

Chapter XII

Barriers of women's political promotion in Poland

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Poland's access to the European Union was related to implementation of regulations obligatorily imposed on all member countries. One of the priorities of the EU politics is equality of chances for women and men and introduction of changes which will influence the quality of life of women and men in a variety of disciplines. New countries especially require all necessary pro-equality changes embracing elimination of violence forms conditioned by the sex, sex stereotypes, promotion of women and men equality executed by means of state's politics.

A low level of women representation in Polish decisive bodies imposes a necessity for a closer look on varied conditions influencing status quo. The following article is an attempt to answer queries regarding barriers which hamper women from functioning in disciplines lately reserved exclusively for men. The undertaken analysis aims to verify the assumption on how differentiated factors can influence the degree of involvement of women and men in decision-making structures on a central and local level. The analysis will be conducted on the basis of available subject literature and statistical data reflecting women and men representation in Polish elective bodies.

In parliament of the Republic of Poland there are 110 women out of 460 MPs which constitutes 23.7%. In the Senate (the upper house of the Polish parliament) there are only 13 female senators out of 100 senators in total.¹ In local decision-making government bodies women constitute 25% and men 75%.² During last European Parliament elections, Polish women acquired 11 mandates out of 51 available for Poland which amounts to 21.5%.³ The reasons for a low political women representation in Poland are multiple. Underrepresentation

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¹ Państwowa Komisja Wyborcza (National Electoral Committee), <http://wybory2011.pkw.gov.pl> (access: 02.02.2015).

² On the basis of data <http://www.pkw.pl> (access: 13.05.2015).

³ <http://pe2014.pkw.gov.pl> (access: 11.05.2015).

of women in political life is a consequence of a general women position in the society. It is worth to point out that throughout the world, women have joined already established and shaped, men-made parliaments. Their low participation in authorities was not questioned as it was perceived as an effect of a traditional division into a male sphere (public) and a female one (private).⁴ Poland's access to the European Union's structures resulted in more frequent and louder discussions about barriers for women political promotion.

Women political activity has been influenced by cultural circumstances, deeply rooted in Polish society. Traditional upbringing determines the position of a woman and a man which only deepens the phenomena of unequal women and men representation in politics. Parents execute and pass on sexual roles unwittingly.⁵ They encourage children to pursue activities and actions sexually marked. John Stuart Mill states that "all women since childhood are brought up in the belief that the ideal of their character is to be wholly different to a male character; they are educated in a way not to have their own will and not to follow their whim but to surrender to others' will".⁶ For some women, political activity seems abstract and detached from daily life. Such an assumption regarding cultural differences is strengthened by school books. According to many scientists, they have enormous influence on sexual classification. Adam Buczkowski claims that a literary portrait of a woman doing household chores and a man spending all day out or tinkering with something, has not changed for years.⁷ Małgorzata Fuszara has pointed out a neglectful exclusion of women figures in history and while portraying outstanding people which builds up an assumption of a lack of women participation in shaping reality. School books portray women as people of narrow interests, most frequently occupied with household chores while professional work, attractions, wide interests and power are assigned to men. Women are presented as figures of low general knowledge, low ingeniousness and creativity.⁸ In a new school book for first grade students we can read a *Legend of Wars and Sawa* in which Wars is a young fisherman who has to defend the river, city and

⁴ Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce w okresie transformacji w Polsce* [Women in politics during transformation period in Poland], in: Monika Frąckowiak-Sochańska, Sabina Królikowska (eds.), *Kobiety w Polsce w okresie transformacji 1989–2009* [Women in Polish transformation 1989–2009. Summaries, interpretations, prognosis], Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010, p. 21.

⁵ Adam Buczkowski, *Dwa różne światy, czyli jak socjalizuje się dziewczynkę i chłopca* [Two different worlds: how to socialize a girl and a boy], in: Jolanta Brach-Czaina (ed.), *Od kobiety do mężczyzny i z powrotem: rozważania o płci w kulturze* [From a woman to a man and back. Considerations about the sex in culture], Trans Humana, Białystok 1997, p. 175.

⁶ John Stuart Mill, *Poddaństwo kobiet* [The Subjection of Women], in: idem, *O rządzie reprezentatywnym* [Considerations on Representative Government. The Subjection of Women], trans. by M. Chyżyńska, Znak, Warszawa 1995, p. 298.

⁷ Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce* [Women in politics], Wydawnictwo TRIO, Warszawa 2006, p. 56.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 56, 57.

a beautiful girl into which the mermaid has transformed. The man is presented as a power-holding entity while the woman is a feeble creature in need of a strong man's support. There arises a question: is it worth to give power to weak creatures who cannot survive without man's support?⁹ Underlining such discrepancies strengthens sexual stereotypes which are difficult to alter. And sexual stereotypes are nothing different as "simplified assumptions and behavior concepts of male and female representatives, shared by whole society and taught during the process of growing up and socializing in this society".¹⁰

According to Bogdan Wojciszke, interpersonal consequences of stereotypes are visible in alternative treatment of women and men by people and various institutions which consequently results in choices and experiences of entities.¹¹ Women are expected to realize their functions in private lives while men are expected to get involved in public life.¹² That is why the sphere of politics seems reserved exclusively for men. As it is aptly noted by Agnieszka Sznajder "stereotypical perception of people belonging to various social categories is acquired during the process of socialization, it also has additional strong emotional weight".¹³ According to the researcher this fact makes it difficult to eliminate stereotype-based way of perceiving social phenomena. Sexual stereotypes are one of determiners of women representation in the field of politics.

