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Women's Descriptive representation in the Riigikogu

Bachelor's thesis

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Abstract

The research on women's political representation has emphasised the role of political, structural and cultural factors in hindering women's access to legislative office. The perceived obstacles can be multifaceted, ranging from electoral systems and party ideology to the socio-economic situation or the prevalent traditional gender norms in a society. This thesis researches the descriptive representation in the Riigikogu, by analysing the conducted interviews with women currently in the parliament.

Three main research questions were posed in this research: what are the perceived obstacles that prevent women from entering the political sphere; what do female elected representatives feel can be done to change this and whether female members of the parliament believe that they represent women's interests. The findings show that, most respondents do not believe that they represent women's interests. Furthermore, three types of obstacles – political, cultural and individual – are identified that hinder women's advancement in politics. Finally, two types of strategies are put forward – formal and non-formal – to combat inequality in the political sphere.

Introduction

The issue of gender inequality is of great importance in all democratic countries worldwide, as political equality is one of the principles of democracy. In the past decades, there has been a steady call for more gender equality in all sectors of life, especially in the political sphere, as women make up half of the world's population, yet compose only 23.3% of the world's parliaments (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017). Thus, it is evident that women are underrepresented in national legislatures and it is possible to claim that due to this, their policy-concerns are not fully addressed. Like in most countries, women are underrepresented in the Estonian Riigikogu. Hence, this issue is relevant to Estonia, because in addition to the gender inequality in the parliament, there are other instances of vast gender disparities in Estonian society, most notably the gender pay gap, which is the largest in Europe (Eurostat, 2017).

This thesis explores the descriptive gender gap in Estonian politics, more specifically in the Riigikogu, and analyses the possible causes for it. Despite the advancements made in women's representation since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the share of women in the parliament has not changed dramatically or reached the levels of Western European countries. It is evident that there are factors in play that have stalled further gains in women's representation.

As the problems surrounding women's representation in political offices are multifaceted, the principal research questions of this thesis are: what are the perceived obstacles that prevent women from entering the political sphere and what do female elected representatives feel can be done to change this. Moreover, I ask, whether female members of the Parliament believe that they represent women's interests.

These research questions are connected to the theoretical framework, as they try to identify the effect of political, structural and cultural factors on women's representation in Estonia. Furthermore, if one states that women's descriptive representation is connected to substantive representation, then female politicians must be consciously representing women's policy-concerns. Still, it is possible that female politicians do not feel the need to solely represent women, or they may even reject feminist agendas.

Finally, if we believe normatively that gender inequality in parliaments is an issue then some measures should be taken to adjust the situation.

For this thesis, three research tasks have been devised. The first research task is to form a theoretical background by exploring previous influential works in this field. This outlines a base for further analysis. The second task is to analyse the data collected on the current situation of women in politics in Poland and the Czech Republic. Comparison with other post-soviet countries helps to highlight the situation in Estonia by showing if the case of Estonia is unique or follows similar trends as other post-Soviet nations. Additionally, both of these countries have tried using different measures to enhance women's representation. It is helpful to analyse what has and what has not worked in other countries, when discussing possible strategies. The third component of this thesis is analysing descriptive representation in the Estonian legislature.

The majority of data used in this thesis was collected through qualitative interviews with 10 female politicians currently in the Riigikogu. This methodological approach is the best in the context of this thesis, due to the relatively small number (27) of female members of the parliament currently in office and the small sample. What is more, the respondents have a unique view of the struggles women may have when joining politics and how to overcome them. Analysing existing peer-reviewed articles on this topic will provide additional support for the subject matter at hand. The thesis will adhere to the following structure: the first section will examine the theoretical background, focusing on the three factors influencing women's representation, the second section will give a brief overview of women's representation in the Czech Republic and Poland, the final section will present the findings from the interviews.

1. Theoretical framework

Issues concerning political representation are often at the core of research covering gender and politics. Mostly, the work on this topic focuses on either descriptive or substantive representation and how these two dimensions associate with each other. Women's substantive representation refers to the attention to women's policy concerns and descriptive representation, which is the primary research topic of this thesis, to the number of female representatives in any governing body (Celis et al. 2008, 99). Currently, the most dominant viewpoint in this field is that the two forms of representation are strongly linked – women in politics influence policy-making by representing women's overall interests better and by introducing more feminist policies (Celis and Childs, 2012, 213). Or in other words, the number of women in government should enhance the amount of women's substantive representation. In addition, Leslie Schwindt-Bayer and William Mishler have also found that that higher levels of descriptive representation increase legislatures' responsiveness to women's policy concerns and enhance perceptions of legitimacy in both men and women's eyes (Mishler, Schwindt-Bayer, 2005, 424).

However, in reality, being a representative and having a meaningful influence on policymaking are often two separate things. Pamela Paxton et al. (2007) suggest that women are able to successfully pursue their policy priorities only, if they reach a certain percentage of legislature, or "critical mass" (Hughes et al. 2007, 274). The exact percentage of "critical mass" is debated. Previous research has frequently used 15% of the legislature to signify it, yet activists cite 30% as the crucial threshold for women to make a difference. Although, there is abundant research on this topic, conclusive evidence has not been found to either confirm or contradict the importance of the "critical mass".

Research from the United States even shows that in some cases women may be more successful at passing legislature they proposed, if they made up a smaller percentage of the legislature. These findings can be explained by sociological theories on discrimination, which suggest that as a minority group grows, it becomes more threatening to the majority and that can cause major resistance (Hughes et al. 2007, 275). Moreover, the theory of intrusiveness proposes that, when women are a small

minority, they can use their token status to draw more attention to their policy concerns. Changing that may affect women's substantive representation negatively: a study in the New Zealand showed that, when women reached approximately 15% of the legislature, a rise in hostility towards female politicians was evident (Hughes et al. 2007, 275). This all suggests that it is not completely certain that higher levels of descriptive representation enhance substantive representation in all cases. Still, though the impact of reaching the critical mass may be contested, I believe that this is important in breaking the stereotypes surrounding politics and politicians, especially for the younger generations. When younger women see other women in positions of power, they may be more willing to join politics as well

There are many theories through which political scientists try to explain the continuing scarcity of women in political leadership positions. These explanations can be reduced to three groups of factors: **political factors**, such as electoral systems; **structural factors** that include overall levels of socioeconomic development and the proportion of women in professional and managerial professions; and **cultural factors**, such as attitudes towards gender roles in the society (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 127).

1.1. Political Factors

Previous studies of industrialised Western states have shown that the type of electoral system, district or party magnitude i.e. the amount of seats per district or the amount of seats won per party in each district respectively and the ideology of parties significantly influence female representation in public offices (Saxonberg, 2000, 146). In addition to these more systematic factors, the internal party nominating system may also influence female representation in the parliament (Saxonberg, 2000, 147). All party nomination processes have a "supply" and a "demand" side, the absence of either could explain why gender gaps in legislative bodies exist.

The "supply" side of the equation represents women's willingness to become members of political parties and afterwards, to become candidates for political office. The "demand" side exhibits the electorates' willingness to vote for female candidates and if the party's nominating organisation (regardless of the selection procedure) is eager to nominate female politicians (Saxonberg, 2000, 147). The prevalent conclusion from

previous studies on the nomination process is that women are more successful on the “demand” side, if there are clear and transparent rules in place that make it easier for women to organise within the party. For example, one could ask, are there any women’s organisations within the party? In Estonia, the four major political parties do, but the two new parties in the parliament do not. Another important factor is whether the party organisation has ties to other organisations outside the party, as it can provide further access points for women (Wängnerud, 2009, 55).

