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## **GENDER DIMENSION OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN WESTERN COUNTRIES AND RUSSIA<sup>1</sup>**

*The article considers the development of women's political rights as a socio-political phenomenon; it also touches on the history of legal regulation of women's political representation in the West and Russia. From the point of view of political and institutional factors of women's participation in the political life of Western countries and Russia, the article carries out a comparative analysis of women's representation in politics in Western countries and Russia, the impact of political institutions on women's participation in political life (political activity of women in the world and in Russia, women's representation in national parliaments, dynamics of changes in the number of women deputies, strategies for women's promotion to power), and considers whether it is possible to transfer the experience of West European countries in implementing institutional mechanisms for women's participation in politics.*

**Key words:** *women's political activism, representation in parliaments and ministries, gender equality.*

A new gender order is currently being formed in the world, it is a new order of life and activity (including in the field of politics), social and interpersonal interaction between men and women as system-forming socio-demographic communities based on the principle of gender equality. In turn, this implies the revision of a number of legal and moral, social and ethical norms related to the social and legal regulators of gender interaction in the society and in the world system as a whole. Therefore, the change in the traditional (by the standards of the last century) social status of women as a gender community led to a chain of social and political adjustments and brought the ideology of equality and equity back into focus [8. Pp. 3-16].

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The struggle of women for their rights continued for many centuries, in many ways the results of such a struggle until the end of the XVIII – early XIX century did not turn out to be successful, many women were never heard, executed or arrested. The first steps to formalize women's political rights and responsibilities began during the French Revolution, when three important documents were adopted, such as the "Declaration of the rights of women and citizens," "In defense of women's rights" and "Declaration of Sentiments." All these documents contained a certain set of requirements for changing the then existing legislation, which deprived women of political rights around the world. Many countries have begun to follow the example of France and take the issue of establishing a legal framework for women more seriously. Discrimination against women and their roles in the family, education, and work gradually faded, but in politics until the middle of the twentieth century, women were not taken seriously.

For the study of women's political participation in the countries of the European Union and Russia the author applies comparative, statistical and sociological methods. The study also analyzes official documents of the European Union and Russia regulating gender policy, including: "Beijing Declaration," "Bill of rights of women," "Millennium Development Declaration," "Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women," Russian Government Decree No. 410-R of 8 March 2017 "On Approval of the National Strategy of Action for Women for 2017-2020" (see: Attachment 1) [12].

The practical part of the research is based on the statistical and comparative methods. As the main material for the study, we used statistical data on the share of women parliamentarians, speakers, and ministers around the world from the Interparliamentary Union's documentary database, a sociological study by Transparency International – Russia, and data on quotas for women involved in politics. A comparative analysis of the representation of women in the politics of the European Union and ROS was made to summarize the results.

The main news sources of the European Union and Russia dedicated to women in the political sphere, including foreign resources – BBC Newsline Ticker, Cable News Network, The New York Times, and domestic sources – RBC, TASS, RIA Novosti and REGNUM, were separately studied and analyzed.

**Legal analysis of gender policy in the EU and Russia.** At the international level in 1952 the UN adopted the "Convention on the political rights of women," which regulated women's free access to participate in elections, to hold any public office, including the right to be elected to the parliament, to the post of minister, speaker, and even head of state. With new amendments, international conferences have begun to be convened at a more global level, including the "World conference on human rights," adopted in 1993, the "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action" of 1995, and the "Regional preparatory meeting for the 2000 review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for action," adopted in January 2000 (2). In total, the UN adopted 9 conventions, 2 declarations and

1 recommendation, and 1 NGO report – “Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women in Central and Eastern Europe” [6].

