

## **ENUT News 1/1999**

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### **A New Women's Studies and Resource Centre in Estonia**

*Prof. Suzanne Lie, Academic Director of ENUT*

#### **Why a women's resource centre in Estonia?**

In keeping with the goal of transforming former republics of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries into viable democratic societies, an increasing number of universities in these countries are establishing women's resource centres and gender studies programs. Such centres are central to the development and advancement of full participatory gender democracy. According to the UNDP National Report on Estonia (1995): *Estonian Women in a Changing Society*, gender differences between men and women have increased to the disadvantage of women and children since the re-establishment of Estonian independence in 1991.

While the move to a market economy has been successful, the social costs have been borne disproportionately by women and children. This is particularly evident in salary differences, in the higher level of unemployment among women, and in the low participation of women in political life and civil society.

#### **The Centre and its Aims.**

The Estonian Women's Studies and Resource Centre (Eesti Naisuurimus- ja Teabekeskus), known as ENUT, is a grass roots, non-profit, non-governmental

organization freely accessible to the public. The Centre, located at the Tallinn Pedagogical University, was officially registered as an NGO in April 1997, and is the first and only women's resource centre in Estonia. It was opened on November 27, 1997, and it includes Estonia's first specialized library on women's and gender issues.

The overall aim of the Centre is to promote better understanding of human rights and it supports the democratic process by encouraging gender equality and the empowerment of women. In practice, it means providing policy makers, the academic world, researchers, media, other NGOs, women's organizations in the provinces, and the general public with information on gender democracy by giving access to a specialized library and by establishing and connecting with women's studies databases and networks in Estonia and abroad. It will also promote consciousness raising on gender issues for both, women and men as well as research. The aims will be realized through publications (fact sheets, newsletters, a journal, etc.) workshops, seminars, conferences and outreach programs.

### **Strategies for the establishment of the Centre.**

#### The Model Followed

Using the experience from the women's movement's fundraising and networking strategies in many western countries, we have built up the Centre in Tallinn from donations, a few large and mainly small ones. Like Virginia Woolf's Three Guineas – a guinea here, a guinea there – we have pieced together contributions, large and small, like a mosaic, which finally resulted in a Centre. Approximately three years of voluntary work, planning and fundraising were necessary before the Centre was realized.

#### Steps followed

Several strategies were employed which often occurred simultaneously. Eda Sepp, a Canadian-Estonian who got the idea of women's studies resource centre in Estonia, took the first step. She convinced the Government of the Province of Ontario to contribute 15,000 Canadian dollars and the Estonian Relief Committee in Canada to give 5,000 Canadian dollars towards the purchase of a core collection of 3000 books. Many hours of voluntary work by Canadians have gone to the purchase and registering of books dealing with women's and gender issues. The second step was continued in Tallinn by Estonians themselves, mostly from the academic world (Tallinn Pedagogical University and Tartu University as well as by officials from the Ministry of Social Affairs who worked on a personal basis). Their object was to define the needs of Estonian women, the goals and by-laws of the Center and to elect a board of professionals to guide the Centre.

#### "A room of our own"

Since women's studies was not well known in Estonia it took a long time and many negotiations for the third step: to obtain "a room of our own." The argument that won support was that all leading universities in the West have Women's Studies programs and centres. Tallinn Pedagogical University generously provided a large hall (50m<sup>2</sup>) rent-free. The Nordic Council of Ministers' Office in Tallinn and the Norwegian Embassy provided funds to turn the space into an office by erecting a glass wall.

#### Fundraising

And fourthly, help was enlisted from wives of diplomats who aided us in fundraising in

the diplomatic and international community in Tallinn. Their help was invaluable in making contacts with the international community. Contributions in kind of mainly second hand furniture and office equipment were made by the Swedish, Finnish, Canadian, Netherlands, British and Norwegian Embassies as well as the American Women's Club of Oslo. Substantial funding has also come from a generous grant from the European Union's PHARE Macro Democracy Program, which ensured the operation for two years.

