
Women and Foreign Policy

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Summary

European studies have revealed a link between the level of cultural development of a milieu and the individual interest in all kinds of political events — particularly those from the realm of foreign policy. The gender-related differences among the responses are significant, particularly in certain clusters of European countries, with a tendency of decreasing under the influence of education and employment outside the home.

The tradition of equal educational and employment opportunities for women and men in Croatia — one of the achievements of the socialist system — has resulted in a deeper immersion of individuals in social developments, which may explain their marked and very similar interest in all political (including foreign policy) events, which were traditionally considered a domain of male interest.

Women in Croatia are attracted to foreign policy; this interest has been proved by their interest in European integrations, particularly among the educated women. However, when the administration of these policies is concerned, women — for the time being — operate solely at lower levels.

Are women in Croatia going to have to wait long for their Madeleine Albright — for a highly placed woman (Foreign Secretary), a creator and executor of her country's policies and, consequently, a major influence on international political relationships, or is the Croatian foreign policy going to remain an almost exclusively male dominion for many years to come?

Are women interested in foreign policy at all?

That the number of women in politics is globally too small is not only a matter of impression based on the media coverage of political events, both in the developed countries and in Croatia; this conclusion is based on actual numbers which reduce the participation of women at the highest decision-making levels to a symbolic presence (proving the accuracy of the impression).

If one had to single out the area in which this statement carries particular weight, it would undoubtedly be that of foreign policy. All the assumptions as to the reasons for the inadequate political engagement of

women in general become even more complex when dealing with the area of foreign, international policy, due to the opinion that what happens outside the home (let alone outside their country) concerns men much more than women.

In order to prove the truth — or the extent — of it, a number of studies have been conducted in European countries. Their primary goal was to answer the question to what degree European women favour European integrations, but indirectly these studies also provided the answer to the question whether women are interested at all in the topics related to the events outside their own states i.e. those concerning foreign policy.

Some of the Croatian studies dealt with the reasons for the inadequate participation of women in public life, particularly politics, but so far have not focused on women as creators and executors of Croatian foreign policy. This segment of political activity has always been branded a “reservation” intended mostly for the male population with the rationale that it is too “complex and serious” for “everybody” to dabble with it.

Nevertheless, even a cursory review of the existing research shows that in the case of Croatia this assumption is only partly true. In the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, women make 60 percent of its employees. Moreover, they occupy a significant number of executive posts: 58 percent of department heads and even 67 percent of deputy department heads are women.

However, their numbers among the employees of Croatian missions abroad is markedly lower: 36 percent of the total number of employees, while women make only 5 percent of the highest ranking diplomatic corps (ambassadors and consuls general) — three out of fifty!

This “pyramidal pattern” — women represented at the lower levels (mostly the executive ones) while their numbers significantly dwindle as we climb the ladder of decision-making power — is visible in the field of foreign policy activity. The most demanding and most responsible posts, both in the ministry itself and in the diplomatic missions are primarily reserved for men.

The existing studies have pointed to the possible causes of such a modest participation of women in politics in general (the type of socialisation, the activist syndrome, etc)¹ but with foreign policy activism we have to ask ourselves whether it is true that a lack of interest of women for the events outside their own country is the cause of these more than modest percentages and to what extent — if — women and men differ in that respect.

¹See in Leinert Novosel, S., 1990.

Before we begin analysing the interest of the Croatian people in foreign policy events, let us review the afore mentioned European studies of that subject.

We shall mention some of the most interesting findings.

The study conducted in 1993 in the European Union countries² showed that 43% of men and 49% of women answered 'never' to the question 'Do you sometimes think about yourself not only as a citizen of your own state but of Europe as well?'; 33% of men and 25% of women were in favour of the integration of Western Europe, while 58% of men and 50% of women estimated that the membership of their country in EU was a good move!

It was expected that, with time, owing to the intense media campaign, proliferation of information and actual political developments, more equitable results in the assessments between men and women on these topics would ensue. However, the study conducted at the turn of the nineties (1989.)³ showed that their attitudes are rather static or only minimally altered. Seven years have elapsed since this second study so perhaps the attitudes have slightly changed though it is not possible to say in which direction and to what extent.

