



Equalizing representation of men and women in decision-making

*Explaining the different proportions of men and women in the single or lower
houses of the national or federal Parliaments*

A comparative case study

Master Thesis

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Summary

Throughout the world, women are still largely underrepresented in important decision-making positions. The international community and the European Union have acknowledged the need to equalize representation of men and women in these positions, because underrepresentation forms an important obstacle to the democratic development of countries. Increasing the levels of representation by women is also seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account in decision-making, which is important for the improvement of the general level of gender equality and the position of women in society.

The national Parliament is a very important decision-making body in a democratic system. It is chosen by the voting population, and it has an important voice in national decision-making. The proportions of women Members of Parliament (MP's) differ largely between European countries. In 2006, European Member States had between 9% and 48% women Parliamentarians. The central research question of this thesis is which factors could explain these large differences in women Parliamentarians.

In order to find an explanation for these differences, three countries with high proportions of women MP's (Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands) and three countries with low proportions of women MP's (Greece, France, Ireland) are compared on several variables. Besides a focus on factors in the political system, features of the administration and socio-economic factors are also taken into account. The selection of the research variables is based on existing literature.

This thesis concludes that current proportions of women in Parliament can be explained primarily by the extent to which women's organizations have made claims for equal representation, and the extent to which political parties have responded to these claims with programmatic and organizational change. Hypotheses concerning features of the administration and socio-economic forces could not be confirmed.

Further research should include more countries to increase the reliability of the results, and should select the cases based on variety in the explaining variables in order to actually establish causality.

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Figure 1: Poster to encourage women to vote : *'If women vote, the democracy is complete'* – Quetzaltenango, Guatemala (June 2007)

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List of abbreviations

CEO	Chief Executive Officer
GSGE	General Secretariat for Gender Equality (Greece)
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
PfA	Platform for Action

1 Introduction

The topic of gender equality has received much political attention over the years. The international community continues to acknowledge its importance. *'Promote gender equality and empower women'* is the third of eight Millennium Development Goals by which the United Nations try to combat the largest problems in the world. Equal representation in decision-making is an important part of this goal. Since the beginning of the 1990s, a European Programme is in place that aims to take the inclusion of women in decision-making positions in European Member States to a higher level. Some countries have made significant progress. Others still have surprisingly low proportions of women representatives in their decision-making bodies (European Commission, 2007).

In order to improve the policies and practices that aim to put an end to unequal representation of women and men in decision-making, it is important to know which factors explain for the differences between countries. By comparing six European Member States on selected variables, this research aims to explain why the proportions of women in the single or lower house of the national or federal Parliament of these countries differ¹. This focus is chosen because this body represents the population in national decision-making (it is therefore a very important element in a democratic system) and because this body has comparable tasks and functions in every European country (which forms a good starting point for comparative research).

This introduction starts with a problem analysis. To illustrate the context in which countries operate when working on this problem, a short history of the international and European agenda setting process is described, including short descriptions of the UN and European objectives and Programme. Then the large differences between European countries in proportions of women representatives are illustrated. This is followed by the central and sub research questions, and a description of the scientific aim and practical relevance of this research.

Then the research methodology is presented. A multiple case study design, in line with the comparative approach, suits the aims of this research best. In order to come up with an explanation for existing differences, certain features of selected cases (countries) will be analyzed systematically. Six cases are selected based on current proportions of women Members of Parliament. The choice of the case studies is defended and the methods and sources of inquiry are introduced.

1.1 Problem analysis

In most countries, men and women are equal by law. Men and women have to be paid the same amount of money for the same job, they have the same right to work, the same right to vote, the same right to participate in decision-making, etc. In practice however, this formal equality does not automatically lead to actual equality. Wages of men and women still differ significantly for example (the wage gap) and women are still unequally represented in important private and public decision-making bodies. In business, most senior CEO's are still men and men still form a large majority of members of Parliament. These inequalities cause women and men to have significantly different opportunities to advance in life, a problem which the international community has addressed for different reasons and from various angles.

It is quite interesting to see that there are large differences between European countries when it comes to the proportion of women Parliamentarians. In 2007, the average percentage of women in the single

¹ The distinctions 'single/lower' and 'national/federal' are made to be able to include all different European political systems.

or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of Europe was 23.6%. Sweden has with 48% the highest proportion, Turkey the lowest; 9% (European Commission, 2008a).

The international programmes that aim to equalize representation of men and women in decision-making include different institutions and elements of a national decision-making system (e.g. political institutions (both legislative/elective and executive), the civil service, the judicial system and economic decision-making). This thesis will focus specifically on finding explanations for the different proportions of women in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of the European Member States. This focus is chosen because of the centrality of the national Parliament in a national system of decision-making.

The national Parliament is very important and very visible in a democratic state. Its composition and agenda resemble a national state of affairs, and its decisions subsequently influence society. A comparative study of this body can clearly visualize explanations for national differences in proportions of women representatives. Other decision-making bodies (e.g. regional or local assemblies, the judiciary, or top positions in large companies) often differ in such a large extent between countries that they become incomparable. Although national Parliamentary systems differ from each other, the fact that there is only one of these bodies per country and its function is similar in different countries, makes it a clear object for comparison research. The focus of this thesis is on the lower or single houses of Parliament specifically, rather than the upper houses, because throughout Europe this is a fully elected body. The system of appointing the upper house differs more from country to country and is therefore less suitable for comparison research. Moreover, not every country has an upper house.

The topic of equal representation of men and women in decision-making has appeared on many national political agendas for a long time. Inter-state and international activities to equalize representation eventually grew out into actions on the level of the European Union. This thesis will focus on European countries because the joint policy actions of EU countries are more highly developed than other international joint actions. The development of the international agenda-setting process and the resulting programmes are described here to illustrate how the international community deals with equal representation in decision-making. The opinions that were formulated during this process illustrate the importance of the issue. The next paragraph is followed by the current proportions of women representatives in European countries.

The international context and the process of agenda setting

The promotion of gender equality has been a European topic since it was taken up in the Treaty in 1957 (Commission of the European Communities, 2000). In 1988 the Council of Europe refers to the link between gender equality and democracy for the first time in an official text. Four years later, in 1992, the first 'European Summit Women in Power' in Athens takes place. Here, the five basic arguments concerning the need to have equal representation of women and men in decision-making forums were formulated: *'equality, democracy, good use of human resources, satisfying the needs and interests of women, and improving the policymaking process'*. This declaration formed the starting point for a debate on the European level (Hubert, 2004).

The actual momentum for including the topic of equal representation in decision-making in European policy occurred when the Third Community Action Programme (1992-1996) was established. This Programme aimed at creating equal opportunities on the labour market. The European Commission and the European Parliament had agreed that *'an active participation of women in the decision-making*

process could be one of the most efficient manners to reach equality between women and men and to create sustainable changes of attitude' (Hubert, 2004).

The Beijing Platform for Action

In 1995, the 'Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women' took place in Beijing. On this Conference all UN Member States identified twelve priority areas for action to improve the situation of women world wide (European Commission, 2007). Critical area G of the resulting Declaration is focused on Women in Power and Decision-making. It is based on the idea in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, that *'everyone has the right to take part in the Government of his or her country'*.

The Declaration states that equal representation of men and women in decision-making serves two purposes. First: the improvement of the system of government, administration and democracy. Second: the advancement of women in society. These two goals are intertwined. If more women participate, decision-making will be a more balanced reflection of opinions in society. This will strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning. Moreover, the Declaration also describes equal representation as having a leverage function for the general advancement of the position of women in society. It is not only *'a demand for simple justice or democracy but can also be seen as a necessary condition for women's interests to be taken into account. Without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women's perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.'* The improvement of the social, economic and political status of women is said to be important for *'sustainable development in all areas of life'* and essential for the achievement of transparency and accountability of government and administration (UN Platform for Action, 1995).

The question arises what can be called a reasonable level of representation. The UN has concluded: *'While it is true that no definite relationship has been established between the extent of women's participation in political institutions and their contribution to the advancement of women, a 30 percent membership in political institutions is considered the critical mass that enables women to exert a meaningful influence on politics'* (UN Platform for Action, 1995).

On the 1995 UN Conference two central strategic objectives were formulated:

Strategic objective G1: *Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making. Actions to be taken.*

Strategic objective G2: *Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership. Actions to be taken.*

These objectives and actions are called the *'Beijing Platform for Action'* (PfA). The PfA covers representation of women in several important decision-making bodies on different levels and fields of society (e.g. politics, legislation, judiciary, trade unions, NGO's).

Although every state is free to develop their own approach to promote equal representation, Governments committed themselves to establishing gender balance through e.g. target-setting and positive actions. Through the annual collection, analysis and distribution of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men in decision-making bodies, the progress of Member States was made public (UN Platform for Action, 1995; Council of the European Union, 1999; 2003).

Following the Beijing conference, the topic of gender equality and equal representation is also further institutionalized on the European level. In 1996 the Council of the European Union adopts a formal recommendation to Member States to introduce *'legislative, regulatory, and incentive measures'* to

tackle the underrepresentation of women in decision-making. The Amsterdam Treaty of 1997 recognizes equality between men and women as a fundamental principle and as one of the objectives and tasks of the Community (European Commission, 2007).

European Programme ‘Women and men in decision-making’

The 1999 review by the Council of the European Union of the follow-up process of the Platform of Action concluded that there was a need for a more consistent and systematic monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the objectives and actions. *‘The persistent under-representation of women in all areas of decision-making represents an important obstacle to the democratic development of the European Union, to its cohesion and globally to its competitiveness, which requires action to be taken at Community level.’* (Council of the European Union, 1999). This eventually led to the establishment of the European Programme ‘Women and men in decision-making’ (Council of the European Union, 2003; European Commission, 2007).

The working method of the European Commission on this issue is characterized by raising awareness of equality issues in decision-making processes and promoting research based on comparable European data (European Commission, 2007).

In 1999 9 indicators on the situation of women in power and decision-making were adopted by the Council of the European Union. In 2003 an extra set of 9 indicators was adopted, specifically focused on economic decision-making (European Commission, 2007). Indicators are statistical information chosen specifically to shed light on a particular economic, demographic or social problem or question. They are useful for monitoring change, for making governments accountable, for mobilizing people in support of change, and for empowering women (Breitenbach & Galligan, 2006). At the same time, it leaves the sovereignty to take decisions and actions at the national level.

A decision-making position is defined as *‘a position from which it is possible to take or influence a decision at organizational or hierarchical level’* (website: Database ‘Men and women in decision-making’).

Table 1: The indicators of the Programme ‘Women and men in decision-making’

<p><i>Legislative/elective political institutions</i></p> <p>Indicator 1: The proportion of women in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of the Member States and in the European Parliament</p> <p>Indicator 2: The proportion of women in the regional Parliaments of the Member States, where appropriate</p> <p>Indicator 3: The proportion of women in the local assemblies of the Member States</p> <p>Indicator 4: Policies to promote a balanced participation in political elections</p> <p><i>Executive political institutions</i></p> <p>Indicator 5: The proportion of women of the members of the national or federal governments and the proportion of women members of the European Commission</p> <p>Indicator 6: The number of women and men senior/junior ministers in the different fields of action (portfolio’s/Ministries) of the national or federal governments of the Member States.</p> <p><i>Civil Service</i></p> <p>Indicator 7: Proportion of the highest-ranking women civil servants (proportion of women civil servants in the two highest-ranking positions (after Minister) of the Ministries (appointed, elected, or nominated) (central government) and the respective levels in the European Institutions (A1 and A2)).</p> <p>Indicator 8: The distribution of the highest-ranking women civil servants in different fields of action</p> <p><i>Judicial System</i></p>
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Indicator 9: The proportion of women of the members of the Supreme Courts of the Member States and the proportion of women of the members of the European Court of Justice and the Court of First Instance

Economic decision-making

Indicator 10: The proportion and number of women and men among Governors and deputy/vice-governors of the Central Banks

Indicator 11: The proportion and number of women and men among members of the decision-making bodies of the Central Banks

Indicator 12: The proportion and number of women and men among ministers and deputy ministers/vice-ministers of the Economic Ministries

Indicator 13: The proportion and number of women and men among presidents and vice-presidents of the Labour Confederations

Indicator 14: The proportion and number of women and men among members of total governing bodies of the Labour Confederations

Indicator 15: The proportion and number of women and men among presidents and vice-presidents of the Employer Confederations

Indicator 16: The proportion and number of women and men among members of total governing bodies of the Employer Confederations

Indicator 17: The proportion and number of women and men among chiefs of executive boards of the top 50 firms publicly quoted on the national stock exchange

Indicator 18: The proportion and number of women and men among members of executive boards of the top 50 firms publicly quoted on the national stock exchange

Scientific scholars see a commitment to the regular production of indicators on gender equality as a necessary part of a strategic approach to gender equality. This commitment might be expected to accompany a commitment to a mainstreaming approach (Breitenbach & Galligan, 2006).

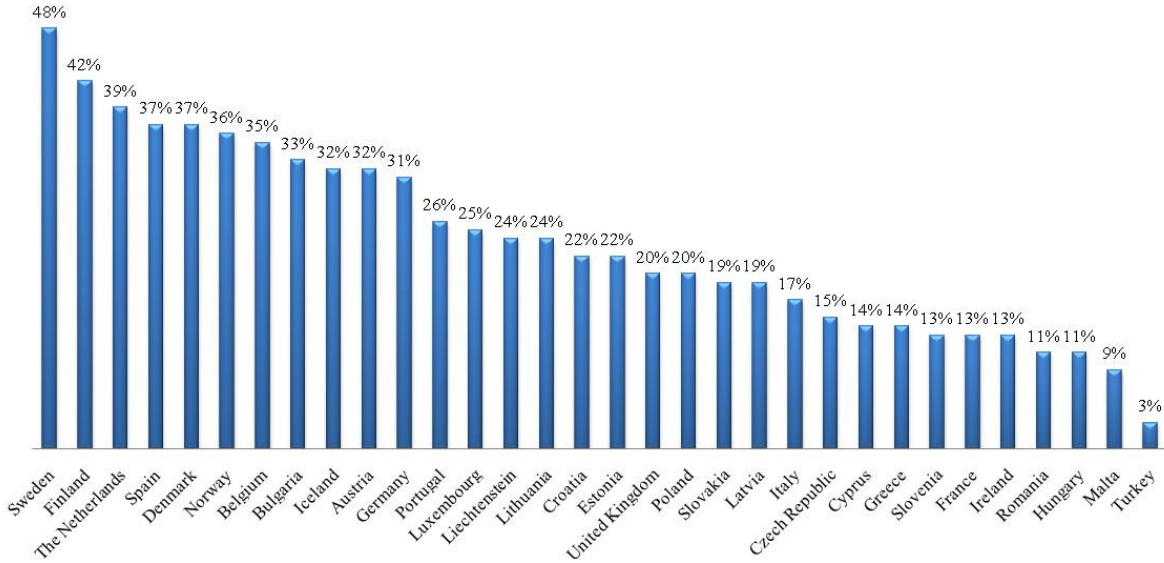
Promoting the equal participation of women and men in decision-making was also taken up as one of the six priority areas (objectives) of the ‘Roadmap for equality between women and men’ in 2006. This Roadmap aims at actively supporting gender equality in Europe and across the world and is supported by the Member States through the European Pact for Gender equality. Other European objectives, for example the policies that are developed within the context of the Lisbon Strategy to encourage a greater participation of women in employment (e.g. policies to reconcile work and family life, combat gender stereotypes) also contribute to the objective of equal participation in decision-making (European Commission, 2007).

Proportions of women representatives in the Parliaments of European Member States

Although European Member States committed themselves to the equal representation objectives, there are still large differences in proportions of women representatives in different Parliaments in Europe. And although the average share of women in Parliaments in all EU countries has increased by almost half in 10 years (from 16% in 1997 to 24% in 2007), the percentage is still well below the target of 30%.

Figure 2 shows the most recent proportions of women representatives of the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of the European Member States, possible future members, and EFTA countries (except Switzerland) (website: Database 'Women and men in decision-making'). It shows that the proportion ranges from 3% to 48%.

Figure 2: Proportion of women representatives in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments ²



1.2 Research questions

How are these large differences possible? Why do some countries have almost equal proportions of women and men in their Parliaments, while others still have little more than 10% women representatives? The central research question of this thesis is therefore:

Central research question

How can the different proportions of women in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of European countries be explained?

Sub research questions

To answer the central research question systematically, the following sub questions are presented:

1. *Which factors in a national system could have an influence on the proportion of women representatives?*
2. *How do the high-proportion countries differ from the low-proportion countries on the selected factors?*
3. *Based on the research findings, which recommendations can be formulated for (international) institutions that wish to increase the proportion of women representatives?*

First needs to be established which factors in a country could have an influence on the proportion of men and women representatives (sub question 1). The answer to this question will result in a framework by which different countries can be analyzed. This framework is established based on existing scientific literature. The ambition of this thesis is to come to an integrative framework that goes beyond the focus on the political system only (as many existing studies have done), and to also

² Data collected between 13-06-07 and 23-07-07

include socio-economic factors that are linked to gender equality, and features of the national administration (Ministries).

The basic assumption of this thesis is that countries with high proportions of women in Parliament have certain features, which cause these high proportions. And that countries with low proportions have certain features, which cause these low proportions. If high-proportion countries have certain features in common, and these features are absent (or e.g. present but in other amounts) in countries with a low proportion, it can be said that these features explain the high proportions, and vice versa. The second sub question is answered in a separate comparative chapter. The place of causality in this research will be addressed in the paragraph on research methodology.

An analysis of these research questions will ultimately lead to a general explanation of why proportions differ. The outcomes of comparative case study research can be used to draw lessons on the mechanisms associated with equal representation. This brings us to the scientific aim and practical relevance of this research.

1.3 Scientific aim and practical relevance

The scientific aim of this research is to systematically compare the situation in carefully selected case study countries, in order to draw lessons on factors that contribute to certain proportions of women in Parliament.

The practical relevance of this research is that conclusions of this analysis could contribute to the improvement of policymaking and implementation in countries that work to equalize the proportions of women and men in their Parliaments. The European Commission underscores the importance of this kind of research, by stating that *'understanding (...) national and regional differences is vital to effective policy and implementation'* (website: European Commission 'Women and men in decision-making').

1.4 Research method

This paragraph describes the research method that is used to find an answer to the stated research questions. The research questions will be analyzed using a comparative case study design.

Comparative case study design

Case study research is a research strategy that is often applied in administrative science because the subject of research is often an up to date event that occurs in daily reality (Van Thiel, 2007). The case study design incorporates the high level of complexity that is associated with the phenomenon under analysis. The boundaries of the phenomenon that is studied in this research are not clearly evident. It is quite impossible to pin down the exact factor that causes a certain amount of women in Parliament. Therefore, conclusions will not be based on causality, but on relationships between certain factors.

The cases are subsequently analyzed using the comparative approach. Hague and Harrop (2007) describe the goal of comparative politics: *'The goal of comparative politics is to encompass the major political similarities and differences between countries. The task is to understand the mixture of constants and variability which characterizes the world's government, bearing in mind the national and international contexts in which they operate. Given this definition of comparative politics, the comparative approach is simply the family of strategies and techniques which advances this goal.'*

The comparative approach has the advantage of helping to improve the classification of areas about which little information is available. This classification can be used as material from which explanations can be launched, which subsequently contributes to theory building. The further

generalization of research findings can have the potential for predictions, which is especially helpful when designing policy. This thesis' aim is to classify and explain. Further research is needed to design an overarching theory.

Case selection

In table 1 (page 5) an overview of the most recent proportions of women representatives of the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments in European countries was presented. This table showed that there are still large differences between European countries in proportions of women in Parliament.

Selection criteria

For this thesis, six countries are selected as case studies: three countries with high proportions, and three countries with low proportions of women representatives. The choice of three countries per group, rather than two, is made for reliability reasons. If two countries in a certain group show similarities, this could be a coincidence. If a third country of the group also shows this factor, the chance that this is a coincidence is smaller, and conclusions are more reliable. Adding a fourth or a fifth country to the analysis would increase the reliability of the conclusions even more, but this would get in the way of the practicality and feasibility of the research.

Next to the proportion-criterion, the second selection criterion is that the countries have been in the Programme from the start. This selection criterion has been chosen because these countries will have had this topic on their national agenda for at least a comparable amount of time. This ensures for example that sufficient data on the topic is available, and makes comparisons more reliable. If a country has put this topic on its agenda, say, only two years ago, a low proportion can be explained by the fact that there was no attention for this problem before this period, and the country is taking its first steps in the development towards equal representation.

This means that the cases are selected on variation on the outcome variable, and not on variation on one or more explaining variables. The aim of this research is to find possible explanations for a certain proportion of women in Parliament, by taking into account more features than just one feature of e.g. the political system. The underlying assumption for the current research design is that differences in equal representation are caused by a number of complexly interrelated factors, and that it is interesting to test this assumption. The choice of the explaining variables is further explained in paragraph 2.2.

Selecting countries

If we look at table 1, the three countries with the highest percentages of women representatives in the single or lower houses of their national or federal Parliaments and have been connected to the Programme from the start, are Sweden (48%), Finland (42%) and The Netherlands (39%). Countries with the lowest proportions of women representatives in Parliament are Greece (14%), France (13%) and Ireland (13%)³.

Method and sources of inquiry

'The prior development of theoretical propositions' is used in this thesis to *'guide data collection and analysis'* (Yin, 2003).

