



Gender equality and quality of life –
how gender equality can contribute
to development in Europe.
A study of Poland and Norway

Working Paper no. 1.7 “Gender Equality and Quality of Life – State of Art Report”

Who won the Polish transformation? Gender dimensions of reforms in Poland

Beata Kowalska, Aleksandra Migalska, Marta Warat

Jagiellonian University in Krakow
March 2014

The research leading to these results has received funding from the Polish-Norwegian Research Programme operated by the National Centre for Research and Development under the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009-2014 in the frame of Project Contract No Pol-Nor/200641/63/2013



WHO WON THE POLISH TRANSFORMATION?

Gender dimensions of reforms in Poland

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IN HIS WRITINGS ON SOCIOLOGICAL IMAGINATION, WRIGHT MILLS EMPHASISES THAT OUR ENQUIRY SHOULD TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THREE DIFFERENT DOMAINS: BIOGRAPHY, HISTORY AND STRUCTURE. AT THE BEGINNING OF OUR RESEARCH, WE TRIED TO SKETCH A GENERAL PICTURE OF THE POLITICAL REFORMS WHICH INFLUENCE THE THEORY AND PRACTICES OF GENDER EQUALITY IN POLAND.

POLISH VERSION OF STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT PROGRAMMES

The Polish transformation was – and still is – a local version of Structural Adjustment Programmes (introduced by the World Bank and Monetary Fund) with all consequences known all over the world. The cutbacks in expenditure on health services and education hit women with double power. They not only lost jobs in the most feminised segments of the labour market, but also a variety of the state's tasks and responsibilities in care, health, and education were moved into the private sphere. Now these are "family problems", which in everyday life in fact mean's women's problems. As research has shown (see Tylor 2010; Płeć a możliwości... 2004), women are now responsible for care for the elderly and disabled or sick members of the family. In this context, a question arises as to the gender consequences of neoliberal reforms. The new system without doubt resulted in new opportunities for educated and wealthy women, but on the other hand it caused huge inequalities among women from different classes and social groups (see Tylor 2010).

The new system submits for consideration two fundamental principles of the politics of recent decades: the first is the assumption that economic growth is a neutral category from a political point of view, and the second is that women constitute a uniform group with common interests.

Figure 1: Gender dimensions of Structural Adjustment Programmes



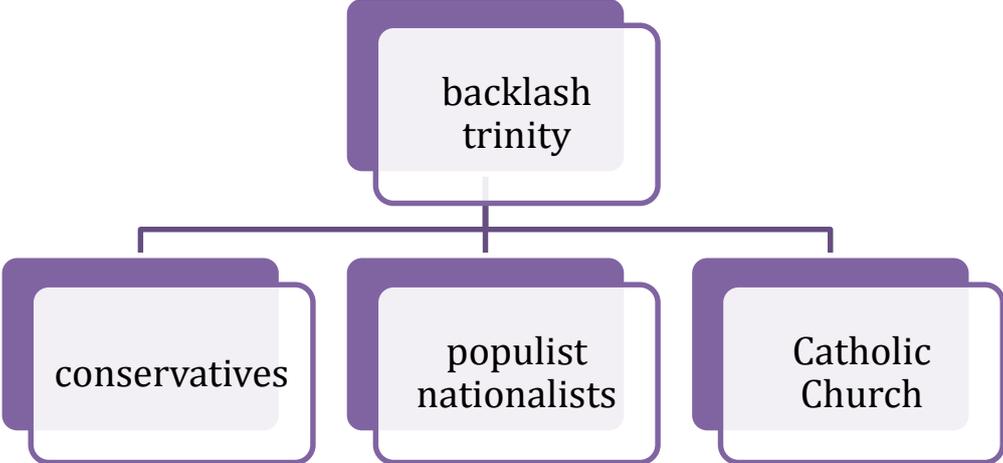
Source: Own elaboration

IDEOLOGY AND CULTURE IN POLICIES

Poland paid lip service to formal (*de jure*) gender equality by including sex equality provisions in the new constitution and assuming international human rights treaty obligations including the CEDAW. But gender equality as a theory and practices faces two distinctive sets of political/cultural forces seeking to undermine and delegitimise women’s rights. One set consists of conservatives, populist nationalists, and traditional religious institutions. We describe them as the “backlash trinity”.¹ The other set consists of neoliberals. Although they stress that neoliberal economic policy is gender-neutral, in fact it has significant political, legal, social and culturally discriminatory consequences for women.

¹ The concept of “backlash trinity” was introduced by Isabel Marcus in the publication *The “Woman Question” in Post-Socialist Legal Education* (manuscript 2012).

Figure 2: Polish backlash trinity



Source: Own elaboration

First, the conservatives. In their ideological narratives, the post-transformation state promotes – in opposition to the socialist state, which imposed unnatural sex equality principles – the restoration of a “natural” social order by policies and laws supportive of an essentialised sex/gender order. In this process of retraditionalisation, contemporary women’s rights principles and practices must be marginalised. If we add a very strong populist nationalist stream, we again have the timeless clearly defined patriarchal sex/gender order. Women, in their roles as mother and homemaker, are the repositories of the nation’s honour. It comes as no surprise that populist nationalists accuse women’s rights advocates of being lineal descendants of the communist party or – as is now even more common – of being liberal humanists or radical feminists. The message is clear – such women are betrayers of the nation. By focusing on women as bearers of equal rights with men, they encourage women’s “selfishness” with destructive consequences not only for the family but also for the whole society.

The third actor in the new post-transformation Polish history is the Catholic Church, which consolidated its power when it visibly supported popular resistance to the communist authoritarian government. It allowed the Church in the post-transformation period to effect drastic policy changes regarding human rights policies in general, and reproductive rights in particular. It appropriates for itself the role of protector of the unique heritage underpinned by a divinely ordained sex/gender order. Although the religious authorities do not encourage hostility to the entire human rights canon, they are selective in their support of human rights principles based on religious doctrine. By no means does the backlash trinity’s opposition to gender equality result in delegitimisation of it politically, legally, and culturally.

