



1.

From national icons to superwomen

Gender and social change

from pre-communism to post-communism

Introduction

The insight into the lives of women scientists in the Enwise countries would hardly be possible without a basic knowledge of a more general **gender context**. This chapter shows that *basic* does not mean *simple*. Even though it strives to provide both insiders (from the East) and outsiders (from the West) with as many explanatory clues as possible, it does not intend to make the explanation too easy. Actually quite a few stereotypical images of an *Eastern European woman* are already circulating, which the following arguments and information consciously attack, emphasising the complexities of the reality of these women. Moreover, the basic starting point here is that the gender history of the Enwise countries may be even **more complex** than their political one, and the latter has indeed been universally acknowledged as complex. The **institutional** and **statistical** part of the gender dimension of this history was the easiest part of the task. A set of **qualitative** explanations is offered, which focuses on the **cultural** impact of political histories to indicate possible ways of interpretation of the data available so far.

The complexity of the given answers is obvious, in view of the very basic findings about the situation of women in the Enwise countries, which at first glance seem to be replete with **contradictions** and **paradoxes**. Such antitheses are typical of the current social position of women, namely the one between high **independence** and **professional activities** of women, on the one hand, and relatively **conservative gender patterns** on the other, which is also relevant when considering the everyday struggles of women in science. To unravel the roots of this confusing combination is to decipher the current contradictions facing such women: this constitutes the final stage in a long chain of cultural changes, in which both progressivism and conservatism had their **specific meanings**, in most cases unknown in Western European societies. Leaving aside the two World Wars, the Enwise countries shared with the rest of Europe (although both wars started in the Enwise countries and lasted there for a longer period of time), these countries underwent in addition **three** other dramatic macro social and political changes: the **liberation** from former empires resulting in the creation of independent nation states (trajectories from pre-modern to modern social form included); the **communist takeover**; and the **rebuilding** of democratic political systems combined with the transition to market-oriented economies. This chapter deals with each of these stages and considers in addition a fourth one, the process of **accession to the European Union**¹. Although, geopolitically, accession constitutes a momentous step for Enwise countries, in reality, it is no more than a continuation of the social and cultural changes begun with the revolutions of 1989.

It should be stressed that all the above-mentioned transformations implied what can be called **cultural revolutions**, which on each occasion had a **gender aspect**, but each time in a **different way**. In the **pre-communist period**, the liberation movements in these countries had to find equilibrium between national self-confirmation and the necessity of modernisation and thus gender politics was **two-sided**. The **communist Cultural Revolution** intended to be the most radical and, in terms of gender, the most pro-

1. Country boxes and maps of Europe at different periods are presented in Annex 1 of this report.

gressive, but in reality, due to its oppressive nature, it erected limits to women's emancipation both directly, by limiting their freedom, and indirectly, by provoking conservative counter-reaction, thus the gender change was **contradictory**. The **post-communist** transformation was not evenly uniform throughout the former Eastern bloc countries either, in terms of cultural gender impact: public (mainstream) discourse, re-opened with this transformation, allowed for political, economic and, to some extent also, cultural changes, but apparently feared and inhibited another revolution in the realm of gender relations and family life. Communist overburdening of women and images of Western feminism, depicted as threateningly militant, served as discouraging arguments. At the same time, behind this loud rhetoric, the demographic behaviour of younger women and changes in attitudes, in a great part of the female population, showed a rather rapid change in life strategies towards more liberated and more **thoughtful** women's lives. In this last period, changes of gender culture have been **fragmented**, **multi-speed**, and maybe slower in rhetoric than in behaviour, both **spontaneous** (due to new opportunities) and actively **triggered** by the perspective of EU enlargement. Regarding the panoply of remarkable historical vicissitudes that the Enwise countries have witnessed, the precise cultural context of each period in each country can only be understood when the key is found to the respective combination of **continuities and discontinuities**.

Negotiating gender contract in pre-communist times

In the last two centuries, the basic fate of the societies under consideration has been virtually one of permanent changes of their position in the geopolitical (European) order. Historical analyses still discuss the way the very lines, along which Europe has been perceived as divided, were construed: until the 19th century, the main division was along the North-South axis, during the 19th century the East-West line started to dominate, and later in addition, the concept of Central Europe came into existence, being since this time in a state of permanent flux.

These facts are indeed well-known and scarcely need enumeration but now there are questions to raise in connection with our specific topic: did all these transformations also have, among other things, a **specific gender impact**? If so, in what kind of framework can such impact be theorised and documented? What type of gender impact can be related to those, both real and symbolic, borderlines? And still more focused: was there a **specific historical context** which precipitated or encouraged this development? How did it affect the historical background of the position of women in science in the Enwise countries? A preliminary glance prompts a basic question: how can it be explained that, despite the historical positioning of these countries on the *margins of Europe*, the historical position of women, as testified by various data, can not be regarded as *backward*?

These questions can be properly answered on the base of **gender-based research** which in all these countries has yet to be pursued. Even though there are, here and there, historical data and descriptions available on both the women's movement and on the history of women's social

advancement, a new approach focusing on the **construction of this history**, including the construction of gender in society and science started to be gradually developed only after the collapse of communism, mostly around the end of 1990s (Miethe and Roth, 2003). Thus, if the issue *women in science* is to be grasped in its whole context, support of systematic research of the history of women in higher education and science in the individual Central and Eastern European countries must be strongly advocated.

The basic framework is nevertheless obvious: women's movements in this region were strongly related to the processes of formation and **liberation of nations** (in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century) and later on to the processes of establishments of **new nation states**. In other words, women's movements were in one way or another interrelated with the national liberation movements. The latter had, as compared to Europe's dominating nations, an additional agenda connected to the seeking of the place of the nation in Europe. Two basic goals were followed: one being to catch up with Western Europe, which was perceived as *more advanced*, i.e. efforts to prove their development towards modernisation and democratisation; the other being to strive for cultural self-confirmation, i.e. defence of local cultural traditions. Representing **progressivism**, on the one hand, and **conservatism** on the other, the two goals were, to a considerable extent, contradictory. As recent gender-based analyses show, it was precisely this ambiguity that undoubtedly affected **gender politics** in this period. To put it from the perspective of women's movements in these countries: though their goals were very much the same as in *more advanced* countries, they were operating in more complex conditions: they had, in addition, to negotiate with leaders of national liberation movements, for whom the position of women was a special card to play within their own politics. Though it is true that in every country women's movements had invariably to cope with national leaders, here a different kind of **negotiation** was the case.