Most researchers have found that the election of women is favoured by electoral systems with proportional representation, party lists and large district magnitudes (Wängnerud, 2009, 54). The basic logic behind this is that these systems are less competitive compared to majoritarian systems based on single-member-districts. Here, due to the large district magnitude, a woman does not have to be number one in her party to win. Women can be placed in lower positions and still have an opportunity to be elected. Still, in a sense, this system is very competitive, as it remains relatively open to new parties, who seek to enter the parliamentary arena.

On the other hand, research from Poland and Czech Republic has shown that in some cases, party magnitude is a more reliable predictor of female representation (Saxonberg, 2000, 150). If a party expects to win one seat from a district, they are more likely to run a male candidate. Yet, it is important to note that the correlation between district/party magnitude and female representation in Eastern European parliaments has not been proven conclusively. This is an area, where further scholarship is needed.

The level of democratisation seems to have an effect on women’s political representation as well (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 130). It is believed that democratic consolidation promotes the spread of civil liberties, which include women’s suffrage and their ability to apply for elected office. Still, there are researchers, who have not found any significant correlations between democratisation and women’s representation – Inglehart and Norris (2001) explain that this may happen, because many non-democratic communist systems have throughout history used various strategies, like gender quotas, as a form of window-dressing. These countries have relatively high descriptive representation rates, without giving women any real power. The real power was wielded by the male-dominated Central Committee of the Communist Party

(Clavero and Galligan, 2008, 152). The token nature of women in parliament did, however serve a purpose. It masked the serious gender inequalities in the political sphere and it had lasting consequences, as it created the image of female politicians as compliant and willing supporters of the regime. After the collapse of the soviet system this image of the manipulated female politician deterred many women from entering the political landscape (Clavero and Galligan, 2008, 152).

It has been discussed that party ideology can affect women's representation. One common finding in research is that leftist ideology increases the number of women elected (Wängnerud, 2009, 55). Populist parties and more importantly right-wing populist parties tend to have historically the least amount of women in their ranks in parliament, as in most cases populist parties centre around a charismatic male leader and this in turn creates a hierarchical and often patriarchal structure in which women struggle to advance. However, this is changing and the role of the charismatic leader is not solely confined to men. Some examples of this can be found in France with Marine Le Pen of the National Front, in Germany with Frauke Petry of the Alternative for Germany and in Norway with Siv Jensen of the Progress Party. It is believed that leftist parties are inclined to be more inclusive by introducing quotas for example, whereas populist parties are more likely to adhere to "traditional" gender roles and not implement gender balancing systems while constructing their party lists.

1.2. Structural Factors

The role of structural factors in women's continuing struggle to advance into electoral offices is the most evident in developing societies (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 129). Women are usually disadvantaged in these situations, as many emerging countries have insufficient childcare services, a lower literacy rate for women and poverty. Thus, the rise in a country's socioeconomic development level is significantly related to the rise in the proportion of women in parliaments. With the rise of women's overall position in society, it is expected that more women reach higher positions in professional, administrative, and managerial occupations, which are often seen as steppingstones to political careers.

Ronald Inglehart and Pippa Norris (2001) suggest that modernisation creates systematic and predictable changes in gender roles. According to their theory, this change is observable in two phases: first, industrialisation brings more women into the workforce, which leads to lowered fertility rates. This phase allows women to make substantial advancements in their education and begin to participate in representative government, albeit in a lesser role than men, since they do not have as much power as them. The second observable phase – post-industrialism – starts a shift towards even greater gender equality, as women start to occupy higher-status positions in economic and political spheres.

Still, structural factors alone cannot explain the barriers women experience when they try to seek political office. Currently, there are large differences between societies with similar socioeconomic standings in women's representation in national parliaments (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 129). For example, in the Netherlands women make up 38 percent of the lower house, which places them on the 20th position in the Inter-Parliamentary Union's world classification, whereas France ranks at 63th position with 25.8 percent. Moreover, women's parliamentary representation (lower or single house) in some poorer societies, such as Rwanda (61.3%, ranking 1th in the world), Bolivia (53.1%, 2th) and Senegal (42.7%, 7th), is much greater than in some more affluent countries like the United Kingdom (30%, 47th) or the United States of America (19.1%, 104th) (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2017).

These inconsistencies suggest that improvements in women's education and professional status act as facilitating conditions for women's empowerment and that structural factors on their own may be insufficient in lessening the gender gaps in politics. Women's empowerment does not equal gender equality. The World Economic Forum addresses this with its annual Gender Gap Reports. For example, Iceland has topped the list for the past eight years in a row and one could assume that women are fully empowered in that society, however in some areas, such as economic participation and opportunity or political empowerment, they have not reached full parity (World Economic Forum, 2016, 194). The same applies to other countries in this report. While gender equality has been reached in some areas, most often in education, it is not the case in all.

1.3. Cultural factors

In many cases, when researching women's legislative representation, political and structural explanations need to be supplemented with cultural factors. As shown above, there are large differences between some societies with similar socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, there are many countries with comparable political systems that have noticeable discrepancies in gender equality. While structural factors mostly represent the supply of women for political office and the political factors the demand for them, cultural factors influence both sides of the equation (Kunovich and Paxton, 2003, 103). More often than not, cultural background can influence women's decision to run, regardless of their careers or levels of education.

It is believed that traditional anti-egalitarian attitudes towards gender norms hinder women's political advancement and theories of socialisation have highlighted the importance of gender roles in private and public spheres (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 131). In cultures with prevalent traditional gender roles, many women may be hesitant to join politics, or if they do seek office, they might find it difficult to attract enough support to win. This notion is felt by many female politicians, as an Inter-Parliamentary Union study shows that the most cited explanation for low female participation in politics is the negative view towards female leadership (Kunovich, and Paxton, 2003, 91).

Inglehart and Norris propose a hypothesis that relates to the connection between political culture and the advancement of women in political offices. Firstly, they question, how the public regard women as political leaders and how these attitudes vary systematically between post-industrial, post-communist, and developing societies (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 132). To answer this, data from the World Values Survey was analysed and the results predictably showed that the nations with the most positive response towards women's leaderships were among the wealthy post-industrial countries, such as the Nordic states, and the most negative stance came from poorer developing societies in the Arab world. Thus, a strong link between socio-economic development and egalitarian views on gender roles is evident. However, these results come with an important caveat: diverse historical legacies still impact cultural attitudes. For example, many affluent Asian countries, such as Japan or South Korea, show a

lower support for women in politics. According to this Inglehart and Norris (2001), many post-communist societies display more traditional attitudes towards women's political leadership (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 133). Thus, it might suggest that traditional attitudes in Estonian society in particular might hinder women's representation in politics.

Norris and Inglehart hypothesise that prevalent traditional attitudes in the society towards women's leadership are a major barrier to the election of women to parliament (Inglehart and Norris 2001, 134). Their findings seem to support this, as they show – with some notable outliers – that egalitarian attitudes toward women leaders are strongly related to the proportion of women elected to the lower houses of national parliaments. The authors state that these findings are not conclusive, as it is possible that the experience of having women in politics shifts public opinion in a more egalitarian direction (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 135). Pamela Paxton's and Sheri Kunovich's (2003) research also supports this, since they find that ideology matters, as it may influence the likelihood that the voters will accept women as their elected politicians and the likelihood that party elites will select and support female candidates (Kunovich and Paxton, 2003, 103).