The first legal act was adopted in the Russian Federation in 1996 with the aim to regulate women’s rights and freedoms, it was the “Concept for the improvement of the status of women in the Russian Federation.” In total, Russia has 8 official documents in this area, including the “National plan of action for the improvement of the status of women and their role in society until 2000,” also adopted in 1996, the “Concept of legislative activities to ensure equal rights and equal opportunities for men and women” of 1997, the “Fifth periodic report of the Russian Federation on measures to implement the provisions of the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women, adopted from 1994 to 1998, the” “National mechanism for the advancement of women” of 1999, the “National report on the implementation of the Platform for Action in the Russian Federation” of 2000, the “Gender strategy of the Russian Federation” of 2002, and other documents. The most important legal document, the Constitution of the Russian Federation, also contains provisions that enshrine women’s rights in various spheres of public life [10].

The legal analysis of the above-mentioned documents of the countries of the European Union has shown the importance of implementing women’s political and civil rights in practice for several reasons. Already in the XIX century, women began to think about taking an active part in politics. The “Declaration of Sentiments” of July 19, 1848, emphasized how unfair it was to deprive women of the opportunity to vote on an equal basis with men to be able to influence the fate of the state through the executive and legislative bodies [1]. The “Beijing Declaration” highlights how widespread gender inequality and stereotypes are against women, even at the stage of democratization of society [5]. This trend is reflected in the fact that many women are not able to get their positions at high levels of government, ministries, legislative, executive and judicial authorities. Although women have shown considerable leadership and management skills to a large extent, the conservative structure of many state structures and political parties, among other things, prevents women from participating in political life in the society.

Other important international documents, such as the “Convention on the political rights of women,” emphasize the importance of women’s suffrage, the right to hold senior public positions and take an active part in politics, on an equal basis with men [4]. The “Vienna Declaration and Program of Action,” in contrast to other documents, directly calls on higher state bodies and international organizations to facilitate women’s access to politics, to allow them to take leadership positions, and to promote greater participation of women in this field [12].

The first document on the role of women in the Russian Federation is Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of January 8, 1996 № 6 the “Concept for the improvement of the status of women in the Russian Federation.”

This document for the first time defined the overall strategy of state policy towards women, including in the sphere of their participation in public affairs. It is necessary to mention the earlier Decree of the President of the Russian Federation of March 4, 1993. No. 337 “On the priority tasks of state policy in relation to women,” in which the task was to draw public attention to the items on the need to attract women to participate in state and public activities in the country [11]. The “Concept for the improvement of the status of women in the Russian Federation” emphasizes the importance of ensuring equal access of women to public service, since the number of women in these positions is a minority compared to men in high electoral activity.

As society becomes more democratic, women’s civic engagement increases, but the historical advantage of men in more professional positions provides women with the most difficult path to politics. To solve this problem, the Decree proposed to involve the media, organize courses and financial assistance, provide free access to all public positions, and provide support not only to individual women, but also to various women’s organizations [3].

In the Russian Federation, the latest document regulating the rights and place of women in politics is Order of the Government of the Russian Federation No. 410-R of March 8, 2017 “On Approval of the National Strategy of Action for Women for 2017-2020”. This document highlights how large the gap between men and women in government positions is in Russia, despite the fact that women show active participation in the political life of the country. To eliminate inequality, this document guarantees equal opportunities for obtaining positions in state bodies, attracting women not only to the political sphere, but also to the state’s economic sector. To achieve these goals, it is proposed to increase the competitiveness of women in the labor market and in the public sector, reduce the wage gap between men and women, and provide women with the opportunity to take the necessary advanced training courses [7].

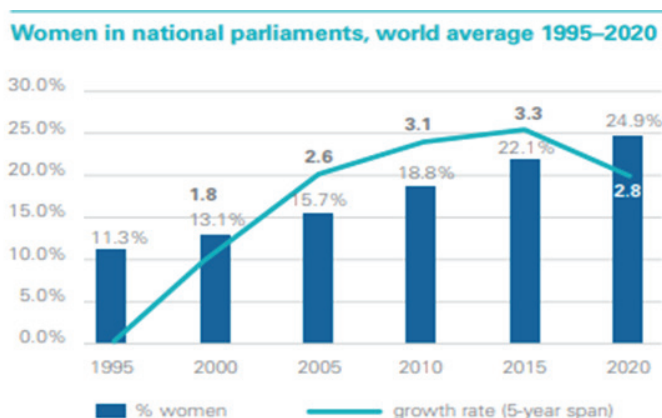
Despite the broad legal framework, goals and targets set by the states for the advancement of women, many of them around the world still face difficulties in obtaining positions in politics.