Figure 3: Delegitimisation of gender equality

- The restoration of a “natural” social order by policies and laws supportive of an essentialised sex/gender order.
- Women’s rights advocates – lineal descendants of the communist party women’s organisation or liberal humanists or radical feminists.
- Women as bearers of equal rights with men – “selfishness” with destructive consequences for the family and, ultimately, the nation.

Source: Own elaboration

Neoliberalism produces a second set of opponents to gender equality. By redefining social and ethical life in accordance with economic criteria and expectations, neoliberalism endorses market exchange as a guide for all human actions. Freedom – rather than justice or equality – is its fundamental political value. The government’s role is limited to the protection of the competitive behaviour of economically rational individuals who provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions. Unlike the backlash trinity with its sex/gender prescriptions, neoliberalism is ostensibly sex/gender-neutral in its prescriptions. Its much-valued entrepreneurial risk-taking, however, is often coincidentally identified culturally as a component of a hegemonic masculinity. As a result, the fact that, for example, women assume risks in childbearing and its consequences, is of little significance for neoliberal theory or practice. Neoliberals challenge the principle that the state should provide adequate social insurance benefits and ignore the differential sex-based impact of this position.

Figure 4: Neoliberal gender regime

- ▶ Ostensibly sex/gender-neutral in demands.
- ▶ Freedom (rather than justice or equality) as fundamental political value.
- ▶ Each person is accountable for his/her own life by making informed individual choices.
- ▶ Challenge to the principle that the state should provide adequate social insurance benefits.
- ▶ Value of entrepreneurial risk-taking, however co-incidentally identified culturally as a component of a hegemonic masculinity.
- ▶ Women’s assumed risks in childbearing is of little or no significance for neoliberal theory or practice.

Source: Own elaboration

WOMEN AND TRANSFORMATION IN POLAND

The process of transformation in Poland created an important context for reshaping the role and position of women. On the one hand, it created new possibilities for women to participate in the public sphere and labour market, gave them the language of rights as a tool empowering them in their struggle for recognition and started the discussion about the role and place of women in society. On the other hand, the new model reinforced the patriarchal order of society and traditional gender roles, excluding women from power. This marginalisation of women and lack of gender equality was seen on two levels:

- in the private sphere – by reinforcing the traditional model of family and gender roles in the domestic sphere; women tended to be more prone to the double burden
- in public life: politics, welfare state or labour market (see Desperak 2009; Gendermeria. Równościowy monitoring 2008).

WOMEN AND THE LABOUR MARKET

One of the main questions evoked by the transition from the planned economy to the market economy was about the impact of this change on the position of women on the labour market. Despite the fact that the communist ideology stressed the equality of men and women in the labour market, this declaration did not lead to equal pay or redefinition of male and female roles. Women were treated as second income earners, which was further reflected by the system introduced in the 1990s. The change to market economy left women unprepared to face the new situation of loss of job security and dismissal from employment (World Bank 2002). The lack of gender equality leads to a situation in which, according to Izabela Desperak, “[w]omen, losing on the labour market, lose in all fields of social activity. Stereotypical images of women and their roles, related to their discrimination on the labour market, can be seen at other levels of social practice – in the media, education, everyday discourse. Women’s place is in the private sphere and – as a result – they are pushed back from the public sphere – from work to politics. Women’s discrimination in various spheres of social life is accompanied by symbolic discrimination, supported by various ideologies” (2009: 55). As a result, researchers even claim that women may be described as the victims of transformation (Desperak 2009). Several factors may account for this. First of all, women’s participation in the labour market is not only their own decision. It

should be seen in a broader context where other social actors are involved. Thus, women's economic empowerment is affected by

- the attitude of the employer (e.g. gender stereotypes);
- family: participation in the labour market depends on the type of family (patriarchal vs non-traditional families), the division of family responsibilities between partners as well as the family support for childcare;
- institutional services (welfare): e.g. availability of public (state) kindergartens, additional classes at school, transport opportunities to school;
- labour law: e.g. maternity and parental leave (if it is given, for how long, and whether it can be shared between partners), the possibility of flexible working hours, social security, retirement policy;
- discriminatory mechanisms of the labour market (e.g. glass ceiling, glass wall effect, sticky floor, pay gap).

