoted. It would allow women in leading positions to exchange opinions, discuss problem areas and propose solutions to overcome obstacles stopping female careers in enterprises. That would be way to improve self-esteem and encourage them to take risks in their companies to promote their career. Women in leading roles are role models for younger colleagues.

In Latvia there are women who have showed competencies to work at the highest posts in politics, NGOs, media and culture. Professional mentoring programme for women was established by NGO Lidere for entrepreneurship to foster the development of entrepreneurship in Latvia. Mentoring has been launched in a number of branches of

multinational companies operating in Latvia (pharmaceuticals, auditing, FMCG) but mentoring network is not wide enough. (20)

Sources used: Eiropas Parlamenta 2011. gada 9. jūnija Ziņojuma par sievietēm un uzņēmējdarbības augstākā līmeņa vadību, 2010/2115 (INI) un EK ziņojums "Women in Economic Decision Taking in the EU: Progress Report, Europe 2020 Initiative", EU 2012)

Existing stereotypes shows that management and leadership skills can be taught, there are no gender or personality differences. The project wants to use potential of exceptional Latvian women to pass their expertise in a structured way to younger colleagues.

This programme will unite elements which will allow to hand over not only specific knowledge of mentors but personal experience stimulating growth of personality of mentees. The focus of the programme is on promoting leadership skills which roots into personalities.

The programme will bring together women from various areas giving wider insight into leadership opportunities and needs in Latvia. The programme is designed in the way that participants learn not only in traditional one to one model but exchange knowledge, skills and experience in a wider group.

In order to meet the stated objectives, the following themes for workshops are advised:

- Role and a leader in an organisation and challenges of women in 21st century
- Strategies and teams – how to reach objectives
- Work/ life balance
- Where to get energy
- Successful female leadership in Latvia

Project workshops will take place on a regular basis – once a month – first part will be public and available online and second part will be internal.

4.7. Media role: Woman as a misunderstanding at Masculine political environment? ²⁰

Media, along with the other agents of socialization- school, family, etc. offer a scope of versions for reality, highlighting or concealing any of its aspects and providing knowledge models that helps an individual to be involved into the complex social relationships. With increasing amount of information and a decrease in interpersonal communication, media texts are playing an increasingly important role in shaping our perceptions of the world around us, including our gender identity.

Latvian media has traditionally been positioned politics as a man's world, where a woman is rather an exception. Regarding this asymmetry researchers pointed out: "A woman in politics is still not taken seriously, but as a kind of supplement, assistant to a man or just exotic phenomenon." Researcher Inta Brikše explains: "In Latvian political culture masculine cultural traditions prevail. Men's position in politics is seen as a natural process, while women - by coincidence or mistake of having to look, reasons of which lies beyond the interests about politics (sexual attractiveness, compensation as a result of private life failures, etc.).

V Conclusions.

5.1. Overview of typical voter psychological portrait

- Society and especially its women "part" becomes *older* due to huge emigration movement in recent 6-7 years -up to 10% from people in working age have left Latvia since year 2005 (see Figure 2) and low birth rates. Older women are tended to vote for men candidates in all sorts of election due to personal preferences and national character peculiarities.

- Lack of positive Women role model in Latvian politics- mostly all of women are somehow perceived negatively from the society in general and active electorate in

²⁰ <http://politika.lv/article/politika-joprojam-istu-vecu-spele>

particular- as an example we can see Sarmite Elerte case in the latest Riga municipal elections- her party received second largest number of total votes from the all parties passing the threshold, but she personally received 7829 devotion signs, which is 24,1% from all voted for Vienotiba party. According to the media- Mrs Elerte is much more recognisable than other women candidates for mayor position, but the question remains about the emotional tint of the said recognition.

5.2. 6 obstacles for women self-realisation in Latvian politics.

- 1) The overall thinking habits and stereotypes in Latvian society, considering men as the only “real” participants and leading force of political processes. Women are not recognized as political leaders and evaluated more critical.
- 2) Lack of motivation- as it is mutually accepted- all the important decisions will be made by men anyway.
- 3) Lack of announced political commitment for gender equality- i.e. National action plan or other political documents
- 4) Minor representation of political opinion, expressed by decision making women in mainstream mass media.
- 5) The non-formal relationship of men-politicians, with no-entry for women
- 6) Non-equal distribution of family duties and finances, also the male domination in decision making issues at family level (both public and private) thus limiting and controlling women engaging with political processes.