Family's influence on women and men participation in the structures of authority bodies is another important factor resulting in a low women representation in the field of politics. Fuszara points out on patriarchal culture that hampers women's activities especially on the level of local authorities which manifests itself by a man forbidding his wife to participate in elections.¹⁴ Without the support of close friends, political activity is not possible.¹⁵ However, for male politicians, a wife is a main source of support in a decision-making process. The support has both emotional and intellectual dimension. From such women, often presidents' wives, it is expected to underline their dependency on their husband,

⁹ *Elementarz [New School Book]*, cz. 4: *Lato* [Part 4: *Summer*], <http://www.wykop.pl/ramka/1954170/nowy-elementarz-men-do-pobrania-w-pdf/> (access: 29.02.2015).

¹⁰ Eugenia Mandal, *Kobiecość i męskość. Popularne opinie a badania naukowe [Femininity and masculinity. Popular opinions and scientific research]*, Wydawnictwo Akademickie Żak, Warszawa 2003, p. 38.

¹¹ Bogdan Wojciszke, *Człowiek wśród ludzi [A man among people]*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2004, p. 276, 420–422.

¹² Joanna Nawrocka, *O liderach i płci [About leaders and the sex]*, Wydawnictwo Pomorskiej Akademii Pedagogicznej, Słupsk 2005, p. 21.

¹³ Agnieszka Sznajder, *Kobiety i władza — analiza czynników sprzyjających większej aktywności kobiet [Women and power — analysis of factors conducive for a bigger political activity of women]*, in: Magdalena Musiał-Karg (ed.), *Kobiety we współczesnej Europie [Women in contemporary Europe]*, Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2009, p. 60–76.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

¹⁵ Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, p. 162.

surrendering to his ambitions, diminishing her value when compared to her husband, admiring and¹⁶ supporting him.¹⁷

Household chores limit time availability. Daily engagement of women into activities related to housekeeping and childcare constitutes approximately 6 hours and 58 minutes while men devote to the very same duties only 2 hours and 47 minutes.¹⁸ Lack of time caused by multiple tasks in the house is a barrier that women face in a bigger activeness on a political arena. As a result, political activity is often undertaken by mature women in their forties who have brought up their children and are mentally fit.¹⁹ According to Anne Phillips:

Providing political equality of women and men must embrace significant changes in the sphere of home life: for example leveling work time: transferring partial responsibility for household and children to a man: breaking patterns leading to uneven work division at home and outside by women and men. Whether on a basic level — due to lack of time or more complex phenomena which is permanent telling women what to do, household experience of women still limits their chances of equal participation in democracy.²⁰

Phillips reasons that men should enter traditional women roles. Sharing household duties will help women to make decisions regarding their activity in the public sphere. Household duties limit women time span so without the help of a family, it is impossible for a woman to exist politically. The first limitation shows that a woman active politically needs family support as she cannot act against her family. In Poland, after introduction of parental leave, demand for father care is not small. In 2012, almost 30,000 men made use of shorter maternity leaves — twice as many as in the previous year. From the research of Beata Łaciak from the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Custom and Law at University of Warsaw it seems that a Polish man does not get involved in household chores more often than a few years back but he spends more time with children.²¹ Steffan Herrström, the ambassador of Sweden in Poland convinces

¹⁶ Bogusława Budrowska, Danuta Dyduch, Anna Titkow, *Szklany sufit: bariery i ograniczenia karier polskich kobiet* [Glass ceiling: barriers and limitations of careers of Polish women], Instytut Spraw Publicznych, Warszawa 2003, p. 32.

¹⁷ Urszula Kluczyńska, *Kobiety na 'drugiej linii' władzy? Wizerunek kobiet (bez)pośrednio angażujących się w politykę* [Women on the 'second line' to authorities? Portrayal of women (in) directly involved in politics], in: Joanna Marszałek-Kawa (ed.), *Kobiety w polityce* [Women in politics], Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2010, p. 73, 74.

¹⁸ Report *Nieopłacalna praca kobiet — jak ją traktować, żeby skutecznie tworzyć podstawy opiekuńczego społeczeństwa* [Unprofitable women's work — how to treat it to successfully create the base of a social society], Instytut Spraw Publicznych [Institute of Public Affairs], Łódź 2006, p. 8.

¹⁹ Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, p. 161.