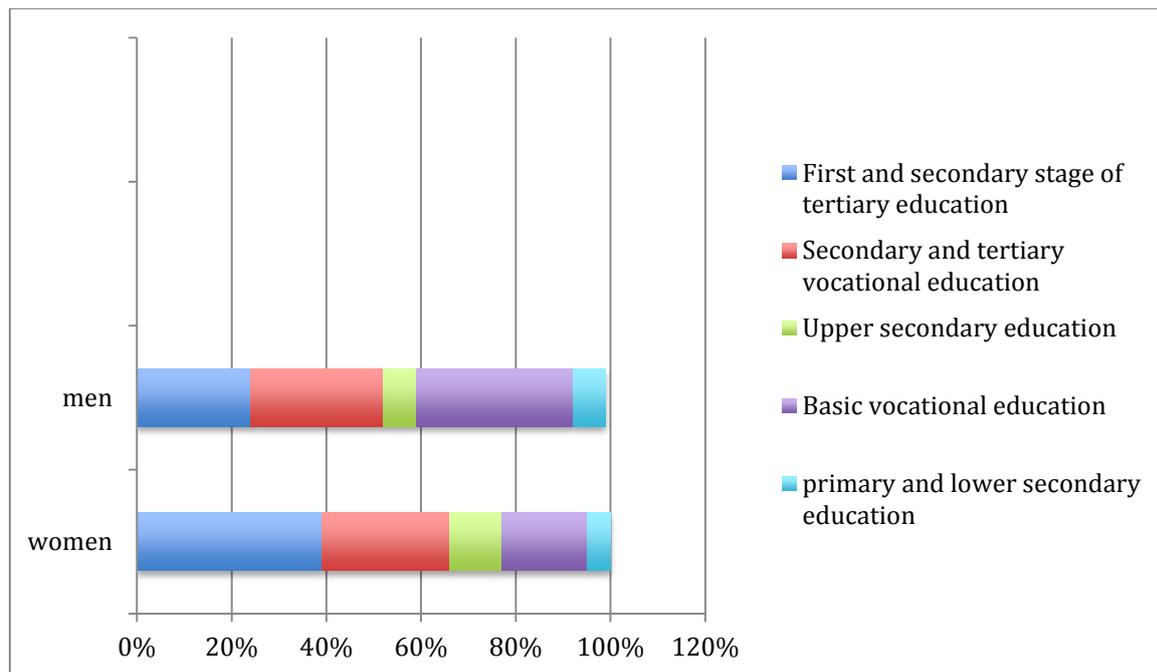
Labour participation of women and men

Another possible factor proving that women did not benefit from the transformation is the lower activity rate among women than men despite the fact that women have a high level of education. We know from the statistics that the activity rate for women was 60.8%, compared to 74% for men (aged: 15-64) in 2013 (fourth quarter) (Eurostat 2014a), while the employment rate for women was 53.4% compared to 66.6% for men in 2013 (Eurostat 2014b).²

The activity rate among women is interrelated with their education. The highest employment rate is among women who graduated from universities. Not surprisingly, the lower the level of completed education, the higher the unemployment rate (Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2012: 3).

² The employment rate for the 20-64 age group was 57.6% for women and 72.1% for men in 2013 (Eurostat: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/refreshTableAction.do?tab=table&plugin=1&pcode=t2020_10&language=en).

Chart 1: Employed people by sex and level of education in 2013.



Source: Sytuacja zawodowa kobiet – podstawowe wskaźniki
http://rynekpracy.pl/artukul.php/typ.1/kategoria_glowna.75/wpis.741

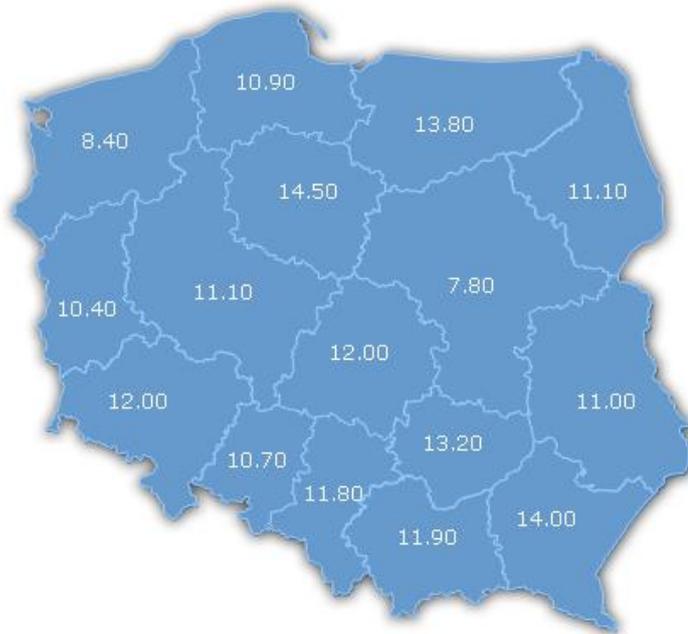
Unemployment

The transition to the market economy was not accompanied by a change in family model and roles within the family. Women still face a double burden and struggle with the family-work balance. Since men are seen as the main breadwinners, women are more likely to work part-time, they are prone to unemployment (especially long-term unemployment) more than men and they are also believed to cope better with unemployment than men (Duch-Krzystoszek, Sarata 2007; Desperak 2009; Płec a możliwości ekonomiczne w Polsce 2004). As the data shows, in the third quarter of 2013, the number of unemployed women registered in *powiat*³ labour offices was 1.084 million, while for men it was 998,800 (Bezrobocie rejestrowane I-III kwartał 2013: 13). The greatest risk of unemployment is faced by women returning to the labour market or by those looking for their first job. In 2013, the unemployment rate for men (which has been decreasing) was 9.7% , and the equivalent figure for women (which has been growing) was 11.1%. In 2013, there were 8.389 million economically inactive women and 5.287 million economically inactive

³ *Powiat* is the second-level unit of local government and administration in Poland, part of a voivodeship.

men. The activity rate was 48.2% and 64.4% respectively, and the employment rate was 42.8% for women and 58.2% for men (Mały rocznik statystyczny 2014: 139).

Map 1: Unemployment rate of women (second quarter of 2013)



Source: http://rynekpracy.pl/wskaznik.php?w_typ=6&stopa-bezrobocia-kobiet-BAEL

Table 1: Unemployment rate by sex 2003-2011

Year	Women (in total) %	Men (in total) %	Women (productive age) %	Men (productive age) %
2003	20.3	18.4	20.9	18.8
2004	19.5	16.7	20.1	17.0
2005	18.3	15.4	18.8	15.7
2006	13.7	11.0	14.0	11.1

2007	9.4	7.8	9.6	7.9
2008	7.6	6.0	7.8	6.0
2009	8.8	8.2	9.0	8.3
2010	9.9	8.8	10.1	9.0
2011	10.9	8.8	11.1	9.0

Source: *Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2012*: 8.

As the statistical data shows, women continue to be overrepresented among the officially unemployed. However, the situation improved for both men and women between 2003 and 2011, although the unemployment rate is still lower for men than that for women. It is also significant that the impact of the 2008-2009 economic crisis was milder for men, who gained jobs at a faster rate compared to women. It can be argued that the economic recovery was more favourable to men, as the unemployment rate for men was stable in 2010 and 2011, while it slightly increased for women. In both cases it did not come close to the highs in 2004. One of the reasons for this may be that men are more likely to work in the private sector, which did better in recovering from the economic crisis than the public one.