However, there are indications that enthusiasm has given way to caution, even among the older member countries.⁴

Let us go back now to the data available from the last mentioned study and observe the still existing difference between male and female respondents regarding the assessment of the European integration efforts. See Table 1.

²According to Mossuz-Lavau, J., 1991.

³This research was conducted in the second half of 1989 on a representative sample of 11,815 citizens of the European Community countries which at that time included Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, Holland, Portugal and Great Britain; in 1991 it was transformed into the European Union and enlarged its membership to 16 countries. However, since these data refer to the earlier period, the earlier name — the European Community — is to be used. All the later data in the article refer to the European Union (EU).

The data from this study are taken from Mossuz-Lavau, 1991.

⁴There is one recent but telling fact: "Not a long time ago (February 22, 1997), *the Vjesnik* of Zagreb published the information that in 1994 52.5 % of Swedish voters voted for Swedish membership in the Union. After Sweden had joined the EU, the affinity of its citizens for the membership of their country in this organisation significantly decreased, according to the recent public opinion polls." The quote is from an article by Josip Županov from 1997. The slowed-down pace of the acceptance of new members is a proof of EU's sudden caution and very sensitive criteria.

As can be seen from the data in Table 1, only 34% of men and 24% of women say that they are extremely supportive of the process, the results similar to those from the earlier study of 1983, both in the low figures regarding the intensity of the interest and the ratio between the male and the female answers. It is worth noting that 10% of men and 18% of women did not answer the question, which means that almost twice fewer women than men had defined attitudes.

In the assessment of the forging of the unified European market, men were more positive than women: 55% of male respondents considered that a smart move as compared to 43% of women. It is again worth pointing out a very high percentage of women who had nothing to say about this — even 24% of women as compared to 13% of men.

Table 1. Responses to the question: “How do you assess the efforts towards the integration of Western Europe?”

Answers	M%	F%
Extremely supportive	34	24
Quite supportive	45	48
Quite opposed	8	8
Very opposed	4	2
No answer	10	18

Source: Mossuz-Lavau, J. 1991, p. 17.

A similar situation is repeated in Table 2, which “tests” the respondents’ interest in the European Union:

Table 2: Gender-related level of interest in EU.

Answers	M%	F%
Strong	11	5
Considerable	34	27
Little	37	37
None	18	30
No answer	1	2

Source: *ibid.*, p. 17.

Eventually, these data lead to the following conclusion: the level of interest in the European Union is not remarkable — 45% of men demonstrate strong or considerable interest as opposed to 32% of female respondents, while little interest is shown by both groups in the same percentage (37%). Particularly interesting is the high percentage of women who do not demonstrate any interest in that integration (30% of women and only 18% of men).

A possible explanation of these perennial male-female differences perhaps lies in the smaller interest of the women from the EU countries in political topics which, in turn, may be attributed to their possible lack of familiarity with the processes of European integration in question.

The truth of this conclusion has been proved by the data shown on Table 3:

Table 3: Gender-related responses to the question: “Have you seen — read — heard in 1992 something about the unified European market?”

Answers	M%	F%
Yes	80	65
No	18	30
No answer	3	5

Source: *Ibid*, p. 17.

The collected data clearly show that women are much less informed than men, the fact corroborated by the fact that almost one out of three women from the EU has learned nothing or knows nothing about this subject. (Cf. Table 2: one third of women shows no interest in European integration.)

Putting the national differences aside, the conclusion imposing itself on the basis of these European studies is rather obvious: the example of the European integration has shown that the female population, though not averse to this concept of European integration, is not wildly enthusiastic about foreign policy topics. Their attitude may most accurately be termed “demure” and largely different from men’s attitudes — this difference varies from 10 to 11 points.

The authors have tried to explain this away by suggesting that women, in comparison with men, are less inclined to state their opinion⁵ about a certain issue, though they pointed out that over the years that gap is narrowing. However, this female aversion to public statements can be derived from a broader context of political culture which, in a certain number of European countries, provides women with a narrower range of interests — home and family — and denies them the opportunities of taking part in public activities, the consequence of which is that women spend a fewer number of years in schools and are less informed about social developments in general. Since all that we are poorly acquainted with is too abstract for us to form opinions, no wonder that women “keep their distance” from the concept of European integration.

On the basis of all this, the authors conclude that women are to a much smaller extent “European” than men!