²⁰ Anne Phillips, *Przestrzeń publiczna, życie prywatne* [Public sphere, private life], in: Renata Siemieńska (ed.), *Aktorzy życia publicznego. Płeć jako czynnik różnicujący* [Actors of public life. Sex as a differentiating factor], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2003, p. 31.

²¹ Joanna Drosio-Czaplińska, *Kto to tata?* [Who is a dad?], "Polityka", No. 42(2929), p. 24–26.

that introduction of parental leave in his country in 1970s and lowering prices of day nurseries together with work time flexibility have proved beneficial for social sensitivity. According to Swedish research it seems that men who have made use of paternity leave, drink less, take more care of a diet and health, share their duties with partners and their marriages are more stable.²²

In the sphere of social conditions, there is also an issue related to a level of education. A right to education used to be one of elements of a wide process of providing equal rights for women and men. It was also a condition enabling undertaking of professional work which allowed women to obtain their own income and independent livelihood. Cultural stereotypes relate to the sex, imposing roles of wives and mothers on girls, limited educational possibilities among young females. Heated discussions and harsh attacks accompanied women's attempts in XIX century to be accepted to universities. The right to study at Polish universities was obtained gradually by women. In the nineties of XX century, the hundredth anniversary of accepting first women at Polish universities was celebrated.²³ In the mid- nineties of XX century, participation of people with university degrees was almost identical among women and men. In 2009 the number of women who graduated from universities was 24% in the whole population between 24–64 years of age and was higher by 6.7 percentage points than in case of men.²⁴ Girls usually perform better at school than boys and receive better results and more often obtain university diplomas. In 2009 and 2010 women constituted 58.2% of students' population. As it is written in the report on the state of education²⁵ women tend to study disciplines that do not ensure a high level of employment possibilities. They are still underrepresented on technical universities.²⁶ Polish women are still associated with better disposition for humanities and men are associated with technical disciplines.²⁷ More and more women continue their PhD careers at universities graduating successfully. Women's educational achievements are not, however, reflected on the job market.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 24.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 39.

²⁴ *Spółeczeństwo w drodze do wiedzy. Raport o stanie edukacji 2010 [Society on the way to knowledge. Report on the state of education 2010]*, Michał Federowicz, Michał Sitek (eds.), Instytut Badań Edukacyjnych [Institute of Educational Studies], Warszawa 2011, p. 22.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 218.

²⁶ Among IT students there was only 10% women and among students of engineering only 19.2%, see more: *ibidem*, p. 219.

²⁷ On Harvard website (www.implicit.harvard.edu/poland) one can find a research on the sex stereotype. The test was answered by over 3,000 Poles and 7,500 Germans. A stereotype regarding women's better disposition for studying humanities was supported by 80% of Poles and 74% of Germans. Contrary to Germans, as pointed out by Norbert Maliszewski, Poles do not do a lot to unroot sex stereotypes, see more: Norbert Maliszewski, *Jak zaprogramować wyborcę [How to program a voter]*, Centrum Doradztwa i Informacji Difin sp. z o.o., Warszawa 2008, p. 117.

They are more often unemployed and poorly remunerated. As it is underlined by the authors of the aforementioned report

educational achievements are somehow influenced by biological differences between women and men but it is environmental factors related to socializing that are decisive: acceptance of sexual roles in families, peer groups and copying stereotypical sexual roles in media and school education.²⁸

All undertaken activities within educational politics which aim at balancing chances should be, therefore, targeted on reducing inequalities between sexes on the job market. Attention is paid to improvement of boys' educational performance and creating interest among girls to pursue education in mathematics and sciences.²⁹

By analyzing social conditioning, it has to be underlined that Catholic religion plays a major role in the country. Catholic church unwillingly looks on the phenomena of women emancipation and sees women's role in the family sphere.³⁰ An indicator of professional activity is also closely related to a dominant religion of a country. The highest indicator can be observed in secular countries and in countries promoting protestant values. The indicator is lower in the countries in which Catholic religion dominates.³¹ Łukasz Wawrowski rises an argument that one of important factors influencing women's position in the society and political life, is Catholic religion. Countries such as Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway and Iceland are generally protestant countries. Catholicism which is a more hierarchy-based and authoritarian religion seems less friendly towards sex equality than Protestantism.³² For some time now, the number of people attending Sunday mass in Poland, has been diminishing. It is attended only by 40% of Catholics. Analysts warn that if the trend continues, within a couple of years, churches will become empty. Witold Zdaniewicz, a sociologist from Institute of Statistics of Catholic Church, claims that religiousness decreases and we face its changes. It can be partially explained by emigration to other countries. It can also be partially explained by the fact that there is less piety shown in daily practices. It is also accompanied by liberal changes.³³ Moral

²⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 217.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 223.

³⁰ Anna Sznajder, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

³¹ An exception here is Spain where mechanisms positively influencing women's public activity has been implemented. Furthermore, the highest indicator of professional activity can be observed in Scandinavian countries, see more: Anna Sznajder, *op. cit.*, p. 72; and *Report on equality between women and men — 2007*, Luxembourg 2007, p. 30.