Horizontal and vertical segregation in the labour market

Analyses of workplaces prove that there is horizontal segregation in the labour market, that is the dominance of one sex in certain occupations. Some 60% of men and 40% of women are employed in occupations perceived as “typical” for their sex – feminised and masculinised workplaces. At the same time, there are more male occupations (300) than female (30). Among the sectors with the highest number of women are health, social care and education (women constitute even 70% of people employed in these sectors). These professions also offer lower salaries and simple, routine work associated with low social prestige (Desperak 2009; *Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2012*: 7; Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004: 21; Przybysz 2012: 49). Women are denied the right to be employed in “male” sectors of the labour market even if they are well educated and qualified. On the other hand, it is difficult to find women among industrial workers, craftsmen and machine operators (*Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2012*: 6; Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004: 21).

Women also experience vertical segregation: there are more men than women in higher and better-paid positions, while the difference is much smaller in lower positions. Men are overrepresented in the top leadership positions (such as directors, higher managers and specialists – even in feminised workplaces), while women dominate among office staff, trade and services despite having the same/similar level of education, job tenure or place of residence (Domański 2011: 257). In this case, phenomena such as the glass ceiling, glass wall effect, sticky floor or glass elevator occur. Moreover, according to Desperak (2009), women continue to be underpromoted, and need four years more than men to receive a promotion. Despite the fact that the market economy was introduced more than 20 years ago, women still lack collective experience in maintaining managerial positions; they do not have networks of contacts or mentors, and are surrounded by social prejudices which regard them as less suitable for management than men are. As a result, only 30% of women could be found in managerial positions in 2012, a number which had decreased (Women in senior management... 2012: 5). Moreover, when we compare the data for Poland and for the EU, it is clear that the share of women on managing and supervisory boards of businesses, with the exception of boards in central banks, is lower in Poland (10.3%, compared to the EU average of 16.6%) and has decreased since 2010 (Więcej równości – więcej korzyści w gospodarce 2014: 3). This proves that the possibilities for women are still limited and that they face discrimination in the labour market.

Izabela Desperak claims that “Women work on a separate labour market based on other rules, sometimes called a secondary labour market” (2009: 62). Thus, the labour market is formed on the basis of “male idiom”: only men are seen as universal employees, while women are perceived through the prism of their responsibility for procreation and housework (Duch-Krzystoszek, Sarata 2007: 35; Gendermeria. Równościowy monitoring 2008). There are other recruitment rules for women, different expectations, and, even before entering the labour market, different socialisation and education paths. This affects women, who declare lower expectations as far as their salary or promotion is considered. Women are perceived as cheaper workers and forced to work in women’s sectors of the labour market (where the salaries are lower). They are also seen as less flexible and effective as well as family-oriented and, consequently, as capable of working only in the sectors related to health or caring. Perceiving work carried out by women as less prestigious and giving lower value to women’s work can be explained by the myth that men should be seen as the head of the family, the only breadwinner and the man of success.

Gender pay gap

Another argument proving that women have lost in transformation concerns the gender pay gap. In Poland, salaries paid to men and women with the same/similar position, level of

education, age and type/sector of work and place of living are varied: a man can earn a third more than a woman (see e.g. Domański 2011: 263; Wynagrodzenie kobiet i mężczyzn w 2013 roku, 2014). This phenomenon is related to the fact that fewer women work in the private sector (66.3% in 2011 in comparison to 81.3% of men), where the salaries are higher than in the public sector (see: Kobiety i mężczyźni na rynku pracy 2012; Zachorowska-Mazurkiewicz 2006). Secondly, the low level of potential earnings that a woman may receive has a negative influence on her vocational activity, and on how much she invests in herself in order to back up her qualifications and gain new skills. Thirdly, the gender pay gap is related to the feminisation of the workplace, where salaries and opportunities for promotion are lower.

Self-employment

The Labour Force Survey indicates that among the total number of self-employed people, women make up 35% in Poland. Between 1985 and 1998 the number of women running their own business (outside of agriculture) increased, which made Poland one of the leading countries as far as the number of self-employed women is concerned. The threat of unemployment and lower chances of finding paid employment are among the main reasons why women are interested in becoming self-employed. Setting up a business may also be an escape from gender-related discrimination and the glass ceiling. For some women, it is also an opportunity to receive higher income, and at the same time a way to reconcile paid employment with family responsibilities and leisure. In these cases, women make the decision to start their own business out of choice and not out of necessity, for owning a company gives independence both financially and in decision making.

FEMINISATION OF POVERTY

Participation in the labour market is not the only dimension which should be taken into account when examining the position of women since the 1990s. Another important factor influencing the position of women – closely related to the unemployment and gender pay gap – is their financial situation. This dimension further proves that the transformation was beneficial mostly for a specific group of women, namely middle-class women. According to Elżbieta Tarkowska (2002, cf. Duch-Krzystoszek 2012: 18), the market economy and its mechanism on the labour market (e.g. higher and long-term unemployment, difficulties in returning to the job market, lower salaries), as well as lower pensions for women, single motherhood and the

responsibility for family and household,⁴ put women at a high risk of poverty. She claims that these indicators show that one of the main traits of poverty in Poland is its feminisation and the fact that women are the managers of Polish poverty.

Table 2: People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by sex: Poland and the EU (percentage of total population). <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Poland									
Women	45.8	40	35.1	31.2	28.6	28.5	27.7	27.3	26.2
Men	44.7	39	33.5	29.9	27	27	26.6	26.1	25.5
EU [27 countries]									
Women	27 ^e	26.6 ^e	25.9	25.1	24.5	24.8	25.4	25.7	25.3 ^e
Men	24.3 ^e	23.9 ^e	22.9	22.3	22	22.6	23.2	23.8	23.5 ^e

e – estimated

Source: Eurostat 2014d

According to Tompińska (2011: 47), the number of both men and women affected by poverty decreased between 2005 and 2008, although for women this process was slower. The situation was different in 2009, when the poverty was even more visible among women.⁵ It is also important to analyse the data on poverty through the prism of age: among people aged at least 64, women are more prone to poverty than men.