Since this common European “profile” (European average) varies depending on individual EU countries, it is particularly interesting to see how certain countries are grouped according to the interest of their female population in the mentioned topics. Since we have at our disposal similar findings (the interest of Croatian women in European integrational processes), we might determine Croatia’s place in the family of European countries. These findings can also serve as a “meter” from which to read the interest of Croatian women in political developments outside Croatia.

The first group of countries in which the differences between women’s and men’s answers were most expected are the southern countries: Greece, Spain, Italy and Portugal. Let us pick out a few findings:⁶ while in Greece 13% of men and even 34% of women claim they have no interest whatsoever in the subject of the European Community, in Spain these figures amount to 33% and 49% respectively. In Italy it is 26% versus 49%, and in Portugal it is 31% for men and 45% for women.

The other countries (with the exception of Ireland which is more similar to the southern than the Western countries) display a small difference between male and female answers: in Belgium this difference is 10 points, in Denmark 5 points, in Germany 9 points, France 7 points, Luxembourg and Great Britain 8 points. The smallest difference is in Holland — 4 points.

These data clearly demonstrate big differences among the EU countries regarding their populations’ interest in foreign policy topics and remarkable differences between men’s and women’s interests; they also show that this

⁵See for example Dubravka Miljković, *Kriterijski obrazac za autoevoluciju tijekom učenja: spol i neke osobine ličnosti*, *Psychologia croatica*, 1, Zagreb, November 1995, pp. 220–221.

⁶Mossuz-Lavau, 1991, p. 19.

difference is bigger in the countries with traditional political culture dominant in southern Europe than in the more developed countries of Western and Northern Europe.

Our study⁷, carried out in the spring of 1997 among the urban population of the four biggest Croatian cities, provides an insight into the opinion of Croatian citizens on the desirability of political integrations of Croatia into the neighbouring (regional) and wider European associations and whether they think of Croatia as an isolated entity or a piece in the mosaic of the unified Europe. We shall not go into the reasons *pro et contra* the mentioned concepts, or what Croatia is to expect from joining the EU (if and when), or what is going to be expected from Croatia, and the political games played with the states in this region aimed at linking them or forging peace, but shall make references to a number of recent works dealing with the relationship between Croatia and Europe.⁸ In this study, the central issue is the answer to the question whether Croatian citizens are interested in the topics related to a broader, out-of-state political space or, more precisely, do they find foreign policy topics worthy of attention and of articulating opinions. Do women differ from men in that respect?

As a consequence of the harassing transitional and war ordeals, the biggest portion of the Croatians estimate that, for the time being, Croatia's priority is the preservation of its sovereignty, more important than other forms of integrations which would imply a degree of this sovereignty's restriction. In that respect the opinions of our male and female respondents correspond — 47% of women and 49% of men (which means every other respondent).

Another consequence of the 'war fatigue' is that the majority of the respondents answered that they are for peace and for Croatia in its present (unchanged) borders. The percentages were similar for women and men — 63% and 58% respectively. The Croatians are weary of autarchy, however; they are aware that the concept of integration means future for each small country, including Croatia. In that spirit, 67% of women and the same percentage of men estimate that at the end of the 20th century any walling up within national borders is pointless.

⁷The study conducted in Croatian cities — Zagreb, Split, Osijek, Rijeka — in April of 1997 on a sample of 1,300 respondents by the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb (Project "Elections, parties and parliament in Croatia 1990—2000").

⁸*Hrvatska i Europa — europski identitet i perspektive europske integracije — prilog raspravi*, (Croatia and Europe — European identity and the perspectives of European integration); a group of authors, Zagreb, European Croatian Movement, 1997, Euroteka, vol.7.

Nevertheless, our recent negative experience, coupled with the political and economic situation in SRY, excludes our eastern neighbours as our potential and desirable partners, so the Croats deem political linkages with SRY completely inconsequential — 56% of women and 44% of men.

The prospect of forging links with Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia is considered of medium importance; gender-related differences are again not significant: 35% of women and 28% of men attach medium importance to the links with Bosnia and Herzegovina, while great importance is attached by 25% of women and 35% of men.

According to the Croats, the coveted position of Croatia is among the developed countries of Western Europe. Here are the results of a recent study⁹ whose parts were published in the *Globus* weekly (Table 4).

