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**PANEL II**

**Equal Participation of Women and Men in Decision-Making Processes, with  
Particular Emphasis on Political Participation and Leadership**

Written statement\* submitted by

Vida Kanopiene  
Mykolas Romeris University, Lithuania

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## **Women's participation in the labour market and economic decision-making : the case of Lithuania**

1. The improvement of women's economic status and their active participation in decision making is essential for the promotion of democratization of society and mobilisation of full potential of human resources. Therefore equal access of women and men to employment and to the leadership positions in economy is one of the major topics of the political and social agenda of UN and EU. Although Lithuania, as well as the other Central and Eastern European countries, EU members since 2004, has a long-time tradition of women's involvement in paid work, their equitable role in the labour market as well as in the other domains of public life still remains a challenge.

2. The report presents a comparative analysis of the situation of Lithuanian women in economic decision-making processes within the context of current socio-economic and political transformations and integration into EU. It aims to show the main patterns of female and male employment and to reveal the key advances and persisting barriers to gender equality.

3. The evidence shows that the role of Lithuanian women in economy is similar to that in many post-transition countries (EU members since 2004) in terms of labour market participation rates and trends as well as gender distribution patterns and occupational segregation. During the Soviet years Lithuania was distinguished by high economic activity of women: since the 1970s they comprised more than a half of those occupied in the national economy, the employment rate of women was very close to that of men and exceeded 80 per cent. Over fifty years of soviet regime women made good use of the educational opportunities provided: they constituted the majority (around 55-60 per cent) of higher school and university students<sup>1</sup>.

4. However, women were excluded from decision-making processes in economy and political power:

- On the basis of special quota system women were included into the composition of the parliament (Supreme Soviet) with the aim to demonstrate gender equality. Women – members of the deputy corpus were most highly represented among industrial workers and collective farmers while the most experienced professionals were not even admitted to the CPSU membership. There were no females among the leading Party officials and very few – in the Governmental elite.
- Majority of executive positions in industry and other principal branches of

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<sup>1</sup> Gender differences in education still persist (table 1, Annex 1). The younger generation outperforms in numbers their male contemporaries at most levels of educational system: they make up about 60 per cent among the students at universities, according to the EUROSTAT data for 2004, 90 per cent of 22 year-old-Lithuanian women have achieved at least upper secondary education, compared with 82 per cent of men.

economy were occupied by men. 2.

5. Complicated socio-economic and political situation at the beginning of the 1990s boosted the reinforcement of patriarchal attitudes in society and the spread of women's discrimination in economy<sup>3</sup>. This resulted in a significant diminution of the role of their labour: in the course of the last decade the number of employed women has decreased by 25 per cent while the total number of employed males – by 14 per cent. The 2002 was the 'turning point' in the Lithuanian labour market: improvement of economic situation has conditioned the growth of employment and decrease of unemployment. Although these positive changes to greater extent were related to men's participation<sup>4</sup>, Lithuania still has a relatively high women's employment rate<sup>5</sup>, and gender employment gap (6.9 percentage points) is one of the lowest among the EU member states (tables 2 and 3, Annex 1).

6. An important peculiarity of women's participation in Lithuanian economy is a very small scale of part-time employment<sup>6</sup>. Contrary to the overall EU patterns, no more marked differences in employment rates of females and males are observed if duration of working time is taken into account: gender employment gap on full-time equivalent basis (8.7 percentage points) in Lithuania is much lower compared to the EU-25 average indicator ( 21.7 percentage points).

7. Gender balance in employment demonstrates that women are more or less equally represented in Lithuanian economy. However, similar to the other EU member states<sup>7</sup>, horizontal and vertical gender segregation still persists:

- Women, traditionally, concentrate in particular areas (e.g., textile industry and social services) while men prevail in construction, transport and machinery.
- Position of women is lower in the hierarchy and they constitute the majority at the bottom of the occupational pyramid. Moving up to the top the number of women decreases and only few of them are in the most prestigious occupations.

8. The analysis of changes in distribution of female and male labour force by sectors and activities since the beginning of the 1990s shows that modernization and structural changes of economy (expansion of service sector and decrease of

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<sup>2</sup> According to the 1989 Population Census Data, women made 25 per cent among managers of divisions/sections in industry, 33 per cent of directors of industrial enterprises.