It is important to realise that while traditional cultural ideas impact women's suitability for political office from the public's viewpoint, these ideas can change over time. At one point, it was traditional and normal that women did not for example have the right to vote. Many theories of socialisation suggest that people's attitudes are shaped during their formative years and their basic values are more or less fixed by adulthood (Inglehart and Norris, 2001, 135). In their work Inglehart and Norris point out that in many post-industrial societies the formative experiences for a lot of men and women differ greatly from those of the older generation, due to the gains women's movements have achieved and the overall shifts in lifestyles and sexual mores. In their work published in 2001 they suggest that the shift is not as notable in post-communist societies and the overall pace of change is slow, however it is conceivable to say that the post-communist countries, especially those who managed to join the European Union, have improved greatly in this sense.

A 2014 study showed that international diffusion of gender norms plays a role in increasing women's political representation (Adams et al. 2014, 321). In this research, Adams et al. claim that gender-balanced decision making norm has become embedded in the world polity over the last three decades. This norm has established certain expectations on appropriate levels of women in the decision-making process (Adams et al. 2014, 322). They find that international factors – such as levels of women's representation among neighbouring countries and intergovernmental organisation partners and time passed since ratification of Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women – effect women's representation positively, especially in the lower-prestige cabinet appointments (Adams et al. 2014, 339-340). However, it is possible to say that these diffusion pressures are in some cases involuntarily accepted by governments, which result in a manifestation of tokenism, where women are placed into insignificant positions.

2. Representation in Post-Soviet countries

Ever since the fall of communism in Central Europe and Eastern, women's representation in this region has been steadily researched. The majority of works on this topic has focused generally on the cultural and ideological legacy of the former Soviet Union on women's participation in politics. It has been noted that during the Soviet era the percentage of women in national legislatures was much higher than in Western Europe and after the collapse of the soviet regime the percentage of women in government fell noticeably and has risen rather slowly over the following years (Stegmaier et al. 2014, 188).

A number of factors that may have produced this decline have been pointed out, such as abolishment of mandatory gender quotas in some countries i.e. no more "window-dressing" or the public's renunciation of communist ideas of gender equality in favour of more traditional gender norms. Another element that has been brought up is the lack of feminist discourse and female mobilisation in civil society around feminist goals – that most political activism was geared towards more conservative issues such as welfare for the family or nation building (Clavero and Galligan, 2008, 152). These factors are mostly tied to cultural explanations of female underrepresentation in post-communist societies.

During more recent years, the focus has shifted to researching the political and institutional factors that influence women's representation, since the process of democratic consolidation has reached a certain point where the institutions are considered to be stable enough and the issues surrounding deepening or enhancing democracy have become more important. What is more, the cultural factors, while important, are not enough to fully understand the mechanisms that encompass women's access to political power. In addition, more information about the inner workings of parties has become available for researchers, and with that a clearer picture of the political landscape can be formed.

In this section of the thesis I will give a brief overview of women's representation in the Czech Republic and Poland from their last elections under the communist regime to the most recent parliamentary elections. These countries were selected for two reasons. First, they all, along with Estonia, followed a similar path towards democracy – all re-

established democratic rule around the same time and all joined the European Union in 2004. Secondly, while Estonia was occupied by the Soviet Union, Poland and then Czechoslovakia remained quasi-independent satellite states of the Soviet Union. I wish to see, whether this difference has somehow impacted the levels of women's representation in these countries, by looking at how women's descriptive representation has changed after the collapse of the soviet system. It is possible that this difference has no impact and the over-all legacy of the Soviet Union has had a negative effect on women's representation in subsequent years in all the countries analysed.

2.1. The Czech Republic

Table 1: Women's Representation in Czechoslovakia and in the Czech Chamber of Deputies 1986-2013

Election Year	Seats Won by Women	Percentage Share
1986 ¹	59	29.5
1990 ²	13	8.7
1992	21	10.5
1996	30	15
1998	30	15
2002	34	17
2006	31	15.5
2010	44	22
2013	39	19.5

¹ The last Communist elections. ² First multiparty elections, 150 seats.

Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union (1995) and IPU online database.

Table 1 shows women's representation in the Czechoslovakian Chamber of the People from 1986 to 1990 and in the lower house of the Czech Republic's parliament (Chamber of Deputies) from 1992 and onwards. Women's representation has followed what Stegmaier et al. have called a typical trajectory for the Central and Eastern European countries: the last election results from under the communist regime show a significantly higher percentage of women elected than compared to the following, the first multiparty elections (Stegmaier et al. 2014, 188). In the 1996 elections, women's

representation rose to 15 percent and stayed for all intents and purposes stagnant for the next three election cycles.

In 2003, during the aforementioned stagnation period, Sheri Kunovich analysed the issues surrounding women's representation in the Czech legislature. In her work, she focuses on the placement of women on party electoral lists, as they are valuable in explaining the decline of female representation in national legislature. She argues that key positions were important during the course of this period, as voters had limited experience with democratic elections (Kunovich, 2003, 274). Since the public was not all familiar with the candidates, they were more likely to choose candidates from the tops of the lists, and in addition, the high number of parties competing in earlier elections reduced the proportion of politicians elected from one party, thus being placed lower on the list may have hurt one's chances dramatically.

Kunovich found that at that time, women were firstly 30 percent less likely to secure first position on electoral list and 14 less likely to secure top positions than men (Kunovich, 2003, 279). Secondly, in terms of individual characteristics, political experience played a role in having better chances at (re-)election by being higher on the party lists (Kunovich, 2003, 282). For example, incumbent female candidates were 33 times more likely to secure a top position and being elected before, especially between 1986 and 1992, enhanced one's prospects. Moreover, women in Czech Republic were more likely to score a high-ranking ballot position if they ran in smaller districts (Kunovich, 2003, 284). All in all, it was clear that the position on election lists were determined by political parties and that they had the power to either maintain or change the *status quo* (Kunovich, 2003, 286). This research showed that the parties tend to not challenge the negative impact of social views on women's representation by allocating women top spots on their lists.

However, referring back to Table 1, in 2010 women's representation rose rather unexpectedly to 22 percent. Stegmaier et al. discuss the possible reasons behind this increase. It is important to note that the two hundred representatives of the Chamber of Deputies are elected in multi-member districts using proportional representation system with optional reference voting, which means that the parties control the order of candidates on the ballot, but the voters have an option to allocate certain amount of

preference votes (Stegmaier et al. 2014, 188). So, the most obvious explanation for the increase is that it could be due to more women being in the top ballot positions and/or voters casting more preference votes for female candidates. They point out that this expectation is affirmed by a reform of the Czech election law between 2006 and 2010 that allowed more preference votes and lowered the vote threshold for candidates to move up the party list.

While the Czech Republic does not have any official legal requirements for gender quotas, some parties, like the Czech Social Democratic Party, the Green Party and the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia have adopted some forms of internal guidelines concerning gender composition of candidate lists (Stegmaier et al, 2014: 191-192). Parties such as The Civic Democratic Party, the Christian Democratic Party–Czechoslovak People’s Party and TOP 09 have not established rules in regard to increasing women’s representation.