**Representation of women in the EU countries.** To date, no country legally restricts women’s participation in parliament, although social and economic barriers still prevent women from achieving equal status with men. Almost all regions, except Europe, still have one upper or lower parliamentary chamber in which women hold less than 5% of the seats. According to the Inter-parliamentary Union, 57 women around the world preside over one of the 192 houses of parliament, 79 of which are bicameral. Thus, women occupy only 20.5% of the total number of 278 positions of presidents of the parliament or one of its chambers [10]. In 2020, only the Pacific region is the only territory where there are no women members of parliaments. In 1995, ten countries, except Europe, had no women members of their only upper or lower house of parliament.

If we look at statistics, we can see that over the past 25 years, the share of women in parliaments around the world has increased significantly by 13.6% [1]. In 1995, only 11.3% of seats were held by women, but in 2015 this figure almost doubled to 22.1%. It is worth noting that although the pace of progress has slowed over the past five years, in 2020 the proportion of women in national parliaments is close to 25% (see: Fig. 1).

The countries of the European Union as a whole have made progress in increasing the proportion of women in national parliaments in 2020, reaching an average of 29.9% for the region [15]. This trend can be considered, on the one hand, as progress in comparison with other States, including the Russian Federation, but also as a failure in the overall representation of women. In 1995, there were 8 out of 10 countries with the highest representation of women in Europe such as Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and Iceland. However, in 2020, only two European countries – Sweden and Andorra were able to join this list. Progress in Europe is still driven by the Scandinavian countries – women constituted 43.9% of their Parliament members in 2020 (see: Fig. 2) [13].

Among the lower houses, Monaco overtook all European countries that held elections in 2018, with 20.8% to 33.3% of seats held by women in the Parliament of Monaco [13]. Latvia has also seen a significant increase in the percentage of women in parliament over the past 25 years, from 19% to 31%, despite a decrease in the percentage of women as parliamentary candidates, for example, in 2014 it



Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) data for single and lower houses; figures correct as of 1 January each year, except for 1995 (1 July).

**Fig. 1.** Women in national parliaments, world average 1995–2020

### Women in national parliaments, Europe, 1995–2020

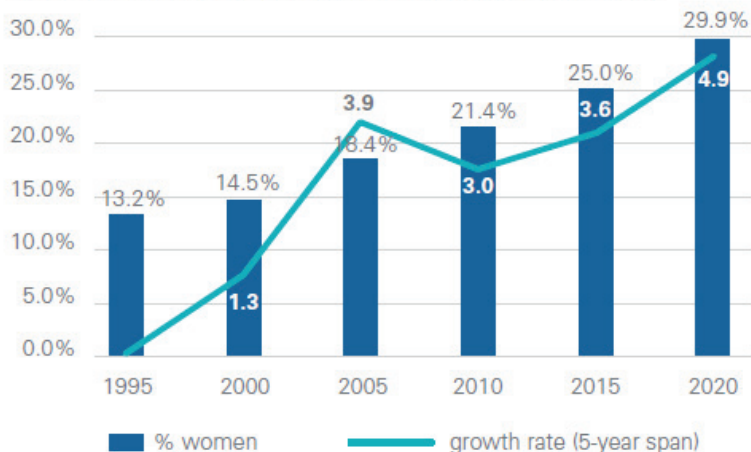


Fig. 2. Average representation of women in national parliaments, Europe

### Progress of women Speakers, 1995–2020



Fig. 3. Progress of women speakers worldwide, from 1995 to 2020

was 33%. Italy, as one of the European Union countries, performed better among larger European states, with the percentage of women in parliament increasing from 28.4% to 35.7% [13]. This trend can be largely explained by the new electoral law that was adopted in Italy in 2017. This law provides higher quotas for women to participate in parliamentary elections.