³ The group of countries with high proportions of women in their Parliament will be addressed as high-proportion countries. Countries with low proportions of women in their Parliament will be addressed as low-proportion countries.

Because there are many more variables that could influence the proportion of women in Parliament than could ever be researched in this thesis, or in researches in general, multiple sources of evidence are used to improve reliability (Yin, 2003).

First, *academic studies* are consulted to construct the theoretical framework. The advantage of using academic literature is that it is based on scientific standards, which supposes a high level of reliability and independency.

Second, *documents, publications and websites* of European and national institutions and organizations are used. In order to improve the reliability of the used information, only acknowledged institutions (governments) or organizations are consulted. Examples of international organizations that monitor and deal with women issues and democracy are the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) or the Inter-parliamentary Union (IPU). A list of consulted documents is taken up in the references. Information from rather old publications is always checked with more recent publications.

This method is also used for the case studies. In addition, relevant organizations and institutions (e.g. Ministries, political parties, etc) are contacted to obtain more detailed and up to date information. Both qualitative and quantitative data are used. To ensure that the data is comparable, per indicator the information for all countries was obtained.

When a comprehensible first draft was finished for all countries, experts who are able to provide in-depth information on the stated indicators on one of the case study countries are contacted for an interview. Respondents with an academic background are selected, who have done research on the matter of equal representation in their country and of who could be expected to have knowledge about the other indicators on which this research focuses. An international (European) outlook in previous research is an additional prerequisite. In appendix 1 a list is of the background of the interviewees is taken up.

The interviewees were contacted by email, in which the central aim of the research was explained. A copy and short explanation of the framework for analysis was included. The interview itself was semi-structured. Questions focused on elements of the theoretical framework and were based on the already acquired information from previous document study. Often interviewees provided useful additional literature. To assure correct interpretation, transcripts of interviews were sent to the supervisor. Second, interviewees received a copy of the case to check correct interpretation and to give feedback on the whole case study.

Based on this information, the hypotheses⁴ are tested, which forms the basis for the concluding chapter.

Outline

This thesis continues with the theoretical framework in which first several important central definitions and discussions concerning this topic are described. Then the central variables for analysis are selected. How these variables are theoretically related to the proportion of women members of parliament is described. As such the answer to the first research question is given.

The theoretical framework is followed by the case studies. First the three high-proportion cases are described, followed by the three low-proportion countries.

⁴ These will be presented after the theoretical framework

Based on the case studies, a comparison is made which will answer the second and third sub research questions on the similarities within the two groups.

In the concluding chapter the explanation for the different proportions of women in the selected Parliaments is presented, thereby answering the central research question. Based on this conclusion, recommendations for low-proportion countries are formulated.

2 Theoretical framework

The central aim of this chapter is to develop a framework of factors that (possibly) influence the proportion of women representatives in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of European Member States. In the first paragraph an introduction of the term ‘gender equality’ is presented and the link of this concept to the topic of equal representation is clarified. In the second paragraph the variables for analysis are selected. This research will focus specifically on socio-economic elements, and on features of the political and administrative system. In the third paragraph the (possible) relationships between these factors and equal representation are explained and graphically displayed in a framework for analysis.

2.1 Gender equality

This paragraph gives an overview of the central terms and definitions that are related to the topic of equal representation, based on existing scientific literature.

In discussions about equal rights and opportunities for women and men, the concept of ‘gender’ is often used. Gender is a term used for the behavioral and identity aspects of the sexes, apart from biological characteristics. It is a socially constructed definition of women and men. A conception of gender is determined by a conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life. These conceptions are culture specific and can be different over time and place (Council of Europe, 1998; Visser, 2002).

Gender conceptions are very influential in our personal and social lives, because they provide implicit standards of comparison and both implicitly and explicitly affect the self image and interpersonal attitudes (Visser, 2002). Slattery Rashotte and Webster (2004) state that gender inequalities continue to exist because gender inferences during interactions mostly occur unconsciously.

The construction and reproduction of gender conceptions take place at both the individual and the societal level, which are both equally important. Individuals shape gender roles and norms through their activities and reproduce them by conforming to expectations. But policies and structures also play an important role. They shape the conditions of life, and in that process they institutionalize the maintenance and reproduction of the social construction of gender (Council of Europe, 1998).

Gender is not only seen as a socially constructed definition of women and men, but also as a socially constructed definition of the relationship between the sexes. In most spheres of life, this definition contains an unequal power relationship, with male domination and female subordination. *‘Men and the tasks, roles, functions and values contributed to them are valued higher than women and what is associated with them’*. This is called the male bias; *‘the male norm is taken as the norm for society as a whole, which is reflected in policies and structures’*.⁵ In this way, policies and structures often unintentionally reproduce gender inequality (Council of Europe, 1998).

The Council of Europe (1998) has proposed an often used definition of *gender equality*. The term is defined as *‘an equal visibility, empowerment and participation of both sexes in all spheres of public and private life. Gender equality is the opposite of gender inequality, not of gender difference, and*

⁵ This line of thinking supposes a dichotomous classification of either ‘male’ or ‘female’. Men and women differ of course, but within these two groups there are also large differences. These differences within the groups make that the two groups also show many similarities. Labeling behavior or norms as typically male, or typically female, therefore discriminates unnecessarily.

aims to promote the full participation of women and men in society'. The European Commission (2001) defines gender equality as *'a situation in which all human beings are free to develop their personal abilities and make choices without limitations set by strict gender roles. The different behavior, aspirations and needs of women and men are equally valued and favored*'.

When designing policies and practices that are aimed at achieving gender equality, it is important to notice that the circumstances under which men and women live differ. This difference is caused for a large part by the fact that women have the ability to bear children and men do not, which brings different challenges for both sexes when making choices. The Council of Europe (1998) states that the existence of differences is not the main point, but that these differences *'should not have a negative impact on the living conditions of both women and men, should not discriminate against them and should contribute to an equal sharing in power in economy, society and policy-making processes*'. This makes that actual gender equality is not equal to 'sameness' and should therefore not include the establishment of the lifestyle and conditions of men (or women) as the norm. The Council states that society is dependent on the utilization of all human resources in order to develop. Both men and women are responsible to remove imbalances in public and private life.

The way the concept of gender equality was used in the European context, has changed over the years. It was first defined as giving women and men equal rights, opportunities, conditions and treatment in all fields of life and spheres of society through legislation. Early European interventions, such as the directives on equal pay and equal treatment, are examples of this approach. These interventions can be categorized as being based on the 'sameness model'; the idea that living conditions for men and women are very different was not taken up into these measures. Consequently, this legal equality did not lead to actual equality (Walby, 2003; Nelen & Hondeghem, 2000; Rees, 1998).

In the 70's and 80's the thinking about gender equality moved from pure legislation towards a more 'active and output-oriented' approach (Nelen & Hondeghem, 2000). Specific actions and measures were needed to turn the passive and legal equality clauses into actual equality. This led to the introduction of 'positive action', *'agreed unequal treatment of or incentive measure to compensate discrimination and improve gender equality*' (European Commission, 2001). In other words, positive action measures focus on the position and situation of an underperforming group, and aim to make up for their 'deficiencies' so that they can perform and compete better within the existing system (Rees, 1998).

The impact of positive actions was limited however. Some authors state that the reason for this lays in the fact that positive actions are based on a 'deficit model'; they focus on shortcomings of a certain group, but do not take possible deficiencies of the system itself into account. A second problem with positive action is that the measures taken have the character of a preferential treatment of a certain group. Other groups tend to be discriminated. In this way, positive action is competing with the principle of equal treatment (Doorewaard & De Nijs, 1999).

In response to this criticism a more 'structural and proactive way' to tackle gender imbalances was needed. A 'transforming model' or mainstreaming approach is needed to challenge a structural status quo which reproduces and reinforces gender inequalities (Rees, 1998). This led to the introduction of the concept of *gender mainstreaming*. This is a *gender equality strategy that aims to transform organizational processes and practices by eliminating gender biases in existing routines, involving the regular actors in this transformation process* (Council of Europe, 1998).

Mainstreaming approaches have insisted much more strongly than previous approaches on the need for good data and research, for the development of indicators and for methods such as gender impact

assessment. Successful mainstreaming requires the development and use of gender-sensitive equality indicators, and clear output measures to determine if the stated aims and targets are met. Mainstreaming entails applying these measures across all policy areas, rather than a selected number of areas which are seen as most critical for gender equality (Breitenbach & Galligan, 2006).

2.2 Choosing variables

A quite logical choice when researching factors related to equal representation, is to focus on the political system. This system determines the way representation is given form in a country, and differs largely in character and structure throughout Europe. The characteristics of political systems could therefore explain the different proportions of women representatives between certain countries.

Although very important, a focus on political elements alone could be too narrow to explain differences between countries fully. As was described in the previous paragraph, the concept of 'gender' is socially constructed, and varies over time and place. As a consequence, the conceptions of the roles women and men are to play in society are likely to differ between countries. And consequently, so is the level of gender equality in society. It could be argued that the differences in proportions of women representatives between countries are caused by the fact that women in some countries have more possibilities to execute the job of a representative than in others. And that it is not just the political system, but also a broader state of societal affairs that explains the proportion of women in Parliament. Therefore, socio-economic factors that are likely to reflect the broader level of gender equality in society are taken up as a second variable of analysis.

An important link between society and the political system is formed by the national administration; the Ministries. These bodies help preparing decision-making, formulate policy based on the decisions that are taken, and execute it (or oversees execution). The both active and passive representation⁶ of women in the policy making process have been proven to be important for the success of gender equality efforts. It is therefore taken up as the third central variable of analysis.

Besides these arguments, the choice of 'political system', 'socio-economic forces' and 'features of the administration' as central variables of analysis is also based on the model of public management reform by Pollitt and Bouckaert (2004). This model depicts forces that influence public management reforms, and its primary aim is to provide a framework to analyze forces that promote and constrain management change. The second aim of this model provides the reason why it is chosen for this research: because *'it permitted country-by-country differences in the pattern of these forces to be mapped and subsequently incorporated into interpretations and explanations'*. In other words, a model like this can be used to make systematic comparisons between countries, and to draw conclusions on how and why these countries differ. The original model also displays the variables 'elite decision-making' and 'chance events'. These will not be taken up as separate variables in the conceptual framework, but they are addressed in the case studies when relevant.

2.3 Designing a framework for analysis

The aim of this research is to explain the different proportions of women representatives across countries. As was explained in the previous paragraph, 'socio-economic forces', the 'political system' and 'features of the administration' are the central variables of analysis in this research. In this paragraph is explained how the central variables are operationalized and how they relate to each other. This is done primarily by using existing scientific literature.

⁶ Meaning respectively the actual presence of women working in the administration and the incorporation of the gender concept in policy

Figure 3 shows the model that is used as a framework for analysis. It is important to note that each factor in this framework can vary not only in strength but also in *nature* from country to country (Pollitt, 2006). Another important fact is that the interrelations that are shown in this model are indicative and do not indicate causality. The arrows in this model give an idea of the complexity of the relations between the selected factors. This does not mean that the model is a complete and actual representation of reality; more related factors and relations are possible.

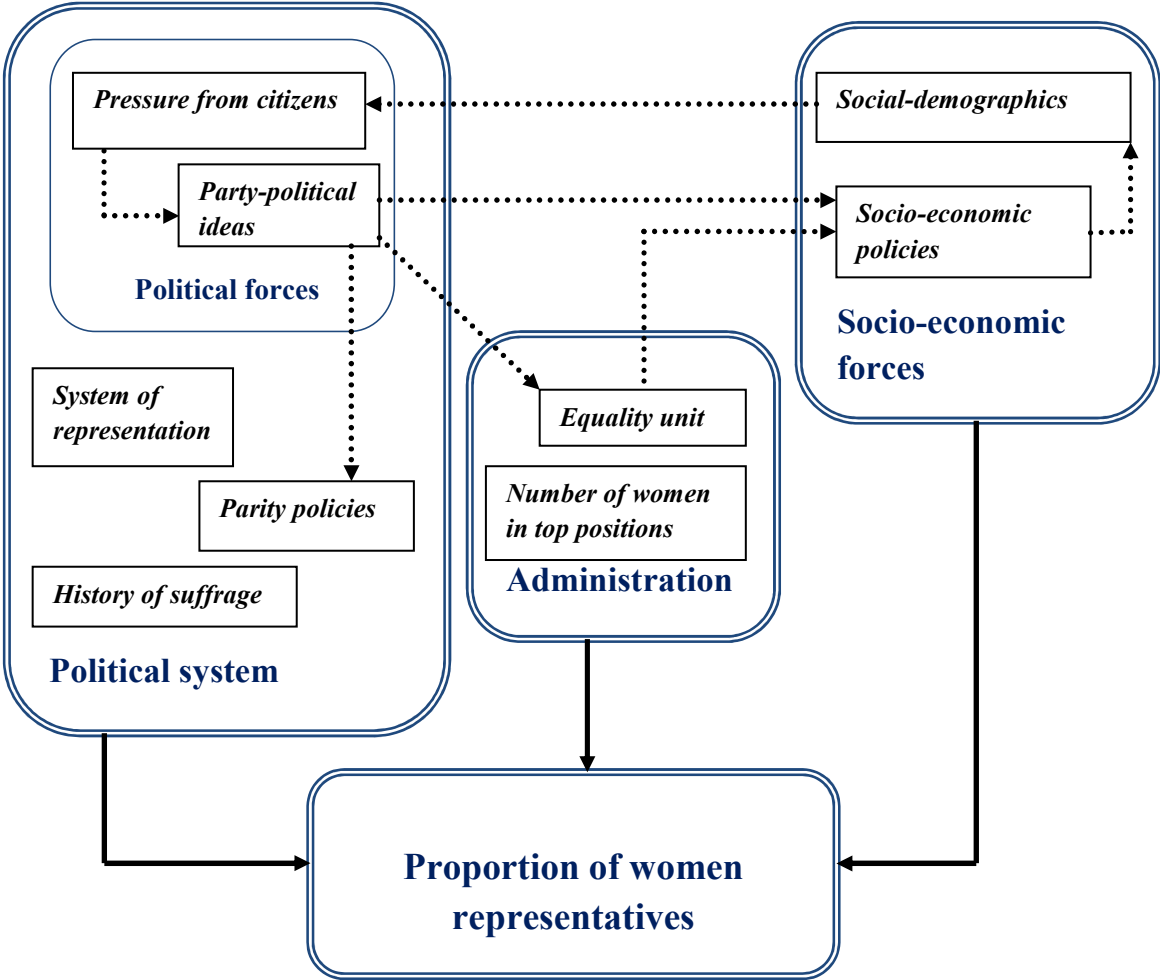


Figure 3: Model for analyzing causes for levels of representation

Political system

The first central variable of this research is the political system. In the analysis a distinction between (relatively static) elements of the political system and (dynamic) political forces is made. The focus of this central variable is specifically on elements that are related to the topic of equal representation.

Elements of the political system that have a static character are the ‘System of representation’, which is part of suffrage law and quite hard to change to changing circumstances, ‘Parity policies’, which are aimed at promoting equal representation and are not likely to quickly change over time, and ‘History of suffrage’. Dynamic political forces include ‘Pressure from citizens’ and ‘Party political ideas’. These can change rather more quickly over time and are therefore called ‘dynamic’.

History of suffrage

The history of suffrage is the first static element of the first central variable. Mateo Diaz & Millns (2004) proved a substantial degree of correlation between the date at which women received the franchise to voting rights and right to stand for election and the number of women members of parliament in a particular country. Countries with earlier dates of female franchise correspond with a present day higher degree of female participation. Countries that have had suffrage for a shorter time are expected to have lower levels of women representation today.

System of representation

In a representative democracy, citizens elect politicians to reach collective decisions on their behalf. The way this *representation* is given form in a democracy is an important feature of a political system, and differs throughout Europe. The different systems of representation can be divided up into two central categories; plurality and majority systems, and systems of proportional representation.

In *plurality and majority systems*, the number of votes in a district is important. Parties are not rewarded in proportion to the share of votes they received; the winner in a certain district simply ‘takes all’. In the plurality form of this system, the winning candidate is the one that receives most votes in a district. In a majority system, the candidate with a majority of votes wins. In a majority system often a second ballot is needed to achieve the required majority. The plurality system is getting rarer nowadays, because this system offers no guarantee that the party that wins the most votes will ultimately have most seats in Parliament.

In systems of *proportional representation* the guiding principle is not to represent a certain district, but to represent parties. Parties are awarded seats in direct proportion to their share of votes they received. Because it is not likely that a party wins a certain majority of votes, coalitions are formed of parties that will eventually form the government. Most proportional representation systems are not perfectly proportional however. Most systems add an explicit threshold of representation below which small parties receive no seats at all. This mechanism is used to reduce fragmentation in the assembly.

Mixed systems also exist. These combine the geographical representation of the plurality method with the party representation of proportional representation (Hague & Harrop, 2004).

In 1997 the European Parliament issued a research which showed that proportional representation multi-party systems most often have more women working in political office than majoritarian two-party systems (European Parliament, 1997). This structural condition limits, but does not *determine* levels of women’s representation however. This can be shown by the fact that the difference between these two systems only emerged in recent decades, and ‘*as women [in proportional representation multi-party systems] have increasingly organized outside and inside political parties to demand better representation*’ (Krook, 2001a). The importance of the organization of the women’s movement for equal representation will be described later on.

Besides these structural features of systems of representation, it is also important to address the different ways representation can be conceived. The representation of a group’s interest can be viewed in two ways. The first is the *presence* of a group’s members in decision-making arenas. The second is the *consideration of its interests* in the decision-making process. This difference is also resembled respectively by the terms ‘active’ and ‘passive representation’. The implication of the first way is that, to be democratic, the composition of the elected body should resemble the composition of the society it serves. The second way implies however, that it is enough to take the interests of voters into account in the decision-making process. These two viewpoints are both used as arguments in the discussion about women’s representation. Also within women’s organizations disagreement exists on the nature

of women's interests and the political strategies that are required to meet those (Lovenduski & Norris, 1993).

Parity mechanisms

The third static element of the political system is 'parity mechanisms', or: strategies that can be taken to increase the proportion of women in decision-making positions. Lovenduski (1993) describes three parity strategies. The first is a *rhetorical strategy* in which women's claims are taken up into the line of campaign and party spokesmen often refer to the importance of getting more women into office. A second strategy is that of *positive or affirmative action*. This strategy includes for example the training of aspirant women, or setting targets for the inclusion of women. 'Considerable encouragement' to put themselves forward for consideration is another way, sometimes in the form of financial assistance. The third strategy is that of *positive discrimination*. In this strategy a certain amount or proportion of places on voting lists or in decision-making bodies are reserved for women. This is often done through quotas.

The use of quotas is a heavily debated mechanism. It is based on the idea that a gender balance cannot be reached naturally on the basis of the evolution of society changing patterns of behavior, but that artificial measures are needed to achieve this goal (Mateo-Diaz & Millns, 2004; Krook, 2001a,b). Conceptually, quotas are based on the idea that representation is about standing for group interests. It assumes that the representative shares social characteristics (e.g. gender, race, locality, class) with those represented and that this commonality will result in similar policy preferences.

Mateo-Diaz and Millns (2004) discern three types of quotas. The first type is the *statutory quota*. This form requires a minimum proportion of women among the elected representatives in Parliament. The second type *quotas in electoral law* is less thorough. In this system, the parties' list of candidates must contain a certain threshold of women candidates. It is not certain if this proportion of women will also end up in Parliament after elections. *Informal quotas* are the third type; these can be implemented by individual parties. Statutory quotas and quotas in electoral law are seen as positive discrimination measures. Informal quotas on the other hand fall more in the line of affirmative action programmes.

The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) proposed another (clearer) classification of gender quota. The first type is the *constitutional quota*, in which the quota is clearly mentioned in the constitutional text. The second is an *election law quota or regulation for the national parliament*, where the quota is included as a part of electoral legislation. And the *political party quota* for electoral candidates, which is drawn up by the party itself.

The use of quota alone does not turn out to be a guarantee for the increase of representation of women. It is important that the normative arguments underlying the choice for the use of quota's are clearly stressed (Krook, 2001a). Also when quotas remain dependent on existing institutional factors (such as the electoral system or party structures), and nothing is done to eliminate legal and constitutional obstacles, it is unlikely that the real effect on patterns of representation will become evident (Mateo-Diaz & Millns, 2004). These arguments show the need for a more inclusive gender mainstreaming approach of the wider system in order for quotas to be effective in promoting equal representation.

Woodward (2001) describes factors that may affect whether gender mainstreaming will become an 'institutional innovation'. The existence and quality of these elements could explain the successfulness of equal representation efforts in certain countries. First, *(political) commitment to a gender mission* is necessary. Secondly, the *degree of resistance to gender equality* should not be too high. Thirdly *the extent to which gender experts play a role* in the process is important. A final prerequisite is a

sufficient level of sophistication in terms of gender and policy issues in the administrative setting. The importance of the organization of the administration is explained later on.

Pressure from citizens

'Organizations that struggle to eliminate unequal gender relations and promote the equal participation of women in the labour market', are called women's movements (Bleijenbergh & Roggeband, 2007). The activities of these women's movements have proven to be important in the process of gaining awareness and knowledge of the topic of gender equality and equal representation (True & Mintrom, 2001; Lovenduski 1993, 14, in: Krook, 2001b). Lovenduski (1993) even states that 'there is no party in which efforts to nominate more women have occurred without an intervention by women making claims'. Bleijenbergh & Roggeband (2007) concluded from a comparative case study that women's political pressure, especially through the national equality machinery, is a prerequisite for the emergence and extension of social-care policies (e.g. childcare). In general it can be said that claims of women's movements are important for gender equality issues to receive attention and reach the political agenda.