The financial situation of women is shaped by the social policy regarding retirement and social benefits/support. Demographically, women live longer than men, but at the same time, they constitute the majority of elderly people living in poverty as their pensions are lower than men's. This is caused by the fact that the retirement age for men and women is different, the salaries are different, and women experience more periods of time when their health insurance is not paid for them. Despite the fact that there are more women who receive pensions than men (due to the

⁴ Unpaid women's work contributes around 30% to the national income (GDP) (Dryjańska 2012: 5). The inequality regarding the division of household work is still great and the changes here are slow. Moreover, there is no social policy supporting the changes.

⁵ However, it should be noted that the data is based on the information about the income of the entire household. In many cases this means that there is no point in separating it for women and men.

reasons mentioned above), men constitute the majority of people who are insured in ZUS, the state social insurance organisation (52% in 2009), and this has not changed for years (Tompińska 2011: 52-53).

To obtain the entire picture of the situation of pensioners, information about job tenure should also be included. In 2009, the average period of job tenure for women was 34.8 years, and for men it was 38.9 years. When we compare this data with information about the job tenure in 2008, it is visible that it was even shorter for women (32.9 years) but longer for men (40.6 years) (Tompińska 2011: 54). The average pension for women is lower (about 30%) than for men (Tompińska 2011: 56). This phenomenon is caused by inequalities in salaries, the type of work, the periods of break at work when the retirement insurance is not fully paid for women, and finally the difference in retirement age.⁶ As a result of these factors, women are more prone to lower pensions.

The inequality on the labour market is also caused by economy of care – a situation in which women are obliged to take care of children and elderly members in their families due to the insufficient number of kindergartens and high fees for them. Only 3% of children up to 3 years old had places in crèches (Poland is in last place in the EU and OECD), and the number of 4-year-old children in kindergartens was 41% (below the average number recommended by the EU). In 2011, crèches were in 204 *gminas*,⁷ and daycare centres in 41 *gminas* (the total number of *gminas* is 2479). This proves that there are many places in Poland where institutional care for young children is not available, and that we are behind the average for EU countries (Chustecka 2012: 32-33). These discrepancies are even more visible in rural areas, where the percentage of children attending crèches and kindergartens is even lower and the number of kindergartens is also lower, as 67.3% of kindergartens were located in urban areas in 2012/13 (Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2012/13 2013: 61; see Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004). Thirdly, there were 9823 kindergartens in Poland in 2012/13 (Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2012/13 2013: 128) and 71.6% of children aged 3-6 were placed in kindergartens (compared to 70.8% in 2011/12): 84.4% in urban areas and 54.3% in rural areas (Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2012/13 2013: 61). It is significant that the lowest number of children in kindergartens is among 3-year-old children (52.3%) and the highest is among 4-year-old (66.4%) and 5-year-old children (92.1%) (Oświata i wychowanie w roku szkolnym 2012/13 2013: 62). This is caused

⁶ Till 2012, the retirement age was 60 for women and 65 for men. New legislation was introduced in 2012 which raised the retirement age to 67 for both women and men. This will be achieved for men in 2020 and for women in 2040.

⁷ *Gmina* is the lowest level of administrative division in Poland.

by the lack of places for younger children and by introducing a mandatory one-year period of attending kindergarten for 5-year-old children. However, the tuition fee for kindergarten increases every year, and this is the main barrier for parents (e.g. the fee increased by 22.3% in autumn 2011) (Chustecka 2012: 33). The research shows that for 13% of parents the fee was a great barrier and they could not afford to send their children to kindergarten (Balcerzak-Paradowska 2004: 42). Thus, the neoliberal model led to a situation in which only the middle and upper class can afford to leave their children in crèche and kindergarten. Therefore, the high fee for kindergartens is an additional barrier for women, especially with a lower level of education, to participate in the labour market (Przybysz, 2012: 49). This factor, together with low salaries, stereotypes of women as workers and high expectation for motherhood leads to a situation where it is rational (from an economic point of view) for women to stay at home instead of pursuing their careers. Thus, the inequality on the labour market is also caused by economy of care – a situation in which women are obliged to take care of children and elderly members in their families (Charkiewicz 2010a). The cost of care is shifted from the state to the family, which leads to the retraditionalisation of family and overburdening women with household work. Women spend (on average) 4.5 hours on housework, and men 2 hours 36 minutes. The time spent on work at home in households with a child up to 7 years old increases to 6 hours 58 minutes, and 5 hours 41 minutes for single mothers. Moreover, the average time spent on household work is higher in rural areas (6.5 hours) than in urban areas (5.5 hours) (Chustecka, 2012: 28). To quote Dryjańska, “In a situation where women experience vertical and horizontal discrimination in the labour market, and as a result they earn less than men, the question of ‘who will take over the primary care of children’ is solved before the discussion even starts. Economic calculation makes women responsible for unpaid domestic work and caring, and after a few years they have difficulty in finding work, and if they find it, they often earn less and have no career opportunities. It is a vicious circle which makes women in the early twenty-first century still reliant on the pot and broom” (2012: 10).

Table 4: Participants in early education (aged between 4 years old and the starting age of compulsory education) – as % of inhabitants of the corresponding age group

	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Poland	62.1	64	66.8	67.5	70.9	76.3	78.4	84.3
EU (27 countries)	88.1	89.3	90.3	91.2	91.7	92.6	93.2	:

Source: Eurostat 2014c

POLITICAL SPHERE

The collapse of communism and the transformation created the **myth of democracy**: this system was seen as one which would guarantee the equality of all citizens. However, despite the fact that women were granted political rights, they are not present in politics, and their participation in decision-making processes is limited.

State level

The situation of women in politics after 1989 shows that the share of position and power at state level is still unequal and women constitute a minority on the political scene. They still face many barriers and limitations, despite the adoption of new electoral regulations such as quotas. Since the collapse of communism in Poland, there have been 61 candidates for president in five elections (1990, 1995, 2000, 2005, 2010), only two of whom were women:

- 1995 – Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz (1.26% votes)
- 2005 – Henryka Bochniarz (2.76% votes).