³² Łukasz Wawrowski, *Polityka równych szans. Instytucjonalne mechanizmy zwiększenia partycypacji kobiet w strukturach politycznych na przykładzie państw Unii Europejskiej* [Politics of equal chances. Institutional mechanisms of increasing women participation in political structures on the example of the European], Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2011, p. 181.

³³ See more: Katarzyna Wiśniewska, *Kościołne badania: Tylko 40 proc. katolików uczestniczy w niedzielnej mszy* [Church research: Only 40% of Catholics participate in Sunday mass], available at <http://wyborcza.pl/1,76842,12034409> (access: 20.06.2012).

changes have as well contributed to this status quo. A bigger secularization of Polish society is inevitable.

Economic situation is yet another barrier that places women on a lost position. It is underlined that a rising level of urban development and economic progress is accompanied by a rise in education level and women participation in the job market which leads to weakening traditional values regarding the role and place of women in the society, and therefore their emancipation.³⁴ In countries such as Poland, women are discouraged from participation in the public sphere by problems on the job market, insufficient day nurseries and kindergartens, inequalities in remuneration and traditional division of family duties sanctioned by the state's tradition. A different situation of women and men on the job market regarding: level of received remuneration, indicator of professional activity, indicator of unemployment, does not remain indifferent to political involvement of persons representing both sexes. An average monthly salary of men in 2013 revolved around PLN 4,500, that is around EUR 1,000.³⁵ Women earned PLN 900 less, that is EUR 200 less. Every four of them received a salary lower than PLN 2,500 (around EUR 600). Remunerations of 25% of men were above PLN 7,500 (EUR 1,750).³⁶ The highest differences between women's and men's remunerations were observed on the level of a director/management. On average, women earned PLN 3,200 less (about EUR 740). Half of the men employed as managers earned from PLN 4,400 to PLN 10,000 (around EUR 100–230). Women received salaries of about PLN 5,800 (approximately EUR 1,300). It looked similar regarding education. In the group of people with MA or MSc degrees, women earned PLN 1,716 less than men (about EUR 400). The difference was shaped on the level of about 30%.³⁷ A household pays attention to economy, aiming at minimizing losses and maximizing profits which contributes to keeping existing status quo — a man provides funds to make a living for the family and a woman looks after home. Without financial backup, an active participation in public life is not possible. Present electoral campaigns are very costly and political parties do not have special funds that could be used to finance initiatives supporting women. Division of political parties' financial means to allow more women to make use of them could contribute to their more active presence in politics.

In political emancipation of women in Poland, historical factors have played a major role. Although Polish women obtained active and passive voting right in

³⁴ Richard E. Matland, *Women's Representation in National Legislatures Developed and Developing Countries*, "Legislative Studies Quarterly" 1998, No. 23; after Anna Paczeński, *Kobiety w Parlamencie Europejskim, Przelamywanie stereotypu płci w polityce* [Women in European Parliament. Breaking the stereotype of the sex in politics], Wydawnictwo Atła 2, Wrocław 2006, p. 11.

³⁵ Poland has not introduced euro currency yet.

³⁶ Remuneration of women and men in 2013, published at http://www.wynagrodzenia.pl/payroll/artykul.php/typ.1/kategoria_glowna.503/wpis.2867 (access: 06.05.2015).

³⁷ *Ibidem*.

1918, their participation in authority bodies was not and is still not proportional to their number in the whole society. The presence of Polish women in political sphere since democratic changes in 1989, evolved in multiple directions. Regaining by parliament the role of political representation in times of system transformation was not taking place simultaneously with a balanced participation of both sexes. The rise of acceptance of women in politics, decreasing number of followers of the belief in which a woman is supposed to take care of home and family and a man should provide financial means³⁸ but also an organized action of feminine organizations and groups aimed at creating a positive view of a candidate, resulted in a bigger number of female candidates in parliamentary elections in the following years. Until this moment however, the critical level of 30% of women presence in authority bodies has not been exceeded. In Polish parliament we still have around 24% women among all members. It is pointed out in the scientific literature that as a result of system changes, new barriers have emerged. They limit women's self-realization in public life. The role of a woman has become to be described by conservative political forces in relation to family context, not her activity in the public sphere.

Political parties' attitude participating in elections towards the issue of equality of women and men is another factor that influences the level of women's political activity. Ideological perception of groups participating in elections is very important. Right-wing parties are not willing to promote the idea of equality of chances in politics. Polish two social democratic parties — SLD (Democratic Left Alliance) and UP (Labour United) together with Partia Zielonych (Green Party) and Unia Wolności (Freedom Union) — central right party with liberal orientation,³⁹ have introduced in Poland, within their regulations, quota amounts regarding representation of each sex in public authority bodies. It was an interesting marketing action that triggered a discussion about equality rights in Poland. A 'fashion for women' has emerged and this change of mentality was necessary to treat the matter of women's political participation more seriously.⁴⁰ Right wing parties cared and still care more for maintaining a traditional authority relation between sexes and stereotypical division into male — public sphere and female — private sphere. Unwillingness for 'equal chances' politics leads to a situation when a party's political orientation, its location on left-right wing scale, influences the process of selecting candidates for electoral registers regarding their sex. Voters however, by

³⁸ In 1992 the percentage of followers of this model was 85% and in 2002 — 61%, after Renata Siemieńska (ed.), *Płeć, władza, wybory* [Sex, power, elections], Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scholar, Warszawa 2005, p. 42.