Over the years, women's movements have pressured political parties in the various European member states to promote policies to attract women voters, to undertake campaigns to recruit women members, to promote women into key positions in the party organization and to nominate women candidates. Despite national differences there is a national trend in the way women's movements have dealt with the issue of representation in politics. Their approach has changed substantially. When women in the beginning of the 19th century obtained the right to vote, they also wanted to obtain the right to stand for election because this was seen as the only possibility to actually change the situation of women. In the 1960's and 1970's however, many second wave feminists were skeptical about political institutions and electoral politics. They preferred the autonomy they found in new social movement organizations. In the 1980's the importance of mainstream politics was reconsidered, and more claims for equal representation were made (Lovenduski, 1993).

The strength of the women's movement in a certain country could explain a certain proportion of women representatives in parliament. If the women's lobby actively pressures political parties to take up measures to achieve equal representation, the proportions of women representatives in parliament are likely to be higher.

Party political ideas

As was stated before, research has shown that measures to create equal representation alone are often not effective without the normative arguments to support them (Krook, 2001a). These normative arguments are often provided by women's movements. Some parties include the topic of equal representation on their agenda because it fits their ideology. Others do not.

Lovenduski (1993) states that parties have responded to claims of the women's movement in two ways. The first way is to respond through *programmatic change*. Over the past years, the claims made by the women's movement has developed from a set of straightforward employment laws, to a wide ranging programme affecting the whole society. Most political parties have responded to these claims in ways that correspond with their ideologies. Some researchers argue that Social-Democratic parties are mainly responsible for social-care policy change. Other research has shown that also Christian-Democratic or Conservative parties introduce measures like childcare and leave facilities (Bleijenbergh et al, 2006). Overall convergence is visible, in the sense that all parties tend to adopt

ideas about equal pay or childcare⁷. Specific party ideologies are always visible in the ultimate policy however.

A second way to respond is through *organizational change*. Parties have developed strategies to promote women internally into decision-making positions in the party organization and externally into elected assemblies and public appointments.

The arguments political parties use to support the claim for more women in decision-making positions differ, but two central approaches can be discerned. The first is based on the fact that women have the formal legal *right* in a modern democracy to participate in the political process, and that it should be possible to enjoy this right. A second line of argument is based on the *utility* principle; the view that women's participation in the political process will have positive benefits for '*a diversification of the res-publica, a renewal of the political culture and a change in legislative output*'. These two approaches are based respectively on the rights and the utility principle, and are often combined in parties' arguments (Mateo-Diaz & Millns, 2004).

In general parties of the left have been more willing than parties on the centre and on the right to commit to equal representation measures, and they have been more consistent in keeping this promise (Lovenduski, 1993).

Administrative system

The government administration is an important, but often not very visible body in democratic decision-making. The administration plays a role in the preparation of decision-making, and in designing and implementing policy. In the definition of gender the importance of policy was stressed. It is therefore interesting to look at certain features and composition of an important body in the national administration; the Ministries.

Number of women employees in the administration

The theory of representative bureaucracy states that passive representation among public employees will lead to active representation in bureaucratic outputs (Keiser et al. 2002). Just as the idea that the number of women in parliament is supposed to influence the policy debate in a way that is favorable for gender equality, it could also be argued that a higher number of women in the administration is favorable for policy developments on gender equality. Therefore the number and representation in higher decision-making or management positions of women in Ministries is addressed.

Equality machineries

Equality machineries have proven to be an important instrument to keep the issue of gender equality and equal representation on the agenda. Stetson and Masur (1995, in: Bleijenbergh & Roggeband, 2007) define a women's policy machinery as '*any structure established by government with its main purpose being betterment of women's social status*'. These are also called equality machineries, because most of these agencies aim to promote gender equality. In response to the demands of feminist movements, many countries have established such equality machineries. Bleijenbergh and Roggeband (2007) assume that equality machineries allow the entrance of feminist ideas into the political debate, promote women's interests and give access to the women's movement. Whether or not a country has an equality-unit and the quality of its functioning could influence the existence or strength of gender equality policies.

⁷ The influence of increased Europeanization on these issues should also be concerned.

If women are active in the Ministries of a country and that country has an active equality machinery, according to the previously mentioned theories this will have a positive effect on the existence of gender equality policies and as a consequence on the position of women in society.

Socio-economic forces

As was explained in the previous paragraph, socio-economic factors that are likely to reflect the broader level of gender equality in society will be taken up as the third central variable. The position of women in society could influence their choice of becoming a Member of Parliament. If women in general still have a very traditional role in society, closely linked to the family rather than to the broader society, this could be an explanation for a very low level of participation in politics. If women's opportunities to advance in society are more equal to men's however, this could positively affect the choice to become a Member of Parliament. Therefore, attention is paid to social demographics that are likely to reflect gender equality in society, and to socio-economic policies which are aimed at creating gender equality.

Social-demographics

Social-demographics are figures that reflect the composition of society. Socio-demographic indicators are often used by different international institutions to measure the degree of gender (in)equality in a country. There are many different approaches to measuring this factor. There is the UNDP 'Gender Related Development Index', the World Bank's 'GenderStats' and the OECD 'Gender, Institutions and Development Database'. A number of scientific scholars have proposed alternations and improvement of these different measures over the years (e.g. Dijkstra & Hamner, 2000).

An important output variable of the level of gender equality in a country is the economic role women play (OECD, 2006); the degree to which they work outside the house in paid jobs. When a large part of the labour market is composed of women, it supposes that men and women have equal opportunities to develop their role in society, outside the house. It is however, quite normative to state that countries in which more women work, are more gender equal. It supposes that working is the way to develop into a full human being, which of course can be debated on. On the other hand, some studies have concluded that having an independent income increases self reliance, reduces dependency, and improves decision-making autonomy (e.g. Kabeer and Mahmud, 2004 in: OECD, 2006), which of course are positive factors⁸. It could therefore be insightful to look at *the number of women in the labour market* as a proportion of the total number of women in a country (the participation rate), when comparing national levels of gender equality.

It is important to note that the number of women on the labour market alone does not provide a good image of the level of gender equality. It is necessary to also take qualitative elements into account.

An aspect that could reflect the level of gender equality on the labour market is the *number of women in top positions in companies*. The database 'Women and men in decision-making', set up by the European Commission in support of the Programme with the same name, displays the proportions of women in top positions in the largest publicly quoted companies in each country. The listed companies are part of the of the blue-chip index of the national stock exchange. The blue chip index covers the companies with the highest market capitalisation. In cases where the index covers a large number of companies, only the 50 largest are taken into account. The data for each country cover only companies registered in that country; non-national companies (i.e. those registered in another country) are not

⁸ It is important to note that these studies are often carried out in developing countries, where employment could mean a rise in independence and autonomy for everyone, and not exclusively for women.

taken up in the database. If a high number of women take top positions in a country, this could be regarded as being more gender equal in terms of career opportunities. If this possibility exists in a country, it can be supposed that women also have the possibilities to take on the job of a representative.

The *gender pay gap* is another important factor. This concept refers to the difference between the wages earned by women and men. It is calculated by taking the average male hourly wage, minus the average female hourly wage, and by dividing this number by the average male hourly wage. The figure that results from this calculation indicates how many percentage points the earnings of men have to decrease in order to be equal of those of women.

Men in the 25 European Member States earn on average 13.79 euro per hour, women 10.40 euro. The gender pay gap for the whole European Union is 25 %. On average in the EU, men earn 3.39 euro more per hour than women. A possible cause for this difference is for example the segregation in sectors. In some sectors employees earn more money than in others, and more men than women tend to work in sectors where wages are higher (e.g. technical professions, as opposed to jobs in healthcare in which more women work). Work patterns are another explanation; overall, five times more women than men tend to work part-time. Part-time workers tend to earn less per hour than fulltime workers. And there are still more men than women in the higher (and better paying) levels of organizations. Biased evaluations and pay systems, and stereotypes are mentioned as possible explanations for the differences (European Commission, 2006).

It is important to note that the indicators mentioned here are not the only factors that reflect the level of gender equality on the labour market in a certain country; these only give a superficial overview. They do however reflect a national state of affairs, and can be compared between countries, which make them useful for this research.

Socio-economic policies

The second element of the third variable is *socio-economic policies*. Countries often set up specific socio-economic policies with the intention to change the composition of the labour market. These systems differ from country to country.

What socio-economic policies a government develops, is largely dependent on the ‘welfare state’ conception of that country. The broad approach to the concept ‘welfare state’ includes the role the government plays in managing and organizing the economy, so that citizens are not solely subject to the market mechanism, and welfare is ensured. Esping-Andersen (1990) proposed an often quoted and often debated welfare-state typology. The original typology consists of three types. In the *liberal type* liberal work-ethic norms prevail, resulting in a modest assistance by the state for a small group of state-dependents, and a general dominance of the market in the provision of welfare. It is said to result in social stratification and large differences between rich and poor. Countries of the *corporatist type*, see the market as a provider of welfare. The state grants social rights on the basis of ‘class and status’ and only interferes when the family’s capacity to take care of itself is exhausted. Countries of the *social democratic type* however, pursue a welfare state that promotes equality of the highest standards, not an equality of minimal needs. Dualism between state and market and between working and middle class is not tolerated. Later on, Esping-Andersen also proposed a fourth, *mixed-type*, to include countries that show features of all three types, but do not fit one category.

Identifying the general welfare state regime⁹ type can be insightful, but in the context of this thesis it is important to focus on specific socio-economic policies that aim at creating gender equality in society. Bleijenbergh and Roggeband (2007) use Esping-Andersen's typology to propose a typology of four different welfare regimes that includes the dimension of social-care policies. The typology can be used to classify national variety in 'public care-giving support'.

The first model is the '*male breadwinner model*'. In countries of this type, the state provides financial support to breadwinners for keeping a caregiver at home. In the '*universal breadwinner model*', the state provides care services. The third model is called '*the caregiver parity model*' in which the state provides financial support to caregivers. In the final, '*family care model*', care is provided by the extended family. This typology can be used to classify the current state of affairs.

In order to illustrate how the case study countries deal with creating gender equality in society, the focus will be on a specific set of socio-economic policies; reconciliation policies, gender pay gap policies and policies to increase the number of women in top positions.

Reconciliation policies

There are different forms of policy that aim at creating gender equality on the labour market. Very important in this respect are reconciliation policies; '*policies that directly support the combination of professional, family and private life*'. This includes childcare services, leave facilities, flexible working arrangements, and financial allowances for working partners. These policies not only serve to promote gender equality, but also contribute to the European goals of growth, employment and social cohesion (European Commission, 2008c). Bruning and Plantenga (1999) state that the disappearance of gender-specific specialization in caring and bread winning called for the introduction of reconciliation policies.

The strength and quality of these policies are important measures that could determine the position of women in society. Most European governments now recognize the impact of care responsibilities on women's employment, but countries still differ in their policy responses and in their implicit and explicit focus on gender equality. Some encourage the establishment of public and private care services, while others tend to improve opportunities to work part-time. Some countries still see reconciliation as a woman's affair while other countries recognize the role of men in care and family responsibilities. Despite the Europe-wide recognition of the importance of reconciliation policies and the high position of the topic on many national agendas, actual policies are still limited (European Commission, 2008c). The thesis will focus specifically on childcare and leave facilities. The way these two factors are organized will give an indication on how a country deals with reconciliation, and can explain the extent to which women participate on the labour market¹⁰.

The involvement of men in the care of small children may be promoted by specific arrangements, such as paternity leave or specific regulations with regard to a father's take-up of parental leave.

Leave facilities

Leave facilities, such as leave arrangements and career breaks, are important for combining work and private life. In 1996 a European directive obliged Member States to introduce legislation on parental leave to enable parents to care full-time for their child over a period of three months. In principle this

⁹ The term 'regime' underlines the fact that in the relation between state and economy '*a complex of legal and organizational features are systematically interwoven*' (Esping Anderson, 1990).

¹⁰ Daouli et al. (2004) for example demonstrated that the choice for employment depends on the availability and costs of childcare in Greece

is an individual and non-transferrable entitlement. This directive ensures a minimum standard within European Member States. It is given a different form per country (European Commission, 2008c).

National regulations concerning parental leave can differ in numerous ways. It can be granted as a *family right* or *individual right*. If it is organized as a family right, families can decide who will make use of the parental leave. If it is organized individually, both the father and the mother can claim a period of leave (Bruning and Plantenga, 1999). Especially in the ten new Member States, parental leave is often a family right (European Commission, 2008c). Secondly, parental leave can be *paid or unpaid*. In most European countries, leave takers are now compensated more or less for their loss of earnings. Thirdly, the *duration* of leave differs largely between countries. The *flexibility* with which the leave can be taken also differs; in some countries leave can only be taken part-time, or during a specific period of time. The number of years during which the entitlement to parental leave remains valid also differs (Bruning and Plantenga, 1999).

It is important to note that a right to take longer periods of parental leave could result in problems for reintegration of women, which could reinforce traditional options for combining work and care (European Commission, 2008c).

Childcare

On the Barcelona summit in 2002 targets were set for childcare. In order to achieve the goal of full employment, *'the European Council agreed that Member States should remove disincentives to female labour force participation and strive, taking into account the demand for childcare facilities and in line with national patterns of provision, to provide childcare by 2010 to at least 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, and at least 33% of children under three years of age'*. In the 2008 report was stated that most European countries are far from reaching the Barcelona targets (European Commission, 2008c).

2.4 Hypotheses

In order to facilitate the process of drawing conclusions, the following hypotheses are formulated.

Hypothesis 1: The selected features of the political systems of high-proportion countries differ clearly from the selected features of political systems of low-proportion countries in the following ways:

Hypothesis 1.1: High-proportion countries obtained *universal suffrage* earlier than low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 1.2: High proportion countries are *proportional representation systems*, low-proportion countries are *plurality or majority systems*.

Hypothesis 1.3: In high-proportion countries, *pressure from citizens* has been higher and better organized than in low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 1.4: *Political parties* in high-proportion countries have responded with more thorough programmatic and organizational change than political parties in low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 2: The selected features of the administrative systems of high-proportion countries differ clearly from the selected features of the administrative systems of low-proportion countries in the following ways:

Hypothesis 2.1: High-proportion countries have more active equality machineries than low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 2.2: The Ministries of high-proportion countries have a higher proportion of women employees and a higher proportion of women employees in top positions than the Ministries of low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 3: The selected socio-economic forces of high-proportion countries differ clearly from the selected features of low-proportion countries in the following ways:

Hypothesis 3.1: In high-proportion countries a larger proportion of the labour market is occupied by women than in

low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 3.2: In high-proportion countries, more women have positions in top positions than in low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 3.3: In high-proportion countries, the gender pay gap is smaller than in low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 3.4: In high-proportion countries, socio-economic reconciliation policies are better than in low-proportion countries.

3 Case studies high-proportion countries

In this chapter the case studies of countries with high-proportions of women representatives in the single or lower house of their national parliament are presented. Attention will be paid to the way in which the selected variables play a role in determining the current proportions of women representatives in Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands.

3.1 Case study: Sweden

Since the 2006 elections, 165 of the 349 Members of Parliament are women (47%). The proportion of women in the Swedish Parliament has always been high, compared to other (European) countries. In this paragraph possible explanations for this trend are addressed.

Universal suffrage was introduced May 24th 1919, based on proposals by a coalition government of Liberals and Social Democrats. After the 1921 national elections, 5 women took a seat in Parliament (website: Sveriges Riksdag). Figure 4 shows that after 1928 the number of women in Parliament grew steadily with only small drops after the 1970 and 1991 elections.

Figure 4: Proportions women representatives after elections - Sweden (website: Statistics Sweden)¹¹



The very active pressure of women's organizations for equal representation, both from within and outside political parties, is a very important explanation for the current almost equal representation of men and women (Wängerud, 2005; Haas, 2003). Dr. Kerstin Kolam has confirmed this in the interview. An important tactic in the early stages in the struggle for universal suffrage was to put women's names forward for nomination. Women's organizations also put up campaigns to promote women candidates and made proposals to get women in better positions on party lists. Whenever reversals in agreements occurred, protests were organized (Lovenduski, 1993). In the first years of universal suffrage women's auxiliaries were active to encourage women to participate in the political process and helped them to gain leadership skills. Women's auxiliaries ended to exist when political parties started to become more committed to integrate women issues on their agendas (Haas, 2003).

¹¹ In Sweden universal suffrage was attained in 1921. Elections took place in that year, and in 1924. The number of women elected in 1924 is not available.

After the 1970 elections, the continuous growth in the proportion of women dropped a little. The Liberal Party and the Social Democrats formally recognized the importance of involving women in politics and the importance of women's votes, and introduced policy to increase the number of women representatives in 1972. The following 1973 elections can be seen as a turning point because the proportion of women increased significantly (to 21%) and never dropped below that level again. During the 1980s and 1990s the rest of Sweden's parties set numerical goals (Wängnerud, 2005; website: IDEA).

When the proportion of women representatives tended to drop below 30% after the elections in 1991, a loosely organized network of feminist activists and politicians (called the *Stödstrumporna*; Support Stockings) threatened to establish a Women's Party. When became clear that a majority of women voters would choose such a party, most political parties decided to appoint more women (Haas, 2003). This resulted in a further rise in numbers of women after subsequent elections. The first woman parliamentary leader was chosen in 1991 (website: Inter-parliamentary Union).

Elections in Sweden take place every four years under a system of proportional representation. The 'Riksdag' (legislature) is a unicameral body with 394 seats which are divided over 7 parties (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). All citizens who have reached the age of 18 by Election Day, and who are or have been resident of Sweden are entitled to vote. During elections, Sweden is divided into 29 constituencies, most of which have the same boundaries as the countries. A normal constituency elects between 10 and 12 members of parliament, but there are large differences between countries; the largest is Stockholm, which elects 42 members, the smallest is Gotland county with only 2 members.

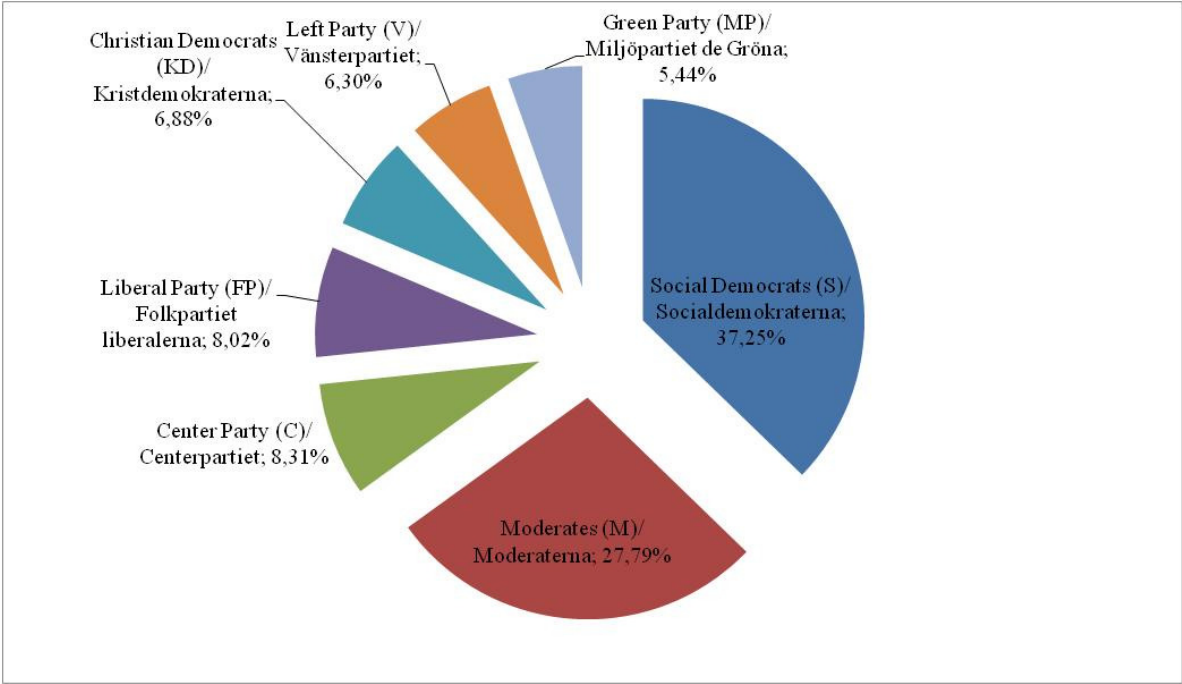
To become a member of the Riksdag, one has to be entitled to vote and be nominated by a political party. Parties have to obtain 4% of total votes or 12% of the votes in a constituency in order for the votes to be awarded to them. Of the 349 seats, 310 are fixed constituency seats. The remaining 39 adjustment seats are used to achieve the best proportional distribution of seats between the parties of the country as a whole. These adjustment seats are first distributed by party and then by constituency. Members are selected primarily on the strength of votes casted on them personally in a particular constituency. The candidate must receive at least 8% of the party votes in order to be sent off to Parliament (website: Sveriges Riksdag).

There are no constitutional quotas, electoral law quotas or other regulations on how many women should be in the Parliament. However, all political parties have set their own quota for electoral candidates and have clearly defined goals for women in politics. **Fout! Verwijzingsbron niet gevonden.** shows the percentages of seats per party after the 2006 elections.