Poland has had only one woman as prime minister: Hanna Suchocka from the Democratic Union (Unia Demokratyczna), in office between 11 July 1992 and 26 October 1993. Between 1998 and 2009, we had 395 ministers, only 35 of them women. Women's representation in cabinets has remained low – usually there has been just one woman, with a few exceptions:

- the cabinet of Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, with 16% female ministers
- the cabinet of Prime Minister Jan Olszewski, with no woman at all
- the cabinet of Prime Minister Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, with 20% female ministers (the number of women has remained at this level until today)
- in 2010, the percentage of women in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister was 28%.

It is noteworthy that women have been in charge of ministries such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture and Art, Ministry of Sport, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Regional Development, Ministry of Spatial Economy, Ministry of Science and Higher Education, Ministry of State Treasury, and Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ministry of Interior, Ministry of National Defence, Ministry of Economy (since 1997), Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment have remained bastions of male ministers' power.

Women have never accounted for more than 30% of members of parliament. After the fall of communism, the percentage of women in the Sejm (the lower chamber of parliament) was between 10-13%. What is significant is that the number of women rapidly declined after the first elections in 1989. These phenomena can be explained by the fact that members of parliament acquired real power in the democratic system, as well as social esteem (cf. Fuszara 2011). For this reason, men became more interested in gaining a position in the Sejm and Senate. In order to increase the number of women in politics, a parity regulation was introduced in 2011. This new regulation has not decreased the level of discrimination against women in politics. The participation of women in the Sejm is still low (23.91% – 110 women – in 2011),⁸ and has barely changed since 2001, when some political parties introduced quotas in their electoral lists (<http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/kom/pl/statystyka.html>; Fuszara 2011: 19). The number of women in the Senate (upper chamber of parliament) in 2011 was even lower than that in the Sejm (13%),⁹ and none of the women was in charge of Senate Committees (Fuszara 2011: 20; <http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/kom/pl/statystyka.html>). One of the reasons to explain the uneven participation of women in the parliament is that women are not offered the best positions on party electoral lists¹⁰ (Fuszara 2007: 28-30). Thus, the position of women in politics can be jeopardised by party politics (whose names are included on the list and on which position on the list), electoral law and the financial support for the campaign. Moreover, the low number of women in parliament results in a low impact on legislation. Women are barely nominated for key positions or committees in the Sejm (12%) and are not appointed as experts to participate in legislative work (Fuszara 2011: 21-22). In many cases, the authorities of political parties prefer

⁸ There are 350 men in the Sejm (76.09%) after the election in 2011, despite the fact that there was not such a difference among candidates: 3063 women (43.54%) and 3972 men (56.46%).

⁹ The majority of members of the Senate are male (87%). The number of men among candidates is also higher: 430 (86%) in comparison to 70 (14%) women (<http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl/kom/pl/statystyka.html>).

¹⁰ According to the electoral system, candidates from the top places on lists have higher chances of election than those from the lowest positions on the list.

to send a less experienced man rather than a female expert to participate in parliamentary work. To sum up, on the state level, women face structural barriers which prevent them from full participation in the political sphere.

Local governments

Women remain underrepresented at local level but there is a higher proportion of them in municipal governments than in the central one. This may mean that women find it easier to win votes at local level despite the fact that they are in worse positions on electoral lists. One female councillor even noticed that the very fact of being in first position on an electoral list gives around 30% of votes (Budrowska 2004: 82). This is why in the majority of cases men are placed at the top of the list.

Since the first election after the fall of communism, women were present among candidates for local authorities. In 1990, women constituted 15% of all candidates and won 11% of seats in councils. The number of female councillors increased slightly, with the exception of the elections in 1998, which resulted in a lower number of women in local authorities. After the most recent elections, the representation of women is still uneven, but their number is higher. In 2006, women constituted 28.66% of candidates for local councils and 11.87% of candidates for reeves, mayors and presidents. As a result of the election in 2006, 9685 women (20%) were elected for local governments (Fuszara, Spurek 2007: 26). The 2010 elections brought another opportunity for a higher share of women representatives in local governments. In practice, there were 30.67% of female candidates and 24% women were elected for province/county and communal councils, but only 9% for reeves, mayors and presidents (<http://wybory2010.pkw.gov.pl/geo/pl/000000.html#tabs-2>).

Women have made major gains at the local level of political life, but their presence in communal councils is still uneven:

- Women are in the majority in 92 *gminas*, while men comprise the majority in 2387 *gminas* (96%).
- Women are absent in 62 communal councils and nine county councils, while men are present in all communal and county councils.
- Women are not part of authorities in 57 *gminas* – neither in councils nor in the executive power (Fuszara 2011: 30-31).

An analysis of women's participation in the political sphere shows that the number of women in national and local governments as well as in political parties has increased. However, this does not mean that Poland has achieved a satisfactory level of women's representation, nor that women managed to share the same range of power as men do. Introducing new legal regulations such as the quota system was a great improvement to the political mechanism, but in order to introduce an equal share of power, further changes should be introduced simultaneously at three levels: in legislation, in functioning of political parties and governments and in public debate. The equality of men and women in society means that women must have access to power. The empowerment of women and their presence in politics (at national and local level) will redefine the social structures, relations of power and institutions.

FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Poland 2030 – Long-term Strategy of Developing Poland

To continue the discussion about “who won the Polish transformation”, or, to put it better, to open it for the question of future change perspectives, it might be reasonable to analyse how the development programmes for Poland designed by Polish governmental decision-makers will reflect the issues of gender equality; whether the problems discussed will find their solutions and if there are any answers for the marginalisation of women's issues described above.