By comparing the election results from 2006 and 2010, Stegmaier et al. found that from the three parties that received enough votes to pass the 5 percent threshold on both occasions, no changes could be seen in the share of women in top-ranked ballot positions, thus it is unlikely that the construction of ballots led to the increase of women elected into office (Stegmaier et al. 2014, 193). What they did see, is that preference voting is an important factor in determining electoral success in the Czech Republic (Stegmaier et al. 2014, 200). That is to say that the higher shares of preference votes raise the chance of getting elected and this effect applies to all candidates, regardless of gender. A higher placement on the ballot and being an incumbent candidate increase the likelihood of being elected as well. One could conclude from this that the increased use of preference voting combined with lowering the electoral threshold to 5 percent facilitated women’s relative success during the 2010 election compared to previous elections. All this could indicate that while traditional views concerning women in politics may prevail in the society, there are measures that the national legislature can take and have to combat factors that prevent women from reaching elected office.

2.2. Poland

Table 2: Women’s Representation in the Polish Sejm 1985-2015

Election Year	Seats Won by Women	Percentage Share
1985 ³	93	20.2
1989 ⁴	62	13.5
1991	44	9.6
1993	60	13
1997	60	13
2001	93	20.2
2005	94	20.4
2007	94	20.4
2011	110	24
2015	111	24.1

³Last Communist elections. ⁴First multiparty-elections.

Sources: Inter-Parliamentary Union (1995) and IPU online database

Table 2 shows women’s representation in Poland over the past thirty years. Again, as with the Czech Republic, one can see that women made up 20 percent of the state legislature before the end of the soviet era and a noticeable downturn in the percentage of women in national legislature followed the collapse of the previous regime. In the early 2000s women’s share of the Sejm rose to 20 percent from 13, but stayed stagnant for another 6 years. This increase was mainly a result of the introduction of party quotas: the Freedom Union, the Labour Union and the Democratic Left Alliance implemented quotas of at least 30 percent of each gender on candidates lists (Gwiazda, 2015, 683). In 2011, another four percent increase of women in the parliament can be observed, yet this situation did not change significantly during the 2015 elections.

2011 also marks the year, when after four failed attempts, a law on gender quotas was passed (Gwiazda, 2015, 684). The successful campaign for implementing gender quotas began in 2009, when a civic committee of legislative initiative called “Time for Women” was established (Gwiazda, 2015, 688). The committee’s aim was to submit a legislative proposal, which called for 50% representation of women on party lists to the

Sejm and sanctions for not registering the list if the provision was not implemented. The bill was justified by emphasising the need for institutional measures to increase the number of women in politics. Amid the subsequent discussions, the original bill was changed to stipulate that at least 35% of all candidates on the lists of all parties running for seats in the Sejm must be women and at least 35% must be men. This system applies only to proportional elections, which means that it is not pertinent to the Senate election where the majoritarian electoral law is used (Gwiazda, 2015, 689). Non-compliance with the law was not the case in Poland, as any party that did not comply risked the invalidation of its lists by the Electoral Commission (Millard, 2014, 5).

The effectiveness of the implemented quotas has been however contested. One of the issues with the passed bill was that it had a gender-neutral formulation with no provisions on how the lists should be ordered i.e. it did not implement a “zipper” system (Millard, 2014, 3). A list generated by using the zipper system has men and women in alternating positions – no two candidates from the same gender can be placed in a row. If the first spot goes to a man, the second position must go to a woman or vice versa. Just being present in party lists is not enough for female candidates. They need the visibility, which comes with being either on the top of the list or among the top. The five winning parties of this election placed 40 women (19.4%) first on their lists and out of these 31 won seats (Millard, 2014, 5). The larger competing parties understandably placed more women in top positions, since they had a pool of more experienced women, who had a chance to win, to pick from. The media accused many parties of “cosmetically placing women” in high places in so-called unwinnable seats, nevertheless these accusations seemed to be baseless (Millard, 2014, 6).

The gains for female representation mostly originated from the success of one party – the Civic Platform – when looking at the bigger picture one can see that other parties actually regressed in terms of women’s representation (Millard, 2014, 6). Millard argues that due to the behaviour of Polish voters and the nature of the open-list system, women fared worse than they would have done with the parties’ own list placement. To illustrate this, male candidates in 2011 received more preference votes than women – this was mostly due to the fact that more men were placed first on party lists by the party leaders who are more often than not men and in Poland, as in most other countries, first-placed candidates were the choice of most, but not all, voters.

Maciej A. Gorecki and Paula Kukołowicz also brought out the paradoxical nature of the gender quotas in Poland, as a very large divide emerged between the proportion of women among the candidates and the corresponding proportion for the elected members of parliament (Gorecki, Kukołowicz, 2014, 66). The last pre-quota election in 2007 saw 23 percent of women among the candidates and 20.4 percent of women among the elected members of parliament, in 2011 43.5 percent of the candidates running in the election were female, while the proportion of women among the candidates winning seats grew to 24 percent (Gorecki, Kukołowicz, 2014, 69). Similarly to research conducted in the Czech Republic, Gorecki and Kukołowicz found that political experience increases the likelihood of female politicians gaining office.

Finally, the authors state that when quotas are in place in an open-list proportional representation system – as they are in Poland – it is possible to properly see the gender bias held by the parties' selectorates and the electorate (Gorecki, Kukołowicz, 2014, 76). In Poland, in their words, there seems to be a rather substantial amount of bias of both types, which is enough to preserve the slow pace of in women's descriptive representation. Thus, while political measures have been taken, the prevailing cultural standards, stemming perhaps from Poland's Catholic background, seem to lessen the impact of gender quotas and the enhancement of women's representation. Yet, this does not mean that the quotas do not work and they should be discarded. It might take a few election cycles for them to start working effectively.

3. Representation in Estonia

Table 4: Women’s Representation in the Estonian Supreme Soviet and Riigikogu 1985-2015

Election year	Seats Won by Women	Percentage Share
1985 ⁷	102	35.8
1990 ⁸	7	6.7
1992	13	12.8
1995	12	11.8
1999	18	17.8
2003	19	18.8
2007	24	23.7
2011	20	19.8
2015	24	23.8

⁷ Last Communist elections, 285 seats. ⁸ First multiparty (Estonian Supreme Soviet) elections. Sources: Eesti NSV Ülemnõukogu XI koosseis. 1985. Mõtus and Saaret. 2013. Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon, vvk.ee.

Table 4 shows women’s representation in both Estonian Supreme Soviet and the Riigikogu from 1985 to 2015. Again, we see that during the communist regime women’s descriptive representation was much higher than it is today. The collapse of the system resulted in a sharp decline of women’s representation in the legislature, as it happened in the Czech Republic and in Poland. From this it is possible to say that the being under the communist regime has impacted women’s representation regardless if the country was incorporated into the Soviet Union or just remained a semi-independent state. Over the course of the following years women’s representation has steadily grown, as it has in the other analysed countries. As of April 2017, there are 27 women (26.7%) in the parliament, due to changes in the membership – this is the largest percentage share that women have ever reached in the Riigikogu.

The Estonian political landscape is interesting in itself, due to the unique party membership situation. Compared to Europe’s established democracies, where women make up around 37 percent of party membership on average – women are less represented, party membership wise, in Southern European countries and more represented in Western Europe –, in Estonia as of 2004 women are the majority

members of parties, in fact in 2015 around 54 percent of party members are women and the share of women keeps rising (Kallakas, 2015). In no other European country are women the majority members of political parties.

Two age groups are prominent Estonian parties, firstly there is a large proportion of women over the age of 61, who make up the better part of parties (they are the largest group), another prominent age group is 31-45 year olds, where both men and women are practically equally represented (Kallakas, 2015). Still, this does not simply suggest that Estonian women are more interested in politics than women in other European countries: demographic factors, for example, are in play in Estonia, especially in the older age groups of party members as men's life expectancy is lower than women's. The age group of 31-45 is the only group in which men are only slightly more represented than women, although this can change in a few years, as women surpass men in terms of numbers in the youngest, albeit smallest age category of 18-30 year olds.