Since the 2006 elections, the *Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti* (the Swedish Social Democratic Labour Party) has most seats (37.25%). The party uses a 50% quota for women on the party list, with a 'zipper system' (alternating men and women on the candidates list) since 1993. Both the *Moderaterna* (27.79%) and the Centre Party (8.31%) decided on equal representation targets (in 1993 and 1996 respectively), but left the final word concerning the list of candidates to nomination committees (Wängnerud, 2005; website: Quota Database). The *Vänsterpartiet* (Left Party, 6.30%) and the *Miljöpartiet de Gröna* (Green Party of Sweden, 5.44%) have a minimum quota of 50% for women on the candidates list. The Liberal Party (8.02%) introduced the zipper system at party ballots of the general election in 1984. The Christian Democratic Party (6.88%) introduced a 40% gender neutral recommendation on electoral ballots, meaning that minimally 40% of the candidates should be either men or women. Dr. Kerstin Kolam also underlined that the high ambitions of these parties to include

women form an important explanation why the proportions of men and women representatives in Parliament are almost equal.

Figure 5: Percentage of seats per party after 2006 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



Central government in Sweden is highly decentralized, resulting in a large number of agencies for the implementation and execution of policy. As a result, Ministries tend to be small. The top three officials in Ministries (the undersecretary of state, the permanent secretary and the under-secretary of legal affairs) are appointed by the minister.

In the current Cabinet, 10 of the 22 ministers are women (45%) (website: Database men and women in decision-making). Ministries tend to be overrepresented by women employees. In 2006, almost 60% of the employees of the national administration were women. The men/women proportion is (almost) equal in the Ministry of Defense and in the Office for Administrative Affairs. In all other policy fields women are over represented with an average 60/40 proportion. Women and men are almost equally represented in most staff categories. Among the permanent administrative staff women are over represented; only little more than 20% of men work there. The percentage of women heads of administrative units has been growing slowly but steadily in recent years. If we look at the two highest levels in Ministries, we see that 38% of the heads of administrative units and little over half of the executive officers were women in 2006 (Government Offices of Sweden, 2007).

Policy-making in Sweden is typically an open process, with extensive participation by experts and interested groups. This is largely due to efforts of the Social Democratic Party. Commissions play a large role in the preparation of new policies (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004). Although private actors such as the women’s movement play an important role in the gender equality process, Sweden traditionally holds the assumption that this goal can only be reached through state intervention. The government and all political parties promote gender equality as an important strategic step on the path to justice, democracy, and the achievement of social parity (Haas, 2003).

The issue of gender equality is largely institutionalized and has a prominent role in Swedish government. Since the beginning of the 1980’s gender equality is an issue that has been focused upon

by the State. In the early 1990's the issue became institutionalized with the introduction of the Equal Opportunities Act. The Equal Opportunities Ombudsman's Office forms the most important equality institution on the level of national administration. It is responsible for supervising compliance with the Equal Opportunities Act (and the Equal Treatment of Students at Universities Act) and investigating complaints. In addition it considers and comments on most reports and proposals from the Riksdag and Government. The Ombudsman cannot take legal action outside the field of the labour market or the university however (Equal Opportunities Ombudsman, 2008). Since the Swedish government decided in 2001 that every work organization, school, union and government agency must establish an Equality Committee, the number of local gender equality oriented organizations has grown rapidly. Equality Committees annually collect statistics, set goals and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies aimed at promoting gender equality (Haas, 2003). The development of these local committees is important for the success of the Swedish gender equality approach.

The development of the (very generous) Swedish welfare state and the fact that women have been given increased opportunity to work outside the home are also mentioned as important factors contributing to the development of women representation in Parliament (website: Sveriges Riksdag). Swedish women have participated on the labour market for a long time. At the end of the 19th century households were often poor, which resulted in a pressure on women to bring in part of the family's income. Because of its conflicting nature with this necessity of economic contribution, the idea that there should be separate spheres for men and women based on work and family was never popular in Sweden. Another factor is the rather restrictive immigration policy after World War II which resulted in immediate demands for women on the expanding labour market.

In the 1920 'Marriage act' was stated that both spouses are obligated to provide for the family. In the early 1930s it was therefore widely accepted that women had a job. When birth rates dropped during the Depression, the government tried to encourage childbearing through the introduction of free prenatal and maternity care. Because these measures could negatively influence the status of women, the freedom of reproductive choice for women was underlined by policy makers. Employed women were included into social policy as a 'social fact'. In 1939 a law prohibited firing women because of marriage, pregnancy and childbearing. Since 1974 it is possible for both fathers and mothers to combine employment with parenthood. Both men and women have the same right to take parental leave, which guarantees parents' return to their same or equivalent job. Parents have a right to 480 days of paid parental leave after childbirth which is shared equally between both parents. 60 of these days are non-transferable (website: Försäkringkassan).

Since 1974 several government sponsored information campaigns have been set up to make fathers aware of the importance of taking parental leave. Some employers have given fathers extra financial incentives to take leave, supported by research findings which have shown that those fathers who take parental leave are better employees when they return (Haas, 2003). Since the 1980's all parents are entitled to request a six-hour workday (and less pay) to combine paid employment and parenting. Overall more women than men are likely to take advantage of this policy.

Sweden sees childcare as a social right (European Commission, 2008c). In the early 1970's childcare became an important part of family policy. This was done first of all to make more mothers available to work, and but also to support children's development and learning. When the demand for childcare exceeded the supply in the early 1990s, municipalities got the task to provide subsidized care for all children, and the national government set aside special funds to assist in meeting this goal. Waiting lists were almost gone in 1999 (Haas, 2003).

The fact that these reconciliation systems are not only flexible, aimed at both spouses, but also very generous, makes that both men and women have the opportunity (in theory) to combine work and family life.

Nowadays Sweden still has a high labour participation of women. In 2006, women comprised 47.39% of the working population (European Communities, 2007). Although the proportion of men and women on the labour market is roughly equal, there are still gender differences visible.

First of all, there still is a consistent occupational segregation of women in public sector positions (as was shown by the high number of women working for Ministries) (European Parliament, 2006). Secondly, women tend to be overrepresented in low and intermediate positions on the labour market (European Parliament, 2006). In 2006, 30% of all people in managerial positions were women. This is equal to the European (EU 27) average and the critical mass defined by the UN, but still far from an equal division. Of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies, none have a women president. 24% of the members of the highest decision-making bodies of these companies are women (compared to other countries this is quite high). The number of employee representatives in the highest decision-making bodies is less impressive; only 4% of these are women (this is equal to the European (EU 27) average). When we look at the members of the highest decision-making body of the Swedish Central Bank, we see that 30% of them were women. Compared to the European (EU 27) average of 15%, this is quite a good score (database: Women and men in decision-making).

The lack of qualified women in upper management is increasingly seen as an important issue of social justice and as a waste of human resources. In 1995 the Leadership Academy was established with the goal of helping women prepare to become high-level managers. The government also sponsored seminars to increase employers' recognition of women's competence (Haas, 2003).

A third consistent gender difference is the gender pay gap. On average men earn € 2.42 more per hour than women. The average wage of men should drop 15% to be equal to that of women. The overall wage inequality is 2.03 (which is relatively low) (Table 2).

Table 2: Gender pay gap - Sweden

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
Sweden	EUR 15.82	EUR 13.40	15 %	2.03
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

In Sweden the policy attention concerning equal pay is rather high profile. The Equality Ombudsman has received an increasing amount of complaints from women. So far however, courts have been reluctant to penalize employers. The government has encouraged companies to voluntarily raise women's wages by using an evaluation system that establishes equal pay for comparable work. The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) is strongly committed to gender equality and gender mainstreaming and regularly publishes on this issue. On International Women's Day 2006, a report was published which contains a concrete handbook on Trade Union feminism and which supports active gender equality work in the workplace (European Commission, 2006).

Conclusions

The Swedish government shows a very high commitment to gender equality on various levels in its system. This strong commitment also pays off and it is therefore not strange at all that the UN declared that Sweden has advanced further along in gender equality and equal opportunity than any other

nation. The Swedish approach is characterized by using recommendations and targets only (website: IDEA), supported legally by the Equal Opportunities Act.

Strong political commitment to equal representation and gender equality in general can be seen as the most important factor explaining the current high proportion of women in Parliament. The strong emphasis of the women's movement on equal representation in Parliament has been a very important factor that contributed to this commitment. The fact that women's movements have always worked inside established party structures made that the topic of equal representation (and the broader topic of gender equality) was always highly placed on the political agenda.

The system of reconciliation policies is generous compared to other European countries and its early development is also one of the reasons why changes in political representation have occurred over the years. Labour force participation of women has traditionally been very high. Although the proportions of women in top positions is higher than many other countries, the numbers are far from equal.

3.2 Case study: Finland

After the 2007 elections, 42% of the seats of Finnish Parliament are occupied by women. Compared to other countries, Finland has always had a relatively high proportion of women MP's. This paragraph will focus on possible explanations for this trend.

Finnish women obtained the right to vote and the right to stand for election quite early, in 1906. A year later, in 1907, the first women were chosen in Parliament. Nineteen women were elected then (OECD; Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2006b). Nine of these women were from the Social Democratic Party, ten were from centrist and right-wing parties (website: Centenary of women's full political rights in Finland). The first woman parliamentary leader was chosen in 1991 (website: Inter-parliamentary Union). Figure 6 displays the proportions of women in Parliament after every election, from 1945 till now.

Figure 6: Proportions women representatives after elections – Finland (website: Statistics Finland)¹²



Finland is a unitary state with a strong tradition of relatively autonomous municipal government, protected by the constitution. There is a multi-party political system and governments are usually quite stable coalitions. A Council of State has the formal power of execution and consists of government ministers and the Chancellor of Justice. The president (now a woman: Tarja Kaarina Halonen) is elected every six years, has some responsibilities for the foreign policy, and is commander in chief of the armed forces.

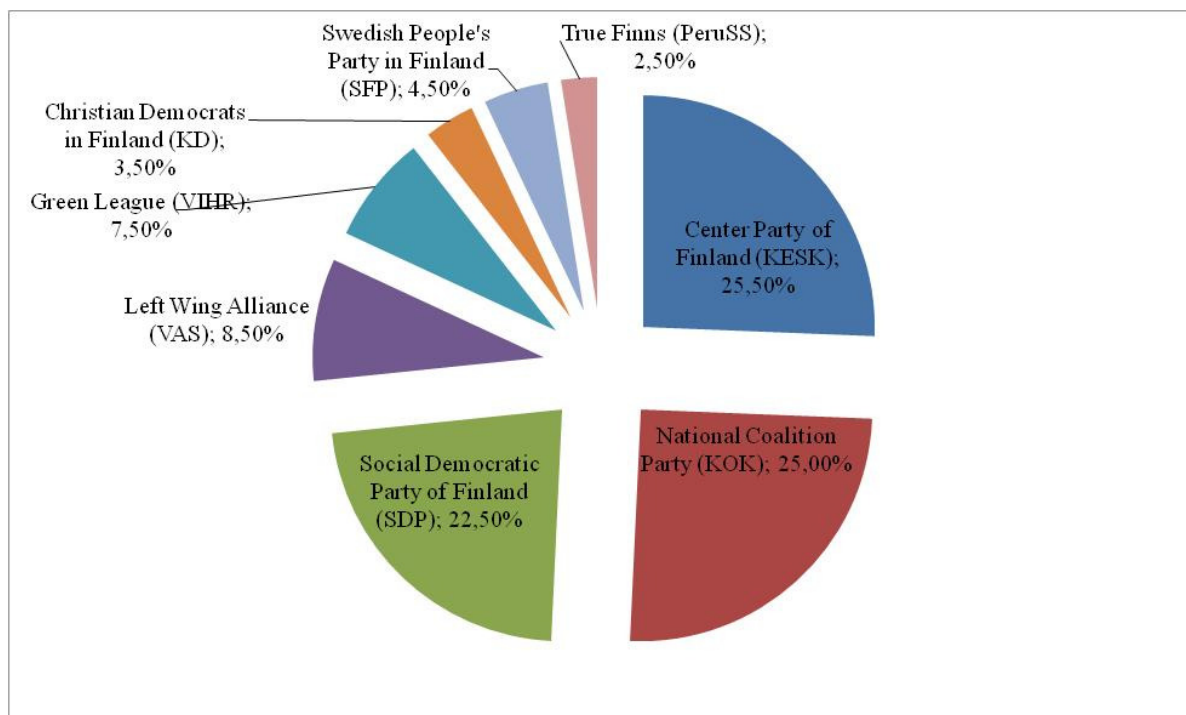
The Finnish legislature is called 'Eduskunta'. It is a unicameral body with 200 seats. Members are elected every four years on the third Sunday of March. During elections the country is divided into 15 electoral districts, according to the division of the regions. The number of Members of Parliament that are elected per district depends on the number of inhabitants. The number of seats per district is allocated half a year before elections. 80% of the members of parliament also tend to be municipal politicians. In this way the regional interests are strongly represented in the central government (Kovalainen, 2003). Every citizen who has reached the age of 18 is entitled to vote. Every citizen that is entitled to vote and is not under guardianship is also entitled to stand for election. Career soldiers and certain high ranking officers however (e.g. the Chancellor of Justice and members of the Supreme Court), cannot stand for election.

¹² In Finland universal suffrage was attained in 1907. The proportions of women representatives from before 1945 are not available however.

Finland has a direct proportional system, meaning that voters choose a person rather than a party. Dr. Eeva Raevaara explained in the interview that the fact that Finland uses an open list system (parties do not have a say which candidates become MP's; this is determined by the number of votes) makes it difficult to apply an exact quota for the number of women in Parliament. On the local level however, the composition of municipal boards and committees must have at least a 40-60 gender balance (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2006b). Because these bodies are an important pool from which candidates for the national Parliament are selected, these local quotas do have an important indirect effect on the number of women in Parliament. This was also confirmed by dr. Eeva Raevaara. Overall, parties have paid attention to achieving a mere gender balance, without the use of quotas.

Candidates can be nominated by registered political parties and voter's associations with a minimum of 100 registered votes in a district. Parties may form electoral alliances and voters associations may form joint lists, in order to improve the group's relative position in elections. In the ultimate division of seats, parties in an electoral alliance are treated as one group. And so are voter's associations with a joint list (website: Parliament of Finland). Figure 7 displays the percentages of seats per party after the 2007 elections. The Social Democrats, the National Coalition (Conservatives) and the Centre Party (which is originally an agrarian party) are the three big parties of recent years (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004).

Figure 7: Percentage of seats per party after 2007 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



In the interview, dr. Eeva Raevaara stated that an important contribution to the high number of women in Parliament is the fact that women voters are very likely to vote for women candidates. Men are also more likely to vote for men, but because the voters' turnout is much higher for women, many women candidates get to be elected.

Politics in Finland is often seen as a process, not as a system being at the grassroots of society (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). This means that the government tends to work closely together with organized interest groups. Women's organizations have played an important role in increasing the number of women representatives in Parliament. The first women's movements in Finland primarily focused on

achieving the expansion of democracy, citizenship, and equality, rather than feminist ideas and were often related to social class (Kovalainen, 2003). Traditionally they have worked in close cooperation with political parties. As a result their pressure has not been very radical, but they have played an important role in the recruitment of women parliamentary candidates. And the mere presence of women on important positions in parties created a mobilization basis for women's issue within the party (interview dr. Eeva Raevaara).

In the early nineteenth century the women's movements were primarily for the upper-class. Later women's organizations became related to the labour and temperance (aimed at the reduction of consumption of e.g. intoxicating liquors) movements. The women's movements of the 1960's and 1970's were related to a wider background in society. Their central theme was raising awareness on inequalities (Kovalainen, 2003). Nowadays Finnish women tend to be rather organized. Even for example minority women, immigrant women, and disabled women have started associations to get their interests heard. The umbrella organization NYTKIS (the Coalition of Finnish Women's Associations for Joint Action) includes 54 organizations, and as a whole has about half a million members. Finland also has men organizations for gender equality (website: Gender equality creates democracy).

Equality between women and men is a crucial part of the Finnish welfare state model. Its ideology follows the universal breadwinner model. Since 1987 the Act on Equality between Women and Men is in force. It has the goal to prevent sex discrimination, promote equality between women and men, and to improve women's status (especially in working life). In 1992, a law prohibited discrimination on grounds of pregnancy and family care responsibilities. Since 1995 employers with 30 or more regular workers are obliged to include measures to promote equality in annual staff and training programmes or in labour protection programmes. The Act does not apply to activities of religious communities of people's private life (website: Gender equality creates democracy).

The high governmental commitment to the topic of gender equality is shown by the high degree of institutionalization. First, the Minister for Social Affairs and Health is responsible for equality issues. Within the Ministry there are three bodies that work on promoting equality; the Gender Equality Unit (prepares the government's gender equality policy), the Ombudsman for Equality (supervises, advises, provides information and monitors the implementation of equality in various sectors of society; assists discriminated persons) and the Council for Equality (active societal discussion forum which monitors the overall promotion of gender equality and issues opinions). The Equality Board acts as an independent board within this structure. In 2004 the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health set up a guidebook that helps public servants to assess the gender impacts on legislation. To support mainstreaming, the method of compiling statistics in different Ministries will be revised so that the information can be produced by gender as extensively as possible (European Commission, 2008c).

Second, the Finnish Parliament has a formal Employment and Equality Committee, with 15 members from all political parties. This committee deals with matters related to the work environment, labour force, employment issues, participation systems, gender equality and non-military service. There is also an informal cross party Network of Women Parliamentarians. Sometimes certain political topics unite women MP's, but often there are disagreements that follow party political lines (website: Gender equality creates democracy).

Third, women's organizations, labour market organizations, trade unions and a number of smaller organizations are active partners in promoting gender equality in Finland. They work in close cooperation with the government.

In the current cabinet there are more women than men ministers (12 of the 20; 60%). This line is not followed through within the Ministries. In the top level, 15% are women, in the sub top 38% (website: Database men and women in decision-making). In central government, the men/women ratio was as good as equal in 2004 (52.5%/47.5%). Women employees are strongly overrepresented at the municipal level; in 2004 77% of local government employees were women (Ministry of Finance, 2006).

The number of women in top positions in the private sector also lags behind. In 2006, 28% of all people in managerial positions were women. This number is slightly below the European (EU 27) average of 30%. Of the 51 largest publicly quoted companies, none have a woman president. In these companies, 20% of the members of the highest decision-making bodies are women, which is more than the 11% European (EU 27) average but below the defined critical mass of 30%. There are no women employee representatives present in these bodies. 25% of the highest decision-making body of the Central Bank are women (database: Women and men in decision-making).

In 2006 48.22% of all people on the labour market were women. Labour force participation has been almost equal between men and women for a long time (European Commission, 2008c), even before for example the childcare system was introduced (Kovalainen, 2003). This can be explained by the fact that the Finnish labour market was for a long time dominated by agriculture which required a full contribution of both women and men. When the occupational structure changed towards industry and service (which happened quite late compared to other European countries), women's participation was still needed to earn a reasonable living. The gender equality debate started in the 1960s when the still traditional gender roles were questioned because they still followed the division of labour in an agricultural society. The Committee on the Status of Women issued a reform programme in 1970. The Council for Equality was founded in 1972 to promote the implementation of these reforms. International debates, and particularly the debates in Scandinavia have also had major effects in Finland (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2006b).

Gender gaps in employment and unemployment have been among the narrowest in the European Union (European Commission, 2008c). Table 3 shows that the Finnish gender pay gap is below the European average. Men do however earn EUR 2.67 per hour more on average than women. Causes for the wage inequality are structural components like industry and occupation. Personal characteristics like age, education and years of employment tend to play a minor role (European Commission, 2006).

Table 3: Gender pay gap - Finland

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
Finland	EUR 14.80	EUR 12.13	18 %	1.96
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

Finnish policy measures to reduce the gender pay gap focus on the improvement of evaluation schemes. Programmes are designed for bringing male- and female dominated sectors within the same collective agreements. The Finnish government also takes special measures targeted towards granting higher rises for female-dominated and low-wage sectors (European Commission, 2006). On 15 November 2004 the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health established a working group to develop a programme for equal pay. The main promise of the resulting programme is to reduce the gender pay gap (calculated by the average monthly pay for normal working hours) by 5 percentage points until the year 2015 (Kovalainen, 2003).

Since the first women set foot in Parliament they have brought new issues into politics, such as women's rights and gender equality. In that way they have contributed to building the foundations of the welfare state (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, 2006b). The economic and social structures of Finland have developed in close connection to the welfare state. Agreements on the wage structure, taxation policies, social policy legislation, services development and other societal infrastructure have been made in negotiations between employers' associations, labour unions, and the government. In the development of social services, publicly provided childcare was always included. At the same time public sector employment opportunities were created. In this way the possibility for women to participate on the labour market and in public life was created (Kovalainen, 2003).

In Finland the municipalities are now responsible for the legislative regulation of public services such as education, social and health care services, day care services and elderly care. Women are very active at the municipal level (Kovalainen, 2003). The high quality of parental and maternal leave facilities seems to cause new forms of discrimination against young women entering the labour market. *'Many share the opinion that the increased proportion of fixed term employment among young, well educated women is to a certain extent a consequence of employers' fear of the costs they might incur from motherhood'* (European Commission, 2008c).

