

**10 Years in the EU from a Gender Perspective.
Activities of Female MEPs from Slovakia**

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Introduction

Over the past ten years, the Slovak Republic has been represented in the European Parliament (EP) for two electoral terms by 20 MEPs – seven of them women – who have contributed to the creation and implementation of the politics of gender equality to different extents.

The purpose of this report is to summarise the representation of women from the Slovak Republic in the EP at two levels – firstly the proportion of women and men in elected offices (the descriptive representation), and then the representation of so called women’s issues by the MEPs from Slovakia (the substantive representation, see e.g. Celis, 2008). Currently, the correlation between these two types of women’s political representation remains unclear. Despite the widely shared assumption that women in politics stand for women’s interests, as stated, for example, in the influential and widely cited and discussed “critical mass” theory of Drude Dahlerup (1988), the will and ability of women in politics to enforce women’s rights and the interests of women is not unambiguously supported by the empirical evidence. Therefore, this report treats these two issues as relatively separate. Current debates about substantive representation of women turn their attention from the concept of “critical mass” to the concept of “critical actors”. (Childs – Krook, 2009). Thus, instead of looking at how many women in politics are necessary to enforce an agenda focused on the living conditions and rights of women, scholars have become more interested in who (whether an individual or a group) is willing and able to enforce such an agenda, and how the entire process of the political struggle operates.

This shift in the category of analysis rises from the experience that not only women but also men (and we have to add also transgender or intersexual people) are proponents of gender equality politics. (Childs – Krook, 2009) Another reason for leaving the conceptual frame of “women standing for women” is that we can hardly hope to find a common definition of what constitutes the women’s agenda; the claims about how to “act for women” nowadays widely differ and can even be contradictory. In the light of conservative political claims regarding women’s issues (which are on rise, at least in Slovakia, nowadays), it is no longer possible to suppose that politics “for women” can be equated with feminist politics. (Celis – Childs, 2012). Therefore, the report on the substantial representation of women concentrates on politicians who have dealt with the issues of gender equality politics.

1. Descriptive representation of female MEPs from Slovakia

The EP is the most gender equal EU institution in terms of balanced representation of women and men. Even countries with a low participation of women in high-level politics receive a higher representation of women in the EP (Freedman, 2002; Kantola, 2009). This is precisely the case for the Slovak Republic (Kantola, 2009; Kovář – Kovář, 2012). The situation can be explained by various factors – by the less confrontational style of the politics in the EP, by differences in electoral systems, and by the lower attractiveness and novel character of the EP in comparison to the national parliaments (NPs) where power and hegemony tend to be more entrenched (for an elaborate discussion see Kantola, 2009). Because in Slovakia there are no essential differences in the systems of elections to the National Council of the Slovak Republic and to the EP (in both elections, the candidate

ballots are predominantly prepared by the party elites and candidates are voted for directly with the possibility of preference votes), and because the elections to the EP are considered both by the voters and political parties to be “second class” elections (Kovář – Kovář, 2012; Mesežnikov, 2009), the most plausible explanation for a higher representation of women in the EP in comparison to the NP seems to be the lower attractiveness of the EP for political elites which provides “political parties with the opportunity to experiment insomuch as that there is less at stake.” (Kovář – Kovář, 2012, p. 13)

Scientific articles considering the representation of women in the EP focus mostly on elected female MEPs. However, participation of women in the elections is one of the crucial factors for increasing women’s political representation (as can be drawn from the experiences with introducing party quotas, see Tripp – Kang, 2008). Therefore, this report summarizes the formal descriptive representation of female MEPs from Slovakia, and also considers the number of female candidates in EP elections.

The number of women who both ran for seats in the EP and later served as MEPs exceeded the amount of women in the National Council (elections).