### **Networking with other organizations**

We now have close cooperation with the newly established office of Gender Equality at the Ministry of Social Affairs. We also work closely with the women's studies programs at Tallinn Pedagogical University as well as the Unit of Gender Studies at Tartu University. Our new partners are Department for Gender and Technology, Luleå Technical University, Sweden, and the Christina Institute for Women's Studies, University of Helsinki, Finland.

### **Management of the Organization**

The organization is managed by an elected board: KAIRE LIIV (Chairperson), lawyer, Estonia's Ministry of Education; VOLDEMAR KOLGA, Professor and Head of Women's Studies at Tallinn Pedagogical University; ANU LAAS, Director of the unit of Gender Studies at the University of Tartu; Reet Laja, Head of the Department of Personnel and Training and Equal Opportunities, Estonia's Social Affairs Ministry, Chairperson of the Estonian Women's Training Centre; EDA SEPP, Canadian-Estonian academician and Chairperson of the Women's Issues Project in Toronto, Canada; MARIKA TAMMEAID, Finnish citizen living in Estonia, Director of the Tallinn Office of the Nordic Council of Ministers; ÜLLE-MARIKE PAPP, head of the Office of Gender Equality, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; and TIINA AUNIN, Professor and Chair of World Literature, Tallinn Pedagogic University.

Staff members: SUZANNE LIE, former Director of the Women's Studies Program for the Social Science Faculty, University of Oslo and researcher on gender issues, serves as Academic Director of the Centre. Her task will be to help organize the Centre's activities and to train an Estonian director and staff.; SELVE RINGMAA, art historian and Administrative Director; MAIE GROSS, part-time librarian.

### **Activities so far**

Guest speakers from the US, Norway, Australia and Finland have given seminars on such varied topics as How to Run an Effective NGO; Adaptability and Thriving in Women; Gender, Sex and Social Change; Does Barbie Doll Matter?; Body Dissatisfaction, Dieting and Self-esteem; 19th Century Women's Writings: The Quest for an "I" as Truth; Competing Theories, Competing Voices; Literary Experiments Among Women Writers in Contemporary Norwegian Literature; and Why Gender Matters in Issues of Sexual Health.

The year's major event was the official opening of the center and the conference "Estonian Women in Politics" on February 4-6, which was attended by over 250 participants representing 129 women's organizations. An art exhibition by four women

Estonian artists displayed at the center added to the festivities. These artists who all have had major museum shows are Ene Kull, Eve Kask, Anu Kalm and Mall Nukke. Eda Sepp from Canada presented the books officially to the center. A contract was signed which outlined that the collection should always be kept together and never be dispersed into general libraries. The official opening was followed by a reception at the center where participants had a chance to familiarize themselves with the books.

Group visits to ENUT have included student groups from Peda, Estonian women parliamentarians as well as many individuals representing NGOs, media and public servants in Estonia. Foreign groups visiting the Center have included Norwegian students and teachers from Oslo Teacher's College, Finnish graduate students from the University of Jyväskylä taking Ph.D.s as Consultants in Equality, representatives from the Office of Equality Ombudsman, Finland, and the Kristina Institute for Women's Studies, University of Helsinki.

Our librarian, administrative director and library science students visited the Christina Institute for Women's Studies, University of Helsinki and the Women's Studies Center, University of Helsinki in order to be trained in organizing women's studies centers.

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### **Canadian Book Project**

*Eda Sepp, ENUT Board member*

The Estonian Women's Issues Project was begun in Toronto, Canada, in June 1994 with a grant of \$15,000 from the Government of the Province of Ontario through the Ministry of Citizenship. The grant was for buying books on women's issues for women's studies resource centre in Estonia. This was a special project by which the Government of Ontario wished to help the democratization of the newly independent Baltic States. The stipulation was that the books would be bought in Canada and shipped to Estonia. The Women's Issues Project is a non-profit, volunteer committee working under the charitable Estonian Ecumenical Relief Organization. The Estonian Relief Committee in Canada donated an additional \$5000.00. The Estonian Credit Union in Toronto has kindly paid for the shipment of the books and the Association of Colleges and Universities in Canada have supported my travels to Estonia