Recent feminist historical analyses show that the position of women formed an argument instrumentally used by these leaders in their messages to the Western world, and additionally, it was being used for both progressive and conservative goals. In other words, **marginality** seems to have made gender a more important issue. Thus women's social and cultural position was a means to demonstrate the nation's equality or even superiority compared to Western countries in two ways: on one hand, intellectuals were construing or seeking national **myths** with images of strong and famous women, aiming at demonstrating that a certain kind of **gender equality** had been traditionally part of the national character. Whereas, at the same time, these constructions also needed to be somehow proved in reality, and thus efforts to improve women's situation may not have been as strongly opposed as might have been expected. Yet on the other hand, simultaneously, another part of the intellectual elite and national leaders was in turn putting emphasis on the moral superiority of women as safeguards of **conservative** traditional values in their respective countries as compared to those in Western countries. It is not by accident that this kind of **double rhetoric** can be nowadays found again in argu-

ments by national political leaders (both men and women!) when discussing the implementation of the equal opportunity policy promoted by the EU: the position of women in the Enwise countries is on one hand proclaimed as advanced enough, but on the other our different gender culture is defended.

For some historians (Evans, 1978), women's activists in these countries had to make excessive **compromises** with their male national leaders, meaning for instance that the women's suffrage issue as a requirement by women's groups and as a political theme emerged here considerably later than in the West, often only as late² as the 1890s and at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite this fact, the way towards the legal introduction of women's voting rights was ultimately faster in the Enwise countries than in the Western ones. To explain the latter phenomenon, attention should be paid to approaches that point to the possible long-lasting **positive** effect of the above-mentioned negotiations with the national leaders: *"Discourses on women at the margins of Europe, and above all calls for their participation in national movements, had the potential to create a more favourable atmosphere for women's public activities than was common in Western Europe. Although this had little direct or immediate impact on the everyday conditions of women's lives, the tradition of debates on women and nation was later to be reflected in ideas about social organisation in the new nation state. Views on the place of women had become an integral part of the self-perception of the nation and its character and thus survived even in the new situation following the actual emergence of the nation states."* This conclusion is derived from a comparative analysis of intellectual discourses in 19th century Ottoman Turkey, Russia, Poland, the Czechlands, Slovakia, and also Italy and Greece, and proved to apply to all of them (Malečková, 2002: 241).

Findings like this one can provide us with a key to understanding and interpreting historical data about women's history in these countries. In all these countries, individual **women's organisations** emerged at the beginning of the 19th century. Towards the end of the century and at the very beginning of 20th century, **networks** of women's organisations and their roof organisations were formed so that from this point of view one can speak about women's movement in the proper sense of the word. These organisations had of course their journals to propagate their ideas to the wider public.

2. With the exception of Poland where the women's group Enthusiasts, propagating women's participation in public life, was established in 1846.

Early women's movements in some Enwise countries

The League of Romanian Women was founded in 1866 and a roof organisation, the National Council of Romanian Women, in 1921. The Association for women's education, Živena, was founded in Slovakia in 1869, the Central Association of Czech Women was set up in 1897, and the National Women's Council of Czechoslovakia was established

in 1923. The Bulgarian Union of Women was founded in 1901, the Lithuanian Women's Association in 1905, and the Baltic Women Union in 1909. In Poland, the Women's League, founded in 1916, comprised as many as 12 000 members.

Source: from the various members of the Enwise Expert Group.

Striving for higher education formed a crucial goal of this movement. In most cases it was an objective which was not contradicted by the policies of national leaders and thus formed a priority, for it was regarded as a way to fostering the nation, when women were regarded as important references points for the educators of children in the national language and patriotic spirit. Even so women activists had sometimes to work underground, as it was the case in the clandestine women's college founded in Poland 1885, called Flying University or in students' organisation at the women's university founded in 1911 at the University of Tartu (Estonia). There was a different history of compulsory attendance of grammar schools by boys and girls in the different countries (in the Hapsburg monarchy in 1774, in Bulgaria in 1878), and of course, there were quite a few distinct female scientists and thinkers who also, without official university graduation, devoted their lives to research. The first women university graduates from this region studied in Zurich in the 1870s - but the most relevant event in our context, i.e. the official institutionalisation of women's enrolment in universities at the state level took place from 1883 in Romania and from 1922 in Lithuania.

After the creation of independent states, women's higher education and scientific careers kept being supported by political representatives, with certain limitations differing from country to country (typically enough, concerning the access to faculties of law). Relevant was also the introduc-

A Slovak botanist: Isabela Textorisová (1866-1949)

After leaving elementary school, Isabela Textorisová privately prepared herself for a teaching career. Up to 1886, she first taught at primary school, then became a supply clerk at the post office, and from 1886 she was the head of the Post office in Slovak city Blatnica, where she lived until the end of her life. Here she started to devote herself to botany, and she did her botanical research in the Vel'ká Fatra mountain region, in Blatnica Valley and Gader Valley where she discovered some rare endemic plants (*Daphne cneorum* L., *Cyclamen fatrense*, *Leontopodium alpinum* Cass. Et al.). She was in contact with significant Slovak and Hungarian botanists. She elaborated and published her botanical experience in the professional periodical *Botanikai Közlemények* (1903). Of great importance is her manuscript work, *On Flora of the Turiec Region*, which she submitted to the competition held by the Slovak national educational non-governmental public association Matica Slovenská in 1930. She published her literary work in the women's magazines *Women's Letters* (1886) and *Girl's World* (1893). She collected dialectological material for Prof. F. Pastrnek and collaborated with Živena (the active Slovak public organisation for educating women) representatives, as well as the representatives of the Czech women's movement.

Source: Velichová, 2003.

The first Hungarian female university professor: Valéria Dienes (1879-1978)

Dr. Valéria Dienes was born in 1879 as Valéria Geiger. She finished as a teacher in the Elisabeth School for Women. She got her PhD degree at the University Péter Pázmány in philosophy in 1905. She was the first Hungarian female university professor. She wrote articles and essays in philosophy and psychology for many scientific journals. She published essays in mathematics, some of them together with her husband. During the 1920s and 1930s she was also engaged in eurhythmics and semiotics. She married Pál Dienes in 1905 and they had 2 sons, Gedeon and Zoltán. She died in 1978.

Source: Groó and Papp, 2003.



tion of co-education in virtually all types of schools. In the interwar period, the share of women studying at universities in the Enwise countries reached up to 25% of the student body.