³⁹ Krystyna A. Paszkiewicz (ed.), *Partie i koalicje polityczne III Rzeczypospolitej* [Parties and political coalitions of III Polish Republic], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, Wrocław 2000, p. 145.

⁴⁰ Sylwia Spurek, *Kobiety, partie, wybory* [Women, parties, elections], Wydawca: Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet, Łódź 2002, p. 63.

giving their vote decide who will represent them in legislation, but they do not have influence over electoral registers. It's political parties that decide on the contents of electoral registers and sequence of people running for elections, about women and men chances in elections and their representation in collegial bodies.

It is worth to look closer at legal conditions and their effects on women electoral representation in Poland. They regard records in enacted new Electoral Code passed by the Sejm of Republic of Poland on 5th January 2011 which introduced an obligation of using quotas on electoral registers. A regulation that a list consisting of less than 35% of women cannot be registered is applied within list-making to the Sejm because in the Senate, single member districts have been introduced. A similar solution has been accepted with regards to local elections' electoral registers and during elections in 2014, single member districts will be in force in communes not being cities on laws of the district.⁴¹ It turns out that application of proportional system increases chances of women to obtain nominations to representative bodies in Poland. The majority statute systematically excludes minorities from the political representation. Introduction of binding quota statute resulted in a double increase in the number of women on electoral registers in elections to the Sejm in 2011. In 2011, 3,063 women stood for election to the lower chamber of Parliament and the number constituted 44% whereas in the Senate with its single member districts, women constituted only 14% of all candidates.⁴² Introduction in Poland obligatory quotas on electoral registers gave rise to a fresh look on women's political activity. Right wing parties began to notice that an increase in number of women on electoral registers can contribute to expansion of electorate and result in a better electoral result. Sanctions for lack of application of quotas on electoral registers obliged political groups to search for active candidates willing to act in the public sphere.⁴³

One of the barriers that hamper women's functioning in politics is also the fact that political parties are not willing to place their female members in typically male disciplines such as constructions, state's defense, finances, international and domestic affairs. Access to ministerial positions in male disciplines requires from women facing stereotypes regarding their qualifications and competencies, their mentality or 'biological nature'.⁴⁴ Political groups place their female members in positions related to the so-called 'female' disciplines which comprise: education, healthcare, welfare, counteracting unemployment, equality of chances for women and men, family life.⁴⁵ Committees in parliament or in local governments are often filled by women. Men are not expected to have any special qualifications in

⁴¹ See Bill from 5.01.2011 — *Electoral Code* (Dz.U. Nr 21, poz. 112, art. 418 § 1).

⁴² Małgorzata Niewiadomska-Cudak, *Kobiety w organach kolegialnych w latach 1919–2011* [*Women in Polish Collegial Bodies in 1919–2011*], Wydawnictwo Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2013, p. 233.

⁴³ See more: *Electoral Code*.

⁴⁴ Anna Sznajder, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.

female disciplines because they are believed to perform well. This dichotomous division into female and male world is preserved in social perception. In a research conducted in 2004 by CBOS (Centre for Public Opinion Research) requested by Fuszara, respondents stated that among the reasons for a smaller participation of women in politics, one can point out maternity and numerous household duties. The second position was occupied by discrimination and barriers posed by men such as favouring men, threat of competition from women's side, male chauvinism. A stereotype of 'men wielding power'⁴⁶ in the society was also mentioned. Another research conducted by Fuszara in 2010 confirmed that respondents saw the reasons for unequal women representation in politics in tradition and habits (49%) and household duties overload (49%).⁴⁷ This burden of tradition places men in authority bodies. On the other hand, assigning women exclusively to the private sphere leads to an assumption regarding woman's responsibility for this sphere and to a larger activity in household duties than men. Women are perceived as entities willing to help, compassionate, having good heart and devoting for others. Men are seen as strong, ambitious and possessing leadership skills. As a result of a division of roles of both sexes, men in the process of socializing are encouraged to hold power and that is why they are more favoured during elections. Electorate is certain of their higher political competency. On the other hand, the stereotype makes women hold roles related to weakening hierarchy.⁴⁸ Women also less frequently participate in elections. According to Polish General Election Project (PGSW), less than 10% of women cast their votes. Women admit that they do not go to elections because "they don't have knowledge about politics". Every third woman as well as every third man explains that "elections don't decide about anything important for people like me". Women, who do not go to elections, claim that they take care of solid issues, children, home, professional work, they have many things to do and they concentrate on them. Therefore, politics still seems a sphere in which women can find themselves if, to some extent, they will accept male rules of the game. The roles that are assigned to women in political parties are not far from stereotypical perception of women. On the one hand, they are to warm and sooth the image in perception of a particular political group, on the other hand women are used for 'unpunished' attacking political opponents. Women are also assigned a role of 'busy bees' whose task is to do a necessary but not spectacular work.⁴⁹ Femininity is still associated with carnality. If a female politician is attractive, her beauty remains in contradiction with the gravity of a function she holds. If she lacks beauty — she will

⁴⁶ The research was conducted on a representative group of 1002 adult Poles; see more: Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 22.