Interestingly, out of all the parties currently represented in the Riigikogu, the party with the highest percentage of female members (57.9%), Conservative People's Party of Estonia (Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond, EKRE) has no women in their parliamentary fraction. The largest proportion of their membership is made out of women over the age of 61, who most likely joined the now defunct People's Union of Estonia (Eestimaa Rahvaliid) before it merged with the Estonian Patriotic Movement (Eesti Rahvuslik Liikumine) to form the aforementioned party (Kallakas, 2015). The Centre Party (Keskerakond), the Reform Party (Reformierakond) and the Social Democrats (Sotsiaaldemokraatlik Erakond) also have more women than men in their parties: 56.2%, 54.7% and 53.1% respectively. The only two parties currently in the parliament that have more men than women in their ranks are Pro Patria and Res Publica Union (Isamaa ja Res Publica Liit, IRL) and Estonian Free Party (Eesti Vabaerakond).

From all of this, one could assume that there should not be a big issue on the supply side of women's representation. Clearly women of all age groups are willing to become members of political parties, even more so than men. Yet during the 2015 elections only 236 women, roughly 27% of all candidates, were up for election (Allik, 2015, 2). This

percentage has slightly fluctuated over the past 15 years. Moreover, the share of female candidates differs greatly from party to party. In 2015, out of all the 6 parties that received enough votes to clear the 5% threshold, the Social Democrats had the highest share of women (36.8%) in their party list (Allik, 2015, 3). The other parties were in the same percentage range: the Centre Party with 28, EKRE with 26.4, the Reform Party with 24.4, IRL with 24 and the Free Party with 22.4 percentage.

As discussed before, while being present in party lists is important for women's political representation, it solely is not enough. The placement in these lists is crucial as well. In the case of Estonia, the candidates are ranked in two lists: the closed national party list and the open district list (Allik, 2015, 4). A high ranking in the district list, may not guarantee a place in the Riigikogu, as after tallying the votes, the candidates are rearranged – those with the most votes will receive either a personal mandate or a district mandate. With compensation mandates, however, a high ranking in a party's national list is necessary, especially for smaller parties that barely manage to surpass the mandatory 5% threshold, as they usually do not receive district mandates.

Women are mostly underrepresented in the top positions of district lists in Estonia (Allik, 2015, 7). The Centre Party performed the best in this area, as women and men were almost equally ranked as either first or second on the ballot. In EKRE-s and IRL-s lists women were ranked first in three districts out of 12 (25%) and their second ranking share was respectively 33% and 25%. The Reform Party, Social Democrats and the Free Party had the least women in top ranking electoral district positions (16.7%, 8.3%, 8.3%), however they placed women in second position more often than other parties (the share of women in second place respectively 50%, 66.7% and 41.7%).

The same underrepresentation is apparent in the closed national party lists as well. When looking, how women are placed in these lists, big differences between parties appear. For example, in positions from 1 to 10, the Social Democrats had 6 women and the Centre Party 5 women (Allik, 2015, 8). As the Centre Party is a large party in the Estonian political landscape, women's placement in lower sections of the list is important, and there a dip in women's representation can be seen – three women were ranked in places 11 to 20 and two in places 21-30. One woman (and four men) from the Centre Party and two (and one man) from the Social Democrats received compensation

mandates, which gave them a seat in the parliament (Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon, 2015). The Reform party had only two women in their top ten, but again, since it is a large party placements down the list become more important, and there, women are more represented. Two women received a compensation mandate for the Reform Party.

From the larger parties, IRL has the least women in the top of their national party list – only two women in the top 20 (Allik, 2015: 8). Which means that if the female candidates in their party are not successful in their districts (if they do not receive a district mandate) they do not have very good chances of getting a compensation mandate. In the end, two women from IRL were elected into Riigikogu, one of them with a compensation mandate (Vabariigi Valimiskomisjon, 2015). Out of the smaller parties that had bigger chances of getting compensation mandates rather than district mandates, the Free Party had 3 women in the top 10 and two in places 11-20, EKRE, the party with the largest female share of members, as discussed before, however had no women in their top 10 and only three in places 11-20. Ultimately, three women from the Free Party were elected into office, two with a compensation mandate. Unfortunately, no women from EKRE were elected.

3.1 Research questions

The main objective of this thesis is to research women's representation in Estonian politics and to analyse the gender gap in descriptive representation in the Riigikogu. To address the main research task, women, who are currently in the parliament were interviewed. The interview questions were crafted to coincide with the main research questions and they drew inspiration from previous research done where interviews were the main method used (e.g. Clavero & Galligan, 2008 and IPU, 2000). Moreover, the three main factors (structural, political and cultural) discussed in the theory section of this thesis were taken into account when forming both the research questions and the interview questions.

The research questions formed for this thesis are as follows:

1. What are the main obstacles in Estonia to women gaining access to political office?
2. Do women in the Riigikogu feel that they are the main representatives of women's interests?

3. What strategies do female members of the parliament suggest for enhancing women's representation?

3.2 Method

Bearing in mind the relatively small number of female representatives in the Riigikogu, a qualitative research design is suitable, as it allows to focus more on the details. All 27 current female members of the parliament were contacted using their official e-mail addresses posted on the webpage of the Riigikogu, although not all responded. Thus, the data used for this analysis comes from 10 semi-structured interviews with female members of the Riigikogu. More specifically the responders were from the Reform Party (3), the Social Democratic Party (4), the Free Party (1), the Centre Party (1) and 1 responder was an independent member of the parliament who works with Pro Patria and Res Publica Union. It is important to note that since the sample is still relatively small, making large generalisations solely based on the interviews should be avoided. That is why other qualitative and quantitative studies have been used to supplement the findings from interviews.

The majority of interviews were conducted in March 2017. The research design was guided by a brief test interview with a member of the European Parliament in which I tested whether the questions were understandable and answerable and adjusted the questions accordingly. It was also influenced by the normative assumption that gender inequality in Estonian politics is a problem and it should be addressed somehow, however the test interview showed that not all female politicians may have the same views and thus additional questions were crafted. Moreover, it was informed by the theoretical background. The interviews were conducted in Estonian, either face-to-face, on the phone or through Skype. A respondent chose to send their written answers. The responses were translated into English by the author of the thesis. All respondents were guaranteed anonymity; thus, every respondent was given a specific code, and Table 5 shows. The interview questions are added in the extras section at the end of the thesis.

Table 5. Interview sample

Name	Fraction
A1	Reform Party fraction
A2	Reform Party fraction
A3	Reform Party fraction
A4	Social Democratic Party fraction
A5	Social Democratic Party fraction
A6	Social Democratic Party fraction
A7	Social Democratic Party fraction
A8	Free Party fraction
A9	Centre Party fraction
A10	Pro Patria and Res Publica Union fraction

3.3 Analysis of the interviews

Demands for enhanced women’s representation needs a prior recognition that a problem exists in the political sphere and it should be addressed. Once the problem is realised, there are different ways that one could articulate the problem and it in turn that leads to different possible strategies for its solution. In the following section I will analyse the responses of the elite female politicians to this issue, starting with the introductory questions: how and why the women interviewed joined politics.