Conclusions

The fact that political parties have been committed to including women in politics over the years is an important explanation for the high proportion of women in Parliament. The relatively open culture in politics and policy-making made that women's organizations could influence parties from within the party structures to nominate more women. This has made the introduction of formal gender quota on the national level unnecessary.

In general gender equality is a topic that is broadly promoted and highly institutionalized within the Finnish political and administrative system. This has led to an awareness of gender equality in many policy fields.

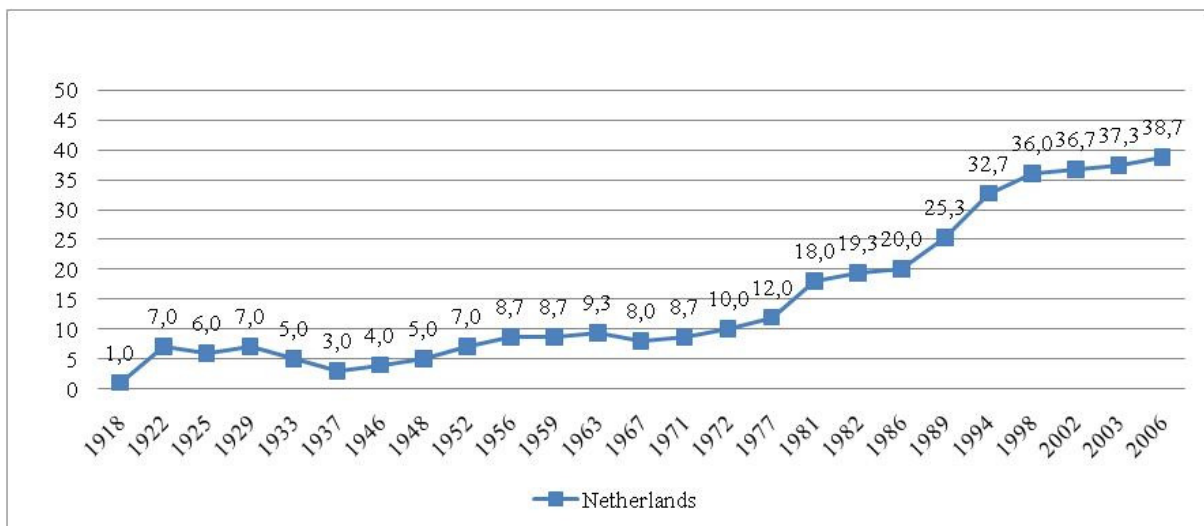
The labour force participation of Finnish women has traditionally been quite high. The gender pay gap is lower than the European average and the system of reconciliation policies is generous. There are still gender inequalities visible on the labour market however. Compared to other European countries, the representation of Finnish women in top decision-making positions is quite high, but still far from equal. The representation of women in high positions in Ministries is quite low, despite the equal numbers of men and women working there.

3.3 Case study: The Netherlands

Since the 2006 elections, 58 of the 150 Dutch Members of Parliament are women (38.7%). This is still far from 50% but more than the 30% the UN claimed as a minimum. This paragraph describes the way in which the research variables influence(d) the current proportion of women in the Dutch Parliament.

In 1917 Dutch women established the right to stand for election after quite a political struggle. A year later, the first woman Parliamentarian Suze Groeneweg was chosen. She was a member of the Socialist Democrat Workers Party (SDAP). In 1919 women also gained the right to vote. Figure 8 shows the proportions of women representatives in Parliament after every election. This development first follows a gulf movement which varies between 3% and 10% for about 60 years. After the 1981 elections, the proportion of women in Parliament took a continuing upward trend. Between 1986 and 1998 the proportion of women increased largely; from 20% to 36% (website: Parlement & Politiek). The first woman parliamentary leader was chosen in 1998 (website: Inter-parliamentary Union).

Figure 8: Proportions women representatives after elections – Netherlands (website: Parlement & Politiek)



In the interview dr. Bleijenbergh explained that in the struggle for women's suffrage in the beginning of the 20th century, the women's movement was the only group which was unambiguously in favor. The conventional parties were against because it would break down their idea of the family as the smallest building blocks of society. They thought that if one person (the head of the family) would vote, all families would be represented. Those parties were also afraid that families would fall apart when women would go into politics. Liberals were more in favor because they emphasize the freedom of choice. The socialists would support women's suffrage with the goal of improving the position of the working class, not to improve the status of women.

The Netherlands has a system of proportional representation; the more votes a certain party receives, the more Members of Parliament it may appoint. The *Staten Generaal* (States General) is composed of two chambers. The First Chamber has 75 seats, the Second Chamber 150. Both have four year terms, unless the government falls before the term ends. The Second Chamber is elected directly by the voting population (Shearer, 2003).

Every citizen with the Dutch nationality older than 18 has the right to vote and the right to stand for election. The law does describe exceptions. Lovenduski (1993) stated that a long party career is the main prerequisite for candidacy to the legislature. Another possibility is to create a new party with its own candidates lists and participate in elections. It is also possible to take part in elections without any

alliances to a political party by handing in a candidates list to the voting commission (website: Tweede Kamer).

For elections the country is divided into '*kieskringen*' which are further divided into districts. Mostly political parties participate in all districts. These districts are purely in place for organizational reasons, because votes of all districts are eventually added up to a national voting result. After elections the number of seats per party is determined. A party can only reach Parliament when it has a higher amount of votes than a certain quota ('*kiesdeler*'; the total number of votes divided by the number of seats in Parliament (150)). Remaining seats are designated through the system of 'largest averages'. A party must have at least one seat to obtain a remaining seat.

Seats are then designated to candidates according to the number of votes casted on candidates. In general, the first candidate on the list ('*lijsttrekker*') gets most votes. Political parties draw up the candidates list, but these are not ultimately determining which candidates receive a seat. Preferential votes ('*voorkeursstemmen*') can be casted on candidates that are placed on a lower position on the party list, in order to increase the likelihood that this candidate gets a seat in Parliament. When a candidate on the list obtains a quarter of the vote quota (the number of votes needed for a seat in Parliament) he or she is certain of becoming a Member of Parliament (website: Tweede Kamer).

Recently the main parties have been Christian Democratic (CDA), Liberal (VVD), Progressive Liberal (D66), and Social Democratic (PvdA). From the Second World War until 1994, the Christian parties were continuously in government. In 1994 and 1998 governments were formed without the Christian parties, they returned after the May 2002 and January 2003 elections (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2004).

The Netherlands do not have constitutional quota or electoral law quota or regulations to guarantee the number of women in Parliament. Although the government set targets to increase the number of women on government, parties are not penalized if they fail to meet them (Shearer, 2003). Figure 9 shows the percentages of seats in parliament per party after the 2006 elections. The *Partij van de Arbeid* (Labour party; 18 women – 15 men (website: PvdA)) is the only party which has a 50% quota (zipper style) on the party list (website: Quota Database). *Groen Links* (Green Left; 4 women – 7 men) does not officially use quota but states that if the number of women is not 'at least half' of the members of all party organs, the ones responsible for selection or appointment should thoroughly explain why (National Bureau Groen Links).

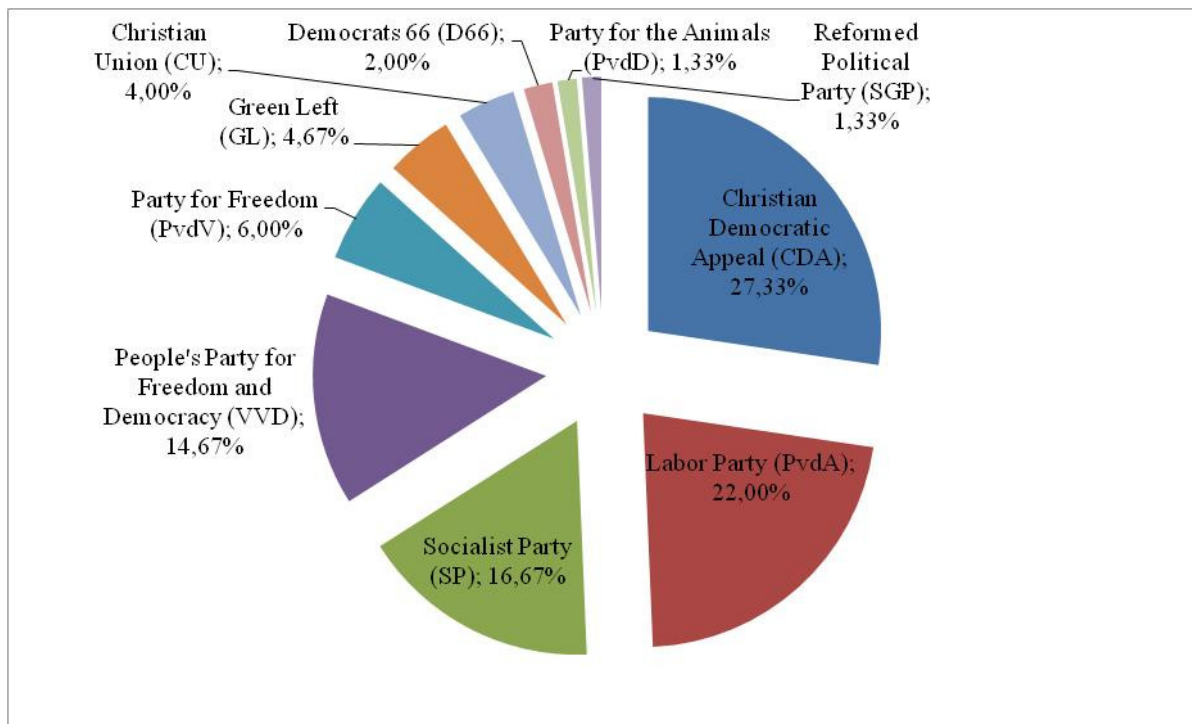
Parties like CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal; 16 women – 28 men (website: CDA)), the SP (Socialist Party; 9 women – 16 men (website: SP)) and the VVD (7 women – 14 men (website: VVD)) state that they give candidate committees the task to let the electoral list resemble the composition of society, but they do not use actual quota. The *Christen Unie* (Christian Union; 2 women – 6 men) has acknowledged the fact that there are too little women active within the party and has started a project (called 'Inclusief') to make the party more attractive for women's participation (website: Christen Unie).

The current cabinet is formed by CDA, PvdA and Christen Unie. At the moment there are more women than men that are junior ministers (6 of the total 9; 67%), and more men than women that are senior ministers (5 of the total 18; 28%). Moreover, it depends largely on the color of the cabinet if there are any women ministers at all. In the Balkenende I cabinet (July – October 2002) there were none. This shows that there are still glass ceilings in party hierarchies.

In 2006 41% of all employees of the Dutch Ministries were women (Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, 2007). In 2006 only 8% of the top level positions in ministries were

filled by women, and 38% of the sub top level positions (website: Database men and women in decision-making).

Figure 9: Percentage of seats per party after 2006 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



The Dutch woman has for long been portrayed as a stereotypical dutiful house wife. As a result the emancipation of women started more slowly than in other western countries. In the 1960's and 1970's feminist began to challenge the existing Dutch policy and culture as limiting women's opportunities for equal participation in public life and personal fulfillment. The women's movements appeared in the 1960's out of the student protests. The article *'Het onbehagen bij de vrouw'* ('The discomfort of women') by Joke Smit is generally seen as the start of the second feminist wave in the Netherlands. The recognition of what were considered natural differences between men and women was now regarded as recurrent inequality, discrimination and injustice to women (Shearer, 2003). In this period, increasing political representation was not really on the agenda, but campaigns for issues like abortion, contraception and economic independence did create a broader awareness for equality.

Dr. Bleijenbergh explained in the interview that the relative absence of women's organizations in the discussion about equal representation can be explained by the fact that they became quickly institutionalized after the protests in the 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s women's organizations received governmental subsidies to professionalize. At the same time this made them very dependent on the government *and as a consequence less radical in their approach*. On the other hand, political parties received state subsidies to nominate an employee for emancipation. This money created an awareness of gender inequalities within the party, which ultimately lead to internal party changes. This made the proportions of women parliamentarians increase.

In 1978 an equality machinery was established in the national administration. The Department of Equality Policy was originally located in the Ministry of Culture, but moved to the more powerful Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment in 1981 (Bleijenbergh & Roggeband, 2007). Later on it was transferred to the Ministry of Education, which according to dr. Bleijenbergh made the policy terrain much smaller and changed their central task towards informing rather than contributing to the

welfare state. Since 2004 the individual Dutch Ministries are responsible for gender mainstreaming. It is not the focus of their attention however, and as a result the ‘gender equality infrastructure’ is called ‘rather weak’ (European Commission, 2008c). The Dutch government does actively root out discriminatory laws and regulations, encourages women to work, and seeks to protect the equality of men and women in all phases of life (Shearer, 2003).

Women comprised 44.90% of all employees in 2006. Of the total population aged 15 to 64, 74.30% had a job. 80.90% of men in this age category were employed, compared to 67.70% of women. It is interesting to see that 46,20% of jobs in the Netherlands is part time¹³. 74.70% of employed women have a part time job, compared to 23% of men. Compared to other countries, these are high percentages (European Communities, 2007). In the Meerjarenbeleidsplan of 2000 was stated that in 2010 at least 65% of all women should have a job of at least 16 hours per week. Since 2002 the growth of the labour participation of women lags behind on these prognoses. In fact, the number of part time jobs almost doubled in 2006, while the number women in fulltime jobs did not grow (Emancipatiemonitor, 2006). According to Bleijenbergh (interview) the high proportion of part time jobs can be explained by the importance of ‘domesticity’;

‘The idea that there is someone at home at 3 o’clock to drink tea with the children is still very highly valued in the Netherlands’.

As a consequence of the large share of part time employment, the gender pay gap in the Netherlands is quite high; men on average earn EUR 3.66 per hour more than women, which makes the gender pay gap slightly below the European average. Besides part time work, the gender pay gap can be explained by job level and age (European Commission, 2006).

Table 4: Gender pay gap – Netherlands

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
Netherlands	EUR 15.50	EUR 11.84	24 %	2.75
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

Dutch policy initiatives on the topic of gender pay gap reduction, have a primary focus on providing information, for example by offering tools on websites by which employees can check whether they are paid according to the rules. In 2006 the Equal Pay Working Group was established by the Ministry for Social Affairs and Employment, with the purpose of raising awareness on this topic. This group addresses all relevant actors, including employers’ and employees’ organizations, about the legal rules of equal payments.

Dutch trade unions participate in the project called ‘Decrease the pay gap’, which intends to increase the effectiveness of policies targeted at lowering wage differences. The project also intends to empower individual women by giving information about career choices and provides training on bargaining skills. This project is funded by the European Social Fund, and also includes unions from Belgium and Hungary.

¹³ A job is called part time if the usual hours are fewer than 35 hours and full time if the usual hours are 35 or more

The 'Wage indicator' project has the goal to improve the information about real wages compared to the formal wages that are agreed in specific collective bargaining agreements. This project also increases insight in the dynamics of the gender pay gap (European Commission, 2006).

The number of women in Dutch top positions is quite low. None of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies had a woman president in 2006, and only 8% of the members of their highest decision-making bodies were women. 26% of all managers are women (website: Database women and men in decision-making).

Compared to other European countries, leave facilities in the Netherlands used to be relatively short and parental leave used to be unpaid. In recent years the leave entitlements have been extended and the level of financial support has been increased (European Commission, 2008c). In a 1998 article, Bussemaker describes the change in rationales in Dutch politics concerning childcare, which also illustrates the development of political standpoints around working mothers. It also portrays the importance of the male breadwinner ideology. In the 1960s public childcare was regarded as *'something immoral in a well-developed welfare state where mothers were supposed to take care of their children at home'*. This morality rationale, with a strong motherhood ideology, made that childcare was not widely available. There were 30 day-care centers for children funded by the Dutch state, intended for children who did not receive enough attention at home and for children from unmarried mothers who were 'forced' to earn their own living. Only a few companies had private sponsored childcare facilities. The shortages in labour supply in those days were made up by attracting migrant workers, rather than stimulating women to take on paid work. Childcare provisions were not seen as social welfare arrangements, but the absence of these facilities was seen as proof for the achievement of the welfare state. The potential link of publicly funded childcare with education was seen as an attack on the existing (pillared) sub cultural organizations responsible for education.

The 'hegemonic interpretation of children's interest' was challenged by the feminist movements that emerged in the 1960s. In January 1970 the feminist movement Dolle Mina organized an open air crèche with the slogan: *'We are not kangaroos, we want crèches!'*. This argument for the entitlement of women to publicly funded childcare disappeared in the early 1970s however. The public debate was based on the interest rationale; whether childcare benefits children in their social and pedagogical development. Playgroups emerged, aimed at stimulating children's development. This 'development need' was often formulated in opposition to the interests of parents and mothers seeking autonomy and independence.

The interests of parents in childcare were cautiously raised in the late 1970s and the public debate began to highlight the conflicting interests. This led to heated discussions in Parliament that ultimately resulted in tax deductible childcare costs. In 1977 the first white paper on women's equality policies was published. Childcare was mentioned cautiously, as a possibility that could contribute to parents participating in social life. But women's labour-market participation was not mentioned here; the authors were thinking about part-time voluntary work in addition to homework.

When the Dutch welfare state came under attack in the 1980s for its inefficiency and lack of incentives to increase productivity, a new rationale emerged that linked childcare to economic productivity. The debates focused on the question whether childcare would increase or decrease state dependency. The social-liberal view gained ground in the second part of the 1980s. This view states that *'childcare is a means to decrease state dependency (especially for lone mothers) and expensive welfare provisions (particularly for breadwinners), and to increase the benefits of women's labour-market participation to the state (because of taxes and contributions they pay)'*.

In the 1990s childcare was recognized as an economically productive instrument of policy making to increase women's labour market participation and consequently making the Dutch economy more competitive. This is called the efficiency rationale which explores the possibilities by which childcare can contribute to economic efficiency. In 1990 there were 300 (partially) state funded facilities and over 300 company based and private day-care centers. Due to the Stimulation Measure on Childcare and an investment of 300 million gulden the number of childcare facilities increased to 70,000 in 1994 (Bussemaker, 1998). In the 2008 report on the development of gender mainstreaming, the Netherlands reported a real expansion of childcare services in the last few years (European Commission, 2008c).

Conclusions

The current high proportion of women representatives in the Netherlands can be explained by the commitment most political parties have made to include a certain number of women. The Dutch government has translated the appeals for gender equality of women's movements in the 1960s and 1970s to a governmental standpoint on equal representation. These developments have inspired political parties to nominate more women candidates for Parliamentary elections which resulted in a rise in political representation.

Despite the relatively high number of women in Parliament, representation of women as ministers not an established fact. In ministries the advancement of women towards higher positions still lags behind.

After quite a lot of policy attention and institutional backing in the 1970s, the concept of gender equality nowadays is not largely prevalent in the Dutch national policy system. Individual Ministries are responsible for including the concept in their policy lines, but the equality infrastructure as a whole is called 'rather weak'.

The high value of motherhood and domesticity in Dutch society holds back labour market participation. It results in a very high proportion of part time employment which also contributes to a gender pay gap. The attention for the interests of women in reconciliation policies is extending in recent years however and measures are taken to increase the availability of childcare for example.

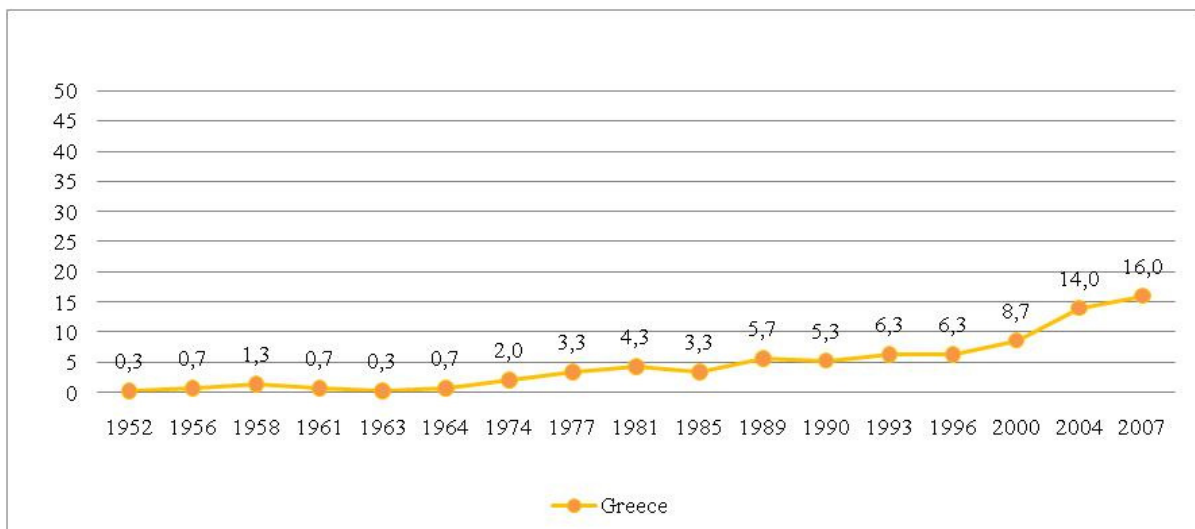
4 Case studies Low-proportion countries

In this chapter, the case studies of countries with low-proportions of women representatives are presented. This chapter starts with the case study of Greece, followed by the case studies of France and Ireland.