It has been said that the **suffrage** question had not been prioritised. Nevertheless, in part of the Enwise countries women's suffrage became a reality relatively early, usually after the foundation of independent states. In these cases, it took a certain time to draft the constitution, but even before gender equality was included officially in newly written constitutions, women were usually first co-opted to national assemblies on the basis of provisional agreements, to get them into parliament³ as soon as possible. In Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, women were granted voting rights in the provisional constitutions⁴ of the new independent states in 1918, and in Czechoslovakia in 1920, i.e. all of them earlier than in a number of current EU Member States. The explanation for this *wave* should be sought both in conjunction with the above mentioned theory and in the context⁵ of World War I, which ironically gave women an opportunity to prove their skills and civic virtues: organisational talents (for instance, in the Red Cross), courage, physical power and professional skills. In other countries, the suffrage rights were introduced later on: Bulgaria 1937, Slovenia 1945 and Romania 1946. Besides basic constitutional laws, specific laws aiming at gender equality in society were relatively quickly adopted.

3. This explains why different information can be obtained as to when women entered the national parliaments.

4. That were later implemented in the Constitutions under great pressure from the first women parliamentarians.

5. In Poland, women's activism in the public sphere emerged earlier, during the partitions of Poland, i.e. from 1772 to 1918.

Women's Suffrage in the Enwise Countries and the EU Member States

Year	Country	Year	Country
1906	Finland	1929	Romania*
1915	Denmark	1931	Portugal*, Spain
1917	The Netherlands (to stand for election)	1934	Portugal*
1918	Austria, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland*, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, United Kingdom*	1937	Bulgaria (to vote)*
1919	Belgium (to vote)*, Luxembourg, the Netherlands (to vote), Sweden*	1944	Bulgaria**, France
1920	Czechoslovakia	1945	Slovenia
1921	Belgium (to stand for election)*, Sweden**	1946	Italy, Romania**
1928	Ireland**, United Kingdom**	1948	Belgium**
		1952	Greece
		1976	Portugal**

Source: www.ipu.org

Notes: * Right subject to conditions or restrictions

** Conditions or restrictions lifted

The ambivalent gender contract under communism

If the pre-communist gender constellation was a mixture of modernisation and conservatism, the communist can be called a *modernisation without liberation*. For two basic lines of the power elites' policies towards women were self-contradictory: on the one hand, **women were deprived of their own voice and possibility to act independently**, on the other hand, state policy was clearly aiming at **further modernisation of women's public status**. The former step was easily achieved by laws prohibiting assembly and by eliminating all civic organisations, including women's grass root organisations⁶ and their networks, and by total censorship of public speech, which prevented any free reflections of what was going on in society (except in former Yugoslavia). The latter policies were designed in the programme documents of the central committees of the Communist Party and indeed gradually implemented in the following areas: ideological advocacy of gender equality, access to all professions for both sexes, affirmative action in the sphere of political representation at both top and local levels, support of educational advancement of women, coeducation as an automatic rule in all schools (moreover, non-sexist education was practised in primary schools, for instance in practical subjects: boys and girls were trained together in woodwork, sawing, cooking... but this varied from country to country and also from decade to decade), a well organised infrastructure of nurseries, kindergartens and after-school care of pupils, which made it possible for women to be both mothers and full-time workers. Working mothers were further legally protected during maternity leave (which had been gradually prolonged) and during care of their children when ill. Single mothers were relatively well protected by state benefits ensuring minimum standards of living, fathers of their children were easily made to pay alimony, for virtually every man and woman was a state employee and thus also intervention into the salaries by the court via the employer was easy and often occurred. Last but not least, abortion laws became more or less liberal, in most cases they were adopted in the 1950s (in Romania it became restrictive again later on). In all the Enwise countries, the state policy towards women was aimed at ensuring their employment (on the basis of the general right to work) and at making it possible for them to

6. In the Baltic States however, newly established women's organisations existed during the Soviet times, but under strong control of the Communist Party.

A different history for former Yugoslavia

In the case of former Yugoslavia, the gender contract was not based on the idea of *equality*, but rather on that of *complementarity of inequality*. Women were simply subjected to the national goals, not as equals (which might have been the case for Central Europe, but not for the Balkans), but as complementary to men (men warriors, women - caregivers). This different gender patterns could be explained by 1) different pre-communist cultures in former Yugoslavia, including differences like between Muslims and Christians or different gender contracts existing in public and private spheres; 2) different communism, which was not only more

liberal and more open, but at certain times had extremely fast economic development, which made upwards mobility for women rather easy, and not dependent on Party membership; 3) differences in *transition* including wars!; 4) differences in the development of women's movements in the 1980s and 1990s; and 5) development of knowledge about women, that existed in the Balkans and that nobody had in the Enwise countries. Additionally, the issue of development and even poverty might be more relevant for the Balkans.

Source: Blagojević, 2003.

combine motherhood and profession life. Thus a continuous employment model came about, specific for the communist period, meaning that, during their productive years, women combined work and family and continued to work even when they had children, or only with very short interruptions. Such a high rate of employment and real work involvement was exceptional among Western European women.

A situation replete with irony thus came about: women's movement was being liquidated and being denounced as a *bourgeois* legacy: women were politically isolated from each other and from women's movements abroad. And yet within a short time, in most communist countries, during the 1950s (in the Baltic States in the 1940s), they obtained a set of possibilities, which conspicuously corresponded to the catalogue of goals the second wave women's movement was fighting for in the 1960s and 1970s in *bourgeois* countries. The other side of the irony was that the political opposition to the communist regime (meaning some dissent groups, for no open oppositions was possible) tended to stick to conservative values and to idealise⁷ the traditional gender patterns. There were several reasons: the opposition was often linked to a church, which was oppressed by the communist regimes, but also the less religious parts of these societies found it difficult to accept the way the communist regime was removing traditional culture by force. Thus traditional gender patterns (meaning mostly the *bourgeois* model) came to form part of those values, which merited protection. In addition, gender equality was part of official politics and turned to caricature in many respects, thus the issue became stigmatised for the opposition. Last but not least, oppositional struggles for political rights followed mainly (and often solely) the battle of totalitarianism versus democracy.