As discussed earlier, structural factors play a role in women’s representation. These factors focus on the link between women’s representation in politics and their representation in leading positions in professional, administrative, or managerial occupations, which can be seen as steppingstones to political careers. The majority of the interviewees were “drafted” or invited to join their parties from these occupations, most noticeably from journalism, because they had certain amount of name recognition, which could enhance their chances when running for office – and not necessarily for a place in the Riigikogu at first, but for a place in local government. Tenure in local government is a usual channel to higher office and it is seen as a somewhat “mandatory” step, as it is a good way to learn policy making and any other imperative skills needed in governance.

Having a high-ranking occupation has also been seen as being a part of politics, although not party politics:

- First, I feel like, when I started in journalism thirty years ago, I actually stepped into politics, but not party politics. If one does hard-hitting journalism, not “entertainment media”, then they are, whether they like it or not, in politics. [...] We started to interfere in policy-making through journalism, we influenced changing legislation. – A10.
- In an indirect way, being an active member in the Estonian Women’s Union (Eesti Naisliit), is being a part of politics. It is also politics, although then I simply was not affiliated with any party. – A5.

As mentioned before, many elite women, who are visible in the society prior to joining higher politics, are invited to join by different parties. While this may seem as a positive thing – political parties are interested in having more women, who have the ability to win elections in their ranks – the parties’ motivations have been questioned:

- [A female member of the Riigikogu] was in fact invited, like many candidates are, not for the content, not because they are strong politicians, but because they are well-known people. And that is very wrong. But then again, we can say that if women let others do that to them, if they are fine with not having a lot of say in their parties [...] then I do not know if the fault lies in men or in women. – A10.

This practice of recruiting well-known members of the society, the “spokesmodels” (*reklaamnäod*) does not apply only to women, but to men too. They are often discredited by female members of the parliament, who envisage themselves as “serious” politicians. These “spokesmodel” politicians are often called decoy ducks (*peibutuspart*) in the Estonian media: people, who in case of winning do not plan to use their mandate and let a substitute member take their mandate. While not all celebrity politicians may intend to give up their seat after winning, for many, their term will be brief. A respondent offered an explanation for this: these well-known people may not realise, what they are going to do in the parliament. They do not know what they are risking and they do not know how large the responsibility is that they have taken on.

The reason behind joining politics is rather clear for all cases in the sample. It is the need to get something done and feeling that being a member of an institutionalised political system is the best way to achieve their goals, whatever they may be:

- The reason, why I joined politics, it that at that I was very strongly involved with animal rights and environmental issues in general, and I realised that to really change the situation: to get more government funding and governmental attention to the issue, policies, concerning these issues, must be changed. – A9.

While the initial interview was guided by the belief that a gender gap exists in Estonian politics and female politicians acknowledge it, a brief conversation with a female member of the European Parliament showed that it is possible that a female politician does not believe that a gender gap is an issue in politics. Or at least has not felt the effects of it and thus views the situation of women's representation as normal. Similar views are expressed by some of the respondents, who either completely reject the terminology of "gender gap", or who are hesitant to deem the state of the politics as such. Some point out their personal positive experiences and their struggle-free path to politics, which is why they perhaps cannot relate to the issue, while still maintaining that they understand why this question is discussed in the society. This, at times abrupt, stance is not uncommon in post-soviet counties, as other studies (Clavero & Galligan, 2008) in Central and Eastern Europe have yielded similar results, where some women, especially from more conservative parties struggle to answer this question.

- I have never felt [a gender gap in Estonian politics]. I have never understood this topic, and this naturally is my own fault. My personal view of the world is that a person's will determines a lot, alongside with some coincidences and historical contexts where people happen to be. But still, the basis for everything is the person's volition and of course being noticed. Perhaps here we should ask, whether men, who mostly are in leading positions notice women and their activeness enough. [...] I will stress that the capital of will decides a lot, because in practice I know that a great deal of people get offers to join politics. –A2.

On the other side of the coin are those respondents, who strongly feel that there is a tangible gender inequality in Estonian politics, pointing out for instance that demographically there are more women in Estonia than men (54% and 46% respectively), moreover ever since re-establishing independence, women's descriptive representation has not risen to the levels in Western European countries. A respondent pointed out similarly to Adams et al. (2014) that there are certain norms in the world concerning gender-balanced decision making, which have established certain expectations on appropriate levels of women in the decision-making process and these levels are not fulfilled in Estonia. It is believed to be normal and justified that in a democracy, at least 1/3 of the legislature should be women. This is linked to the theoretical idea of a "critical mass" – the belief that for women to be successful in achieving their policy goals, there should be a considerable share, at least 30%, of them in the legislature (Paxton, et al. 2007, 274). As noted in the theoretical section, the actual effect of reaching the "critical mass" is contested, and evidence can be found that in some cases reaching higher levels of descriptive representation may hinder women in their work towards their policy concerns. However, many respondents note the importance of visibility, not solely for their success, but for the future generations, so that more women would be brave enough to step in to politics, and the importance of support that comes from having other women around them.

3.3.1 Perceived obstacles

Overall, the respondents brought out three main barriers that hinder women's path towards political power: political, cultural and individual barriers, with individual issues being the most prominent.

Individual challenges were mostly identified as either the lack of confidence stemming from the belief that professional politics is too difficult or just the absence of interest in it. The high-paced, stressful nature of the occupation is emphasised often and the issues with balancing family and work life that arise from this are seen as the major deterrent from joining politics. Respondents have found that in certain periods of a woman's life, especially after they have given birth, their priorities lie elsewhere, and purely physically they could not handle the intense and very time-consuming work:

- The stereotypes that have occupied our consciousness prevent women [from joining politics]. Our people's personal stances. Women do not want to step into politics, may the reason for it be the lack of interest or the fear of the perceived gender gap that has been talked about for decades and what thus has infiltrated our sub-consciousness. – A1.

The biggest political barrier that is pointed out, is the unfavourable placement in party lists that acts as a major deterrent in women's enhancement in politics:

- The political landscape [in Estonia] is open, but party back rooms are closed. This means that many things are decided in the inner circle that are not necessarily supportive of women's causes. Thus, seemingly, constitution in hand, you could join freely and even get elected, but you will never get elected if you, say, are in a party list of hundred people, and you are not in the first ten, or in a district list with around ten candidates and you are not among the first two or three. – A4.

The same respondent found that the government should show interest in having its citizens equally represented. If women, again, make up over half of the population and in the parliament their share is currently at 26.7%, then women's voices and faces are clearly underrepresented. Normatively, this respondent feels that, the party list should be "striped" i.e. be formed using the zipper method and only as long as they can be using this method, because as the electors are from both genders, so should be the party lists. Currently, there is no legislation in Estonia that mandates how the parties should form their lists, however if there were, parties would be more proactive in their search for female candidates, who would have a serious chance at getting elected. Another issue that has been brought up on multiple occasions, is the belief that women do not vote for women.

Finally, in terms of political barriers the unwritten rules, the norms, present in the Riigikogu have been cited as having hindered women's representation. For example, when we look at how many women are in leading positions in fractions – one female chairman out of six –, how many women are among the chairmen of standing committees – one out of eleven –, and how many women are on the board of the Riigikogu – none –, then a conclusion can be reached that women are at a disadvantage.

To be blunt, these positions are paying positions and, the higher up the rank, the larger the pay checks. Some respondents have a rather cynical stance on this problem: they feel that men are consciously keeping women out of these positions, as they do not want to lose their monopoly of power.