For the sixth electoral term of the EP (2004 – 2009), which was the first term of Slovak representation in the EP, 17 Slovak parties ran¹ (many of these parties, as well as parties running in the further EP elections, existed only for a short time). Out of 188 candidates, 50 were women (26.6 %). In comparison, in the NP elections in 2006 the percentage of female candidates was 22.7 %. In the EP elections, women were rarely positioned in the first places of the candidate ballots. A list was led by a woman only in five cases² and the second place was occupied by a woman in three cases³. In one party, all of the eight candidates were women (AŽ-OS), and one party did not nominate any woman among its 14 candidates (SĽS). There were also two other parties (OKS and RKDH) where no single woman was nominated, however, these parties had only one male candidate in total. Even though less than one third of the ballot lists was led by women, Jan Kovář and Kamil Kovář (2012) conclude that, in general, women attained better positions in the EP elections than in the national elections. However, their conclusion rises from the comparison of the ratio of women elected and women running for office. Thus, a detailed analysis of the positioning of female candidates should be an issue for further research. Nevertheless, in the 2004 EP elections,

¹ The Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK – Strana maďarskej koalície); Alliance of the New Citizen (ANO – Aliancia nového občana); The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic party (SDKÚ-DS – Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana); Hungarian Federal Party (MFS – Maďarská federalistická strana); The Trade Party of the Slovak Republic (ŽS-SR – Živnostenská strana Slovenskej republiky); Democratic Union of Slovakia (DÚ – Demokratická únia Slovenska); Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS – Komunistická strana Slovenska); Free Forum (SF – Slobodné fórum); Coalition Slovak National Party, The Real Slovak National Party (SNS, P SNS: Slovenská národná strana, Pravá Slovenská národná strana); Slovak People’s Party (SĽS – Slovenská ľudová strana); Active Women-OS (AŽ-OS – Aktívne ženy – OS Slovenska); Smer (Smer); People’s Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS-HZDS – Ľudová strana – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko); Coalition Movement for Democracy, People’s Union (HZD, ĽÚ – Hnutie za demokraciu – Ľudová únia); Civic Conservative Party (OKS – Občianska konzervatívna strana); Roma Christian Democratic Movement in the Slovak Republic (RKDH – Rómske kresťanské demokratické hnutie v Slovenskej republike); Christian Democratic Movement (KDH – Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie)

² Eva Bartošová for AŽ-OS, Anna Záborská for KDH, Mária B. Nagy for MFS, Monika Beňová for SMER, Edit Bauer for SMK

³ Daniela Občasníková for AŽ-OS, Eva Černá for ANO, Jarmila Chovancová for ŽS-SR

the ratio of the number of women elected to the number of female candidates was 0.84⁴ while in the 2006 national elections the ratio was only 0.57. (Kovář – Kovář, 2012)

The amount of female candidates for the EP stayed at approximately the same level in the next electoral term (2009 – 2014), where 16 parties ran⁵. Out of 184 candidates, 50 were again women (27.2 %). In the 2010 NP elections, there were 22.7 % female candidates. The order of candidate lists to the EP disadvantaged women even more than in the previous elections; only two lists were led by a woman⁶, and only two parties positioned a female candidate in the second place⁷. Interestingly, one party used the so called zip-system on the candidate list (SZ) and all parties nominated at least one female candidate. An exception was the Democratic Party where, again, there was only one male candidate in total. Despite the controversial positioning of female candidates on the ballot lists, the ratio of women elected to female candidates was 0.81 while in the 2010 NP elections it was 0.62. (Kovář – Kovář, 2012)

Five women were elected to the EP in both terms⁸. In the sixth term, Slovakia had 14 seats in the EP and 35.7 % of them were occupied by women (in the NP there were 20% women in the years 2006 – 2010). In accordance with the changes in the redistribution of seats adopted in 2007, Slovakia had only 13 seats in the EP in the seventh electoral term (2009 – 2014). Thus, the five female MEPs made up 38.5 % of the whole representation of the Slovak Republic (while in the NP there were 16 % women in the term 2010 – 2012). The number of women representing the Slovak Republic in the EP slightly surpassed the average percentage of female representation in the EP, which was 30.2 % in the sixth, and 34.8 % in the seventh term. (*Women in the European Parliament*, 2011)

It is obvious that for female politicians in Slovakia, the EP represents a good opportunity for getting into high-level politics. However, as the EP is considered to be a second-order political institution, the question of the real political power attained through office as an MEP remains at least controversial.