In communist countries, women were, at the same time, empowered and disempowered. There was **discontinuity** with the pre-communist women's activism and self-reflection and **continuity** in the opening up of the public sphere to them. The most radical critiques of communist regimes say that women were just misused and exploited by these regimes. The most frequent argument is that the traditional male professions were open to women solely in order to get a cheap labour force, especially in industry. Yet the sociological data show a more complex picture of **women's employment** and testify to a real improvement of women's social status during communism. In fact, the majority of women, especially in agricultural countries, always worked hard, as farmers, factory workers, servants, before communism. It is true that the number of women in factories increased after the communist takeover, and as a sign of women's modernisation, they were depicted with machines and as strong, which created the typical stereotype of a woman under communism. Yet the statistics show that, at the same time, the young generation of women was rapidly catching up with men at the level of education (an open university system made it possible also for the older generation), so that by the end of 1970s, they achieved parity with male students on the secondary and in the majority of the Enwise countries also on the tertiary levels. With it, the **structure** of female occupation was gradually changing and a sizeable num-



Polish poster:
"We greet the women who work
for peace and growth of the fatherland!"
Source: © Gazeta Wyborcza, 2003.



Polish poster: "March on, Youth,
in the struggle for happy socialist
Polish countryside"
Source: © Gazeta Wyborcza, 2003.

7. Interestingly, in this context, the only sphere free from the interventions of the state was the family, which had a traditional structure. This was often emphasised in criticism.

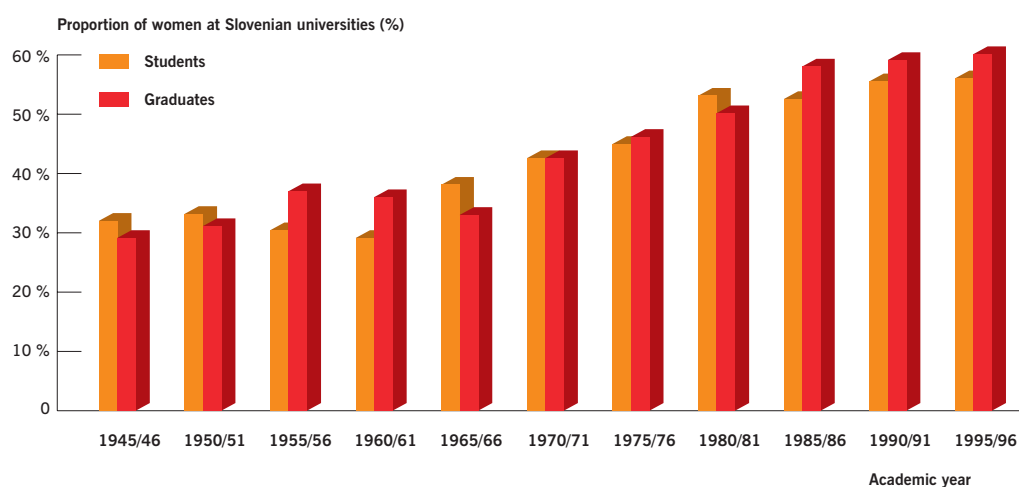
ber of women were moving to more qualified jobs. Among university graduates, the number of female doctors, teachers and also lawyers grew considerably, often exceeding that of their male counterparts. Numbers of women scientists were also growing gradually.

And yet, despite all the propaganda on gender equality and the growing professional skills in women, and despite attempts of a non-sexist education, the **horizontal and vertical segregation** between the two sexes were not lessening, but rather deepening. The labour market was segregated into better paid male and worse paid female areas and despite the fact that more and more women were entering highly qualified professions, it was not mirrored in leading positions. Though this phenomenon has been noticed by Western sociologists in Western countries as well, there was an important difference: in communist countries, the existing *glass ceiling* was not reflected on, named or criticised by women. Neither was it a theme in the social sciences. As was repeatedly stated by the members of the Enwise Expert Group, namely the up to now persisting lack of **gender awareness** in the majority of women themselves, including women in science, has turned out to become the major breaking factor to women's career advancement: in terms of career limits being accepted as a natural consequence of their dual role, and in terms of very low sensitivity to unequal treatment.

How can such a self-limitation be explained? The wider context must be taken into account. The very **concept of a career** under communism was distorted by specific conditions of a totalitarian state. One of the preconditions for most scientific careers from the PhD degree upwards was **party membership**⁸. This factor varied according to the respective disciplines, representing an almost absolute obstacle in the humanities and social sci-

8. It was not quite the case in Poland, where party membership was helpful, but not mandatory, in order to carry out academic career. But it has to be admitted that there were numerous cases of slowing down the careers of academics openly involved in the dissident activities or even removing them from academia.

Women at Slovenian universities (1945/46 to 1995/96)



ences (which was a typical female choice), but not so much in natural sciences. Many potential career men and women preferred consciously to avoid party membership, even when it meant a breaking factor to their further career. Women's role in family eased their reconciliation with this choice more than for men.

Another important factor that could not be found in non-communist countries and that did affect the specific concept of female career was the policy of **social up levelling**. In a communist country, where the general social equality issue was regarded as the basic one, the state policy had a **varying impact** on women's lives. Because the category of *domestic servant* ceased to exist (being classified as typical exploitation), many former career women found life more difficult under communism. Former, pre-communist career women⁹, being part of the intelligentsia class, who were regarded as a natural enemy of the socialist revolution, were often persecuted, sent to a factory or to prison. But for former servants or women from the lower classes, state policies towards women often meant personal advancement and improvement of their social situation. The **pre-communist female elites**, which often had a strong cultural capital from their intellectual or wealthy families, with self-esteem developed on the basis of their achievement within a competitive milieu, and often in contact with women's activism, were devastated. Simultaneously, **new groups** of women who were enjoying rapid intergenerational social mobility towards careers,

9. In Poland, this affected only women who, during World War II, fought in the Home Army.

Distribution of women and men in Hungarian universities from 1970 to 2001

Year	Women	Men
1970	44.7 %	55.3 %
1980	49.9 %	50.1 %
1990	48.8 %	51.2 %
2000	53.6 %	46.4 %
2001	53.4 %	46.6 %

Source: Hungarian Central Statistical Office in Groó and Papp, 2003.

A Czech case of discrimination

When I returned from maternity leave, I felt for the first time that I was not a fully valued employee, not because I was a woman, but because I was a mother, although I did not work less than any other colleagues. For the first time, I experienced discrimination (evidence of which was for instance that my salary stopped increasing). But of course, I was first of all discriminated, because of my refusal to join the party, so I was not fired, but treated as kind of a *second class* employee. Despite this position of mine, I still enjoyed my academic life as a kind of luxury, I felt still privileged.

Biographical statement by Hana Havelková, Czech member of the Enwise Expert Group.