From cultural barriers, the prevalent societal norms that influence how female politicians are judged by society, have been cited. Most feel that female politicians are treated differently than their male colleagues. First, there is the perception that some members of the society may have that if a female talks about “harder” topics, such as national defence or economic policy, then they do not seem to be as credible as male politicians. It is expected from male politicians that they discuss these topics and make their stance known. Yet no one questions men, should they speak on “softer” topics like culture or education. Another manifestation of these cultural barriers is evident in how the media covers female politicians:

- Men and women are treated differently. This is a reason, why women do not want to join. Women are allowed less. Their looks are criticised: are you fat or thin. Then they are shown as stupider than they actually are. If a man is mediocre or dumb then it usually is not evident in the media. But if a woman, who is very smart, yet “slips” on something then they are immediately labelled as someone who is foolish. – A6.

This marginalisation of a female politician is perceived as a big problem – when men are questioned about the contents of their policy and their work, women get questions about beauty tips or their personal life. An additional issue with the media’s portrayal of women is that women are not represented as frequently as men are. When parties send their representatives to do press, to go on TV to popular political discussion shows, they tend to send men. Recently there have been calls for more women to be on these political shows, and not just because their opinions are important, but to break the widespread perception that politics is only for men. Again, women need visibility to be successful and having a media presence is hence invaluable.

Nevertheless, there are a few respondents, who separate their personal experiences from the larger picture, stating that they have not personally felt that they have been treated differently compared to male politicians. One respondent even found that the Estonian

society cares for women slightly more than men. Perhaps this is a manifestation of the view of women as the “weaker” sex, who need to be in a sense protected. A further point here is the role of the recipient: a respondent found that if a person allows, say the media, objectify and ridicule them, then it will take every opportunity to do so. Out of these respondents, many point out that the treatment of female politicians varies from person to person:

- The treatment of female politicians varies from person to person. For example [a male politician], can ruthlessly mock anyone, even women, and that is evident in the public sphere. Yet, there are men who consciously hold themselves back, because they know that it is not as polite to address women as they address men. – A8.

Still one respondent found that there are no barriers that prevent women from joining politics, drawing attention to the fact that in Estonia women are more represented in parties than men:

- Nothing prevents them. Women enter politics, they are very prominent in parties. Even in EKRE, which has the largest percentage of female members, although outside of the party only 5% of their supporters are women. In conclusion, nothing prevents them from entering; that is not the question. The question is in that men are in leading position and they will not give away this opportunity to lead. – A5.

3.3.2 Representing women’s interests

Women’s descriptive representation has been tied to women’s substantive representation: having more women in the parliament should enhance their abilities to influence policy-making towards women’s policy goals (Celis, Childs, 2012: 213). Still this theory expects that women are knowingly representing other women and women’s issues. As discussed before, the decline of women’s representation in former communist countries after regaining their independence is repeatedly linked to the public’s repudiation of the communist ideology of gender equality in favour of traditional gender norms or to the lack of feminist discourse and mobilisation around feminist goals (Clavero, Galligan, 2008: 152). Hence it is rather reasonable to think that not all female

politicians in post-communist countries (perhaps even globally) feel that they represent – or need to represent – women’s issues.

In fact, all but two respondents in this study do not believe that they represent women explicitly. They feel that they represent all citizens equally, their constituents or in their work they focus on certain topics. For example, if a respondent’s previous occupation was related to cultural matters, they felt that their main subject field in the parliament was culture. This is a logical action – they may feel that they are more competent in certain issues and hence be in a better position to reach policy-goals. One respondent found that women should not be in politics to represent women’s issues: all topics, be it defence policy or agricultural policy need a feminine touch. Separating topics as men’s and women’s is not a good idea – a woman’s voice is important for instance in energy politics and a man’s voice is important in family law. One respondent even expressed regret over not being vocal enough on women’s issues such as the gender pay gap in the past, even though they felt that women and children have an important place in her political agenda.

A representative out-right rejected feminist ideas, citing that the Estonian public is wary of extremes and it might even turn on certain groups of people, who stray too far from the norm. She felt that female politicians, who push the feminist agenda, may find it difficult to succeed in politics: they might lose their credibility. This sentiment was echoed by a respondent, who said that they did represent women’s interests:

- Since my objective in the political competition has been throughout the years women’s rights, which in my mind are human rights, then yes I can claim [that I represent women’s interests]. But not only. My love for foreign policy has not waned and this dilemma has risen from time to time that because you are involved with women’s rights, which have, even recently, been ridiculed [...] then does that not lessen my credibility as a politician in topics where my true passions lie. – A4.

3.3.3 Strategies for enhancing women’s representation

The respondents put fourth two possible groups of strategies that could be used to enhance women’s representation. These groups can be classified as formal and non-

formal strategies. Formal strategies are tied to political factors and non-formal to cultural factors that prevent women from advancing in politics.

The most distinct formal strategies are applying gender quotas or the zipper system. The proposed quotas can be in written or unwritten form. For the use of unwritten quotas, the positive example from Canada was given:

- I believe, that quotas, either in written or unwritten form, will help. The prime minister of Canada is a good example: they do not have an official quota system, but under his leadership their 30-seat cabinet was compiled with 15 men and 15 women. There are countries, where a certain breakthrough has been achieved [...] using quotas. On the other hand, there are countries that have used the zipper method [...]. These all help to make women more visible and help them reach positions where they can see that they influence politics. – A5.

Another area, where quotas could be used to reach more gender equality were also brought up. For instance, an interviewee felt that there should be more women in high-ranking positions (ministers, chairmen of standing committees) of the government.

Still one respondent found that simply using the zipper system may not be enough, drawing attention again to the difference between “serious” female candidates and those who are in the lists to simply generate votes:

- [The zipper method] may be implemented purely mechanically, and in that case, it will not have any benefit. Female entertainers can be brought into the election list under the cover of the zipper method. – A7.

Non-formal strategies are often vaguer in the responses, for instance empowering women, so that they realise their abilities. If the respondents identified individual issues, such as lack of self-confidence, as main obstacles on the road to political representation, they were more likely to point out the need for more support for female politicians. Some state that a good example is enough: women need to see other women succeeding and that may inspire them to join as well. Here, the role of women currently in positions of power is stressed, the need for them to enthuse others and to be active in political debates and elections, so that the illusion of politics as a man’s realm dissolves. Some

more concrete strategies have also been put forth, such as establishing non-formal support-systems within parties or active clubs on the local level – these could motivate women and help them make sense of what they need to do to succeed as well.

Summary

This thesis explored the descriptive representation of women in the Estonian parliament, as the issue of gender inequality is of great importance in all democratic countries. While analysing the continuing scarcity of women in political leadership positions, three groups of factors have been discussed in literature, as they are in the thesis: political, cultural and structural factors. More specifically, political factors are linked to the electoral system, district or party magnitude and ideology, which may in some cases benefit, but in other cases hinder women's advancements. Structural factors to the available pool of well-educated women, from which possible candidates can be found and cultural factors sum up the prevalent traditional gender norms in societies.

Since the fall of communism, most research done in the post-communist states has focused on either the cultural legacy of the former Soviet Union or the effect of political factors on women's participation in politics. The cases analysed in this thesis – Estonia, Poland and the Czech Republic – all follow, what can be called, a typical trajectory for the post-soviet countries: during the first free elections women's share of seats won fell dramatically and has risen slowly in the following years. Legislative measures have been used in Poland and the Czech Republic to combat this issue with varying success. In Czech Republic amending the voting law, so that more preference votes can be cast, facilitated women's relative success at elections, but in Poland implementing gender quotas did not have a substantial effect on women's representation, as they did not mandate the use of the zipper system and there is a noticeable bias towards male candidates in the society.