⁴ The ratio is calculated as the number of elected women divided by the number of all female candidates.

⁵ Smer – Social Democracy (Smer-SD – Smer – Sociálna demokracia); The Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic party (SDKÚ-DS – Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana); The Party of Hungarian Coalition (SMK – Strana maďarskej koalície); Christian Democratic Movement (KDH – Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie); People's Party – Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (ĽS-HZDS – Ľudová strana – Hnutie za demokratické Slovensko); Slovak National Party (SNS – Slovenská národná strana); Freedom and Solidarity (SaS – Sloboda a solidarita); Green Party (SZ – Strana zelených); Conservative Democrats of Slovakia (KDS, OKS – Konzervatívni demokrati Slovenska); Communist Party of Slovakia (KSS – Komunistická strana Slovenska); Free Forum (SF – Slobodné fórum); Party of the Democratic Left (SDĽ – Strana demokratickej ľavice); The Agrarian Party of Countryside (ASV – Agrárna strana vidieka); Mission 21 – Movement of Christian Solidarity (Misia 21 – Hnutie kresťanskej solidarity); The Democratic Party (DS – Demokratická strana); LIGA – Civic-Liberal Party (LIGA – Občiansko-liberálna strana)

⁶ Jana Budáčová for SZ, Edit Bauer for SMK

⁷ Martina Čierna for LIGA, Ľudmila Farkašová for SF

⁸ In the sixth term, all (both male and female) candidates elected to the EP held at least the third position on the ballot list (elected female candidates: Edit Bauer no. 1, Irena Belohorská no. 3, Monika Flašíková-Beňová no. 1, Zita Pleštinská no. 3, Anna Záborská no. 1) . In the seventh term, the candidates elected to the EP held at least the fifth position on the ballot (elected female candidates: Edit Bauer no. 1, Monika Flašíková-Beňová no. 2, Katarína Neveďalová no. 5, Monika Smolková no. 4, Anna Záborská no. 3)

Table 1: Descriptive representation of female MEPs representing the Slovak Republic in the sixth and seventh terms of the EP

Sixth electoral term (2004 – 2009)				Comparison to NP 2006 – 2010	Comparison to EP's average 2004 – 2009
No. of candidates	Women	No. of MEPs	Women		
188	50 (26.6%)	14	5 (35.7%)	22.7% / 20%*	30.2%
Seventh electoral term (2009 – 2014)				Comparison to NP 2010 – 2012	Comparison to EP's average 2009 – 2014
No. of candidates	Women	No. of MEPs	Women		
184	50 (27.2%)	13	5 (38.5%)	22.7% / 16 %*	34.8%

* the former number refers to the percentage of female candidates in the national elections; the latter to the percentage of female MPs in the national parliament

Data sources: Bútorová – Filadelfiová, 2011; Kantola, 2009; Kovář – Kovář, 2012; Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic; *Women in European Parliament*, 2011

2. Activity of female MEPs representing the Slovak Republic

Altogether, over past ten years, the Slovak Republic has been represented in the EP by seven female politicians. In the first term of Slovak representation in the EP (2004 – 2009), among the 14 MEPs from Slovakia, five were women: Edit Bauer, Irena Belohorská, Monika Flašíková-Beňová, Zita Pleštinská, and Anna Záborská. In the elections in 2009, Edit Bauer, Monika Flašíková-Beňová, and Anna Záborská were re-elected and during the seventh term of the EP (2009 – 2014) they served together with two new elected female MEPs – Katarína Neveďalová and Monika Smolková.

Most of the elected female MEPs representing Slovakia served on committees where women traditionally dominate.⁹ Only three of them served on committees with less than 30% women. Table 2 summarises the division of the MEPs according to the committees, together with information about the overall representation of women on the committees.