⁴⁸ Anna Paczeński, *Potrzebne na gwałt, czyli kobiety w polskich partiach politycznych* [Needed urgently — about women in Polish political parties], in: Joanna Marszałek-Kawa (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 258

be classified as a freak and a frustrate.⁵⁰ This excessive concentration on the looks is not conducive for holding leadership functions in the country. Norbert Maliszewski accused women who were members of parliament in previous parliament created by Donald Tusk, that they do not make use of their positions as it is done by their counterparts in Spain, Italy, France and are merely men wearing skirts. Maliszewski wrote that in order to improve the image of Donald Tusk's parliament in years 2007–2011 and weaken a critical blade aimed at him, it is necessary to call in female MPs, pretty and sexy. For a particularly pretty woman he chose Joanna Mucha who became a minister in next term of office.⁵¹ Mucha became famous for proposing to call her 'lady minister' instead of simple 'minister'. A debate began around the nickname which was soon supported by Polish Language Council. According to professor Andrzej Markowski, the chairman of Polish Language Council, female forms of names of professions and titles are allowed. However, such forms often raise negative emotions among Polish speakers.⁵² In his perception of women in politics, Maliszewski was not alone. A woman is perceived by the society through features of character such as passivity, submissiveness, trustworthiness, stereotypical social roles and attractive looks.⁵³

Another barrier is a lack of women solidarity in promoting other women's careers. Magdalena Środa, when asked as to how she would comment on CBOS results that only 17% of women would like to work closely with other women but 70% in a situation of a female-male conflict supports a man, responded that she is not surprised because women do not have experiences of common activities. Women, according to Środa, are rarely loyal.

If a woman is lucky and makes it to the top, she is a rarity and proudly defends her uniqueness, forgetting who she is. Other women remind her of her old oppression so she denies solidarity with them.⁵⁴ The ones who manage to obtain higher positions, forget about other women in fear of losing achieved position, which does not influence an increase in women political representation. What is interesting, Hanna Suchocka, first female prime minister in the history of Poland, despite numerous petitions from female groups and organizations, did not decide on establishing

⁵⁰ Agnieszka Graff, *Świat bez kobiet. Płeć w polskim życiu publicznym* [World without women. Sex in Polish public life], Wydawnictwo W.A.B., Warszawa 2001, p. 40.

⁵¹ Norbert Maliszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 94–96.

⁵² Magdalena Fris, *Wikipedia: żeńskie nazwy zawodów? Nie w Polsce!* [Wikipedia: female names of professions? Not in Poland!], available at <http://media2.pl/internet/92302-Wikipedia-zenskie-nazwy-zawodow-nie-w-Polsce.html> (access: 15.07.2015).

⁵³ Dorota Zaworska-Nikoniuk, *Uczestnictwo kobiet w polityce i kariery polityczne kobiet upowszechniane w magazynach luksusowych i prasie feministycznej* [Women participation in politics and women political careers popularised in women magazines and feminist press], in: Joanna Marszałek-Kawa (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁵⁴ Magdalena Jankowska, *Dlaczego kobiety przegrywają w wyborach?* [Why do women lose in elections?], a conversation with Magdalena Środa available at <http://www.newsweek.pl/styl-zycia/dlaczego-kobiety-przegrywaja-w-wyborach-41318,1,1.html> (access: 12.04.2015).

a position of a Female Proxy. She claimed that she could not see the need for actions regarding women promotion and filling in an open position.⁵⁵ A woman entering political life has a choice — she can either become similar to men⁵⁶ or remain ‘a true woman’. According to Agnieszka Graff, if a woman “creates her image opposing stereotypes, she is accused of ‘lack of femininity’ (case of Suchocka) and if she does not resign from her sex, she will be blamed for excessively ‘feminine’ attitude to politics (that was the case of Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz when she was running for presidency)”.⁵⁷ Women who have obtained high positions are afraid of other women. It stems from a couple of reasons. First of all, working with men seems less conflict and what is more, they treat other women as rivals and thirdly, they cannot implement equality policy through their actions. There is also one more reason regarding men’s attitude towards women on high positions who can replace them in fulfilling office duties. Men often in presence of women speak with irony about introduction of equality politics because they are afraid of being excluded from public life. The problem is that all actions undertaken to balance chances are perceived by men as a threat, not as support of a female group.