To research the Estonian political landscape and the reasons behind the representative gender gap, three questions were raised and to answer them, interviews were conducted with female members of the parliament. The questions were as follows:

- What are the main obstacles in Estonia to women's gaining access to political office?

- Do women in the Riigikogu feel that they are the main representatives of women's interests?
- What strategies do female members of the parliament suggest for enhancing women's representation?

First, the interviewees found that there are three main groups of obstacles preventing women from joining politics: individual, political and cultural obstacles. Individual hardships were identified most often, with women's lack of confidence or struggles to combine family and work being the most common examples. The political factors brought up were mostly linked to the same factors given in the theoretical background, like placement in party lists or the unwritten rules of conduct in the Riigikogu that may hinder women's advancement. Finally, cultural obstacles were described as the prevailing norms in the society e.g. the belief that politics is a man's work.

While the interview sample is not large enough to make generalisations about all the women in the parliament, it is noteworthy that most did not feel that they represented women's interests explicitly. Most stated that they represent either everyone, their constituents or specific policy areas. Lastly, respondents put forth two types of strategies for enhancing women's representation, that I have categorised as formal and non-formal. Formal strategies proposed are establishing gender quotas or implementing the zipper system, which would force the parties to find female candidates, who have good chances at winning seats. Non-formal strategies can be rather ambiguous, like empowering other by being a good example, or more concrete like establishing support-systems within parties.

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Extras

Extra 1: Interview questions

KÜSIMUSED

1. Mis põhjustel Te astusite poliitikasse?
2. Kuidas Te astusite poliitikasse?
3. Kas Teie arvates on Eesti poliitikas sooline lõhe?
4. Kas naistel on võrdsed võimalused poliitikas läbilöömiseks?
5. Kas Eesti poliitiline maastik on avatud naiste jaoks?
6. Mis takistab naiste sisenemist poliitikasse?
7. Kas Teie arvates koheldakse naispoliitikuid erinevalt, võrreldes meessoost poliitikutega (meessoost kolleegide või ühiskonna/meedia poolt)?
8. Kas Te tunnete, et naispoliitikuna olete peamised naiste huvide esindaja?
9. Mida saaks teha/peaks tegema, et rohkem naisi astuks poliitikasse?
10. Mis on teie arust põhjused, miks naised EI liitu poliitikaga?

Resüme

NAISTE DESKRIPTIIVNE ESINDATUS RIIGIKOGUS

Kaidi-Lisa Kivisalu

Resüme

Soolise võrdõiguslikkusega seotud probleemid on tänapäeval aktuaalsed paljudes demokraatlikes riikides, lähtudes demokraatlikest väärtustest, on poliitilise võrdsuse saavutamine ühiskonnas väga oluline. Naised moodustavad poole maailma elanikkonnast, kuid ainult ühe neljandiku maailma parlamendi liikmetest, seega võib öelda, et naised on poliitilises sfääris alaesindatud, mistõttu võivad ka nende halduspoliitilised huvid jääda tahaplaanile. Eesti ühiskonnas on soolise ebavõrdsuse küsimus olulisel kohal, sest see väljendub ka teistes eluvaldkondades. Üheks näiteks võib tuua soolise palgalõhe, mis on ühtlasi Euroopa suurim. Seega on soolise esindatuse uurimine vajalik ja aktuaalne.

Antud bakalaureusetöö uurib naiste deskriptiivset esindatust Riigikogus. Selle bakalaureusetöö peamiseks uurimismeetodiks on intervjuud naistega, kes esindavad rahvast Riigikogus ning intervjuudest saadud andmeid täiendavad teised teadustööd. Töös on püstitatud kolm peamist uurimusküsimust: mis on peamised takistused, mis raskendavad naiste astumist poliitikasse; kas naised Riigikogus tunnevad, et nad on peamised naiste huvide esindajad; mis strateegiaid soovitatakse naiste esindatuse tõstmiseks.

Töö on oma struktuurilt jaotatud kolmeks. Esmalt antakse ülevaade teoreetilisest taustast ehk eelnevatest teadustöödest selles valdkonnas. Varasemad tööd on leidnud, et naiste sisenemisega poliitikasse on seotud kolme tüüpi faktoreid, mis võivad kas soodustada või takistada nende esindatust. Poliitilised faktorid on seotud näiteks riigis kasutatava valimissüsteemi, ringkondade suuruse ja erakondade ideoloogiatega. Struktuurilised faktorid on seotud riigi sotsiaalmajandusliku olukorraga ning olemasoleva kõrgelt haritud naiste koguga, mille seast kandidaate leida. Viimaseks, kultuurilised faktorid, mis on seotud ühiskonnas levivate sooliste normidega.

Kuigi antud uurimistöö keskendub suure osas Eestile, siis töö ilmestamiseks on kasutatud Tšehhi ja Poola näiteid, mis moodustab töö teise osa. Erinevalt Eestist ei

olnud need riigid Nõukogude Liidu koosseisus, vaid olid poolisesesivad Nõukogude Liidu satelliitriigid. Siiski taasiseseisvusid kõik kolm riiki samal perioodil ning liitusid Euroopa Liiduga samal ajal. Nende riikide puhul on näha sarnast tendentsi, mida on võimalik vaadelda ka teistes postkommunistlikes riikides: enne taasiseseisvumist oli kõigis riikides suur naiste osakaal parlamentides, kuid peale taasiseseisvumist langes esindatus drastiliselt. Seejärel on toimunud aeglane, kuid stabiilne naiste esindatuse kasv. Nii Tšehhis kui ka Poolas on kasutatud legislatiivseid meetmeid, et ühtlustada naiste võimalusi valimistel. Tšehhis on osutunud eelistushäälte süsteemi muutmine edukaks naiste osakaalu suurendamise mõttes, kuid Poolas rakendatud sookvoodid ei osutunud nii edukaks, kui loodeti. Ühest küljest on Poola süsteemi vähene edu seotud seaduse nõrkade kohtadega, teisest küljest meeste valimiste soosimisega.

Töö kolmandas osas antakse ülevaade Eesti poliitilisest maastikust ja on esitatud uurimuse intervjuude tulemused. Esmalt tõid vastajad välja kolme tüüpi faktoreid, mis takistavad naiste sisenemist poliitikasse: isiklikud, poliitilised ja kultuurilised faktorid. Isiklikud faktorid olid ülekaalukalt kõige enam mainitud, viidates naiste vähesele eneseusule ja raskusele ühildada töö- ja pereelu. Poliitiliste faktorite all oli esitatud peamiselt ebasoodne asetus partei ringkonna või riiklikus nimekirjas. Kultuuriliste faktorite all toodi näideteks ühiskonnas levivad normid ja stereotüübid. Suurem osa küsitletud naispoliitikutest ei tunne, et nad oleksid peamised naiste huvide esindajad. Pigem leitakse, et ollakse, kas kogu rahva, oma valijaskonna või teatud valdkonna esindaja. Võimalikest strateegiatest, mida saaks kasutada naiste esindatuse suurendamiseks, kerkisid esile kahte tüüpi vastused. Formaalsete strateegiate all olid esindatud sookvootide ja „lukusüsteemi“ kasutusele võtmine ning mitte-formaalsete strateegiate all oli näidetena toodud teiste naiste julgustamine ja tugistruktuuride loomine parteide juurde.

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