In choosing the books I have kept in mind many different levels and a broad spectrum of readers to benefit the local conditions in Estonia. Emphasis has been given to scholarly books, which will further the knowledge of important issues in women's studies and form the basis for understanding women's issues as an integral part of human rights and a democratic society. The target group for the books is individuals in leading positions in society: educators, scholars, politicians, activists, therapists, the media, etc., who can influence large groups of people and inform the general public. The books would also serve the needs of students at the Tallinn Pedagogical University and other educational institutions in Estonia. The core collection of the books has been carefully selected from scholarly and university publishers

Many individuals have helped with the project. I am indebted to many scholars in the

field of Women's Studies at Toronto and York Universities for the helpful advice and many suggestions. At the initial stages of the project Debbie Corrigan-Sepp researched the collection of books at the University of Toronto and prepared extensive lists. Linda Leetma Liima used her skills in librarianship and prepared more lists. Peeter Liima designed and printed our letterhead and helped with his computer skills. Toomas Sepp has ordered all books through his Virtual Bookstore. We soon found that the regular suppliers in Canada had very few of the books in stock that we wanted so I had to telephone academic publishers directly and request catalogues. Debbie Corrigan-Sepp and Christina Prozes spent weeks during the first summer combing second hand bookstores in Toronto for out-of-print books. Our volunteer committee has spent long hours soliciting donations. Ivi Egalik received a large donation of books on women's health from Women's College Hospital. Tiina Timusk, a secondary school teacher at Clarke Institute of Psychiatry, got a large donation of books from that Institute and Linda Norheim sent out about 250 letters to women's studies periodicals and other resource centers asking for donations. The response was tremendous and we received many books and periodicals. Frieda Forman, librarian in charge at the large women's resource centre at Ontario Institute for Studies in Education was helpful with advice and donated many books Toomas Sepp helped with typing the list of books and transporting them to various places as needed. His cheerful help was felt everywhere. The design of the data base was by Aivar Jaenes.

The second parallel phase of the project involved the establishment of actual women's resource centre in Estonia for which there was no infrastructure at the time. I had initially decided that for a maximum benefit the books should be all together in a specialized library. To found such a resource centre was a long process, which involved many enthusiastic people in Estonia and many supporters from foreign embassies. I organized an exhibition of a selection of about 250 of the books in Tallinn at the Baltic-Nordic Conference "Equal Opportunities" in April 1997. In May of the same year the Tallinn Pedagogical University agreed to provide a space for the On the opening of the centre a contract was signed which stipulates that the books would always be kept together in a specialized centre and never dispersed into larger collections.

The collection of books will provide information for women with the aim of raising their status and self-knowledge. It will help them to understand themselves in relation to the forces, processes and institutions within society and it will eventually help to democratize the society as a whole.

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### **The Tallinn Pedagogical University Women's Studies Center**

*Voldemar Kolga, Professor and the Head of the Center*

The Women's Studies Center was created by a need to be current and to enhance the teaching of social and pedagogical sciences at the Tallinn Pedagogical University (TPU). The establishment of the Center was preceded by a seminar in 1995, which presented an overview of studies in Estonia from a woman's perspective by the following

participants: Katrin Paadam, Dagmar Kutsar, Leeni Hansson, Eve Annuk, Maimu Berg, Helle Niit, Ainiki Väljataga, Sirje Kivimäe, Karin Hallas, Eha Komissarov, and Barbi Pilvre. At the initiative of Barbi Pilvre and Ene Paaver, the Women's Studies Center was officially registered on June, 1995, as a unit in TPU.

"Introduction to Women's Research" was offered as an elective in the fall of the same year, and it included, also, guest lectures by Eda Sepp from Canada, Imbi Paju from Helsinki University and the philosopher Hasso Krull. In 1998, the fourth analogous course was given and almost 100 university students registered for it. Altogether, about 350 students from TPU, Tartu University, Tallinn Technological University and the Law Institute have attended the lectures and seminars.