<sup>3</sup> Hidden and open discrimination of women in the labour market was confirmed by findings of sociological research conducted in 1996-1997 [7;8]

<sup>4</sup> Men's employment rate has increased by 7,4 percentage points (or from 58.9 in 2001 to 66.3 per cent in 2005) whereas the change of respective women's indicator was 3.0 percentage points (from 56.2 to 59.2 per cent).

<sup>5</sup> The indicator is below the Lisbon target (60 percentage points) only by 0.8 per cent.

<sup>6</sup> A part-time rate for women (7 per cent in 2004) in Lithuania is much lower compared to the average EU-15 indicator (30.4 per cent) but quite similar to the NMS 10 average rate (5.0 per cent)

<sup>7</sup> Statistical data demonstrate only relatively small shifts in segregation by occupation and sector since 2000 in the other EU member states as well. In fact, overall occupational segregation has risen slightly at the EU25 level and for both EU15 and NMS10.

employment in agriculture) prompted the increase of the number of men in some former highly feminized activities (e.g., in trade). Meanwhile women's share has decreased in almost all sectors of economy, except of that in education and health care. Rapid privatization has resulted in the concentration of male labour force in private sector<sup>8</sup> (masculine spheres of activity were privatized to a much larger extent) and female labour force in public sector<sup>9</sup>.

9. More active men's involvement in big business and entrepreneurship was stipulated, first and foremost, by a number of specific factors related to their dominance in society prior and during the period of economic reforms; possession of power enabled them to preoccupy pivotal positions in privatization. Significant obstacles for women to undertake commercial activities were direct or indirect gender biased discrimination as well as the lack of information, personal experience, self-confidence and specific business 'know how' [1].

10. Although the women's role in private sector has strengthened (e.g., a proportion of women among the managers in private sector has increased recently and makes around 40 percent), men still occupy the principal positions in decision-making:

- According to the data of European Commission (2004), women are not represented among the presidents of the top 50 publicly quoted companies<sup>10</sup> of Lithuania.
- Women make only 11 per cent among the members of the highest Decision Making Bodies and 7 per cent of the Daily Executive Bodies of these companies.
- Women's participation in decision-making is especially low in agriculture and industrial sector<sup>11</sup> – the respective indicators are only 7 and 5 per cent.
- Women are not represented among the Heads of National Central Banks, they make only 25 per cent of decision makers in the highest bodies of the banks [4]

11. A typical illustration of gender hierarchy is under-representation of females in the administration structure of the Lithuanian Confederation of Industrialists - one of the most powerful and influential economic institutions on the national scale. The president and vice-presidents as well as chairpersons of the sixteen committees of confederation are men. Women are present only among representatives of

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<sup>8</sup> In the period of economic reforms (1990-2000) the total number of employees in public sector has decreased by 65 per cent while the numbers of persons employed in private sector has almost doubled. At present the share of the private sector in total employment makes close to 73 per cent.

<sup>9</sup> According to the Labourforce survey data, a proportion of women in private sector during the last years has stabilized and makes around 42 per cent. Men make up majority (around 62 per cent) of employers and self-employed persons.

<sup>10</sup> Top 50 companies are defined as the companies that are quoted on the national stock exchange and that have the highest market capitalisation.

<sup>11</sup> Agriculture, hunting and forestry, fishing, mining and quarrying, manufacturing, electricity, gas and water supply and construction (according to statistical classification of economic sectors in EU - NACE)

confederation in governmental bodies, but their proportion is very small (10 per cent) [10].

12. Prevalence of men in private sector leads to the concentration of wealth and power in their hands and thus maintains the economic inequality of sexes. This is also confirmed by persisting gender wage gap, the gross average monthly wage of Lithuanian women makes around 83 per cent of men's (table 4, Annex 1). The lowest salaries are in the most feminized spheres of employment such as the textile industry, health care and education. There are some areas where women earn more in comparison to an average employee – these are, first of all, 'masculinized' branches of economy (electricity, gas and water, transport). The utmost differentiation of salaries by gender is observed in the best paid spheres of professional activities, e.g., in financial intermediation women's average salary makes slightly more than a half of men's. Gender-related wage differences are conditioned primarily by vertical occupational segregation and insufficient social estimation of women's work – they are paid significantly less for similar jobs or jobs of comparative value.