Experiencing *natural* discrimination

In 1976, the Institute for Philosophical Research of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences announced a competition for a grant for doctoral study in Philosophy of Science at the Institute. I entered the competition together with 4 other graduates. At this competition, a male physicist and I scored highest with equal marks. The man was preferred. Then, I asked the head of the *Philosophy of Science* department: "Why did you prefer the other person?" having in mind that both of us were physicists and both of us had scored equal marks. The answer was short, simple and *natural*: "Because he is a man, but do not worry! Next year will be a new competition for a doctoral grant at my department and you are welcome to try again". I was not pleased by this reply, but I was not angry either, because I found it *natural* – the things are as they were, fixed and unchangeable and I could not do anything. At that time I lacked sensitivity for discrimination. Only later (1990), after my participation in an international project on "*Gender Gap in Higher Education*", I realised for the first time that in 1976 I had been in fact discriminated against, but that at that time I was not aware of it.

Biographical statement by Nikolina Sretenova, Bulgarian member of the Enwise Expert Group.

were formed gradually, yet this was happening in political conditions of drastically limited personal self-determination and of dubious character in that career advancement required moral compromises with the regime, and was subject to permanent ideological censorship, without cultural (familial) capital, reflection by and support from the feminist scene, and **without public discussion** on the necessity of the renegotiation of domestic roles, on glass ceilings, prejudices against women etc. Thus not only was the first wave of female intellectual elites suppressed, but also available patterns and models of female career were removed, and a **different career model** started developing *ex nihilo*. Although most of this was true also for men, the relationship between men and career was of course more automatic.

Nevertheless, given almost fifty years of full female employment and the permanent growth of women's professional skills, added to the availability of a childcare infrastructure that made fulltime employment possible, the low representation of women in leading positions or top positions in science is surprising. A special kind of feminist *archaeology*¹⁰ must be performed, namely the **research** on what exactly has happened to the gender constellation under communism. Basic statistical data of that time, broken down by gender, can usually be found in archives, such as demographic data or the rough overviews of the employment structure. Remuneration data had been usually monitored by economists, so that the basic development of women's social status can be reconstructed. Yet, since neither citizens nor social scientists were allowed to point at social problems openly, the data were rarely analysed, theorised and interpreted. Concepts such as *pay gap* or *glass ceiling* were unknown. Women's **double burden** or the so called *double shift* was discussed from time to time, but the habit of connecting employment with maternal duties became **naturalised**.

10. Using here a current and favourite Western feminist term for reconstruction of forgotten and hidden women's history...

"I still have clearly in mind...remembering..."

When Dr. Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin was in Romania, I was appointed to join her to meet Elena Ceausescu, who at that time was called: "*the highest scientist of the Romanian communist regime*". Despite the 38-year difference of age between us, I felt very close to Dr. Crowfoot Hodgkin. She was honest, gentle and supportive. I was so close to the Nobel Prize than I had ever dreamed of being! But when we arrived at Elena's office, I received one of the hardest orders I ever had in my life: I had to stay outside, in a special room, with two big Labrador dogs, which were watching at me. I had to wait until the end of their meeting, which lasted for more than 2 hours. Could you imagine what Dorothy could think about this situation? Could you imagine the weight of humiliation that I, as a young scientist, had to experience?

Biographical statement by Mioara Florica Tripsa, Romanian member of the Enwise Expert Group.



Dorothy Crowfoot Hodgkin with Mioara Florica Tripsa (left) and Eugenia Kovacs (right) during her visit in 1985 at the Department of Biophysics of the Medical University in Bucharest.
© Prof. Dr Mioara Florica Tripsa

Women's role as a second **breadwinner** was in the vast majority of families an economic necessity, but it also became a cultural norm, so that women started to perceive their job outside the family as their *duty*, as did their husbands and their communities. But since they were only regarded (also by themselves) as *second* breadwinners, the **traditional division of gender roles** kept being regarded as *natural* as well. Very little qualitative research has been done so far though it is urgently needed in order to learn about women's subjective perception of their lives and about their everyday strategies.

Transformation: new amalgam of continuities and discontinuities

Gender scholars and women activists who emerged after the collapse of communism started addressing the issue and looked for explanations of the specific kind of **gender blindness**. Despite lacking systematic research, there are some general hypotheses about the sources of gender blindness, as inherited from the communist time. It can not be ignored that the character of modernisation processes, as described above, removed the pressing legal barriers, which formed the goals of the women's mass movements in 1970s in the West. Though serious gender based problems were persisting during communism and new ones came into existence, they became **more hidden** and shifted to a rather **more cultural** level, which was virtually impossible to tackle. The difficulty had been especially caused by the **combination of modernisation with conservatism**. As shown above, modernisation of professional status was not accordingly accompanied with modernisation of cultural patterns - moreover, traditional patterns were often even fostered by the specific role the family acquired under communism, namely the role of a refuge from the regime. And the specific female **career model** as described above, in which having children was included and resulted in an acceptance of limited career ambitions, has been presented by many women in answering the question of whether they feel discriminated against (be it in sociological research or media interviews) as a matter of more or less **free choice** (meaning the acceptance that the choice of having children automatically requires certain compromises).

Women in communist countries were often characterised as *superwomen*. Many seemed genuinely to feel like that, strong enough to solve their problems on their own. Another important level of explanation has to be sought after in what was (and partly still is) regarded as a **political issue**. For even if interviewed women did admit gender inequalities, sexism and the like, they still tended to regard it as a **private problem**, refusing to recognise unfair treatment as a systemic gender based problem and to treat it politically. Lack of **public discourse** has been the main reason. Under communism, there was no public actor to articulate gender issues in free, authentic and differentiated way. Surprisingly, the **official propaganda** made obscure even such an obvious fact that, through mothers, it was actually children who were protected, not women as such. Moreover, women's issues did not represent a theme for the **political opposition** either. Not only were women's issues not popular, due to the fact that it was part

of official communist policy, but the priority was put on general (individual) civic and political rights. Though currently the public discourse on gender issues has been opened, the process of addressing gender issues was considerably slowed down, after 1989, by combined **antifeminist** and **anticommunist resentments**.

The transformation process that started in the Enwise countries after the fall of communism¹¹ has been underpinned by principles, which are entirely different to those central to communism. Individual political freedom and freedom of choice are regarded as superior to all other values. Yet in most of the Enwise countries, the anti-communist turn brought about a **conservative backlash**, including the tendency to push women back to their traditional roles. Often this conservatism was closely connected to the resurrection of the political position of church or with the rise of nationalism.