The reality is that Polish neoliberal-oriented political actors do not take the case of gender equality and women's empowerment into account, as well at the moment not considering it as a challenge for the future, by reflecting the issue in the vision of Polish development. The strategic governmental document *Poland 2030. Development Challenges. A Long-term Strategy of Developing Poland* is an example of this kind of attitude. Drafted by the Team of Strategic Advisors of the Prime Minister (in 2012), this project for Poland for the next two decades:

- Identifies and describes the key areas of challenges – the opportunities and threats facing Poland over the next 20 years
- Offers a multi-dimensional diagnosis in these key areas
- Designs Poland's path of development in accordance with **the polarisation and diffusion model**¹¹

¹¹ The polarisation and diffusion model is based on the “trickle down growth” idea, assuming that the investments in the centres and in the dynamically developing sectors of the market economy will stream down to the peripheral areas and raise their improvement. While the Polish government sees Poland's

- Recommends the directions of state policy in response to challenges in order to facilitate the implementation of the model of sustainable development.

Neoliberal development perspective as anti-democratic and reinforcing inequalities

Whatever the idea has been, the *Poland 2030* Strategy has raised a number of questions from the perspective of feminist critique (see Charkiewicz 2010b, 2010c, 2014; Wóycicka 2010). Hence, it is important to give some space for critical insight in omissions in the gender and power dimensions while designing the future for Polish citizens.

The first and main point of criticism of the Strategy obviously lies in the foundations of the whole proposed development framework and is related to its neoliberal character, which implies further consequences. Primarily, as mentioned above, the neoliberal core entails thinking about all of the dimensions of social life as relying on economic rationality. Attention is focused on unindividualised, mass processes in which people, individuals, are redefined as functions, reduced to economic or reproductive roles and economic or reproductive effectiveness instead of thinking of their needs or rights. This results in a **significant inversion** of perspective: where it is rather the citizens, not the state, who play menial and subservient roles. For example, the obligation of women to provide an income-generating function as well as reproductive functions and investments in the human capital of their children.

Remarkably, this attitude is even reflected in the language of the document: it moves us back to the discourse of 19th-century philanthropy, when instead of talking about the human, civil, economic rights of citizens (for example the right to shelter, social care, and maintaining a good health), such things were spoken of in terms of privileges, claims or demands of failed, dysfunctional or simply greedy people. By presupposing such a standpoint it has become undisputable that the problem situated *in* the individual should be worked out and solved on his/her side.

The second feminist economy objection is associated with treating Poland as a business project – guided by the logic of a huge enterprise with the supremacy of financial arguments and decisions. In this order, the state management is based on a cost-benefit calculation in economic terms: the final result, or the average, is what is taken into consideration. Even if there are some

development path as such, the Polish economist Ewa Charkiewicz warns that the model has been strongly criticised and discredited in the international arena, when in practice it turned out that the centres rather “suck” the resources from the less developed regions, just deepening the existing inequalities (see Charkiewicz 2010b: 12-13).

social costs on the way or if there exist margins of success of institutional decisions, what the state and “the society” is interested in is “the general view”. Thus, as long as they do not have a serious impact on that general view, inequalities are transparent for neoliberals.

The next feminist argument against *Poland 2030* is that the report shifts responsibility for the situation of exclusion, marginalisation and also for finding the ways to get out into society and its resources and capabilities. Perceiving individuals through their functionalities and fragmenting to utilitarian roles in terms of the market (revalorising to taxpayers, source of revenue, social reproduction or taking-care holders) results in recognising the blame for the failure in fulfilling these roles on the side of the individuals and their dysfunctions. As a consequence, situations of social exclusion risk, such as poverty, disability etc., even if not obviously viewed as the fault of individuals, are seen as matters to be solved on the personal level, with private sphere resources engagement.

This brings us to the consequence of the above – the state’s withdrawal from the public sectors, which is one of the critical points from the perspective of women’s issues. Public sectors such as the social security system, health care or education are seen as being managed and organised as enterprises, and measured by their economic effectiveness with a priority for calculation of income generation instead of indicators such as the quality of services, equal access etc. The expenditures of such “social privileges” interpreted as expensive or overloading to the state are to be minimised. Instead, according to the polarisation and diffusion model, the funds can be relocated to facilitate investments in growth sectors and new technologies. The abandonment of large sections of the public sphere by the state related to the commitment to the vision of Poland as a country of incontrovertible success hits “the margins”, the unprivileged, the poor. In fact, though, the government struggle to ignore the margins and mistreat them as invisible is likely to collapse in the light of Charkiewicz’s (2010c) remark that only 3% of Polish households perceive their economic future and stability as protected and unthreatened. If these are margins, they are certainly enormous ones.

Considered as the orientation for fast economic growth, the neoliberal revolution in Poland is utopian and impossible to implement without a change in the paradigm of development. As economists (Charkiewicz, 2010c) predict, it will only reinforce, or in the future perspective, deepen the existing inequalities and the unsustainable development trends. The cost of this experiment will be borne by the poorest, weakest, and unprivileged.

Gender equality issues – neutrality intensifying inequalities

The neutrality inscribed in the neoliberal project of *Poland 2030* will obviously intensify inequalities and existing discrimination. It must therefore be scrutinised meticulously as far as gender equality is concerned.

As shown in a previous part of this report, in Poland women still experience the situation of marginalisation. There are structural as well as cultural reasons for their positions of exclusion, built on the basis of inequalities developed in the past and still existing. While the starting point for men and women is not the same in many areas, there is no equality of opportunities, and the idea of neutrality simply will not work. Although the knowledge of inequalities is not hidden or unavailable, the authors of the *Poland 2030* Strategy have not benefited from it, in many cases frankly ignoring the simple facts that have previously come to light.

The area of social policy of the *Poland 2030* Strategy is an adequate domain to exemplify the scale of the omission of the gender perspective, as it should be at the heart of thinking about gender equality and gender mainstreaming policies in such a strategic document. According to Irena Wóycicka (2010), there are at least a few spheres in which some comments on the marginalisation of women's issues should be added.

The first gap, the crucial one, is the total lack of an educational perspective in terms of a systemic educational project aiming at elimination of stereotypes and prejudices. Stereotypes and traditional gender-connected expectations strongly existent in the Polish cultural environment lead to the excluding and discriminating practices discussed above, in both the private and the public spheres of women and men's social, economic, and political life dimensions. Until perceiving women and men in terms of traditional gender roles, the conservative world view and the "natural order of things" are questioned and counterbalanced by an institutional equality and anti-discrimination education system, the change will not come.