13. However, these explanations are only partially true: a comparative analysis of average salaries in various occupational groups shows that the gender gap is observed both in unskilled or low skilled professions and in the 'top' ranking positions of occupational hierarchy. For example, in the national economy the average gross monthly salary of women, legislators, senior officials and managers, makes only 78 per cent of men's average salary in the same occupational group; the respective indicator in a group of professionals is 79 per cent, among technicians and associated professionals 61 per cent, in elementary occupations 80 per cent [16]. Similar situation is observed within the branches of economy. Although in Public sector gender pay gap is less pronounced, even in the same occupations women earn less, compared with their male colleagues.

14. In order to clarify still existing here hidden discrimination of women, a reference to the sociological research data should be made. According to the findings of a number of surveys conducted in Lithuania, the attitudes and behaviour of many employers are grounded on patriarchal understanding of gender social roles [7]. Besides, due to deep-rooted stereotypes, there are professions or positions that are identified as only 'feminine' or 'masculine'. This also suggests that formal educational attainment is not a decisive factor for the professional career of women - the educational choices are very important in this respect. However, the data of national statistics indicate continued segregation in education, i.e., the disproportionate enrolment of women and men in IT-related and other modern study programmes that offer broad prospects in the labour market [13:63].

15. Summing up, it can be concluded that Lithuania provides a good illustration of a multiple character and complexity of the process of women's economic empowerment. Notwithstanding the creation and development of legislative framework and establishment of national machinery for the enforcement of equal

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<sup>12</sup>ISCO-88 classification

gender opportunities<sup>13</sup>, alongside with achievements there still exist many obstacles and challenges.

16. First and foremost, the administrative measures alone do not guarantee an improved position for women in the labour market if these measures are not reinforced by consistent and continuous integration of gender mainstreaming approach into social and economic policies pursued by state.

17. Since Lithuania is EU member state, employment policies to a great extent are influenced by the EU directives<sup>14</sup>. Therefore an emphasis in the National Action Plans and Programmes [14;17] is put on introduction of measures aimed to meet the Lisbon targets with respect to women employment rates and childcare provision as well as to reduce the unemployment and integrate into the labour market mothers of young children, economically inactive and socially vulnerable groups of women. The other issues that are of great relevance to the promotion of equal gender roles in economy (e.g., persistence of horizontal and vertical segregation of the labour market and gender pay gap, hidden discrimination of women) lack adequate response in these strategic documents.

18. Subordinated position of females in economy is regarded as a problem of particular importance in the National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2005-2009. The principal objectives of his programme are to change the existing stereotypes on the role of women and men in economy and to increase the opportunities of females to take the executive positions in decision making. It encompasses a number of measures aimed to encourage the employers to settle equal salaries for the work of equal value, to support women's entrepreneurship and to change traditional sex role stereotypes. Planning of special regional seminars aiming to view the officially approved methodologies of evaluation of work/ tasks and positions, training of employees of labour market institutions and social partners in order to raise their awareness of the importance of women's promotion in economy, organization of special information campaigns aimed at motivation of men to take parental leave and take care of their young children, allocation of financial resources for the projects of women's NGO's which intend to change the traditional images of females and males in mass media might be considered as examples of good practices [18]. However, the budget of the Programme is poor and integration of the foreseen

<sup>13</sup> During a period of EU pre-accession negotiations the Lithuanian legislation was reformed and harmonized in accordance to the requirements as laid down in the 'ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE'. As was indicated in 2000 EC Regular Report [4], in the field of equal treatment for women and men the legislative framework was substantially in line with these requirements: equal rights for women and men were enshrined in most national laws, the Law on Equal Opportunities was passed in 1998 [15]. It was the first such law in the entire region of Central and Eastern Europe and aimed to ensure the implementation of the equal rights for women and men consolidated in the Constitution. A mechanism of the enforcement of equal gender rights and opportunities has been put in place on the level of Parliament/Government and the Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson was instituted in 1999 (Annex 2).

<sup>14</sup> The promotion of employment and inducement of investments into human capital is a key priority of employment policies in Lithuania.

measures to the other national programmes (NAP Employment and NRP) is rather sketchy. There is a need to strengthen the coordination of efforts and to extend cooperation between government institutions and gender equality bodies in strategic planning ( e.g., there is no evidence on the involvement of the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's institution and of other equality bodies in preparation of the NAP for Employment and NRP).

19. Reinforcement of participation of local municipalities<sup>15</sup> and social partners in the process of implementation of policy measures as well as maintenance of active dialogue between national/local authorities and women's NGO's are essential in this respect – many important initiatives arise at the grass roots level but local non-governmental organizations usually lack human and financial resources to translate their ideas into actions<sup>16</sup>.