The Center collaborates with the Helsinki University Kristiina Institute and the Central European University in Budapest. Several seminars have been held that examines relations between education and media from women's research perspective. A special course was given in 1997, "Gender and the media", which included journalists. In May of same year, Prof. Jirina Smejkalova from the Central European University spoke on women's research in the Czech Republic and other parts of Eastern Europe. A lively seminar, "Simone de Beauvoir and Estonia", was held in April 1998. The chief organizer was Elo Lindsalu and participants were Prof. Toomas Liiv, the psychoanalyst Endel Talvik, and Barbi Pilvre who spoke of Simone de Beauvoir in relation to Jean-Paul Sartre.

Research has also begun gradually. In a Master's thesis framework, Barbi Pilvre is studying gender construction in media, Katrin Kivimaa is studying feminist art at the Central European University, and Elo Lindsalu is studying woman in literature. The Open Estonia Fund and the Nordic Ministers Council have funded the Center. The members of the Executive Board are: Barbi Pilvre, Ene Paaver, Ainiki Väljataga, Helle Niit, Reet Varblane, Katrin Kivimaa. Marianne Paimre is Information Secretary and Voldemar Kolga is the Director of the Center. Barbi Pilvre is the spiritual guide to the Women's Research Center.

More information about the Center can be obtained from the Center's Home Page in the Internet. Several articles (<http://www.tpu.ee/>) can be very helpful with lessons. Tiina Veldi has posted material.

Composed from the Centre's Home Page

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### **Unit of Gender Studies, Tartu University**

*Anu Laas, Head of the Unit*

The Unit of Gender Studies at Tartu University was established in 1995. Preparations for the unit started in 1990 in the Unit of Family Studies. The unit is connected with the Faculty of Social Sciences. It acts as an academic program, research and information centre and consists of a small library of gender studies which is open to the academic community and for women's NGO's. Donors include: the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States Information Service in Tallinn (USIS Tallinn), The Central European University (CEU), and the Curriculum Resource Centre. Aims of the

unit are:

- promotion and coordination of gender studies
  - women's studies and gender research
  - teaching and curriculum development
  - information and consultation on gender issues (governmental institutions, women's NGOs, interested groups)
  - documentation of research results
  - databases of persons related to gender studies, institutions and women's NGOs, men's NGOs
  - lectures, seminars and courses for non-academic community
  - co-operation between institutions, academic community, and with the women's NGOs.
- Examples of courses given: Feminist perspective in literature, feminist perspective in sociology, sociology of gender, sociology of family, psychology of family, classic texts in feminism.

#### Research

Gender stereotypes in Estonia and Finland (1996-1998)

Career paths of university graduates of 1992 (1996)

Women's employment and entrepreneurship (1997-1999)

Research on fathers (1998-1999)

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### **Feminism and Literature**

Course description

*Leena Kurvet-Kaosaar,*

*English philologist and lecturer in world literature at Tartu University*

At the beginning of the course I will give, as background, the development of feminist thought and feminist literature. Emphasis in the course will be on analysis of literary works, using feminist literary theory. Among these works will be world literature classics, such as Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein", top contemporary novels by both male and female writers (Margaret Atwood, "The Servant's Story", John Fowles, "The French Lieutenant's Daughter"), and works by Estonian writers (Maimu Berg, "The Writers"). My goal is not to force doctrines on the students, but to open doors and to awaken interest in them. The course is designed principally for upperclassmen at Tartu University's Philology Department, but all who are interested are welcome.

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## **Feminism in the World Literature, Tallinn Pedagogical University**

*Tiina Aunin, Professor, TPU*

For the past two years courses in feminist world literature has been given at Tallinn Pedagogical University. Courses were given in "Women's Creative Writing" and "Creative Women's Works" by Professor Tiina Aunin, Chair of the Department of World Literature. She has also given a paper in the spring of 1998 in Vigo, Spain on "North American Women Despota Writers, particularly Estonian Writers". Professor Michelle Jones, A Fullbright Scholar from the United States gave a course "On the border: American immigrant woman writers".