Table 4: Responses to the question: “Which part of the world is the future development of Croatia most linked with?”

Region	Percentage of responses
Central Europe	35
Western Europe	53
Mediterranean	9
Balkan	3

Source: *Sociokulturne vrijednosti Hrvatske*, 1997 (Croatia’s social and cultural values)

Our study also shows the correspondence of the opinions between the genders. Both sexes were (and with symbolic differences) in favour of the co-operation (linkage) with Central European countries: Hungary, Czech Republic and Austria. This linking is of utmost importance for 45% of women and 51% of men, while the possible ties with the European Union were favourably appraised by both men and women with an almost identical and very high percentage — 70% and 68% respectively.

The concept of a wealthy and democratic Europe made up of evenly developed countries is the ideal of most of our respondents.

It is interesting that the Croatian people, having in mind the level of culture and knowledge in their country (not to mention the understanding

⁹The study *Social and cultural values of Croatia* (Ekonomski institut Zagreb, late 1996), conducted on a sample of 1,000 respondents from six Croatian regions. Some of the more significant results were interpreted by A. Štulhofer for the *Globus* of June 11, 1997.

of political developments¹⁰ concerning this region), do not think it will be possible to achieve these goals overnight. While almost one third of the respondents (27%) thinks that we are already ready to join Europe, the rest are somewhat more critical and think that we are going to be ready in a shorter (31%) or a longer time (34%)¹¹. This proves that the Croatians are self-critical and aware of Croatia's lag regarding Europe.

The mentioned responses lead us to the conclusion that the Croats (the urban population) are very interested in broader political developments, that they are relatively well-informed about them and thus able to form articulate opinions; the gender-related differences are negligible. Since the male-female difference is usually in the range of 3 points, Croatia could in this respect be put into the category of the afore mentioned, more developed western European countries. However, since Croatia lags after these countries in other indicators of development, the question is how it is possible that the Croatian men and women have responded almost identically and that their responses correspond to those of other European respondents. Apparently, gender itself is not a discriminatory variable as is the case in less developed European countries (south).

European experts have insisted for some time that the social and economic status, education and employment outside the home, are the aspects that provide for the real differences in the level of individual interest in politics in general, and foreign policy in particular. This affects the (non)convergence of male and female responses.¹²

a)

The confirmation of these assumptions could be found in the results of the research conducted in the European Union countries. Here are the education- and gender-related percentages concerning the acceptance of the idea of integration (Table 5).

The level of interest in the EU corresponds to the level of education. The figures for “deeply and considerably” interested but poorly educated

¹⁰This is clearly corroborated by the slowed-down dynamics of admitting new members. This process, under the motto “Differentiation without discrimination”, is envisaged to have several phases. The fifteen member-states of the EU have drawn the thin red line between the five candidates from Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Estonia) and Cyprus on the one hand and Romania, Latvia, Slovakia, Bulgaria and Lithuania on the other (which still do not satisfy the requirements regarding the level of political and economic reforms). If the admittance of the first group of countries is realistically to be expected in the next five to six years, one can only guess the length of the waiting period for the other aspirants.

¹¹*Sociokulturne vrijednosti Hrvatske*, ibid.

¹²See in Leinert Novosel S. 1996.

men is 36% while for those better educated is 53%; with women this jump is even more pronounced — from 23% to 45%.

Another interesting indicator: among poorly educated women there were 41% of those that showed no interest in EU, while the corresponding figure for educated women was only 18%!

Not only does the interest in EU increase with education, but the differences between men and women narrow (if we merge those deeply and considerably interested, the difference in the percentages between men and women are 13% for lower levels of education, 10 for medium levels and 8 for higher levels).

Table 5: Education-related interest in the European Union.

Interest	Elementary school or less		Secondary school		Higher education	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Deep	8	4	9	6	15	7
Considerable	28	19	37	30	38	38
Little	38	34	37	40	43	37
None	25	41	17	23	11	18
No answer	1	2	1	1	1	1

Source: Mossuz-Lavau, 1991, p. 24.

The increase in the interest in the EU is matched by the positive assessment of joining this association, again depending on the level of education: 63% of poorly educated men and 53% of women think this would be a “good move”, while the gender-related difference in the category of highly educated respondents was smaller — 76% of men and 72% of women.