Table 2: Representation of Slovak female MEPs according to division of EP committees

Committee of EP	Representatives	% of women
2004 – 2009		
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)	Edit Bauer (member)	95 %
	Zita Pleštinská (member)	
	Anna Záborská (chair, member)	
Committee on Internal Market and	Zita Pleštinská (member)	52.3 %

⁹ To approximate the substantive political interest of female MEPs representing The Slovak Republic, this report concentrates mainly on the division of MEPs in the EP Committees. The division in regard to Delegations of the EP can be found at the web pages of the EP -

(http://www.europsky.parlament.sk/sk/zoznam_poslancov/poslanci_podla_delegacii.html). Important activities taken on behalf of a specific delegation or offices held are discussed below.

Consumer Protection (IMCO)		
Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI)	Irena Belohorská (member)	48.5 %
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)	Edit Bauer (member)	41.2 %
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)	Edit Bauer (member) Monika Flašíková-Beňová (member)	34.6 %
Committee on Development (DEVE)	Anna Záborská (member)	30.6 %
Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET)	Monika Flašíková-Beňová (member)	20.9 %
2009 – 2014		
Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM)	Edit Bauer (member) Katarína Neveďalová (member) Anna Záborská (member)	85.7 %
Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL)	Edit Bauer (member)	54.0 %
Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE)	Edit Bauer (member) Monika Flašíková-Beňová (member)	51.7 %
Committee on Culture and Education (CULT)	Katarína Neveďalová (member)	48.4 %
Committee on Regional Development (REGI)	Monika Smolková (member)	28.6 %
Committee on Development (DEVE)	Anna Záborská (member)	26.7 %

Statistical data source: *Women in the European Parliament*, 2011

As can be seen in Table 2, female MEPs representing the Slovak Republic were active mostly in the FEMM Committee of the EP; four of the total seven MEPs were members of FEMM and Anna Záborská also served as the chairperson of FEMM. Because activities of the MEPs in the FEMM Committee will be the subject of the last section of this report (substantial representation of women in EP), at this point, the report will concentrate on the activities of female MEPs representing Slovakia in other political areas.

Edit Bauer served in the EP during its sixth and seventh terms. She was a candidate of the national party SMK, and member of the European People's Party Group. Before election to the EP, Edit Bauer held several offices in high-level politics in Slovakia. She was a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, state secretary of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Family of the Slovak Republic, and member of various committees of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic. In the EP, she was member of three committees: the FEMM, EMPL and LIBE committees. On the EMPL and LIBE committees, she dealt mostly with the issues connected to anti-discrimination legislation and protection of vulnerable groups and individuals. Among the most important aspects here is the fact that, as a member of the EMPL, she was a rapporteur on the proposal for the directive on the organisation of working time for individuals. As a LIBE member, Edit Bauer took up activities mostly connected to the problem of human trafficking.

Monika Flašíková-Beňová served in the EP during its sixth and seventh terms. She was a candidate of the national party Smer, which is a member of the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. Monika Flašíková-Beňová is co-founder of the political party Smer. She has been active both in national (MP) and regional politics (vice-chair of regional self-government). In the EP, Monika Flašíková-Beňová served as a member of EMPL, AFET and LIBE committees. She was also the most active Slovak MEP. In the seventh term of the EP, Monika Flašíková-Beňová was, as a member of LIBE, involved with anti-discrimination, the elimination of racism and xenophobia, and the enforcement of LGBT rights. She participated in several motions for resolutions

dealing with issues such as Roma people and free movement, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in Lithuania, and the fight against racism, xenophobia and hate crime.

Anna Záborská served in the EP in its sixth and seventh terms as a member of National party KDH, which belonged to the European People's Party Group. Before serving in the EP she was active in high-level politics in Slovakia – she was a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, chairperson of the Committee of the Government Office of the Slovak Republic for Healthcare, and member of several other governmental boards. In the EP, she served as a vice-chair (in the sixth term) and as a member (in the seventh term) of the FEMM committee. Later on, she was a member of the DEVE commission. Most of her activities focused on gender-related issues, and also, as a member of the DEVE committee she submitted, for example, a Report on an Agenda for Change which emphasised gender- and family-related issues. Thus, more attention to the activities of Anna Záborská will be given in the last section of this paper.