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### **About ENUTs Partners**

The Christina Institute for Women's Studies, University of Helsinki

The Christina Institute for Women's Studies was founded in 1991 as a separate institute within the Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki. The Institute promotes women's studies, coordinates and administers relevant instruction, encourages research and distributes information on women's studies. The Institute has an extensive library on women's and gender issues. A Board chaired by Aili Nenola, Professor of Women's Studies, directs the Institute. Maria Nykänen is the administrative director. The Institute has given lectures and seminars at Tallinn Pedagogical University Women's Studies Centre since 1995 and will act as a partner with ENUT in connection with the European Phare Democracy Programme. They will train ENUTs staff on how to run a library and the use of information services on the internet connecting with women's networks. They will also conduct workshops on women's role in the contemporary civil society, politics and policy making.

Department of Gender & Technology, Luleå University of Technology, Sweden

The Department of Gender and Technology was first established as a Centre for Women's Studies in 1982. In 1997 it was integrated into the Department of Gender & Technology. It has concentrated its research within techno-science and feminism concerning the production of knowledge and problem solving. As a partner with ENUT the Department offers its expertise in information technology and networking with women's organizations through the Internet. Their aim of networking is to produce situated (new) knowledge about gender, technology, citizenship and politics in transformation and to contribute to the democratization of the transnational political institutions from the grassroots. Acting Professor Christina Mörtberg is director of the department.

## **Bureau of Equality**

*Ülle-Marike Papp, Head of the Bureau of Equality*

Established December 16, 1996.

To date, the Equal Rights Bureau is the only state agency whose mission is equality of men and women and the guaranteeing of equal opportunities in the Estonian society.

### **The Bureau's Immediate Tasks**

- a) to advance the principle of equal rights in national policies and in the development of structures in Estonia
- b) to bring national legislation into compliance with international requirements on gender equality
- c) to work out a strategy for integration of the principle of equality

During its two years of existence the Bureau has established permanent ties with other state agencies and international organizations, organized international conferences and seminars, and training sessions for civil servants. An analysis of Estonian laws' compliance with international requirements is almost finished, and an overview of the equal rights situation in the different socio-economic areas is, also, almost completed.

International projects and the program "More and better jobs for women" have been launched. With regard to eurointegration, questions concerning labor have had special attention – equal pay for equal work, equal access to jobs, education and promotion, and managing work and family.

Many international organizations have supported the Bureau's activities, such as the UN Development Program, the Nordic Countries Ministers Council, International Labor Organization, the Swedish International Developmental Aid Agency.

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## **The Women's Educational Center**

*Reet Laja, chairman of the executive committee*

The transition to a market economy created a need for Estonian women to learn how to run a business and, therefore, the Women's Educational Center was created as a department of the Estonian Business Management Institute in 1990. Courses were offered in setting up business, import and export opportunities, bank loans, bookkeeping, and business language and computer knowledge. Almost 3000 people from different parts of Estonia attended the courses.

Attending these courses, the enterprising women developed ties not only with each other, but also with businesswomen in Latvia, Lithuania, Ukraine, Finland, Sweden and other countries. As a result, the Estonian Enterprising Women's Association (EEWA) was founded in 1992. It has about 200 members and 11 chapters across Estonia. Since 1995, EEWA has organized fairs and sponsored "Woman of the Year" annually. The Women's Educational Center started "Women into Public Life" project in 1995 with UN Development Program funding. In 1996, it was continued as seminars with financing by the US-Baltic Fund. The seminars were held at different locations in Estonia and the aim was to support women in public life and thereby, help to develop democracy in Estonia. In 1997, the Women's Educational Center became a non-profit organization. In recent years, the Center has placed emphasis on the proceedings of the IV World Women's Conference and their application.