20. Crucial factors that slow down or even impede women's participation in economic decision-making are cultural traditions and gender social role stereotypes. Recent public opinion survey data and research findings indicate the certain shift of public attitudes and rise of egalitarianism in society<sup>17</sup>. Still, men are more often reckoned as 'bread winners' in a family<sup>18</sup> and majority of Lithuanian population point out that women are in the disadvantaged position in the labour market and other domains of public life<sup>19</sup>. The latter statement is also confirmed by the reports of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson which indicate the facts of gender biased discrimination in private sector [12].

21. Therefore it is very important to continue efforts to raise public awareness of the issues relevant to gender equality and promotion of women's role in economy and increase of their participation in decision making. Despite a manifest progress that has been achieved in Lithuania during the pre-accession period and afterwards, there do exist gaps and barriers, gender mainstreaming remains a challenge for politicians, decision-makers and social partners. The activities of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's institution, other equality bodies and women's NGO's are good examples in this regard, still the translation of legislative and institutional provisions in all fields of life need to continue.

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<sup>15</sup> There are no structural units responsible for the implementation of the gender equality principal at local level, apart from within Vilnius municipality.

<sup>16</sup> There are around 90 women's NGO's in Lithuania. Considering the main goals and the character of activities, three types of women's organisations can be singled out in Lithuania: political organisations, oriented towards integration of Lithuanian women in society and the increase of their role in public life; organisations rallied around the solution of specific social and economic problems of specific strata women (elderly, housewives, disabled, rural citizens) and organisations directed to the participation of females in other domains, i.e. cultural, religious, etc. [9].

<sup>17</sup> Representative survey of Lithuanian population conducted by 'Spinter' company in 2005 showed that majority (65 per cent) of respondents support the statement that women are as good leaders as men [11]

<sup>18</sup> This opinion is supported by 58 per cent of Lithuanian men and 52 per cent of women (data of public opinion and market research company 'Baltic Surveys Ltd' [11]

<sup>19</sup> According to the 2004 TNS Gallup data, most of Lithuanian inhabitants are of opinion that conditions of participation in the labour market (68 per cent) and politics (79 per cent) are more favourable for men [20].

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## ANNEX 1

**Table 1.** Education of Lithuanian women and men in 2001 ( per 1000 population aged 10 years and older, Population census data)

Level of education	Moterys	Vyrai
Tertiary	135	115
Specialised secondary	209	175
Secondary	261	284
Elementary	125	178
Primary	213	203

**Table 2.** Employment rate by gender in Lithuania and EU, 2004 [6, 10; 68; 87]

Average	Employment rate, (age group 15-64) per cent		Employment rate, full-time equivalent, per cent		Gender employment gap	Gender employment gap (on full-time equivalent basis)
	Males	Females	Males	Females		
EU-25	70.9	55.7	68.9	47.2	15.2	21.7
EU-15*	72.7	56.8	70.3	47.0	15.9	23.3
NMS 10**	62.0	50.2	61.5	48.3	11.8	13.2
Lithuania	64.7	57.8	64.8	56.1	6.9	8.7

\* Old member states

\*\* New member states (since 2004)

**Table 3.** Gender employment gap by age and education in 2004, percentage points [ 6, 48; 88-90; 91-93]

Average	Age group			Education*		
	15-24	25-54	55-64	High	Medium	Low
EU-25	5.8	16.8	19.1	7.2	12.9	21.1
EU-15**	5.8	17.8	19.1	7.1	12.6	22.8
NMS 10***	5.9	11.7	18.1	7.4	13.9	7.2
Lithuania	9.2	4.8	16.8	1.5	11.9	12.5

\* Low – less than upper secondary education; Medium – upper secondary education completed; High – tertiary education completed.