Irena Belohorská served as an MEP during the sixth electoral term as a candidate of the party HZDS (without European political group affiliation). Previously, she held the office of Minister of Healthcare, and was also a member of the National Council and held several offices in the government. In the EP, Irena Belohorská was a member of the ENVI committee, vice-chair of the EU-LAT delegation, and also held office in the Conference of Presidents – the only representative from the new Member States. Her activities concentrated mostly on the composition, power and responsibilities of specific units of the EP. As vice-chair of the EU-LAT she also participated in a motion for a resolution on the fifth EU-LAT Summit in Lima.

Zita Pleštinská served in the EP during its sixth term for the national party SDKÚ-DS – member of the European People's Party Group. Before becoming an MEP, Zita Pleštinská was active mostly in regional politics - she held the office of mayor, as well as further regional-level offices. In the EP, Zita Pleštinská was a member of FEMM and IMCO committees, whose activity she mainly focused on. One of her most important contributions to EU politics was a report on the proposal for a decision of the EP and the Council on the financing of European standardisation, which constituted a legislative base for the policies of the European standardisation in Regulation no. 1025/2012.

Katarína Neved'alová represented the national party Smer-SD (in the Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament) during the seventh electoral term of the EP. Before serving in the EP, Katarína Neved'alová was assistant to a member of The National Council of the Slovak Republic and was politically active mostly in national and international partisan structures. In the EP, she served as a member of FEMM and CULT committees and during her service she focused mainly on issues related to youth and education; specifically on the topic of occupational and educational mobility and on the topic of interconnection between education and occupational training. She was the shadow rapporteur for the framework for improvement of the European education and training system Youth on the Move.

Monika Smolková served as an MEP on behalf of the national party Smer-SD during the seventh electoral term of the EP. Previously, she was active both in national-level politics (Member of the Council of the Slovak Republic) and regional-level politics (a mayoral office). As an MEP, Monika Smolková was a member of the REGI committee, where, as a rapporteur, she submitted a report on the proposal for a regulation on a European grouping of territorial cooperation with regard to clarifying, simplifying and improving the establishment and implementation of such groupings.

3. Substantive representation of women and gender-equality policies: Contribution from Slovak MEPs

Since its inception in 1987, the European Union has promoted equality between women and men, while the EP counts as one of the key institutions able to assert gender equality policies. The EP has the competence to adopt resolutions which can serve mainly as tools for further political lobbies, as well as directives which oblige Member States to take action on issues under consideration. Over more than 30 years, one of the permanent committees of the EP is the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM). The agenda of FEMM concentrates mainly on the issues of equal treatment and opportunities for women and men in the professional sphere, gender mainstreaming and gender budgeting, balanced representation between women and men in politics, and the problem of violence against women (Toutain, 2013). Among these issues, MEPs representing the Slovak Republic have dealt mainly with, and contributed to, the issues of gender mainstreaming, as well as equal pay and working opportunities. However, several activities related to gender equality were taken out of the scope of FEMM committee, specifically the issue of human trafficking and equal LGBT rights.

These issues were focussed on mainly by three female MEPs representing the Slovak Republic – Edit Bauer, Monika Flašíková-Beňová, and Anna Záborská, who can be perceived as Slovak “critical actors” of gender-related policies in the EP. However, as is obvious in the subsequent part of this report, each of these MEPs not only concentrated on different issues related to gender equality, but also held more or less distinct positions according to their ideological background. The subsequent text summarises some of the most important activities taken in the field of gender equality by these three MEPs.