The Center's members participate at international gender equality conferences. With the assistance of the US Embassy, the Center effected the project "Women as public opinion makers", holding three seminars for representatives of women's organizations.

Women's Educational Center's members are:

Reet Laja, chairman of the executive committee, psychologist, president of EEWA 1992-1998, a founder of the women's organizations network;

Riina Kütt, project leader, translator, member of EEWA executive committee;

Leena Blum, project leader, sociologist, member of EEWA executive committee;

Merle Krigul, member of VII parliament, head of Tallinn City Foreign Relations Department, member of EEWA;

Ülle-Marike Papp, head of Equal Rights Bureau of the Social Affairs Ministry;

Niina Oja, at the Social Affairs Ministry, member of EEWA;

Karin Juhat, project leader, member of EEWA;

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## **The Women's Education Center for Citizenship**

*Ene Hion*

The Women's Education Center for Citizenship is:

- \* based on united effort
- \* independent of political parties
- \* non-governmental
- \* nonprofit organization

Objectives of the Women's Education Center for Citizenship are to provide general knowledge about citizenship, politics, the world, to promote freedom of the individual and human rights, to value human life and the family. By law, men and women are equal, but in reality neither society nor women are ready to participate in decision-making in

all levels of society. The Center teaches and encourages women to become active in public life, based on democratic principles.

Diverse seminars and workshops are offered by the Women's Education Center for Citizenship on different levels:

\* first level - general knowledge about democracy, society's developmental trends, non-governmental organizations,

\* second level - practical knowledge needed by women that prepare themselves for leadership: video and training in public relations, debate, speaking, etiquette, etc.

\* third level - training for those who have been elected to local governments, or hold responsible positions and need leadership experience: taking charge of a project, working with staff, self-realization, etc. Seminars and workshops on the third level occur in parallel. The fundamental principles of the Women's Education Center for Citizenship: voluntary association - individuals and enterprises join the Center at their own wish and remain independent

openness - joining the Center and working together are not based on political choices, party membership or social position

nonprofit - membership dues and contributions are used only for purposes mandated by the by-laws.

The Women's Education Center for Citizenship is registered as a nonprofit organization in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Estonia. The Board of Trustees determines the Center's activities and the Executive Council implements them.

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## **The Political Parties' Women's Roundtable**

*Liia Hänni, Parliamentarian*

The Political Parties' Women's Roundtable was founded on October 28, 1998, by the women's organizations of 11 political parties: the Progress Party Women's Association, Estonian Rural League Women, Farmers Party Women, Estonian Pensioners and Families Party Women, Estonian United People's Party Women, Fatherland Women's Association, Center Party Women's Assembly KENA, Coalition Party Women's Union, Moderates Women's Association, Women Reform Club NaiRe, and People's Party Women.

The Roundtable's objective is to create in Estonia a more humane society, to improve the internal political climate, and to assist women to enter politics. All Roundtable participants are equal partners and decision is made only by consensus. Meetings and other undertakings take place regularly. Meetings are held once a month.

For the near future, the Roundtable has set as its goal larger representation of women in the March 1999 parliamentary elections. It was voted to propose to all political parties to have three women candidates out of every ten on the national list. Considering the Estonian election system, it would give a third of the seats in the parliament to women. In the campaign, the Roundtable wants to bring to the voters' attention the low representation of women in the parliament.

The Roundtable has discussed the political atmosphere during elections. The political parties' women's organizations consider it very important for the campaign to be honest and ethical. A letter to that effect was sent to all the political parties.

The Roundtable added its own question to the public survey in order to learn voters preference for either women and men candidates. The results help to evaluate more objectively women's chances and to prepare for the campaign.

The Roundtable's collaborative work with the Women's Education Center for Citizenship has been fruitful in their joint endeavors to educate women in democratic and political participation. The Roundtable considers essential the development of regional networking for women and has supported it.

The Roundtable is open to all women's organizations of the political parties that are willing to support the Roundtable's objectives.