It is appropriate here to mention the finding of European researchers who have observed an increase and a positive attitude towards the integration in direct correlation to the level of education, as well as the narrowing of the gender gap, in all the EU states. According to their own words, this represents one of the most interesting findings of this study.

Excluding the response “not at all interested in the EU”, the gap between the poorly and the well-educated respondents is closing down: in Spain from 18 to 4 points, in Germany from 10, to 3, in Holland from 12 to 5, in Luxembourg from 11 to 1, in Portugal from 16 to 6, etc.

The conclusion is that the level of education has a great influence on the respondents' attitudes, particularly women, a universal rule in the EU countries, regardless of the level of the development of a particular region.

What is the situation like in Croatia?

Excluding the responses to two questions (the one on the desirability of political linkages with central European countries and the one on joining the EU) and controlling for the level of the respondents' education and gender, we get the following data (Table 6):

Regardless of the educational level, our respondents consider this link extremely important, though the percentages are somewhat lower in the category of uneducated than educated people: those with lower education — women 69%, men 71%, and those with high education — 74% women and 78% men. All this corroborates the fact that in Croatia too the higher the educational level the more importance people attach to the mentioned integrations. Also, it is apparent that the gender gap in the responses has increased from 2 to 4 points, a statistically insignificant gender-related difference, and somewhat different from the European results, where the gender gap was considerably narrowed with education.

Table 6: Education- and gender-related responses to the question about the importance of Croatia's links with central European states (Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria).

Education/Responses	Unimportant		Of medium importance		Extremely important	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Elementary school or less	14	13	14	18	71	69
Secondary school	7	4	11	21	82	75
Higher education	6	8	16	18	78	74

A similar distribution of education- and gender-related data is found regarding the issue of linking Croatia with the European Union (Table 7):

Regardless of the educational level, our respondents consider this integration extremely important; the importance increases with the educational level but only among the female respondents (from 83% among the uneducated to 89% among the educated ones), while the percentage among the men is constant regardless of education.

Table 7: Education- and gender-related responses to the question of the importance of linking Croatia with the European Union.

Education/Responses	Unimportant		Of medium importance		Extremely important	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Elementary school or less	5	4	8	13	86	83
Secondary school	4	4	8	11	88	85
Higher education	6	2	9	9	85	89

The gender difference exists but is statistically insignificant. One detail is worth pointing out — educated women attach more importance to these integrations (89%) than the men of the same educational level (85%).

A review of Croatian gender- and education-related responses tells us that higher education is conducive to a clearer understanding of issues, but this influence is not as strongly reflected in the gender gap as is in the EU countries.

One more question from our study is interesting as a control for what our respondents really think about the integration with the European Union (when this integration is juxtaposed to the preservation of state sovereignty) and whether their responses differ according to gender and education. The results can be found in Table 8:

Table 8: Education- and gender-related differences in responses to the question: Complete sovereignty or links with Europe?

Education/Responses	Preservation of the sovereignty		Links with Europe		Don't know	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Elementary school or less	51	53	28	25	21	21
Secondary school	51	48	39	30	10	2
Higher education	44	42	51	46	5	12

The higher the educational level, the weaker the belief in the necessity of the preservation of sovereignty (among elementary-educated respondents — 53% of women and 51% of men, among those with secondary education — 48% of women and 51% of men, and among those with higher education — 42% of women and 44% of men).

At the same time, a higher educational level means that a bigger importance is attached to the links with the European Union (among those with elementary school education — 25% of women and 28% of men, and among those with higher education 46% of women and 51% of men). This leads to the conclusion that with both genders, the higher the educational level, the more prevailing the concept of the European integration.

Rather interesting is the analysis of the “don’t know” response, whose numbers decrease with better education, but the rate of change is higher among men than women (elementary education — 21% of women and 21% of men, secondary education — 22% of women and 10% of men, and higher education — 12% of women and only 5% of men, or twice less).

Let us conclude then that, despite the fact that the rating of the importance of the European integration grows parallelly with the educational level of both genders, women are less inclined, even when educationally on a par with men, to express their opinions on that issue.

b)

In the European studies, working outside the home has proved another significant factor in explaining a bigger interest and a more positive evaluation of European integrations. Let us have a look at Table 9:

Table 9: The importance of Croatia’s linkage with central European states (Hungary, Czech Republic, Austria) according to employment and gender

Employment/Responses	Unimportant		Of medium importance		Very important	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Employed	6	6	17	20	77	74
Unemployed	7	10	10	20	83	70

While among the employed there are 17% of men and 24% of women completely disinterested in the European integration, among the unemployed these percentages are higher, as are the gender-related differences — 20% of men and 33% of women.