What needs to change are the relations among women which are characterized by lack of solidarity and competition. Lack of women solidarity is described by Joanna Marszałek-Kawa. She claims that it is a problem of psychology as women do not like being ‘managed’ by women. Psychologists point out that women treat one another as rivals.⁵⁸ It is not difficult to agree with these statements as many women who existed in politics, held high positions in authority bodies, did not practically supported other ladies. They tended to cooperate more with men than with women. Hanna Suchocka frequently underlined her attitude towards Catholic Church and promotion of traditional division of roles. In Hanna Suchocka’s parliament all ministerial seats were occupied by men. Central celebrations of Women’s Day were abandoned by her although as many as 78% of Polish females still celebrates 8th March as Women’s Day.⁵⁹ Renata Siemieńska thinks however that her assessment as a good politician was more important than her unwillingness to change a traditional concept of women role in the society together with supporting restrictive antiabortion

⁵⁵ Urszula Nowakowska, *Instrumenty państwa na rzecz awansu kobiet* [State’s tools for women promotion], in: Barbara Gadomska, Maja Korzeniewska, Urszula Nowakowska (eds.), *Kobiety w Polsce w latach 90.* [Women in Poland of the nineties], Wydawca: Fundacja Centrum Praw Kobiet, Warszawa 2000, p. 10.

⁵⁶ Magdalena Środa, *Król jest nagi! Niech żyje królowa* [The emperor has no clothes! Long live the queen], OŚKa — Ośrodek Informacji Środowisk Kobiety, available at <http://www.oska.org.pl/biuletyn/b11/srodapolit.html> (access: 17.06.2015).

⁵⁷ Agnieszka Graff, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

⁵⁸ Joanna Marszałek-Kawa, *Brakuje nam solidarności, czyli dlaczego kobiety nie głosują na kobiety* [We lack solidarity — why women don’t vote for women?], in: eadem (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 233.

⁵⁹ Data according to a report from Internet research „Women’s Day” (2004) 80% respondents below 25 years of age, after: Marcin Milczarski, *Marzenia nie tylko od święta* [Dreams not only once in a blue moon], available at www.magazynfamilia.pl (access: 12.02.2015).

act.⁶⁰ Since the end of September 2014, Poland had a new Prime Minister because the president of Republic of Poland, Bronisław Komorowski, designated Ewa Kopacz (the previous Chairman of the Sejm) on 15th September, to form a new parliament. Ewa Kopacz, as a second woman in the history of Third Republic of Poland, started to execute duties of the Prime Minister⁶¹.

Psychological factors have a significant influence on making a decision of entering political activity. Lack of faith in one's competencies, strengthened by the group which certainly and loudly accentuates that women do not have necessary features enabling them to hold power effectively because these features are common for men, leads to resignation from functions considered manlike.⁶² Women face higher expectations than men who apply for the same position. These who express postures and behaviours stereotypically assigned to representatives of the other sex such as entrepreneurship, self-confidence, the rule of 'iron fist' are considered 'men in skirts'.⁶³ According to D. Zaworska-Nikoniuk a woman to shine in politics has a few strategies to choose from. The author names seven of them:

1) masculinization — erasing features associated with femininity and acquiring features associated with masculinity;⁶⁴ 2) Azrael cat — supporting male projects and conformity;

3) 'remaining in the shade' — being in company of a well-known male politician allows a woman to appear in the media sphere;

4) 'a neck shaking a head' — realization of her own projects by means of male support from a friend from the same political option;

5) a strategy of the seeming feminism — interest in female issues to gain women's support as voters;

6) non-conformism strategy — building own political career by means of independent projects without men's support;

7) an attempt to create her own female party and struggle with multiple social stereotypes. According to Dorota Zaworska-Nikoniuk, first five strategies enlarge women's chances to pursuit political careers. They do not, however, influence a real change of living conditions of women and their engagement into political life.

⁶⁰ Renata Siemieńska, *op. cit.*; after: www.miestokobiet.art.pl/Plec_a_wybory/Postawy.html (access: 09.04.2015).

⁶¹ See <http://www.prezydent.pl/aktualnosci/wydarzenia/art,3023,prezydent-desygnowal-ewe-kopacz-na-premiera.html> (access: 12.02.2015).

⁶² Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, p. 160.

⁶³ Norbert Maliszewski, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

⁶⁴ The classification proposed by Dorota Zaworska-Nikoniuk, see more: Dorota Zaworska-Nikoniuk, *Uczestnictwo kobiet w polityce i kariery polityczne kobiet upowszechniane w magazynach luksusowych i prasie feministycznej [Women participation in politics and women political careers popularised in women magazines and feminist press]*, in: Joanna Marszałek-Kawa (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 180.