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## **Women in Politics and Development of Democracy in Restored, Independent Estonia.**

*Liia Hänni, Parliamentarian*

The present conference presents an opportunity to analyze Estonia's problems through the eyes of women. Estonia is young and developing state, albeit very shortly celebrating its 81st birthday. Sovereignty cannot develop de jure, but only de facto - only when a people can decide their own future. That time has been very short for us.

The most valued consequence of freedom is that we can be ourselves, we can freely express our opinions, argue and find solutions together to our common problems. The existence and quality of democracy does not depend solely on the smooth functioning of the institutions of power, but on the activities and values of the whole population, especially the country's citizens. More than half of Estonia's citizens are women. Therefore, we cannot ignore the question: how do Estonian women relate to politics and power and how should they?

If one were to consider power in a narrow sense as an activity in a society's power structures, then there have been few women in Estonian politics and there are presently still few of them. But if one were to consider it in a wider scope, with all its streams and ties that have influenced power and decision making, then women's role is not so modest.

It is said that women are the necks that turn a man's head. It is questionable whether such "streams" belong in a democratic society and do they always bring results. Too many problems exist in Estonian society and one cannot be satisfied with the current political leadership.

Just as the fast economic development is conspicuous, so is neglect of matters important for human development. In many cases, even deterioration. The most critical problem is the continuing decline in the birthrate. Women can and should be involved here, because women know what obstacles are in the path of creating larger families. It is a suitable time to influence national authority, because the political parties have the issue in their platforms. Continued public attention is needed in order for the subject not to be forgotten after elections. Women must learn to apply pressure on power.

The greatest threat to democracy is distrust of governmental power. Public perception is that power is used for personal interests. The political parties themselves help to increase this perception by smearing their opponents. There is too much fighting and too little cooperation in Estonian politics. It is possible for women to improve the political climate by their presence. Examples can be found in the past as well as the present. A year ago, the 11 women in the parliament formed the Riigikogu (parliament) Women's Association across party lines and they have managed to work together regularly. The Association's most important achievement has been the legislation to reduce the unjustified and high social benefits enjoyed by the parliament's members. The women elected to the next parliament can continue this work.

In November of last year was founded a roundtable consisting of eleven political parties' women's organizations. The roundtable has set as its goal to form a society in Estonia that is friendly to people, it wants to improve the domestic political climate, and to help women to enter politics. A few months of activity have initiated several moves, such as a letter to the political parties about candidacies and political ethics, a survey of voter preferences for either female or male candidates, a united publicity clip, etc).

Diverse educational programs, seminars and conferences have helped women to become included in public life and we are grateful for all of them. Work among women is increasing. In several parts of Estonia are being established, or are already established, regional roundtables where both political and nonpolitical women's associations gather. This is a new variety of cooperations that Estonia needs very much.

Democracy will not occur without a strong civil society and in its creation women have a decisive role.

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## **Women and elections**

*Tiina Raitviir, Internal Defense Academy*

1. There are few women in Estonia's parliament. In the 1990 elections, women won 6% of the seats, in 1992, there was an increase to 14%, but in 1995, it fell to 12%. In the local elections, 24% got elected in 1993, and 31% in 1996. The problem begins with candidacy: the number of women candidates is small and those that get elected to parliament are even fewer. Women get into office easier in local elections, which are not as prestigious. Female candidates get regularly fewer votes than male candidates. Our figures show that a woman's "value" is 60-80% of the man's 100%. About the same correlation exists in women's and men's average salary. The "market value" of a woman

in Estonian society is difficult to change in the value system that has developed. It would be easier to change it in the political sphere.

2. Majorities of members of the political parties are men (54.5%), but women's share is unusually large (Signe Aaskivi, 1998; data is from October 1, 1998). Aaskivi concludes that women's share is smaller in the more powerful coalitions and opposition. For example, the Coalition Party has 30.5% women, the Estonian Rural People's Party has 31.8%, the Reform Party has 28.5%, the Fatherland League has 30.4%. Although the Centrist Party and the Moderates Party are strong parties, the share of women members is significantly greater (47.5% and 41.5% respectively). It is evident that there are sufficient numbers of women in the parties to be candidates. Women candidates are positioned, however, in the middle or end of the list. The current challenge to the system is to increase the number of women at the beginning of the list.