4.1 Case study: Greece

Since the 2007 elections, only 48 of the 300 Members of Parliament are women (16%). The Greeks have had universal suffrage for only a short period of time; in 1952 Greece women received the right to vote and to stand for election. In that same year the first women parliamentarian was chosen. In the first few years the proportion of women parliamentarians was low. From the elections of 1974 on, the proportion of women grows slightly each time, with a slight decline after the 1985 and 1990 elections. After the 2004 elections, the proportion of women representatives has taken a steeper increase (from 8.7% to 14%). The first woman parliamentary leader was chosen in 2004 (website: Inter-parliamentary Union).

Figure 10: Proportion women representatives after elections – Greece (Source: Greek Parliament¹⁴)



Greece has been a democracy for a relatively short period of time. The tasks and significance of the Greek Parliament have changed in the last century as a result of the changing state structure. In the 1970's democracy was introduced after the seven year dictatorship of Papadopoulos came to an end. In 1975 a new Constitution was drawn up that turned the country into a Parliamentary republic, with a president as the head of state. The right of the president to interfere in political life was curtailed by the adoption of the 1986 constitution, which turned Greece into a pure parliamentary governmental system (website: Hellenic Parliament).

The prime minister and his cabinet have executive power. Parties need a majority of the 300 seats in Parliament to form the government. The country is divided into 13 administrative regions, of which the government's secretary general is in charge (Pantelidou Maloutas, 2003; website: Hellenic Parliament).

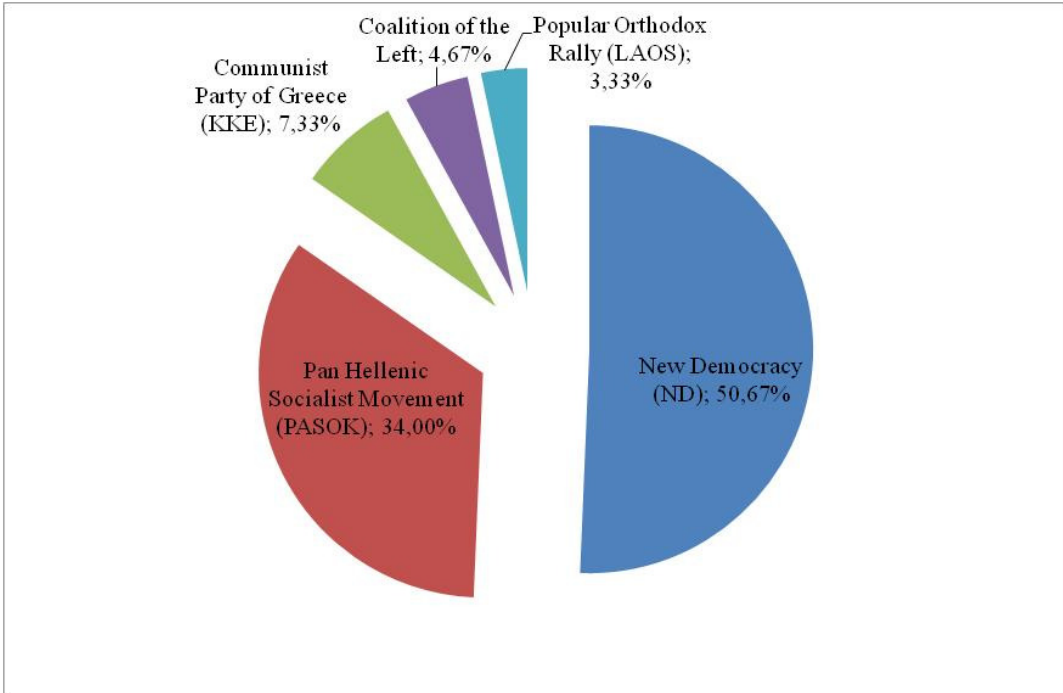
¹⁴ These numbers have not been published but were provided by a employee of the Greek Parliament

During elections the country is divided into 56 constituencies. The number of MP's per constituency is determined by the number of official inhabitants. This number is adjusted every ten years. Every citizen older than 18 has the right to vote. In order to stand for election citizens have to be 25 years old. The law upholds exceptions to these rules. The job of MP is incompatible with other public functions or any professions in general for example.

Any party must receive at least 3% of all votes to achieve a seat in Parliament. 40 seats are reserved for the 'first past the post' party; the first party (or coalition of parties) that obtains an absolute majority (51%) of votes. The remaining seats are divided proportionally according to each party's number of valid votes. 288 of the 300 seats are designated according to constituency voting. The 12 remaining seats are filled by a nationwide party list and divided based on the total amounts of votes a party received (website: Hellenic Parliament - *Greek Constitution*).

In 1981 the Panellenio Sosialistiko Kimena (Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement; PASOK) came to power. This is the only party that has been using a 40% minimum quota for women on party lists (website: Quota Database). Nowadays Greece has a two party system; with the Liberal Conservative 'New Democracy' and Socialist 'PASOR' as the two dominant parties. It is quite hard to obtain electoral success for smaller parties (website: Hellenic Parliament). Figure 11 shows the percentages of seats in Parliament per party after the 2007 Parliamentary elections.

Figure 11: Percentage of seats per party after 2007 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



The fact that ballots are arranged alphabetically makes that parties do not have a say about the order in which candidates can be elected. Dr. Stratigaki explained in the interview that this means that personal campaigns are very important. These campaigns are often very expensive. As a result, the women that now have been chosen in Parliament are often women who already gained a lot of publicity elsewhere; for example with their work as actresses, singers or athletes. '(...) of course you can say that this is not enough because we need more women who are good in political things, not only media things, you know!'

In the interview Dr. Stratigaki summed up several reasons why there are only a small number of women in Parliament. She explained that political parties tend to have a large influence in Greek

society; larger even than other public or private institutions. This means that competition between parties is also very high. She suspects that because of this dominance and constant competition for power, women are less inclined to choose a political career.

In 2002 a provision was taken up in the constitution that requires an equal percentage of candidates on all ballots for local and regional government. Ballots with less than one-third of women will not be accepted. The constitution was changed in 2007 again for Parliamentary elections. This provision states that one third of all candidates of a party must be women. Dr. Maria Stratigaki stated in the interview that this provision will probably have a less large impact, because parties are free to decide how many women candidates they include per ballot. *'Big parties can have a lot of women on the ballot in Athens, which is a big city, and they can have no women in a small district, on an island for instance'*. The impact of this constitutional reform will become clear after the next Parliamentary elections.

The low level of representation in Parliament also has effect on the number of women ministers. In the current Cabinet, only 2 of the 24 ministers are women (one of them is senior minister, the other junior minister) (website: Database women and men in decision-making). The representation of women in Ministries is better. In 2006, 47.2% of all employees of the Ministries were women (source: email Ypesdda). In the highest level of ministries, 30% of the positions were held by women in 2006, and 34% of the second highest positions (website: Database women and men in decision-making).

Women's organizations do not play a large role in Greece. In the 1980s women's movements did have a massive following. These movements have had an influence on the current *'new climate of gender awareness and of legitimization of gender equality'*. Nowadays, the influence of women's movements is quite low (Pantelidou Maloutas, 2003). Dr. Stratigaki said in the interview that *'there is an NGO called the Political Association of Women in Greece that tries to promote the inclusion of women in politics, but it is not very successful'*.

The awareness of the need for gender equality in Greece is growing however. Some politicians now do show feminist sensitivities. More and more scholarly thinking and writing is influenced by feminist theories and there are conferences, courses in universities and specialized journals on women's issues. Pantelidou Maloutas (2003) expects this *'introspection'* will eventually lead to new political interventions. In general trade unions have had a positive involvement in gender equality issues, but their involvement has been limited to the issue of equal pay for equal work.

The EU membership has had an important stimulating effect on the gender equality debate in Greece. Greece joined the European Union in 1981 and in this same year the socialist party entered the government. This government set a goal to harmonize its co-existence with other European countries and therefore introduced important legal measures aimed at equality between men and women. As a consequence, women's employment increased, the occupational gender segregation decreased and the wage gap became less big. Economically Greece has caught up largely in the recent decade. After a long period of stagnation, the budget deficit has been reduced, total revenues increased, the general debt has declined (though it is still among the highest of the EU), and inflation is at the EU average (Pantelidou Maloutas, 2003).

Despite improvements on the economical level, there are still large differences between the living conditions for men and women. Dr. Maria Stratigaki states that the Greek society is still very patriarchal. This causes a low number of women on the labour market, and a very high unemployment rate of women. Women hold 38.5% of all jobs and the employment rate is only 47.4% for women (compared to 74.6% of men) (European Communities, 2007). The large difference in labour

participation between men and women can be explained for a large part by the fact that women's unemployment rate is double that of men's (European Commission, 2008c)¹⁵.

The representation of women in top positions in Greece is quite low. One of the presidents of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies was a woman (2%), and only 8% of the members of the highest decision-making bodies of these companies. Only 2% of all employee representatives in these decision-making bodies were women. There were no women in the highest decision-making body of the Central Bank of Greece. In 2006, 26% of all people in managerial positions were women however, which is only just below the 30% European average (database: Women and men in decision-making).

The Greek gender pay gap is equal to the European pay gap (25%). The average wages per hour are in fact much lower than the average European hourly wages.

Table 5: Gender pay gap - Greece

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
Greece	EUR 7.97	EUR 5.94	25 %	2.63
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

Women's shorter work experience and the gender differences in labour force participation play important roles in explaining the gender pay gap in Greece. The occupational and labour force segregation are also mentioned as possible explanations. The existing gender differences in educational achievement seem to be insignificant however. The issue of the gender pay gap has little profile in public debate or on the policy agenda in Greece (European Commission, 2006).

These labour market statistics show that the traditional division of roles between the sexes is still quite evident in Greece. Symeonidou (2003) researched that the time women spend in childcare tasks is double than men's time, while the time they devote to household chores is quadruple to men's. This gap becomes even greater in case of couples with children. Although in general men do not help women in the household or with the care of the children, women do receive a lot of support from their mothers, or mothers in law, especially when they are working. This makes that Greece fits the family care model.

The demand for childcare increased with the large increase in labour force participation by women in the last 25 years. The supply of childcare does not meet the high demand. Moreover, Greece is characterized by substantially lower childcare provisions than other EU countries. Although the costs of childcare provided by private institutions are tax deductible, these facilities are very expensive and the number of places in public institutions is much lower than the demand. Public childcare facilities only provide space for 3% of all children under age 3. Large firms in industrial and service sectors is rare (Daouli et al., 2004).

Pantelidou Maloutas (2003) states that the insufficiency and the high costs of childcare contribute to the tendency to quit work after childbirth and not go back to work. Daouli et al. (2004) demonstrated a strong negative correlation between labour market participation of Greek women and paying for childcare, meaning that the estimated hourly costs of childcare negatively affects the probability of

¹⁵ Some caution in interpretation of these numbers is wise however, because Greece has the smallest percentage of its labour force in waged labour, and the largest percentage of self-employed people of all EU-countries (European Commission, 2008c).

participation¹⁶. The tight might be turning however; in the 2008 report on the development of gender mainstreaming, Greece reported a real expansion of childcare services in the last few years (European Commission, 2008c).

In 2004 the General Secretariat for Gender equality (GSGE) was set up; the *'governmental agency competent to plan, implement, and monitor the implementation of policies on equality between women and men in all sectors'*. It is part of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Administration and Decentralization. In its activities it focuses on combating gender inequalities on the labour market, preventing and combating violence against women, fighting gender stereotypes through education and reinforcing women's participation in decision-making centers. The GSGE supervises the activities of the Research Centre for Gender equality (website: General Secretariat for Gender equality).

An example of an initiative by the GSGE is a programme that was set up that aims at promoting gender equality in secondary education and post-secondary initial training. By using vocational guidance and counseling services of schools, gender stereotypes in occupational choices are combated. Girls are encouraged to participate in initial training courses in specialties where women are underrepresented. There are also policies to reduce vertical segregation. These generally aim to increase the number of women in high-level and management jobs. Another initiative is the publication of a guide for the integration of gender equality in firms. The guide contains a list of proposals addressed to public administration and social partners aiming at the integration of gender equality in firms. Equal pay for work of equal value is one of the five main categories of the proposal (European Commission, 2008c)

Conclusions

The fact that Greek society is still strongly patriarchal and conservative, which results in many persisting inequalities between women and men, has a strong influence on the continuing underrepresentation of women. Politics takes place in the public sphere while women in their daily activities are still more connected to the family. Because women's organizations have not pressured for equal representation over the years, in general political parties have not felt the urge to include more women.

This trend is changing however. Since Greece has become a member of the European Union, the general awareness and policy attention for gender equality issues has grown, especially due to efforts of the Socialists Party. The recent constitutional revisions to have at least 1/3 of women candidates on electoral ballots can be seen, despite criticisms, as an important step towards increasing the number of women in Parliament in the future.

As a result of the traditional roles and values in society, the labour participation of Greek women is much lower than that of men. Representation in economic decision-making positions is as a result also low. A lack of reconciliation facilities contributes to this situation.

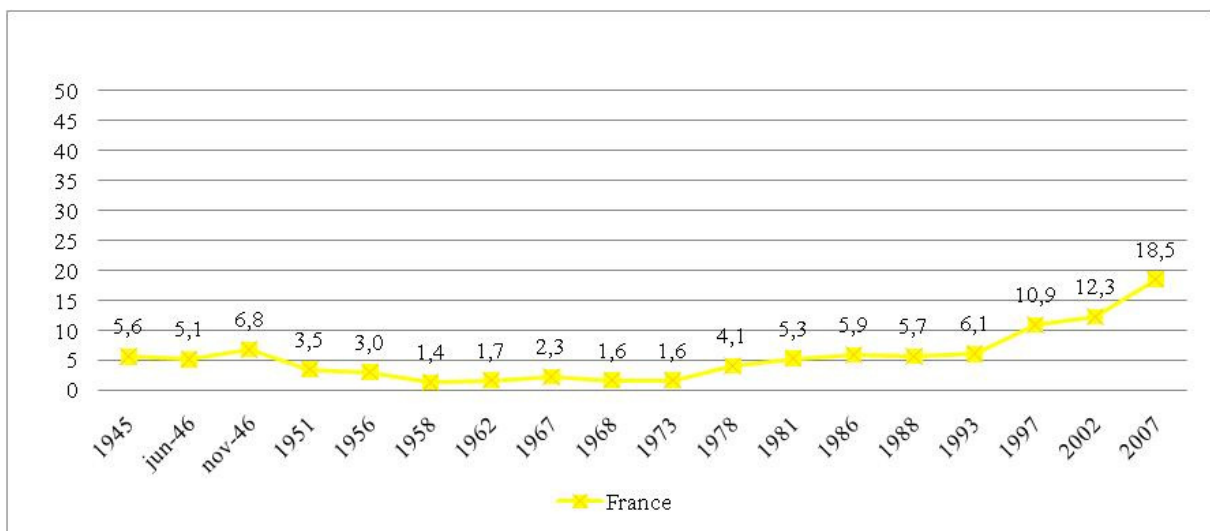
¹⁶ The offered market wages and the financial situation of the household proved play a more vital role in the choice whether or not to participate on the labour market than the costs of childcare.

4.2 Case study: France

Since the 2007 elections, 107 of the 577 Members of Parliament (18.5%) are women. The number of women in the Assemblée Nationale has been very low since the first elections in which women could be elected (in 1945). Since the 1997 elections, the proportion of women parliamentarians does seem to grow slightly (from 6.1% in 1993, to 18.5% in 2007). This paragraph will focus on possible explanations for the continuing underrepresentation of women in French politics.

In France women got the right to vote and the right to stand for election in 1944. French men achieved universal suffrage 100 years earlier, in 1848. In 1945, the first women Parliamentarian was chosen. In Figure 12 the proportions of women representatives after every election from 1945 till now are presented. After a slight increase after the November 1946 elections, the numbers dropped again. After the 1997 elections, an increase in the number of women in Parliament is visible (website: Assemblée Nationale). The first woman leader of Parliament is not yet chosen (website: Inter-parliamentary Union).

Figure 12: Proportions women representatives after elections – France (website: Assemblée Nationale)



The underrepresentation of women in French politics has a long history. Sineau (2005) states that the 1789 French Revolution put a strong label on the participation of women in politics: *'By positing women's political inability as an absolute principle for 150 years, the Revolution legitimized the notion that women were not competent to assume responsibility for the conduct of public affairs'*. (Bereni, 2007).

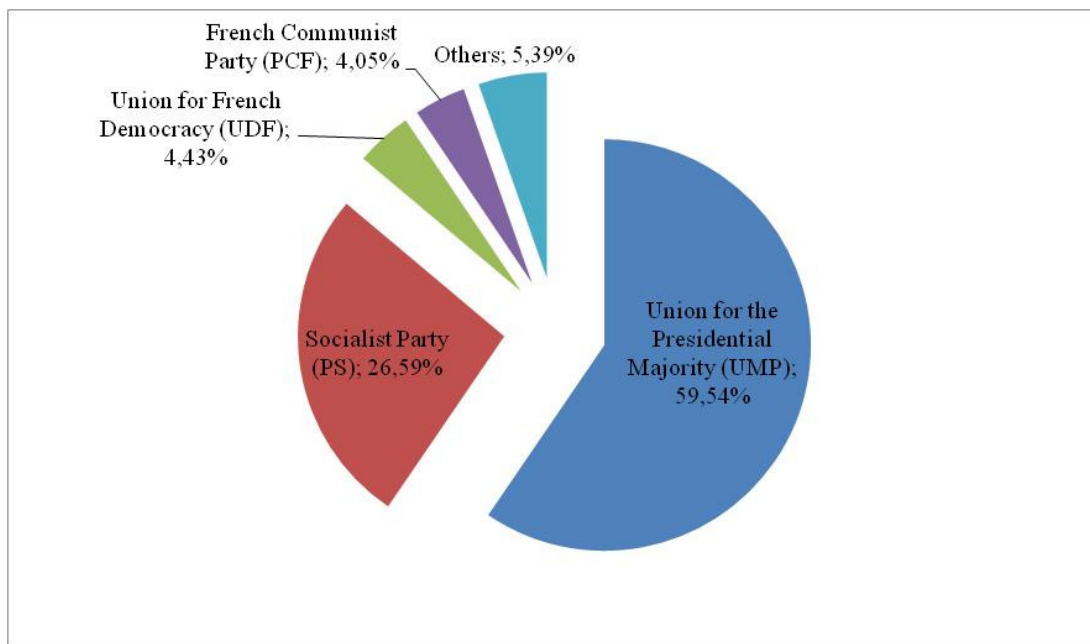
Another explanation for the years of underrepresentation in Parliament could be the fact that women did not largely participate in local politics for many years. Having a seat in local politics was (and still is) essential for a career in French national politics. Competition for such offices was high among men, while women in those days were still largely excluded (Lovenduski, 1993).

Lovenduski stated in 1993 that parties had accepted women's claims in their campaign rhetoric and they did compete for women's votes, but promoting the participation of women in party affairs received less enthusiasm. *'Sometimes party leaders claim, with some degree of truth that they do not have the power to influence the choice of officials, delegates or candidates. But this does not mean that such strategies are invariably insincere or doomed to failure. A commitment to women's representation in party rhetoric may be the beginning of a process that will lead to more substantial*

policies of inclusion. Once the public commitment to equality is made, women then start to expect effective action’.

For a long time, the *Parti Communiste* was the only party that nominated women to elected office. In the early 1970s a few women party executives of the *Parti Socialiste* made demands for more equal representation in party leadership positions and candidacies. This initially led to the introduction of a 10% quota in 1974 which was raised to 30% in 1990 (Bereni, 2007). The party nowadays holds a 50% quota for its electoral lists, and is therefore considered ‘gender neutral’. *Les Verts* (The Greens) have the parity principle written in their by laws. None of the right wing parties have quota for equal representation (Sineau, 2005; Bereni, 2007). Which parties were in office has altered frequently in recent years. Figure 13 shows the current division of seats in Parliament.

Figure 13: Percentage of seats per party after 2007 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



Several initiatives to introduce quota have failed because of lack of political support. Discussions mainly focused on the fact that the ‘intrusion’ of gender into politics is unacceptable because it opposes the important ‘republican universalism’ (Bereni, 2007).

The French took on a different perspective to equalize representation in stead, called the parity reform. Parity is ‘*the idea that representative assemblies should be composed equally of women and men*’ (Krook, 2001b). The idea of parity arises from an idea that women and men have an equal status, rather than the idea of representing a minority (Vogel-Polski in: Sineau, 2005). The parity concept was introduced rather than quota, would not come into conflict with the principles of Republican Universalism on which the French system is based (Freedman, 2004). Hubert (2004) states that the strength of the concept is that it avoids the discussion which percentage of women’s representation is ‘enough’ to be considered ‘equal’.

In 1999 the French Constitution was reformed to state that ‘*the law favors the equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions*’ and that political parties ‘*contribute to the implementation under the conditions set by the law*’. This amendment is called the ‘parity reform’. In

June 2000 the electoral law was revised so that the parity reform would apply to all elections with a proportional ballot¹⁷ and the national legislative elections (Sineau, 2005; Reed-Danahay, 2003; website: Quota Database). Since the introduction of the parity reform, parties in all elections run on the basis of the list system must have 50% of each sex on their candidates list. The exact requirements differ per governmental level. The drive to '*legislate the gender-imbalance away*' makes that France's trajectory towards equal representation is very different than that of other countries (Freedman, 2004).

The parity law has led to large increases in the number of women in the regional and municipal elected offices (up to 48%, which is the highest of Europe, together with Sweden) but the increase on the national level has strongly lagged behind (although the number of women standing for election did increase) (European Commission, 2008a).