11. Which depending on the countries was referred to as the fall of the iron curtain, velvet revolution or as "die Wende" in GDR, meaning, in German, radical political change.

A different pattern in the new Eastern *Länder* of Germany

With comparatively low general levels of household income, the transformation process in Eastern Germany has turned many women into the principal earners of family income. On average, women in the new Eastern *Länder* of Germany account for almost 50 per cent of household income (compared with one third in Western *Länder* of Germany).

The employment rate of married women with children under 18, in particular, is considerably higher in the new states of Germany (East 74% compared to West 56%).

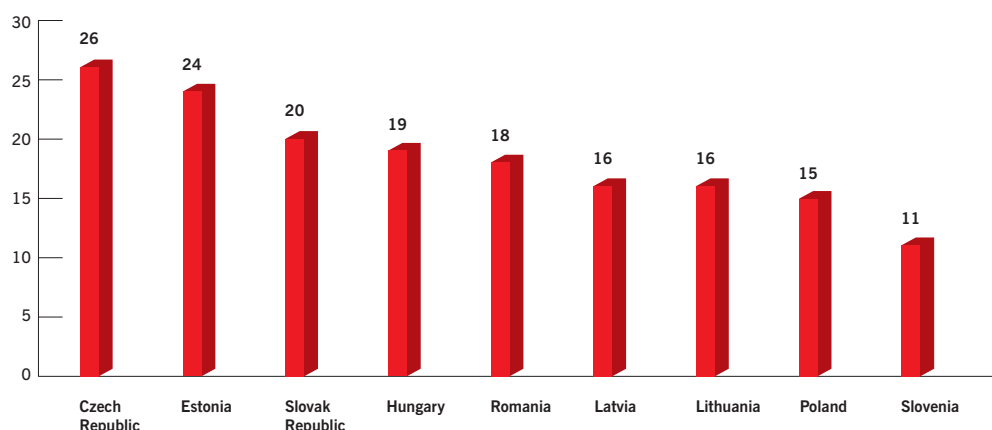
In 1991, 35% of East men and 30% of East

women, when surveyed, commented: "It is much better for all, if men are fully employed and women stay at home to look after household and children". Five years later this percentage reached only 27% among East men 27% and 26% among East women, which means no chance for a revival of the conservative family model of *a working man + a housewife* (whereas, in both surveyed years, 50% on average of West men and women agreed with this conservative family pattern).

Source: Nickel, 2003 and Schenk, 2003 cited by Burkhardt, 2003.

Gender pay gap in unadjusted form in 2001

In the Enwise countries, like in the EU Member states and other regions of the world, women's income is on average lower than that of men.



Source: Eurostat, 2003.

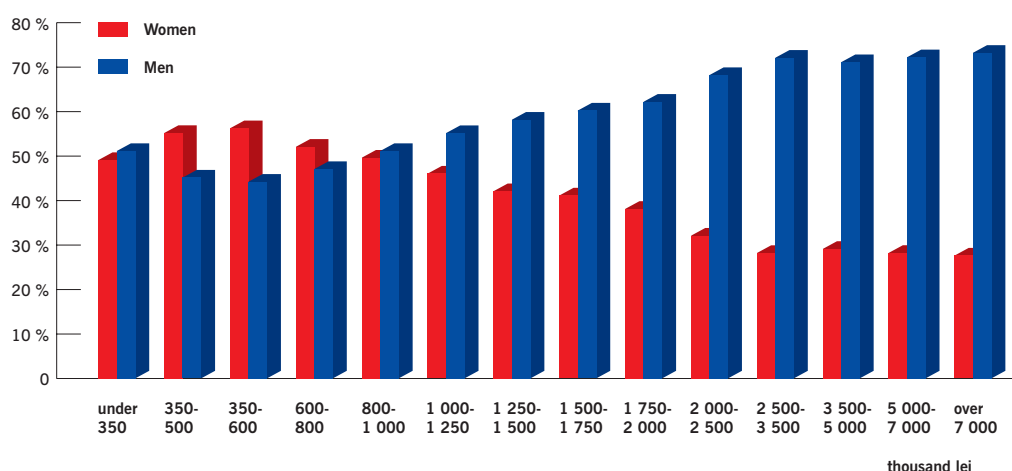
Note: The gender pay gap in unadjusted form refers to the difference between women's and men's gross hourly earnings as a percentage of men's average gross hourly earnings. For example, the unadjusted pay gap at 26% in the Czech Republic, which is the widest gap of all Enwise countries, means that on average, women earn 74% of men's earnings for every working hour (see also

Chapter 3, "All that Glitters is not Gold"). This measure is referred to as unadjusted because it does not take into account factors such as occupational and vertical segregation and level of qualification. Since hourly wages are considered in this measure, the full-time / part-time dimension is partly accounted for, but there is no adjustment made for the fact that part-time salaries are generally lower *pro rata* than full-time salaries.

Differences between the individual countries as to **new gender ideology** are quite substantial and can be attributed to different religious and political histories - but the real outcome has been the same: women's return to full-time work in the family home was not only **not** happening, but was even hardly possible for **economic** reasons. Still more surprising is that neither the percentage of part time jobs increased significantly: the majority of women of productive age work full time and spend on average only slightly less time at work than men. There are also **structural** reasons. The post-communist legacy of strong horizontal gender segregation of the labour market has made women irreplaceable in the labour force. Women usually comprise from about half the labour force up to 80% thereof or more among the employees in the services and health care sectors, in the banking and insurance industries, and in commerce. Moreover, due to their acceptance of lower remuneration, they made it possible to keep whole segments of work still functional (nurses, teachers and others). **Psychological** reasons are important as well: research indicates that women value having work for the financial independence it entails as well as the possibility of social contacts.

The question whether women can be seen as the losers of the transformation processes is not simple to answer. **Unemployment** rates vary throughout the Enwise countries and have also been permanently changing in time up to now. But even in cases when the difference between male and female unemployment rates is not very dramatic, another gender phenomenon has been noticed, namely women's greater **flexibility** in the labour market. It means for instance, a greater willingness to requalify and change jobs (horizontally), but also to accept a position below their qualifications, and first of all, in general, to **work for less**. This is true for less qualified professions where women work for pitiful salaries, but such inadequate remuneration is also an issue at managerial level for women.