**Table 4.** Average monthly gross earnings by sectors of the economy and gender in 1999-2005, per cent [2;3;18]\*

Sectors of economy	Monthly average salary of women compared to men in the corresponding branch			Monthly average salary of women compared to the average in the national economy			Women's share among all employees		
	1999**	2001**	2005**	1999	2001	2005	1999	2001	2005
Total	81.9	81.7	83.1	90.4	90.4	90.9	51.7	52.7	48.9
Agriculture, hunting and forestry	97.2	91.1	87.9	92.5	65.6	70.9	20.9	31.3	41.7
Processing industry	77.1	77.5	76.9	81.7	97.2	80.7	48.0	48.2	49.1
including textile	79.2	82.3	77.3	71.8	89.8	71.0	77.3	81.2	...
Electricity, gas and water	80.4	83.1	77.6	109.0	116.6	140.6	24.3	24.2	21.7
Construction	90.6	92.0	103.8	83.7	83.8	91.9	13.7	13.9	8.5
Wholesale and retail sale	81.2	79.2	79.6	75.4	83.7	82.5	51.7	52.1	50.9
Hotels and restaurants	76.5	92.1	79.5	62.1	67.9	60.8	72.4	70.7	80.4
Transport and storage, communication	86.8	83.4	95.6	99.7	102.4	105.8	31.3	34.7	25.2
Financial services	66.0	63.2	57.1	168.9	172.9	172.2	62.2	63.8	69.3
Real estate, rental and commercial activities	83.6	87.8	82.6	104.2	93.8	103.4	49.6	46.8	45.5
State government and social insurance	90.5	88.2	94.0	135.9	130.2	147.0	41.6	46.7	41.8
Education	95.9	94.9	97.4	93.3	89.5	88.4	77.7	76.8	78.2
Health and social work	84.5	83.3	81.6	79.7	76.7	78.5	84.7	83.3	83.8
Other service activities	85.7	92.5	84.2	82.8	80.0	80.4	53.3	48.4	65.0

\* Calculation conducted by the author based on Statistics Lithuania data

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### **National Machinery for Monitoring and Implementing equal rights**

1. Equal rights for women and men are enshrined in Lithuanian national laws and Constitution. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women came into force in respect of the Republic of Lithuania in 1994.

2. On 1 December, 1998, the Seimas of Republic of Lithuania passed the Law on Equal Opportunities, which came into force on 1 March, 1999. (Original Lithuanian version of the law is 'Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men'). The Law on Equal Opportunities has several amendments. Amendments to the Law on Equal Opportunities passed on 18 June 2000 introduced definitions of indirect and positive discrimination. The last amendment (1<sup>st</sup> July, 2005) has introduced supplement prohibiting any type active or passive discrimination on the grounds of a person's sex, especially if it is related with family or civil status and supplement which prohibits discriminatory job or education opportunities advertisements.

3. On 18 November, 2003, the Seimas of Republic of Lithuania passed the Law on Equal Opportunities, No IX-1826 with the aim to assure the application of EU directives 2000/43/EB and 2000/78/EB. In accordance with the Article 1 of the Law, any direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of age, sexual orientation, disability, race or ethnicity, religion or beliefs is prohibited in Lithuania. The Law came into force on 1 January, 2005. The word-by-word translation of this Law from Lithuanian into English language does not differ from the official English version of the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men.

4. A mechanism of the enforcement of equal rights and opportunities of women and men has been put in place to implement women advancement policies. At present this mechanism is comprised of the institutions of following levels. At the Seimas (the Parliament) level these issues are within the jurisdiction of the Group of Women Parliamentarian and the Committee of Family and Child Affairs. At the Government level, the implementation of these issues is within the jurisdiction of the State Consultant on Foreign Relations and Relations with NGO's. The main responsibility for policy making on gender equality and co-ordination of implementation of equal opportunities for women and men lies on the Labour Market and Equal Opportunities division within the Ministry of Social Security and Labour. On March 7, 2000 the Government of the Republic of Lithuania approved the establishment of the permanent Inter-Institutional Commission on the issues of equal opportunities for men and women. Members of the Commission are representatives from all ministries and certain departments.

5. The Office of Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson was established in 1999. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson's office an independent public institution accountable to the Seimas and it supervises the implementation of the provisions on equal rights and opportunities for women and men. The Law on Equal Opportunities, Article 27 states, that each year, by the 15 of March the Equal Opportunities Ombudsperson shall submit to the Seimas an annual report for the preceding calendar year about the activities of the Office. The report shall be considered at the Seimas and shall made public. The Ombudsperson offers suggestions to the Seimas and Government on the development of equal opportunities policies and improvement of

gender equality legislation . On the initiative of the Ombudsperson, various projects on promotion of Gender mainstreaming are prepared and implemented in the country.

6. Following up of Beijing Platform for action, Women's Advancement Programmes for 1996-1997, 1998-2000 and National Programme of Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2003-2004 and 2005-2009 were adopted by the Lithuanian Government.