This difference in outcome of the parity reform on different elected offices is largely due to the different consequences when the requirement for parity on lists of candidates is failed. The list of candidates of the bodies mentioned under footnote 17 is rejected when the party did not comply to the quota requirements; whereas for the lists of candidates of the national legislative elections the law provides a financial penalty. The public funding that a party receives from the state will be reduced as soon as the deviation from parity reaches 2% among electoral candidates. This means that a party that presents 49% women and 51% men will not be penalized, but a party with 55% men and 45% women it will be. But national political parties rather paid the financial fine than 'sacrificing' the incumbents who would have to step down (Sineau, 2005; website: Quota Project; Murray, 2004).

This difference between various levels of government can also be explained by the differences in election systems. Nowadays, members of the Assemblée Nationale are chosen through a two ballot 'first past the post' (majoritarian) system. Constituencies may choose one Member of Parliament, and there are between 2 and 24 constituencies per department. The fact that parties still tend to choose the most well-known personality as a candidate (e.g. someone who already holds a local mandate in a district) makes that there is only little renewal in candidates, or: '*a self-reproduction of male elites*' (Sineau, 2005). To be elected in the first ballot, a candidate must obtain an absolute majority of the votes, and a number of votes equal to a quarter of the number of registered votes. Because it is quite hard to obtain such a majority in one round, there usually is a second ballot. To be a candidate in the second ballot one must have been a candidate in the first ballot, and one must have obtained a number of votes in that round equal to 12.5% of the registered votes. In this second ballot it is enough to receive a relative majority of votes (website: Assemblée Nationale). On the regional level a hybrid system was introduced in 2004, which holds both 'first past the post' and proportional representation features (European Commission, 2008a).

Women's organizations have not been very eager in influencing political parties to address the issue of equal representation. The so called second feminist wave started in the 1960's, and peaked in France in 1968. The most important feminist group of that time was the Mouvement de Libération des Femmes (MLF). The legalization of abortion was the first issue on the agenda. The MLF, as other women's organizations, did not want to work within the existing system of public policy reform. The feminist movement expected the needed changes to come from the social movements, not political

¹⁷ These are specifically: municipal elections for towns with more than 3500 inhabitants; senatorial elections for senators selected by proportional representation; regional elections; elections to the Assembly of Corsica; elections of the general council of the territory Saint-Pierre-et-Miquelon; European Parliament elections; council of Paris elections; and elections to the arrondissement councils of Paris, Lyons, and Marseille (website: Quota Database).

parties and therefore did not push women into Parliamentary seats (Sineau, 2005). Another weakness of the MLF was its internal dividedness which caused its splintering in the late 1970's. In the 1970s, the issue of the representation of women was raised by only a few factions of the women's movement (Bereni, 2007), for example by *Choisir* and *Alliance des Femmes pour la Democratization* (AFD). In that time, the labour unions did take up the issue of women's rights, as did the Socialist party. In recent years, women's organizations of immigrant women are emerging (Reed-Danahay, 2003).

The fact that women's organizations were not eager in influencing political parties can also be explained by the fact that the French governmental system has a highly centralized character. Because the state is said to represent the *intérêt générale*, rather than a specific interest, the variety and intensity of pressure groups has always been moderate (Kickert & Hakvoort, 2000). The government often closes deals with a smaller number of 'peak organizations' rather than letting interest groups influence decision-making. The closure of these deals is facilitated by the speed by which members of the grand corps of civil servants make career moves between government and business positions (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004). As a consequence, France has lagged behind other European countries when it comes to women's rights and gender equality. Women's organizations therefore have profited from the stronger influence of the European Union on human rights and gender equality issues.

The French administrative system is known for its 'Grand Corps'; the administrative elite which is recruited from the various 'Grand Écoles'. In France there is no formal separation between politics and the administration, which is for example shown by the fact that members of the Grand Corps have highly mobile careers; they often switch between functions in politics and the administration, and even top positions in the private sector. It is said that this administrative elite governs the whole state, economy and society. That is why France is called an *état administrative* (Kickert & Hakvoort, 2000; Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2004).

The current Cabinet is composed of 11 women and 22 men (33%) (website: Database women and men in decision-making). An employee of the *Bureau Ressources Humaines et Affaires Generales* of the *Ministère du travail, des relations sociales, de la famille et de la solidarité* estimated in a telephone call that in 2006 over 60% of the employees in the Ministries were women. Only 13% of the highest decision-making positions in Ministries were then taken up by women however, and 27% of the sub highest level (website: Database women and men in decision-making). This shows that the glass ceilings in the Ministries are quite large.

In 1974 a Secretary of State for Women's Affairs was created by the government, in order to redress the lack of representation of women in politics. Françoise Giroud was the first person in this post. Under her leadership legislation was introduced that granted women more rights in areas of employment and marriage (Reed-Danahay, 2003). Nowadays the *Ministère du travail, des relations sociales, de la famille, et de la solidarité* holds an equality unit, which aims to create equal access for women to responsibilities in political, economical and corporate life, and equality in professional life. *Le Service des droits des femmes et de l'égalité* puts these aims into practice by supervising the use of policy aimed at banning inequalities, and by taking the gender dimension into account in decision-making procedures in all domains and by all actors. This body also provides different 'Conseils' in several topics related to gender equality (website: Ministère du travail, des relations sociales, de la famille, et de la solidarité).

The low participation of women in national politics is a strange contrast compared to the labour market participation, which has traditionally been quite high (Sineau, 2005). Of the total labour force, 46.31% was a woman in 2006. 57.70% of women between 15 and 64 had a job (European

Communities, 2007). In France, women are quite well represented in economic decision-making positions. The percentages of women in some of the selected positions approach or pass the 30% critical mass. In 2006 the proportion of women in managerial positions was 36% (which is above the European (EU 27) average of 30%). In 2006, the head of the daily executive body of the Central Bank was a woman as well as 25% of the members of its highest decision-making body. The largest publicly quoted companies have some work to do however. Two of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies had a women president and only 8% of the members of the highest decision-making bodies of these companies were women. There are only male employee representatives in these bodies (database: Women and men in decision-making).

In France the gender pay gap is an important issue on the policy agenda and compared to other European countries they are doing quite well. The average pay of women relative to men’s rose from 64% in the 1960s to 82% in 1996 (research covering full-time workers in the private and semi-public sectors) (European Commission, 2008c). The average hourly wage for both men and women is now above the European average, and the gender pay gap is smaller. Men on average earn EUR 15.26 per hour, which is EUR 2.60 more than women (who earn on average EUR 12.66).

Table 6: Gender pay gap – France

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
France	EUR 15.26	EUR 12.66	17 %	3.36
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

On 1 March 2004 all major unions signed a national inter-sector agreement on gender balance and occupational gender equality, which includes a section on equal pay. Companies committed themselves to closing the ‘residual gap’, the pay gap that cannot be explained by sectoral or structural effects. They also promised that the criteria that are used for job evaluation are examined at sector level, in order to eliminate discriminatory factors. The effects of absence related to parenthood on pay, will be examined as well, and solutions for these problems will be sought (European Commission, 2006).

Since the 1983 Roudy Law was introduced to ensure equal treatment in the working place, companies with more than 50 employees are obliged to file annual reports on employment practices with respect to gender, including practices like training and promotion. When companies demonstrate exemplary employment practices, they receive subsidies (Reed-Danahay, 2003).

In March 2006 a new law on equal pay was developed, which obligates collective bargaining and aims at abolishing the gender pay gap by 2010. When the obligation for gender pay bargaining is not met, penalties are possible. The Equality Charter of March 8th 2004 is another important document, which aims to introduce a gender mainstreaming approach ‘in all actions’ of Ministries, local authorities, social partners, associations, etcetera (European Commission, 2008c).

France introduced public childcare allowances in 1986 and in 1990, parental leave in 1994, and part-time work protection arrangements in 2000 (Bleijenbergh & Roggeband, 2007). In France women have at least 14 weeks of paid pregnancy leave. The regulations mandate that this leave cannot be counted in any way against a woman’s benefits or possibilities of promotion. The law states that a woman must be permitted to return to the same position. The programme Return-to-Work Incentive for Women encourages women to return to work after having a child. Subsidies are provided when a

child is under 6 years old. Public daycare facilities are available and the government also subsidizes childcare at home. Free schooling is available for children from the age of two (Reed-Danahay, 2003).

France provides *Caisses d'Allocations Familiales* (family allowance funds) to families to assist in the costs of raising children. If parents stop working to care for a child under the age of 3, they receive Parental Education and Upbringing Allowance (Allocation Parentele d'Education). Mothers that stay at home receive free healthcare insurance (Reed-Danahay, 2003). France introduced public childcare allowances in 1986 and in 1990 (Bleijenbergh & Roggeband, 2007). In the 2008c report on gender mainstreaming, France reported an 'almost full coverage' concerning childcare.

Conclusions

The political system in France has excluded women for many years. Quota to include more women have never been popular, because it opposed the idea of universalism on which the French state structure is based. The parity law emerged from a different rationale; the fact that women and men have an equal status, not that they are representing a minority. It has only little effect on the national level however, primarily because political parties do not want to change their candidate recruitment procedures and rather sacrifice part of their party's funding. The absence of women's organizations that make claims for equal representation could be seen as an important explanation why parties do not want to change.

Gender equality has become an important part of labour market policies in France. The topic has been institutionalized on the national level. Traditionally women's labour force participation has been quite high and reconciliation policies are rather good. The number of women managers is high, and so is the representation in decision-making in the Central Bank. The top decision-making bodies of the top 50 publicly quotes companies are still mainly populated by men however.

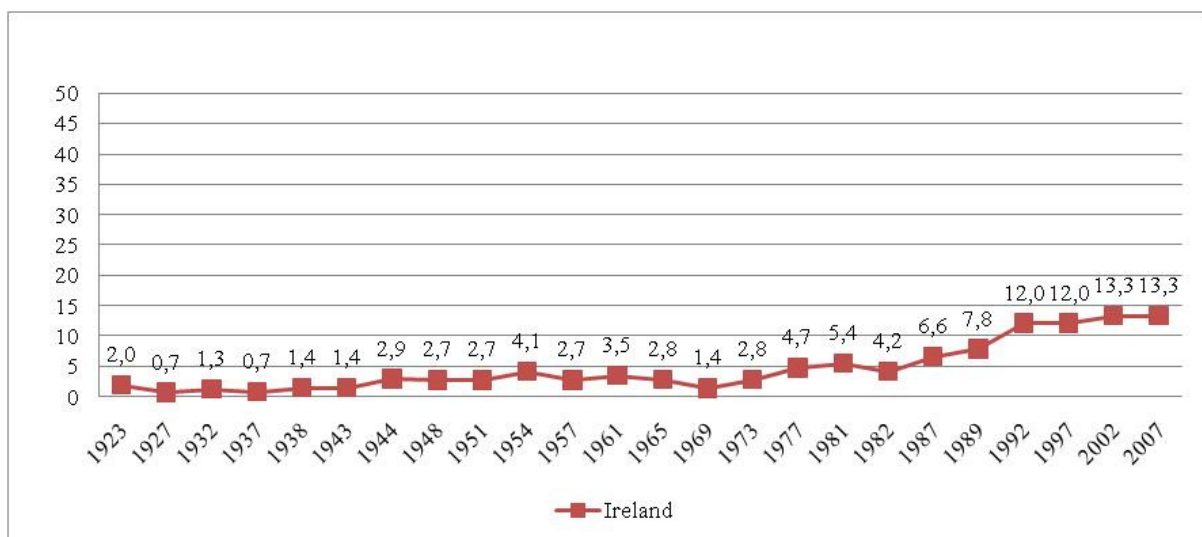
4.3 Case study: Ireland

Since the elections in 2007, 23 of the 166 Members of Parliament (13.3%) are women. From the start of universal suffrage the number of women in the Irish parliament has always been low. This has been a continuing source of concern (White, 2006). This paragraph will shed light on possible explanations for this continuing underrepresentation.

If one factor does not explain the low proportion of women in the Irish Parliament, it is the history of Irish suffrage. Women in Ireland have had the right to vote longer than most other women in Europe. After the fight for independence from Great Britain, the Irish Free State introduced universal suffrage for all adults over twenty-one years old in 1922. From 1898 on, women were allowed to vote in local governmental elections. And in 1918, women of thirty years and older received the right to vote (Throop, 2003).

In the first elections for the newly formed Dáil in 1923, the first women parliamentarians were chosen. After the elections of 1969, the proportion of women in parliament has been growing slightly after every election, except for a decline after the elections in 1982 (website: Oireachtas). The first woman parliamentary leader was chosen in 1982 (website: Inter-parliamentary Union).

Figure 14: Proportions of women representatives after elections – Ireland (website: Oireachtas)¹⁸



Ireland has a bicameral parliament, consisting of the Seanad Éireann (the Senate) and the Dáil Éireann (Lower House). From the 1990s on, the norm has been coalition governments. Before 1989 however, one-party governments were very common. In the last decade, Ireland has been lead by female presidents. Mary Robinson was the first woman to become the Irish president. She took this office from 1990, until she was followed up in 1997 by another woman, Mary McAleese, who still holds this position. It was the first time in global history that the presidency of a woman was followed up by another woman. This is a strange contrast with the continuing underrepresentation in Parliament. In 2004 McAleese's term was automatically extended with another seven years because she was the only legitimate presidential candidate (website: Áras an Uachtaráin).

¹⁸ The number of seats in the Dáil has changed often over the years. In Appendix 2 the numbers of women parliamentarians and the number of seats are presented, on which the proportions in are based.

Members of the *Dáil Éireann* (the *Teachta Dála*; TD's or deputies) are chosen every five years. Votes are divided by a system of proportional representation, by means of a single transferable vote, in multi-seat constituencies. White (2006) highlights that recent research has shown that the single transferable vote system overall results in relatively high numbers of elected women (e.g. in Australia) and that Ireland is a surprising exception.

The single transferable vote system means that voters rank order candidates in a certain constituency. Candidates must then achieve a certain quota of votes to win elections. Rest-votes are transferred to other candidates on the party's list. If no candidate achieves the quota then the votes of the candidate with the lowest amount of votes are transferred to the candidate of next preference of those who voted on this person. The counts continue until the quota has been reached for the number of representatives in that constituency. The results of elections are roughly proportional; the level of representation the party has in parliament is close to the first preference of voters.

The multi-seat constituencies required by the single transferrable vote system mean that candidates must often compete for election with others from the same party. Women are more likely to emerge as those who win a second or lower seat from a popular party (probably because Irish voters in general are more likely to choose men than women (Galligan, 1993)). This makes that mostly men are sent off to Parliament in most districts (White, 2006).

This system gives voters the chance to choose by party, locality, ideology and candidate personality. The dimension of gender has not been available to the electorate to any significant degree until the 1980's however (Galligan, 1993). The fact that constituencies are quite small gives larger parties some advantage. It also allows a strong relationship to develop between the TD and its constituency (which leads some to believe it produces TD's who are excessively parochial).

White (2006) states that the selection of candidates is a '*crucial factor*' explaining the low numbers of women representatives and that there has not been '*an inherent need or advantage*' for a party to nominate more women candidates. There is a continuing idea (nowadays almost subconscious) both in politics and in society, that there is no need for more women in political life. This was also mentioned by dr. Galligan in the interview.

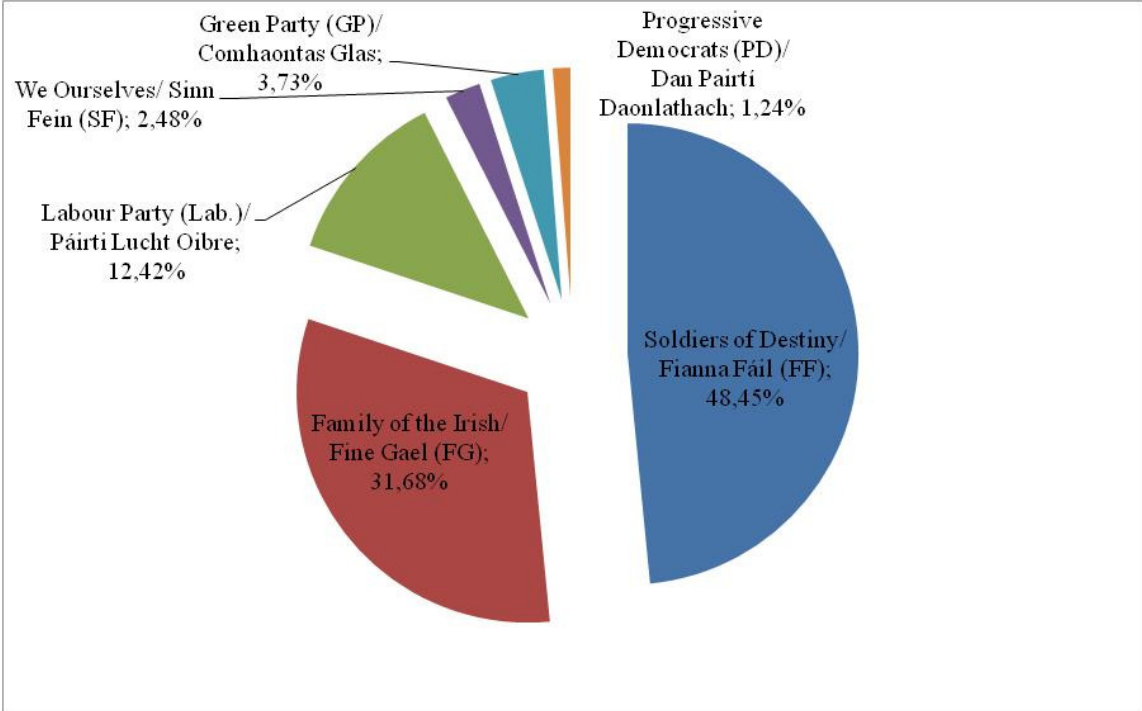
Traditionally, the road for women to parliament is dependent on family connections with former incumbents of political office. Between 1957 and 1969 of the total 22 individual women candidates chosen to contest the four elections and two by-elections in this period, nine were elected: all but one were widows of former members of the *Dáil* (Galligan, 1993; Lovenduski, 1993). In recent years local government service has become the main route of entry into national politics for both women and men, but the tradition of women taking over seats of male family members is still evident.

At the moment candidates are mainly selected at the level of the constituency on selection conferences. There is no formal quota for selecting a certain number of women in the constitution or in electoral law. Some parties do however use quota for their electoral candidates. The largest party since the 2007 elections is Fianna Fáil (with 48.45% of seats). This party's ideology can be characterized as 'pragmatic liberalism', which means that it supports the 'merit' argument rather than quota (interview dr. Galligan). There is a small change visible however; the party adopted a 30% quota, but for internal positions only and it set the target of selecting 1/3 women candidates for the next local elections (website: Quota Database). Dr. Galligan stated that this is only a target however, and it will probably take a long time before the 30% women representatives at the local level will influence the national level of representation (interview dr. Galligan). The second largest party, Fine Gael (31.68% of votes), has always resisted quota. This can be partially explained by its right wing ideology. Although every

now and again there is some rhetoric about quota by this party, it was never actually followed up or implemented.

Most of the smaller parties have quotas, but because they only have a small number of seats, their measures do not have a very strong effect on the number of women in Parliament. The Labour Party (12.24% of seats) has the largest amount of women TD's. It uses a 25% quota on their electoral lists, and a 30% quota of internal positions. Members of this party have passed a motion to have 50% women candidates in the 2013 local elections. The Workers Party uses a 40% quota on party lists since 1991, but this party is not represented in parliament. The *Comhaontas Glas* (Green party; 3.73% of seats) has a 40/60 gender balance among its election candidates since 1992. This balance must be attained in order to qualify for 50% of the party funding (website: Quota Database).

Figure 15: Percentage of seats per party after 2007 elections (website: IFES Election Guide)



An important fact that could explain the attitude of parties towards including women could be the low pressure from women's organizations on this issue. Ireland now has hundreds of women's movements that focus on achieving issues that are important for women, such as health, family violence, welfare reforms, education, gay and lesbian rights, and the accessibility of psychological assistance (Throop, 2003). Dr. Galligan stated in the interview that the major spokesperson for women's rights is the National Women's Council of Ireland. Increasing the level of women's representation and participation in decision-making is on their agenda, but it does not actively promote the issue. And when it does, it is often too late in the political game. It organizes campaigns to vote for women candidates, but it is not fully committed to encouraging parties to increase the number of women on their lists in the years before elections (interview dr. Galligan).

Overall it can be said that Irish women's organizations do demand change, but that their tactics are rather soft. In the 1990s for example, women's organizations did not choose confrontational tactics, but chose for a reasoned discussion. Instead of demanding full abortion rights, Irish feminists fought for the right for information about abortion and the right for pregnant women to travel freely to other

countries for an abortion. *'Feminism, therefore, not too surprisingly, follows the Irish cultural gender model when attempting to make change'* (Throop, 2003).

Ireland is, and has been in the past, quite a conservative society, which has a strong influence on gender roles. Women are often defined by their motherhood, as show articles 41.2.1 and 41.2.2 of the Irish constitution:

41.2.1 – "In particular, the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved."

41.2.2 - "The State shall, therefore, endeavor to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home."