Employees breakdown by salary group in Romania (October 1998)



Source: NCS survey in Tripsa, 2003.
 Note: 1 K = 38080.0 Leu - Financial Times - Sept. 15, 2003

The traditional practice that men automatically expect and are offered better salaries, and that women are offered and accept lower salaries still persists. Last, but not least, **horizontal segregation** of whole segments of the labour market has been reproduced in the transition period for new reasons: the segments, which were *feminised* under communism, now remained part of the economically poorer state sector (schools of all levels, health care etc.). And again, this means that women keep their employment (competition is not very intense in these sectors, for men had left for financially more attractive areas), but under conditions that can be characterised as exploitative and **under-evaluating** their capacities and skills. Needless to add that, though women keep working hard in the professional sphere, they are nonetheless, due to their position of being the **second breadwinner** in most partnerships, expected to accomplish the duties of parenthood not usually expected of their male colleagues.

In terms of **everyday life**, the process of transformation during the 1990s has been gendered from the very beginning. Men eagerly returned to their traditional public and professional positions and were becoming economically and socially stronger than women. For women the situation has been more complex. On one hand, the burdens facing women became even greater after the collapse of communism. Social transformation meant **increased demands** both on women's nurturing roles (to cope with the

Gender blindness still active?

YES, I think women do enjoy equal opportunities. Of course, there are always some situations, where men and women are dealt with differently, but these are totally dependent on the particular people involved, not on society as a whole.

Estonian young female scientist (age: 36, medical sciences) at the Enwise workshop on Young scientists, Prague, April 2003.

Turning private struggles into a public issue

We still assume gender problems to be more private (personal or woman's own) than social. But, it is the problem of society as a whole, how to support research and sustainable development, it is not only its legal right, but also its duty, to utilise all human potential and to benefit from the scientific achievements of the whole of human kind.

Slovak young female scientist (age: 35, natural science) at the Enwise workshop on Young scientists, Prague, April 2003.

Feminist movements in Yugoslavia

Besides the institutional and legal support provided by the federal State for gender equality, feminist movement started to develop already in the 1970s in Zagreb, Belgrade and Ljubljana. Feminists were marginalised, but not really forbidden, due to the fact that Yugoslavia was rather open to the West and very much under the influence of Western intellectual developments. The first international feminist conference in communist countries was organized in Belgrade (1978), as well as the first post-communist feminist conference (1994). In the 1980s women's issue became part of the public discourse and scientific debate. In the second half of the 1980s feminist publications, translations or even original feminist contributions, were edited. In this decade also a scientific journal, *Zena*, was published in Zagreb, where different researches on

women were published from all over Yugoslavia. Moreover, the *Yugoslav Sociological Association* established a section devoted to *Women and Society*. The issue of women and science was also debated. In the same period, the *Interuniversity Centre* in Dubrovnik was organising international conferences and courses dealing with gender issues directly or indirectly. These seminars were the occasion for women scientists coming from the socialist countries to travel abroad and to meet foreigner colleagues. Feminist movements in Yugoslavia were creating an *alternative political space* in the crisis of the socialist system and before the traumatic beginning of civil and ethnic wars in the 1990s.

Source: Blagojević, 2003.

greater psychological pressures on their family members under rapidly changing life conditions) and on their working activity (to cope with economic hardships in the family, to keep their jobs after the right to work had been eliminated). Thus the previous division of roles acquired new dimensions - men concentrating more than before on public success, women thus bearing the responsibility of the well-being of their families also under new conditions and new hardships.

All this is true in particular for families with children as well as for women and men whose formative years were spent under the grasp of communism which inevitably influenced their personalities, values, social and professional organisation, etc. Cognitive patterns of the youngest generation are more complex, being partly rooted in local gender culture, partly new and different, responding to the changed social conditions. The process of transformation has obviously opened up opportunities, not enjoyed before, due to the changing economic situation and people's preferences and values have changed accordingly. As a result of this transformation, a generation gap, which has resulted in wide-ranging changes in behaviour and sometimes in values, is increasingly evident. In addition, it is clear that the liberalisation of the economy, which has also led to changes in society, has brought about new opportunities especially for young women and women without families. Young women's life strategies have changed, they get married later and have fewer children, but according to opinion polls, the higher value of family and children over professional career still prevails in the rhetoric and mentalities of society.

The inherited (more or less unified) model, in which women were used not to have to choose between career and family, has persisted and can be regarded as positive. At the same time, social **differentiation** among the female population is dramatically growing. According to some sociologists, the influence of **age** and **education** on economic status tends to be

Starting to understand... (I)

However, during the last 15 years that I have been working in research management, I started to notice the signs of gender inequality in science. Sometimes I compared the number of men and women submitting proposals to our organisation for international research grants and I observed that there was a shocking difference in numbers. I slowly understood that the bosses at most of the institutions submitted the proposals under their own names, while the female colleagues – who usually conducted the real cooperation with the partner institutions – had the right to prepare the proposal and later to take part in the cooperation activities. These observations led me closer and closer to the women and science initiative, and finally I became the Hungarian member of the Enwise Expert Group.

Biographical statement by Dóra Groó, Hungarian member of the Enwise Expert Group.

Starting to understand... (II)

In the new job, I also began dealing with women's issues. Under communism, women's issues were an absent topic and I never got the idea to even think about them. Yet the opening of the country had brought also new impulses from abroad and I soon realised how important an issue this is and how the power of totalitarian system was able to let people forget to reflect even upon their everyday lives. I regarded it also as my professional duty to catch up this terrible debt towards the gender problematic.

Biographical statement by Hana Havelková, Czech member of the Enwise Expert Group.

even greater among the female than among the male population. There has also been an increase of singles, both male and female, and cohabitation as the increasingly preferred family model. It has to be stressed that the Enwise societies are still not yet settled: young women, who have been so far prepared to postpone starting a family, still ask themselves whether and how to manage both career and family is possible in the new, competitive society and whether negotiation with their male partners will be possible, given the persistence of conservative views (more so on men's side). **Young women scientists** start to reflect on these hardships. The cultural impact of cognitive experience of the new generation is very much in flux at present and there will be certainly a great diversity among the individual social groups and regions. The explanation of demographic trends needs more research focusing on qualitative analysis - for the time being, general conclusions can not yet be stated with complete authority.