The role of media regarding keeping up stereotypical perception of roles in the society is also underlined.⁶⁵ Fuszara points out on the way of presenting female candidates in television programs.⁶⁶ Researches of pre-election television campaigns prove that figures of women are shown on TV less frequently than men and less time is assigned to broadcasting female speeches when compared to men. Statistical data prove that in programs which are free of charge for parties and committees — paid for by taxpayers of both sexes, time distribution is less favourable for women than their position on electoral registers⁶⁷. Mass media can therefore contribute to elimination of women in political life. From the data provided by the management of Polish Radio station in Lodz 'Radio Lodz' it turns out that broadcasts of Radio Lodz in July 2014 such as: 'Good morning', 'Pulse of the city and region', 'I ask so I am', 'My radio, my music', 'Our children', 'Parliamentary Monday', 'Upbringing is a challenge', 'Local government from A to Z' were attended by 410 women and 765 men. It has to be pointed out that to programs such as 'Parliamentary Monday' or 'Local government from A to Z' mainly men were invited and in the last program there were no women at all.⁶⁸

Sonia Szczepańska, the author of an article *Kobieta — zwierzę polityczne?* [*Woman — a political animal?*] notices that questions which are asked of female candidates, regard personal life and not qualifications, disposition for professional achievements through which there is a stereotype built up that "women know nothing of politics".⁶⁹ The role of the media in perception of the world is immense. Knowledge and image of an entity about political reality is more often based on its representation by the media. This repetitive and short-term perception of reality happening on the basis of the media leads to creation of solid pictures about reality, considered typically as the right version of reality.⁷⁰ It can influence modification of stereotypical perception of women.

To sum up, it has to be pointed out that we cannot talk about improvement of a situation in the sphere of public life without eliminating barriers which cause uneven treatment of women and men willing to prosper actively in public life. Despite numerous declarations regarding willingness and necessity of transforming existent status quo, results in the form of achieving equality of women and men are far from ideal. What changes should be introduced that would limit not institutional barriers? Only a long-term strategy will allow for a change

⁶⁵ Joanna Marszałek-Kawa, *Brakuje nam solidarności...*, p. 233.

⁶⁶ Małgorzata Fuszara, *Kobiety w polityce*, p. 105.

⁶⁷ Eadem, *Kobiety w polityce w okresie transformacji...* p. 27.

⁶⁸ Data provided by management of 'Radio Lodz'.

⁶⁹ Sylwia Szczepańska, *Kobieta — zwierzę polityczne?* [*Woman — political animal?*], in: Małgorzata Radkiewicz (ed.), *Gender — culture — society*, Rabid, Kraków 2002, p. 29.

⁷⁰ Hans Mathias Kepplinger, *Demontaż polityki w społeczeństwie informatycznym* [*Deconstruction of politics in the society of information*], trans. by Artur Kozuch, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, Kraków 2007, p. 179.

of social awareness regarding women's participation in decision-making processes and holding authority seats. A strong social will to introduce innovations within the model of social relation plays a significant role in this process. The change of self-awareness that would enable them to think they can pursue political careers should be based on popularization of a model of a woman who is active socially. For some women, political activity seems abstract, detached from daily life. The change of awareness of women themselves regarding legitimacy of the division of social roles according to sex can only help in making a decision about participating in making decisions.

Political parties play a major role in the change of social awareness regarding women political participation. Creating in parties female sections can only help women to find an equal place in a democratic society. Such sections which were created in social democratic parties, led to introducing changes in statutes and defining 30% participation of both sexes in decision making bodies. Success achieved on a small scale has encouraged to pursue a larger activity regarding taking political-social actions supporting and promoting women.⁷¹ An increase in awareness regarding women and men equality in the society on all levels of authorities, non-governmental organizations, educational system and the media can contribute to limiting barriers which influence political involvement of women.

“Women's time has come. Not for women themselves but for the life harmony and well-being of women and men” — said Ségolène Royal running for the presidency seat in France in 2007.⁷² According to the principle of fairness, women and men should have equal access to decision-making bodies. Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska used to write: “The equality rule itself [...] seems to base female rights on fairness only. People are equal so they should have equal rights, regardless of the sex.”⁷³

A postulate to represent women by other women is an obvious realization of the declaration “nothing about us without us”.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Ewa Malinowska, *Feminizm europejski. Demokracja parytetowa a polski ruch kobiet. Socjologiczna analiza walki o równouprawnienie płci* [European Feminism. Parity democratisation versus Polish female movement, Sociological analysis of a fight for gender equality], Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2002, p. 193.

⁷² Christine Ockrent, *Kobieta i władza* [Women and power], trans. by Katarzyna Resztak, Jolanta Kurska, Wydawnictwo Prószyński i S-ka, Warszawa 2007, p. 178.

⁷³ Zofia Daszyńska-Golińska, *Kobiety we współczesnym życiu publicznym* [Women in contemporary public life], in: Aneta Górnicka-Boratyńska (ed.), *Chcemy całego życia. Antologia polskich tekstów feministycznych z lat 1870–1939*, [We want a full life. Anthology of Polish feminist texts from 1870–1939], Res Publica, Warszawa 1999, p. 268.

⁷⁴ Bernadetta Darska, *Kobiety w przestrzeni publicznej, czyli to, co niewidoczne, jest znaczące* [Women in public sphere – what is invisible is important], in: Joanna Marszałek-Kawa (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 168.

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