Anna Záborská, as the chairperson of FEMM

Before concretising the contribution of Slovak MEPs to the abovementioned issues, it is necessary to note the most important achievement of Slovak MEPs in the FEMM committee – the chair of **Anna Záborská**. Anna Záborská held the chair of FEMM from September 2004, and in March 2007 she was re-elected and held the office till July 2009. Anna Záborská represents a conservative political ideology. As Agnieszka Rochon and Agnieszka Grzybek stated in the Introduction to the publication summarising the first five years of EU membership of Poland, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic, “The Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee in the European Parliament, led by a conservative Anna Zaborska, was also unwilling to take more progressive steps.” (2009, p. 5) Later (*ibid*) the authors complain about the shift in both discursive and legislative framing of gender equality policies: “The equality and antidiscrimination discourse has replaced the discourse of women's rights, which may lead to the marginalisation of certain demands (e.g. the right to abortion, the right to contraception etc.)”. This shift in the framing of gender equality is characteristic of the agenda represented by Anna Záborská; even though she promoted and successfully passed the report on gender mainstreaming in the EP commissions, generally she has focussed much more on so called “family mainstreaming” – a term she used, for example, in the Report on an Agenda for Change on behalf of DEVE. Family-related issues (e.g. unpaid work, life-work balance etc.) belong to gender equality politics and are also an important agenda of feminist politics, however, Anna Záborská endeavoured to preserve the so called “traditional” – heterosexual – family and to suppress political initiatives to recognise other types of partnerships and families. Issues of sexual and reproductive rights and health, concerning, for example, the right to safe and legal abortion and contraception not only remained unaddressed, but Anna Záborská even explicitly spoke against them both in the EP and in her public and media speeches. Most recently, she did not vote for the report from Edite Estrella on sexual and reproductive health and rights promoting equal access to sexual and reproductive health services.

This standpoint of Anna Záborská, who, due to her position in FEMM represents an important authority in the field of gender equality in Slovakia, poses a serious complication

for the implementation of politics of gender equality in Slovakia. Especially nowadays, in the context of the struggle over state strategy on the protection and support of human rights, when gender-equality policies are being radically rejected and attacked by conservative associations, Anna Záborská, as former FEMM chairperson, represents an important power on the conservative side of the struggle (which she also publicly presents very straightforwardly, with her presence and public speeches on the Pro-life March, for example).

Thus, even though Anna Záborská has been very active, and we can say also successful, in the field of gender politics, her contribution to a rights-centered and equality-framed feminist gender politics is at some points controversial while at some others even negative.

Gender Mainstreaming

Even though **Anna Záborská** represents a conservative voice on the issue of gender equality, in 2006 (and later again in 2009) she submitted a Report on Gender Mainstreaming in the Work of Committees, where she stressed the importance of implementing gender mainstreaming and gender equality principles in the politics proposed by every single committee. The Parliament supported this position and on 18 January 2007 adopted a resolution which undertook to apply a gender mainstreaming strategy with regard to community policies and the work of its parliamentary committees. Gender mainstreaming – i.e. understanding seemingly “neutral” or mainstream politics from a gender perspective, which considers the impact and effects on both women and men – presents a key element in a holistic approach to the implementation of the politics of gender equality. However, what remains ambiguous is the explicit rejection of the concept of gender mainstreaming as “trying to erase the differences between men and women, whose origins are seen as “cultural”, and based on habits and traditions” in the speech made by Anna Záborská at the conference focussed on the perspective of the Church on gender politics organised by the Conference of Bishops of Slovakia (March 2013).

Equal treatment in employment and occupation

The greatest achievement concerning the issue of equal treatment of women and men in employment and occupation in recent years was the Recast Directive 2006/54/EC, which provides that sex discrimination in respect of all aspects of pay should be eliminated, and stipulates that any persons who have considered themselves discriminated against through a failure to apply this principle should be able to have their rights asserted by judicial process and be protected against any reprisals on the part of their employers. Also related to this directive, in February 2012 **Edit Bauer** submitted a Report with Recommendation to the Commission on the application of equal pay for women and men, in which she stated that The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality noted that fifty-five years after Article 119 of the Treaty of Rome, nothing has really changed. She asked the Commission to review Directive 2006/54/EC and implement the principle of equal opportunities and the equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation. She also urged a more precise definition of the gender pay gap, proper analysis of the situation, prevention of discrimination and the implementation of effective, proportionate and dissuasive sanctions. The report was adopted and resulted in the EP resolution of 24 May 2012 with recommendations to the Commission on the application of the principle of equal pay for male and female workers for equal work or work of equal value.