3. Our sociological analyses show that women's participation and interest in politics is 1.3 - 2.5 times smaller than men's. But among the members of parliament, women are 7-8 fewer than men. Women's interest and participation in this area should have 25 - 30% of the parliament composed of women. Women's share in local governments should be 35 - 40%. The survey showed that the two population groups that are conservative are those with a higher education and those with the highest income. Those groups are also leading opinion makers. As long as they do not change their minds, women will not be elected to the parliament, to the city and town governments. A high number of young people, high school and university students, thought that women don't belong in politics.

4. Women's arrival at Estonia's public offices has been obstructed by the following factors: the socio-cultural situation in Estonia today, the absence of a tradition of women politicians and the women's political movement "Women elect women!", the very small share of women among top leaders as grooming for top politicians, the opposition of society's opinion makers and party leaderships to advance women in politics, and the perception of politics as being dirty.

Sources:

1. Aaskivi, Signe. The Party registries' comparison: men and women. Sõnumileht, 26 October 1998, p. 11.

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## **Estonian Women in Politics, February 4-6, 1999**

### *Conference Program*

#### **Thursday evening, February 4**

17:00 Early Registration

18:00 Reception / Official opening of the Centre – TPU Rector Mait Arvisto, materials on women in politics

20:00 Dinner for speakers

#### **Friday, February 5**

09.00 Registration

10:00 Opening speeches:

Minister of Social Affairs Tiiu Aro – What is Democracy?

What is Women's Studies? – Suzanne Lie

10:35 Plenum I - Women in Politics

Heidi Hautala

Berit Ås, Norway, – Master Suppression Techniques in a Power Perspective: Political Experiences with Language and Power

Melissa Wells, US Ambassador in Estonia

12:00-12:30 Coffee break

12:30 Plenum II – Women in Estonian Politics: State of Art (Achievements and Problems)

- Liia Hänni, – Women in Politics After the Reemergence of Democracy in Estonia

Tiina Raitviir – Women in Political Parties and Parliamentary Elections

Sirje Jõgiste (Tahkuranna) – Experiences and problems of being a local politician

14:00-15:15 Lunch

15:15 Plenum III – Strategies to increase women's participation in politics

Ebba Witt-Brattström, Sweden, - Title: "Support Stockings": Women's Challenge to Democracy

Pat Evans, US – Title: Women campaigning and running office (includes topics - women as political strategists, women winning with women)

Anu Toots – Women's Interests in the Parties Platform

16:30-17:00 Coffee break

17:00-18:30 Workshops:

1. Women and political involvement – Speakers: Maret Maripuu, Reet Laja, Jill M.

Bystydziencki, Liina Tõnisson

2. Women's networking – Speakers: Krista Kilvet, Christina Mörtberg (Sweden) Silva Anspal

3. Women's image in politics – Speakers: Reet Valing, Marika Tammeaid

4. Women's political agenda: Siiri Oviir, Mall Hellam, Kadri Ottis

5. Women and local politics – Speakers: Ülle Puustusmaa (Võru), Mai Treial (Jõgeva)

6. Cultural stereotypes hindering work between men and women – Speakers: Eda Sepp (Canada), Voldemar Kolga

19:00 Reception at Old Town Hall with Concert – Meeting with Tallinn's Mayor Ivi Ee

## **Saturday, February 6**

10:00 Panel discussion -- Chairwoman: Talvi Märja; Discussants: Sirje Kiin, Andra Videmann

12:00-12:15 Coffee break

12:20 Presentation of conference conclusions. Jill M. Bystydziencki, , Women

Transforming Politics: Strategies for Empowerment - Summary of workshops. 14:00

Closing addresses –Valve Kirsipuu, Selve Ringmaa, Suzanne Lie