In the following question about favouring the idea of integration, a larger number of unemployed respondents gave “no answer” (12% of men and 20% of women) than those employed (8% and 15% respectively).

This means that for the unemployed it was harder to give their opinion on the issue of European integration. However, the researchers admitted that the employed respondents were not as enthusiastic about this idea as it might have been expected in comparison with the unemployed (as was the case with the differences in the educational level).

In this case, too, Croatian respondents demonstrated certain similarities with those from the EU countries (Table 10):

In Croatia the unemployed are also more inclined to deny the importance of these links than the employed respondents, while the gender-related differences are not pronounced. The response “not important” is rarer among the employed respondents (6% of women and 6% of men) than among the unemployed (10% of women and 7% of men), while the response “very important” is more frequent among the employed (74% of women and 77% of men) than the unemployed (70% and 83% respectively). This leads to the conclusion that the employment in Croatia affects the attitude towards the importance of these links though less than education.

Table 10: The importance of political linkage of Croatia with the European Union, according to employment and gender.

Employment/Responses	Unimportant		Of medium importance		Very important	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Employed	4	2	8	8	88	90
Unemployed	6	7	8	20	86	73

Even the unemployed men consider this “very important” (in a higher percentage than expected) — a rise of 6 points instead of an expected decrease. The European axiom was confirmed solely for women.

Similar, though (as expected) more emphatic results were obtained on the issue of Croatia’s political links with the European Union (Table 11):

Once again we can see that a greater importance to the EU integration is given by the employed (90% of women and 88% of men) than the unemployed (73% and 86% respectively); the difference among the women is much more pronounced than among the men (17 points versus 2 points), which reiterates the fact that men, regardless of employment are in favour of the mentioned issues. We could say that a woman, when working only in the home, is outside all political developments, particularly those concerning foreign policy.

Table 11: Absolute sovereignty or certain limitations (EU), according to employment and gender.

Employment/Responses	State sovereignty		More important EU links		Don't know	
	M%	F%	M%	F%	M%	F%
Employed	50	46	40	37	10	17
Unemployed	48	48	44	31	8	21

And finally, the confirmation of the expected. Among the employed respondents there is a significantly smaller number of the “don't know” answers (17% of women and 10% of men) than among the unemployed; there is a big difference in the percentage of these answers between the unemployed (21%) and the employed women, while among the men the difference deviates from the expected (only 8%). This means that unemployment does not affect men and women equally — even unemployed men display certain interest, handle certain information and form opinions on political issues unlike unemployed women who are in this respect much less active.

Conclusion

The results of the European research have shown that the EU women are less interested in the integrational issues than the men. The differences among the countries are expected and easily explicable. Namely, they are a logical consequence of various types of cultural development: the traditional, in which a woman's place is in the home, i.e. outside the public sphere of social life, the image for centuries promoted by the Catholic church, particularly in southern Europe, and the modern, which tones down the significance of the inter-gender division of roles, typical for the countries of Western Europe, and its even more developed form which abolishes differences between the gender-related roles, most prominent in northern Europe.

As is already well-known, the gender-related division of social roles is clearly reflected through an intensified or symbolic interest in all public social developments, particularly those in the sphere of political activity. Thus the logical conclusion from the European studies was that a higher level of cultural development and the equalization of the gender roles are the reasons that the women from this area feel more European!

Another conclusion was that education, even more than working outside the home, encourages the integration of women into social life of any country, which results in an increased interest in broader political issues.

Or simply: more educated women are more European than the uneducated ones.

In this respect, the situation in Croatia, as a post-socialist country, is very complex: the decades of the domination of socialist ideology which abolished the gender-based division of social roles and considered it as not only one of the fundamental socialist achievements but civilisational as well, runs counter to the desire of those who have used the increased influence of the Church as an opportunity to redefine the social roles of men and women and promote the traditional patterns.