The second area of "gender omission" is the labour market. Even though the Strategy recognises a need for improvements in employment policies, like for unemployment counterbalance activities, considering women as a group at risk for remaining outside of or falling out of the job-market activation system (often because of care-giving responsibilities in the private sphere), it fails to diagnose the reasons for this situation. There are no reflections on the labour market segmentation, the gender earnings gap, the glass ceiling etc., which are only the tip of the iceberg of phenomena presently existing and being researched in Polish society as a manifestation of discrimination against women. Obviously, *Poland 2030's* lack of recognition and

diagnosis of the main sources of inequalities precludes any reliable and effective programming towards equality.

Another factor of false neutrality is related to women's burdening resulting from their care roles in families. This is an issue of taking care of people with disabilities, permanently ill, elderly people, elder parents etc. As Wóycicka notices, due to the dominant "family-based" model of organising care for such people in Poland (so in practical terms, the "women's duty" model) and according to the population ageing trends, the situation of women who deal with the inefficiency of the social care and public services at present would be even worse in the perspective of the neoliberal project of care assistance for the future (Wóycicka, 2010: 2). The project, with its plan to remove the duty of care from the state and refunded public services, will shift the whole burden to the private sphere, impelling families to look for assistance on the privatised services market. Wóycicka's further argument against the liberal project of care is based on its solidification of the traditional division of gender roles in families with women as the "natural" care-givers, leading to women's unpaid household work. In fact, in the liberal model, unpaid work of women exists as the alternative for the cost that the household would have to bear instead, in order to purchase adequate care services in the private market (ibidem). Given the fact that the majority of households cannot afford such commercial support, this model plainly keeps women at home and thereby excludes them from the labour market, or from combining both career and care duties – it forces them into exhausting double-burden work beyond their energy and time resources.

Following this argumentation of gendered care-giving responsibilities, parenting duties are another issue indicating the gender-blindness of this development project. The Strategy appears to recognise the current inequalities and the need for a change in order to establish a more equal division of parenting care enabling both men and women to combining the roles of parent and professional. Anyhow, it presents a lack of applicative vision of effective policies that would struggle to eliminate women's falling out of the labour market after childbirth or, in the further perspective, the risk of "double burden". While the problem of combining career with parenting duties is both structural (lack of infrastructure: accessible and affordable nursery schools and kindergartens, long-term and flexible maternity leaves) and cultural (related to the traditional division of gender roles), there is no implementation plan interweaving and dealing with the complexity of these dimensions (Wóycicka 2010: 2-4). When there is a case of parenthood and employment, it is always women who are perceived as the main actors on the scene. Their predetermination for being the first and undisputable carer for a child is the attitude they have to cope with in both the family and the private sphere, as well as in the workplace, where, to put it bluntly, employers prefer to hire fathers rather than mothers. In order to stimulate

the *social* development as well, there should be solutions proposed responding to this duality of the sources of inequality.

Women's roles as care securers have further consequences resulting in the additional costs they pay in social security insurance and pensions and the retirements system. *Poland 2030* ignores the fact that during care periods, women who remain outside of the employment market or confine themselves to part-time jobs simply miss out on the social insurance system. The neoliberal model of care in *Poland 2030* does not treat care as an activity that also generates national income, so there are no plans for implementing means like compensations for care periods or granting special retirement entitlements, which have been successfully adapted in some other countries. While elsewhere in Europe (e.g. the United Kingdom, Germany, Norway, Sweden, see more: Wóycicka 2010: 5), social security systems are presently being reformed to include care periods in pensions systems, in Poland the contribution in such situations is extremely low already, and only if the person decides to fully withdraw from work.

Last but not least, as Wóycicka (2010) points out, an indefensible area of oversight in the Polish government perspective on development is overall insensitivity, and as a consequence the tolerance of structural and cultural conditions on which the dimensions of women's exclusion such as poverty or gender-based violence exist. The *Poland 2030* Strategy is completely blind to and silent on these issues.

Towards a new framework – gender and intersectionality of exclusion

As Charkiewicz (2010c) points out, the presented Polish programme of development is based on two complementary strategies: 1) neoliberal marketing, based on organising the whole functioning of the state in terms of economic rationality, with the support of 2) reduction of other possibilities/capabilities of creating one's own social or civil subjectivity. To contest such an order, a change in production and consumption patterns is required, together with striving for the solidarity of sharing social reproduction and care-giving costs (Charkiewicz 2010c: 15). For this purpose, efforts should be focused on the struggle to reverse the perspective again to the democratic instead of the neoliberal, where equality and social justice, not economic effectiveness, are the main intention. This means the need for a continuous and persistent critical oversight of state politics in Poland, struggling against the neoliberal framework which ignores the multidimensional character of exclusion of men and women, especially its interconnections to socioeconomic status. Furthermore, it is crucial to build a new framework on the benefits of

gender equality focused on the diversity of gender categories and intersectionality of social exclusion. As Charkiewicz claims,

*“Women are integrated with the techno-financial capitalism in multiple ways, as targeted paid and unpaid labour, as consumers, credit recipient, as shareholders, and a few of them as investment bankers. **Production of inequality is an in-built systemic feature. The imaginary woman, the oppressed political subject of feminist discourse, does not exist any more. Oppression took new forms**, existential insecurity, work intensification, reprivatizing the costs of social reproduction, commercialization of everyday life, and colonizing private space of home, bombardment of bodies with toxins, while at the same time giving some women the option to advance by engaging in exploiting others. **It seems futile to keep on talking about formal equality or general exclusion of women** (unless in tactical interventions). The problem is not exclusion, but how, on which terms we are integrated, and the new social cleavage between integrated and exploitable and abandoned unexploitable. **Women are located at both sides of this divide**”* (Charkiewicz, 2010b: 27).

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