Public discourses (theories, media, literary, art, etc.) are changing only slowly, but their change can not be stopped. **Women's activism** experienced a resurrection immediately after the collapse of communism in all of the countries concerned – in the former Yugoslavia earlier. New women's organisations started dealing in the first place with the most serious social problems concerning women such as domestic violence and violence against women in general or with discrimination in the labour market. In Poland, it was especially the passage of the law prohibiting abortion that triggered the mobilisation of women's organisations. Two points must be enumerated from the comparative point of view: the **historical interruption** between pre-communist and post-communist women's movements was so long that the post-communist women's movement can not rely much on its pre-communist history. Though it does have some symbolic supportive affect in terms of the realisation of women's own history, the world has moved elsewhere in the meantime. So the new wave had to start virtually from zero. That said, however, it should be noted, secondly, that the new women's organisations are not isolated given that they receive

The right to choose

I shifted my identity from a traditional married woman to a self-made woman, who is defined by others (but not by Western colleagues) as a feminist. I have to say that my profession, especially my involvement in gender studies, offers me the possibility to understand and, what it is more important for me, to claim that I have the right to live without a man and children. It is my own life. Yet my specialisation in gender studies restricts my career, preventing me to access to higher scientific positions at my institute.

Biographical statement by Alina Zvinkliene, Lithuanian member of the Enwise Expert Group.

Learning early... from abroad

In 1983/84, I spent a year in the US on the American Council of Learned Societies fellowship, which was a true feminist milestone in my scientific career. I became associated with a university group of *dissenting* women professors, displeased with the differences in the system of promotion and salary gaps between female and male professors at the State University of New York at Buffalo. Each month, we met at one of the professors' houses to discuss the promotion criteria and pay rolls and, towards the end of that year, wrote a report of our sessions to the President. I revisited Buffalo 5 years later to find out that our efforts had not been in vain. My scientific career has changed considerably since then. Everything I have written afterwards has been inspired by feminism and – later – by gender theory.

Biographical statement by Elżbieta Oleksy, Polish member of the Enwise Expert Group.

direct help from many women's organisations and worldwide legitimisation of a whole set of gender issues as public and political issues of high importance that has affected changes in gender culture in the West.

These have been imported to the Enwise countries through literature, journals, films, etc. or through personal experience after 1989, with some exceptions. Thus these cultural changes can be accelerated through contact with the world, yet there is still a long way to go. **Media and advertising** are replete with gender stereotyping images and of outspoken sexist utterances, which are not recognised as such by audiences. Not many people are really sensitive to cases of misogyny in the media, nor are boards in charge of supervising the correctness of media contents.

Towards EU membership

International mechanisms designed to prevent all forms of discrimination against women (as formulated in CEDAW) and/or equal opportunity policy (as conceived by the EU), have formed an essential role of making the governments of the Enwise countries deal with gender issues after 1989. Along the **governmental reports**, which after the signature of the Beijing Platform for Action had to be delivered to the UN Commission for Women's Rights, not only required the governments to collect information, to form working teams of civil officers and to communicate with women's organisations, but via the critical comments by the international commissions the local readers got a **feedback** and learned what was missing in the state's agenda from the perspective of international comparisons. Unfortunately, governments of the Enwise countries have not been particularly influenced by UN recommendations and, moreover, the information prepared under the aegis of the UN has not been sufficiently disseminated. Developments at the EU level have, by contrast, brought about greater practical reform. The adoption by local governments of equal opportunity policies within a process of *harmonisation* of the legislation of the accession countries with that of the EU has proved to be the

Misogynist image in the Polish media

"94 FM - It Turns Us On" - This advertisement of a radio station *Radio 94 FM*, showing a woman's breast whose nipples are replaced with radio knobs, appeared on billboards in Warsaw in January 2003. The radio station is mostly addressed to men and is thought of as a kind of *gentlemen's club*.

Interestingly enough, the person responsible for the radio's promotion was a woman. This advertisement provoked protests by Polish women's organisations.

Source: Oleksy, 2003.



necessary catalyst to transform their positions. Despite the adoption of legal changes, however, the problem of their implementation remains an issue. Women as yet have to recognise themselves when the law is violated to their disadvantage, but thanks to the existence of legal amendments, the first cases have come to court, women's organisations have started to train certain groups of women who are the most vulnerable to become aware of their new rights. Last but not least, since the new legislative changes, such as the explicit prohibition of harassment and discrimination at the workplace, or of discriminatory advertisements, have been discussed by the national parliaments and amply reported in the media, they contribute strongly to opening up a general public discussion about these topics. The effect on local cultural patterns and ways of behaviour can not be denied.

Concluding remarks

Before the communist takeovers in the Enwise countries, the situation of women, from the comparative perspective, can be summarised as follows: their basic civic rights, as well as the right for education and property, were achieved in a process similar to that in Europe and at about the same time, being in most cases even accelerated due to the process of national liberation movements. Women's activism was originating both as part of the national movements and, importantly in our context, as part of an international women's movement, being in touch with other Central and Eastern European countries as well as the all-European women's networks. Yet traditional cultural gender patterns have of course persisted as well. Although in an international comparison, the level of *patriarchalism* is mostly difficult to assess and measure, it can be assumed that it would differ from country to country in both East and West: therefore, it would not be correct to produce stereotypical images on the East and West as blocks. Moreover, the Enwise countries went through two other dramatic macro social and political changes: from partly traditional and partly *bourgeois* societies into communist ones, and from a communist to a demo-

Misogynist images in the Estonian media



"Oh mirror, mirror on the wall ... Who is the fairest (woman scientist) of them all (in Tartu*)?"
PS: Tartu is the main university and knowledge town in Estonia.

Source: © Hillar Mets in "Eesti Päevaleht", Estonian daily newspaper, September 9, 2003.



"The first talking thing was invented by God... Edison invented the first talking thing that can be switched off..."

Source: © Hillar Mets in "Eesti Päevaleht", Estonian daily newspaper, August 13, 2003.

Misogynist statement in the Estonian media

A lecturer starts his lecture with these words: "Now we are going to talk about matters, which the Chinese and women obviously won't understand..."

Source: Monthly magazine "Eesti Naine" (Estonian Woman), No. 9/1989.

cratic regime, which should be also theorised as a jump from cultural isolation to a globalised culture. All these social changes included their gender dimension, implicitly and explicitly. Communist gender patterns have been changed relatively slowly so far, yet the cognitive experience with the newly established competitive society, the new life strategies in young generation and the impact of international standards of gender equality policies, do result in an increasingly visible cultural shift.



Gender equality under communism, as with this perfectly elaborated imaginary object shown in the picture above, was simply an illusion...

Source: Bruno Ernst, Abenteuer mit unmögliche Figuren, Taco erlagsgesellschaft und Agentur, 1987 in Velichová, 2003.