This phenomenon does not pertain solely to our country; it is typical of most transitional central European countries.¹³ Though — for the time being at least — this has remained at the level of an attempt at reviving patriarchal social patterns, this Arcadian relic nevertheless brings a certain amount of insecurity and dissatisfaction to portions of the society, particularly the female population, which considers the present-day position of women in Croatia worse than before — 40% of female respondents — while only about 30% believe that it has remained the same.¹⁴

Do these attempts at redefining the social position of women have a more viable perspective?

We should ask ourselves to what extent the modern approach to the roles of women and men has become a part of people's worldview, which they support regardless of the changes in political systems, as compared to those who do not take these goals for granted and who think that the return to the traditional patterns is the best possible way for social progress and the model for the relations between the sexes.

Since all these issues affect women's destinies, let us mention here that the most recent studies¹⁵ in Croatia on this issue (the relationship between

¹³“Despite its monopartyism and restricted personal freedoms, the independent Eastern Germany guaranteed to everyone a job, free child care and unstintingly doled out welfare, albeit solely for those who did not sin against the Communist Party. Many women in eastern Germany think that in the communist state they enjoyed much more equality at work and in political life than in the unified Germany.” The conclusion from a recent poll reported by Reuter/HINA, *Vjesnik*, October 31, 1997.

¹⁴Faculty of Political Science, the study done in April of 1997. Let us mention here that better educated women perceive this deterioration of their position more pernicious (64 %) than the uneducated women. Also — expectedly — the working women are more critical towards this development (53 %) than the unemployed ones, though a high percentage of the latter opted for that answer (44 %).

¹⁵Again this refers to the results of the already mentioned study by the Faculty of Political Science of April 1997.

“the modernists” and “the traditionalists”) have shown that the former are much more numerous than the latter.¹⁶

One more proof which enables us to conclude that in Croatia “the modernist stream” far outnumbers the “traditionalist”: 73% of women and 74% of men think that no principle or value may be more important than the freedom of the individual.

Based on all that has been said so far, we may say that the chances of the traditionalists to introduce more radical changes (by this we primarily mean those regarding the position of women) are not great and that so far they have accomplished only one thing — they have generated misgivings and a sense of uneasiness which, as we have seen, surface in the form of an impression of the deteriorated social position of women. However, this group’s influence should not be underestimated, particularly when they wield political decision-making power and bring laws which might radically affect the social position of women.

What has proved to be a guarantee of the preservation of equality between men and women not only in Croatia but in the world as well, is the tradition of equal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Together with employment outside the home, this has offered equal opportunities to all people for social integration at a higher level, which leads to an increased interest in what is happening in the Croatian society and, consequently, in Europe and the world.

These two components can explain the enlightened awareness of the Croatian people who do not envisage the future as building walls but as forging links with other European countries. The gender-related differences in the answers are almost negligible. The Croatian men and women are more interested in the foreign policy issues (European integrational processes) than the respondents from the oldest EU member-states. The higher the educational level, the more interested women are in the integrational developments; a bigger portion of educated women is aware of the importance of these processes than their male counterparts! With men, this “European law” was not corroborated.

However, it should be noted that even when equally educated, women are hesitant and more often choose the “don’t know” answer (the type of

¹⁶As illustrated by the following answers: One of the questions was: Should one return to the traditional and original values of one’s people? 35 % of women and an almost equal number of men (36 %) think that it is the correct solution, while 64 % of women and 62 % of men declare that one should always strive towards something new, new values and challenges, and that science and a free and critical attitude towards everything are the basis of progress — 64 % of women and 69 % of men.

The results are taken from the mentioned study by the Faculty of Political Science of April 1997.

socialisation in which “this is none of women’s business”). So even among highly educated women there are twice as many “don’t know” answers as among the men on the same educational level.

Especially when unemployed, women are almost outside all social developments, particularly those political. Unlike them, men (even when unemployed) cultivate an interest in what is happening in the world and form opinions about these developments (due to the roles within the family — unemployed women are busy while unemployed men are truly idle).

Due to the importance of further integration of women into social life on a higher level — a fundament of any democracy — it is essential to promote and provide equal education and (if women so desire) their professional career. These are the prerequisites for arousing interest in all types of developments in most people, regardless of gender, and for the inclusion of a bigger number of women among the creators and executors of foreign policy in the near future.

If we mould Europeans within our borders, European integration will be more or less a formality.

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