Slovenia, by contrast, suffered the greatest setbacks among the European countries that held elections in 2018, with the number of women in Parliament

falling from 35.6% to 24.4% [13]. In the run-up to the elections, many political parties demanded the intervention of both the Electoral Commission and the Supreme Court of Slovenia in order to change the conditions for granting quotas. A similar trend can be seen in the Czech Republic, where the proportion of women in the upper house has fallen from 18.8% to 16%, due to the fact that in 2018, they elected by two women less than at the previous elections.

Until the end of the 1990s, there were relatively few countries in Europe where women served as speakers of Parliament. However, between 2005 and 2015, the percentage of women as parliamentary presidents increased from 8.3% to 15.6%. As of 2020, the number of female speakers worldwide is already 20.5% [14]. Since 2015, some States have appointed their first female speaker, these countries include Nepal, Namibia, the United Arab Emirates, and others (see: Fig. 3).

If we talk about the countries of the European Union, the General Council of Andorra appointed its first female speaker only in 2019. In her speech as speaker, she emphasized the importance of a woman not only holding this position, but also taking part in politics in general. As of January 1, 2020, there were 16 women speakers in the European Union and the sub-Saharan countries [2].

The number of women holding ministerial positions in Europe is quite high, in two countries – Spain and Finland, as of January 1, 2020, the share of women in such positions was from 60 to 69.9%. In the other twelve Western countries, including Australia, France, and Canada, the number of women ministers is from 50 to 59.9% [4].

When it comes to the role of women in parliamentary committees, the data obtained from 167 parliamentary chambers presents a rather contradictory picture of women's leadership. Currently, women head 26% of the committees on foreign affairs, defense, finance, human rights and gender equality, among others. It is worth noting that this percentage varies significantly depending on the type of the committees: more than 73% of women hold senior positions in gender policy committees, while just over 10% of women participate in the management of defense committees. Meanwhile, women head a third of human rights committees, a fifth of foreign affairs committees, and 13% of finance committees.

In terms of gender quotas, until 1995, only two countries – Argentina and Nepal – applied gender quotas established by law. However, over the past 25 years, quotas have spread to all regions of the world, which has led to an increase in women's representation in parliaments around the world. Today, elections to the highest state bodies are held in 81 countries in accordance with the legislation that provides for gender quotas, including the European Union countries. In 2019, two countries adopted new legal measures: United Arab Emirates a presidential decree was adopted prescribing gender parity, and a new constitutional provision was adopted in Benin. This normative document provided for the introduction of quotas in the new law on the elections. At the same time, in Guinea, in May 2019, the gender quota for candidates was revised upwards from 30% to 50%

[14]. Due to gender quotas adopted in legislation or on a voluntary basis, women on average won 30.3% of seats in 40 wards, while only 17.9% of women won seats in the remaining 28 wards without quota systems [14]. Currently, there are no gender quotas in such vast territories as Russia, the United States, Greenland, as well as in many countries with an Islamic form of government, such as Iran, Syria, India, etc.

Thus, the high gender gap and stereotypical attitudes towards women in some countries prevent most of them from gaining access to political positions. The gap between the percentage of women in politics between Europe and Russia is explained by many factors. First, Western society is the more tolerant and liberal, in contrast to the conservative Russian society, where the role of women in politics is still not taken seriously. Second, there is a broader legal framework in the European Union that regulates women's rights, including in politics, while there is such legislation is almost non-existent in Russia. Third, a large number of different quotas are provided for women in the European Union, which makes it possible to take an active part in the country's political activities. In the Russian Federation, quotas for women are not as common as in Europe, for this reason, it is difficult for many women to get a high position in politics, however, it is necessary to remember that Russia is the country with the most pronounced female face both on the gender "passport" and on the real national portrait [9. Pp. 4-13].

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