Human Trafficking

The problem of human trafficking received the attention of the EP in its seventh term. In March 2011, the EU Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting victims was adopted. The most important achievements of the Directive lay in the broadened scope of the definition of exploitation, the focus on victim

protection, more strict penalties for offenders and the introduction of the obligation for the Member States to establish national rapporteurs or equivalent mechanisms. The proposal for the directive aimed at repealing and replacing Framework Decision 2002/629/JHA was also initiated by **Edit Bauer**, who, as early as in January 2010, alongside Simon Busuttil, submitted the motion for the resolution on preventing trafficking in human beings. The motion urged “the adoption of a victim-focused approach, meaning that all potential categories of victim must be identified, targeted and protected, with special attention being given to children and other at-risk groups (...) the development of a common EU template for the collection and collation of data relating to all aspects of trafficking in human beings, including age and gender (...) [and stated that] the level of penalties and sanctions for those – including legal persons – who profit from trafficking in human beings should reflect the seriousness of the crime and have a dissuasive effect, and trafficking in children should be particularly severely punished“.

Even though trafficking has to be considered a gender-related issue per se (UNODC, 2012), Edit Bauer stressed the gender aspect of trafficking both in her public speeches (e.g. on The Sixth EU Anti-Trafficking Day held on 18 October 2012) as well as in her report from 2010. Edit Bauer thus contributed not only to the adoption of EU policies on the prevention of trafficking in human beings, but also towards a focus on gender aspects in the legislation.

Rights of LGBT persons

The issue of the rights of LGBT persons was dealt with mainly by the MEPs **Monika Flašíková-Beňová** and **Anna Záborská**. However, both politicians were active from opposite perspectives. While Monika Flašíková-Beňová advocated the rights of LGBT persons, Anna Záborská acted against the implementation of policies acknowledging the rights of LGBT persons. Among the activities of Monika Flašíková-Beňová, we can mention the most recent report on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2010 – 2011). In the section focussed on sexual orientation and gender identity, the report calls for recognition of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people, as well as for the adoption of a national legislative framework to address discrimination experienced by LGBT people and same-sex couples on grounds of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Following this report, the EP adopted a resolution on the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union (2010 – 2011) in December 2012.

However, Anna Záborská did not vote for this report, nor for the report from Ulrike Lunacek on the EU roadmap against homophobia and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. In her parliamentary speeches, Anna Záborská often disagreed with the implementation of terms such as homophobia and sexual identity, which would, according to her, mean the legitimisation of an ideological activism.

Conclusions

The European Parliament indisputably represents an important institution for the enforcement and implementation of policies of gender equality in all Member States and therefore in Slovakia. Representation of women in the EP at both levels markedly outruns the representation of women in Slovakia; female politicians have a much better chance of reaching the EP and thus serving in international high-level politics, and both female and male politicians have many more opportunities to deal with the issues of gender equality than they have in Slovak politics (as can be drawn from several notes on the disinterest of political institution on gender equality, see e.g. Lamačková, 2008). However, several important questions related to the better position of both women and gender equality politics remain open. As the first section of the current report states, the EP is considered both by politicians and voters to be a secondary political institution (Kovář – Kovář, 2012; Mesežnikov, 2009). It is thus questionable and unclear whether women who reach the EP more easily than they can achieve positions in national politics automatically reach a better position and opportunities in national politics, which is characterised by its masculine character

(Maďarová, 2011). Another important question concerns the contribution of gender-related activities of Slovak MEPs in EP to national politics. Firstly, as much analysis shows, the Slovak Republic does not score well on the effective implementation of the EU gender policies (Lamačková, 2008). Secondly, a massive amount of conservative political pressure can be observed in Slovakia nowadays and many of the activities undertaken by the MEP Anna Záborská support this trend. However, we cannot overlook the positive cases. Not only did Edit Bauer contribute substantially to the abovementioned issues of gender equality, but she was also engaged in other activities, which she treated in a holistic, gender-sensitive way (e. g. gender aspects of poverty, intersection of gender and age etc.). Furthermore, Monika Flašíková-Beňová publicly supported the idea of gender equality and rights for LGBTI people when she took part in the PRIDE march in Slovakia. Thus, even though the female MEPs from Slovakia were fairly active in the area of gender equality, their agenda does not introduce a consistent holistic approach to the issue.



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