The influence of the Irish Catholic Church in the drafting of the constitution in 1937 is visible here. Although the influence of the Catholic church of governmental processes has diminished in recent decades, the traditional views of gender roles are still deeply rooted in daily life. An Irish woman often encounters contradictory messages about her proper role in society. The church tells her to either be a celibate religious sister or a mother, the Irish and international media tell her she should have a career. Despite the many traditional ways of thinking, Throop (2003) states, there is an emerging category of 'new men', who are interested in sharing housework, childcare, cooking and cleaning, as well as earning. The existence of a new man also requires the emergence of a new woman however, who gives up some control of the household to get some control in the outside world. But despite these changes it can still be quite hard to obtain birth control, and abortion is still specifically forbidden by the constitution.

The last decade has shown a *'dramatic change'* in the role of women in the Irish economy. Traditionally the participation of women in the paid labour force had been low. Nowadays it is above the European average and it is this change that has played a central role in the recent employment growth in Ireland. The employment rate of women increased from 53% in 1999, to 59.3% in 2006¹⁹. This pattern of increased employment rates has been working its way through different generations of Irish women. Increasing proportions of women in paid employment reflects changes in women's expectations, a rise in educational levels, more employment opportunities and smaller families. However, while rates of recorded unemployment are similar between women and men, non-employment rates are significantly higher among women than among men, which reflects women's traditional roles as primary caregivers (Barry, 2007).

Ireland has much work to do when it comes to women in top positions, although improvements are visible. The numbers of women in managerial positions are quite reasonable compared to the European average; in 2006, 29% of all people in managerial positions were women. However, on the higher levels, women are still underrepresented. Only 9% of the members of the highest decision-making body of the Irish Central Bank were women, which is below the already low European (EU 27) average of 11%. One of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies had a woman as president, and only 5% of the highest decision-making body of these companies was a woman. 2% of employee representatives in the highest decision-making bodies of these companies is a woman (database: Women and men in decision-making).

The gender pay gap is slightly higher than the European average (Table 7). On average men earn EUR 4.82 more than women. Findings from national research indicate that a significant part of the gender

¹⁹ The employment rate of men rose in this period from 75% to 78%.

pay gap is caused by differences in years of experience and years out of the labour market. In addition, (vertical) segregation is said to play an important role (Barrett et al. 2000; Russell and Gannon 2002, in: European Commission, 2006). The pay gap is narrower in the under 30 year age groups; among professional workers, managers and administrators, and in the public sector. In fact, women under 30 years in the public sector earned on average higher rates of pay than male workers (Barry, 2007).

Table 7: Gender pay gap - Ireland

	Men	Women	Gender pay gap	Wage inequality
Ireland	EUR 18.29	EUR 13.47	26 %	3.91
EU-25	EUR 13.79	EUR 10.40	25 %	

Ireland views the gender pay gap as an important policy area to achieve greater gender equality. This awareness has not yet been translated into a programme of action or into a set of specific policy initiatives however. The involvement of trade unions in this development has been positive but rather limited. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) initiated a small-scale gender and pay project. Under this project, the trade union congress is being funded to carry out activities addressing the gender pay gap under a number of themes, including awareness of the gender pay gap, job evaluation skills and resources, training of trade union officials and vocational training. This involved the development of a toolkit by the ICTU to support managers, officials and activists to address the gender pay gap. The ICTU is also looking for a higher level of minimum wage²⁰ and more resources towards the provisions of childcare services (European Commission, 2006).

The increased participation of women on the labour market and a growing awareness of gender inequalities in pay are positive developments in terms of equal opportunities. What has not kept up in pace is the development of childcare and other reconciliation policies. The Irish government does not make it easy for women to work once they have become mothers. There are very little childcare facilities that are sponsored by the Irish state. Private daycare is available but very expensive (Throop, 2003). In the 2008 report on the development of gender mainstreaming, Ireland reported a persistent low level of childcare facilities (European Commission, 2008c).

In 2006 the Maternity Protection Act of 1994 was extended. From March 1 2007 women are entitled to 26 weeks of maternity leave, together with 16 weeks additional unpaid leave. Women have to take leave at least 2 weeks before the due date, and at least 4 weeks after delivery. The remaining weeks can be taken up by choice. Employers are not obliged to pay the leave, it depends on arrangements in labour contracts (website: Citizen's Information). Mostly payments are between 70 and 80% of the earnings (European Commission, 2008c). Women may qualify for a Maternity Benefit, a payment by the Department of Social and Family Affairs for which one must have paid enough 'PRSI contributions'. The employee's contract could provide additional rights during the leave period, so that, for example, the employee could receive full pay minus the amount of Maternity Benefit payable. Fathers are only entitled to maternity leave if the mother dies within 24 weeks of the birth (Website: Citizens Information).

The parental leave entitlement has recently been increased. It continues to be unpaid, but it could be combined with maternity leave to establish a new leave entitlement of 56 weeks. 26 of these weeks are

²⁰ Ireland only recently introduced minimum wage legislation (European Commission, 2008c).

paid 80% of pay. The age of children for which parents can take up parental leave has been raised from 5 to 8 years (European Commission, 2008c).

Dr. Galligan stated in the interview that the current living conditions, and a lack of awareness concerning gender inequalities attributes to the low level of pressure from women's organizations, and women's participation in politics. She states that the 'post equal opportunity generation' (*'the young generation that enjoy all the equal opportunities the previous generations have fought for'*) suffers from the current living conditions in Ireland. Often people live long distances away from their work and family support arrangements are lacking, which results in a *'punishing schedule'*. Dr. Galligan supposes that people are so overburdened these days (*'not always by choice'*) that they do not have the time or energy to be concerned with politics. This makes the pool of candidates from which parties can choose, a lot smaller. And moreover, *'(...) while this generation feels they have all of the opportunities to advance in whatever field, profession or activity they are involved in, they do not recognize that there are significant structural constraints on their lives – inadequate childcare, no time for community and voluntary activities as precursors into politics, less acceptance that the barriers for women begin to manifest when they have children as the traditional division of labour within the family persists.....etc. They see structural analyses of discrimination as 'old feminist' thinking...'*

In the current Cabinet 5 of the 25 ministers are women (20%). In national ministries 27% of the top positions are taken up by women, and 11% of the sub top positions (website: database Men and women in decision-making).

Ireland has a Gender equality Unit which falls under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law reform. This department concentrates on 'mainstreaming equality', which means that the policy processes are evaluated and improved so the gender dimension can be included. It focuses at both increasing the quantitative measures of women's status in society (indicators), and investigating structural and institutional discrimination. One of its goals is to investigate the (intended and unintended) outcomes of policy and program shifts (Throop, 2003). In the National Development Plan 2000-2006, gender mainstreaming was introduced as a national policy line. Through three key processes gender mainstreaming is implemented; completion of gender impact assessment forms in relation to each relevant measure; inclusion of gender equality in project selection criteria, and commitments to monitor and evaluate progress on gender mainstreaming (European Commission, 2008c).

Members of the Equality Unit have engaged with a range of expert groups to foster the development of gender equality indicators. The progress in the actual development of these indicators has been slow however (Breitenbach & Galligan, 2006). This can be due to the fact that the equality unit is quite unstable at the moment. For a while it was very well resourced and supported, and guided by the Secretary General. She was a very strong feminist who was keen on seeing change in the field of gender equality. When she was transferred the momentum fell. Over the last few years the department has been restructured and downscaled, and currently holds only two civil servants (interview dr. Galligan).

Conclusions

The overall attention for gender equality in Ireland is rather low. The traditional gender roles are still visible in politics. Parties as well as the population lack the drive to push for equal representation because they see it as old feminist thinking.

From the fact that labour force participation of women has grown greatly in recent decades, while political representation still largely remained the same, can be concluded that there is no automatic

spill-over labour market participation towards political representation. This underlines the important role political parties play in the process of candidature.

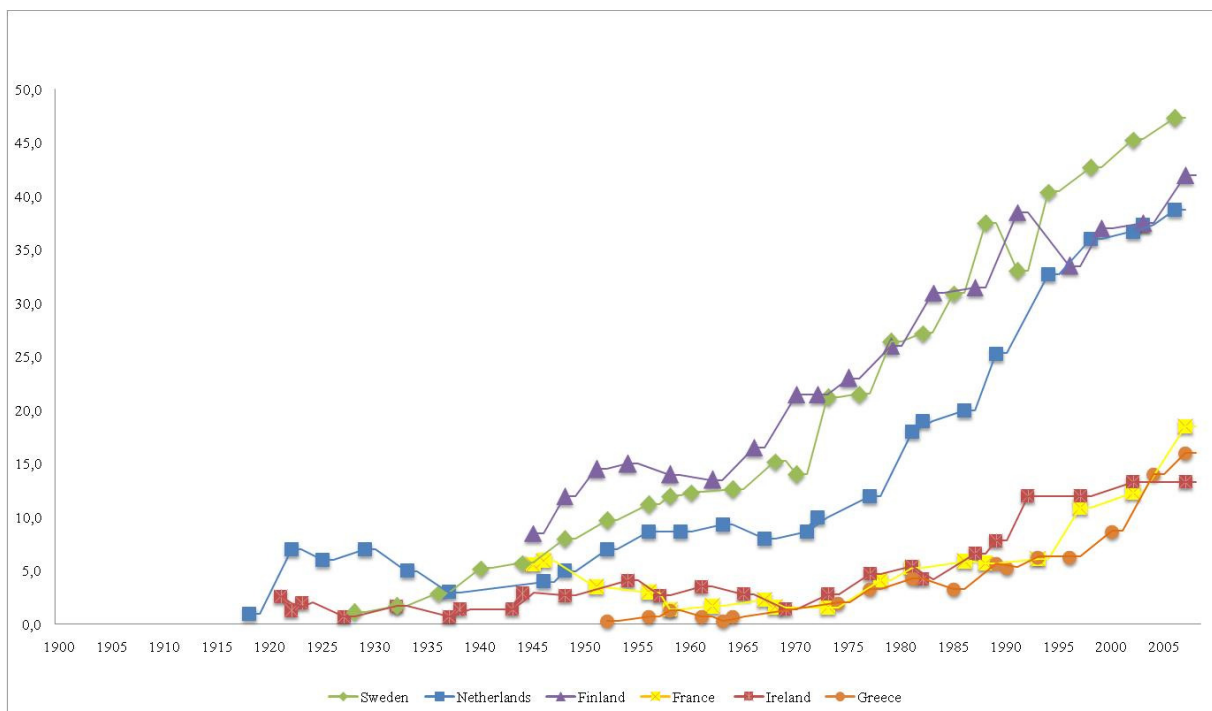
The Equality Unit in Ireland does not have enough resources to carry out its tasks. Reconciliation is not yet on a reasonable level, which results in a punishing schedule for both men and women with children.

5 Comparison high-proportion and low-proportion countries

In this chapter the six countries are compared on the selected variables. This is done by checking if the stated hypotheses can be confirmed. In appendices 2, 3 and 4 the data on which this comparison is based are summarized.

Figure 16 shows the development of the proportion of women parliamentarians in the six case study countries. If the development of the number of women in parliament is compared, we see that after 1950, the high proportion countries showed an upward trend, while in the low proportion countries the proportion of women stayed roughly the same. The three low-proportion countries all begin to show an upward trend in the 1990s.

Figure 16: Development of the proportion women representatives in Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Greece, France and Ireland



Hypothesis 1: Political system

The first hypothesis is that the political systems of high proportion countries differ clearly from political systems of low proportion countries on the selected features.

Hypothesis 1.1: High-proportion countries obtained universal suffrage earlier than low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis can be confirmed only partially. Of the three high-proportion countries, Finland was the first to introduce the universal rights to vote and to stand for election (1906). The Netherlands and Sweden followed around 15 years later. The high-proportion countries attained universal suffrage about 22 to 46 years earlier than France and Greece, but Ireland stands out. Irish women obtained the right to vote around the same time as Dutch and Swedish women (1918) (appendix 3).

Hypothesis 1.2: High proportion countries are proportional representation systems, low-proportion countries are plurality or majority systems.

This hypothesis can be confirmed partially (appendix 2). The countries with high proportions do all three have systems of proportional representation, and Greece and France are majoritarian systems.

Ireland has a Single Transferrable Vote system however, with votes being transferred into Parliamentary seats according to proportionality, and still low numbers of women Parliamentarians. In other countries this Single Transferable Vote system leads to high numbers of women in Parliament (White, 2006).

Hypothesis 1.3: In high-proportion countries, pressure from citizens has been higher and better organized than in low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis can be confirmed. In Sweden, Finland and the Netherlands, women's organizations have pressured political parties both from within as from outside the political system to include more women in politics. In Ireland and Greece however, women's organizations have not been making strong claims for equal representation. In Ireland it is even discarded an 'old fashioned feminist claim'. The fact that French women's organizations did not want to participate in formal politics but took a more revolutionary approach, made that political parties never felt the urge to include more women (appendix 2).

Hypothesis 1.4: Political parties in high-proportion countries have responded with more thorough programmatic and organizational change than political parties in low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis can be confirmed. In high-proportion countries, all political parties have committed themselves towards actively including women on their list of candidates. This commitment is often laid down in the use of either formal or informal quota. In low-proportion countries, most parties have not made this commitment. In France the very strict parity rule is laid down in a law (which can be regarded as a thorough parity policy) but because it is not actively carried out by political parties this law has only little effect. Greece also introduced a constitutional reform. Political parties themselves did not take action to include more women, except the Socialist Party. In Ireland political parties do not see the point in actively including more women. Sometimes the topic is part of parties' rhetoric, but actual measures have not been taken yet, except by the labour party (appendix 2).

Hypothesis 2: Administrative system

The second hypothesis is that the administrative systems of high-proportion countries differ clearly from administrative systems of low proportion countries on selected features.

Hypothesis 2.1: High-proportion countries have more active equality machineries than low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis cannot be confirmed. In Sweden and Finland the equality machineries are very active; they constantly monitor and check the status of gender equality issues within their legal framework. In the Netherlands however, the equality infrastructure is called rather weak. In Greece and France the equality machinery plays a quite active role in raising awareness for gender equality in labour market and anti-discrimination policy. But this does not result in higher numbers of women in Parliament. In Ireland however, the gender equality unit is said not to have enough resources to fulfill its duties properly. Political awareness of the issue lacks as well.

Hypothesis 2.2: The Ministries of high-proportion countries have a higher proportion of women employees than the Ministries of low-proportion countries.

Unfortunately, there was no data available on the total proportion of women working for the Ministries in 2006 for France and Ireland. The total proportions of the other countries differ largely however (appendix 2). In Sweden women were overrepresented as employees in 2006 (60%) and a large (although not equal) proportion of the highest positions were filled by women (N-1 39%; N-2 43%). In Finland the share of women employees is almost 50% (47.5%), but there is a glass ceiling for promotion towards the top positions. Only 15% of the N-1 and 38% of the N-2 positions was taken by

women in 2006. In the Netherlands only 42% of the employees of Ministries were women and the glass ceiling seems even thicker than in Finland; women occupied only 8% of the N-1 and 20% of the N-2 positions. In Greece a larger share of women work for the Ministries (47.12%) and there are more women in top positions (N-1 30%; N-2 34%) than in the Netherlands. Both France and Ireland have a larger share of women in N-1 positions than the Netherlands (resp. 13% and 27%). This makes that the hypothesis that countries with high proportions of women in Parliament also have high proportions of women in the administration cannot be confirmed.

Hypothesis 3: Socio-economic forces

The third hypothesis is that the selected socio-economic forces of high-proportion countries differ clearly from the low-proportion countries.

Hypothesis 3.1: In high-proportion countries a larger proportion of the labour market is occupied by women than in low-proportion countries.

Countries can be compared by calculating the absolute gender gap in employment rates. This is the absolute difference between the employment rate of men and the employment rate of women (see appendix 4, Figure 20).

Figure 17: Absolute gender gap in employment rates

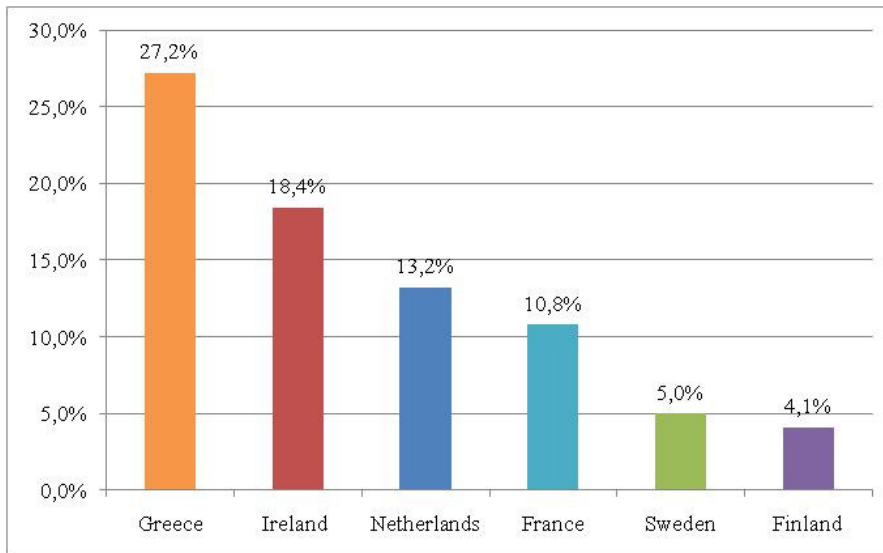


Figure 17 shows that this hypothesis can be confirmed only partially. Greece and Ireland show a high gender gap in employment rates (resp. 27.2% and 18.4%). Sweden and Finland show a low gender gap (resp. 5.0% and 4.1%). It is however interesting to see that the gender gap in employment rates of the Netherlands is larger than the gender gap of France (resp. 13.2% and 10.8%).

Hypothesis 3.2: In high-proportion countries, more women have positions in top positions than in low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis cannot be confirmed. In fact, the percentages of women in the selected high economic decision-making bodies differ per body and per country, and do not seem to be linked to the percentage of women in Parliament.

The percentages of women in management positions do not differ largely between high- and low-proportion countries, all score between 26%-30%. Except for France where 36% of all people in management positions are women (Appendix 4, Figure 23).

The percentage of women presidents of the highest decision-making bodies of the 50 (51 in Finland) largest publicly quoted companies does show a difference. Both in Greece and Ireland, one of these

presidents was a woman in 2006 (2%), and two in France (4%). Although this is just a very small number, it is more than in the high proportion countries. In the high-proportion countries there were no women presidents of these companies at all in 2006 (Appendix 4, Figure 24).

This is different for the members of the highest decision-making bodies of the 50 (51 in Finland) largest publicly quoted companies. In Sweden and Finland respectively 24% and 20% of these members are women. In the Netherlands, Greece and France this is only 8% and in Ireland 5%.

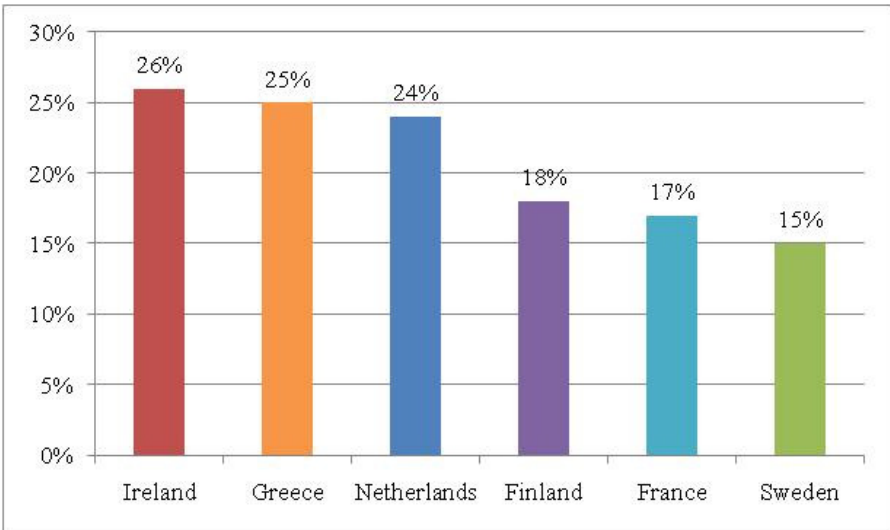
A comparison of the representation of women in employee representative bodies of the 50 largest publicly quoted companies results in a scattered image. In Sweden 4% of the members of these bodies were women in 2006, in the Netherlands only 2% and there were no women in these bodies in Finland. Greece and Ireland also had 2% women employee representatives, while France had none (Appendix 4, Figure 26).

A final variable is the percentage of women in the highest decision-making body of the Central Bank. Of the high-proportion countries, Sweden and Finland both scored above the European average of 15% (resp. 30% and 25%), while the Netherlands scored just below (11%). The percentage of women in Ireland (9%) was just below the Dutch percentage. In Greece there were no women in the highest decision-making body. France stands out here, because the head of the daily executive body of the Central Bank is a woman, and 25% of members of its highest decision-making body (Appendix 4, Figure 27).

Hypothesis 3.3: In high-proportion countries, the gender pay gap is smaller than in low-proportion countries.

This hypothesis can only be confirmed partially. The gender pay gap is rather large for the low-proportion countries Ireland and Greece (resp. 26% and 25%), and lower for the high-proportion countries Sweden and Finland (resp. 15% and 18%). The contrast is formed by the positions of the Netherlands, which is with 24% just next to Greece, and France, which with 17% falls between Finland and Sweden.

Figure 18: Gender pay gap (European Commission, 2006)



Hypothesis 3.4: In high-proportion countries, socio-economic reconciliation policies are better than in low-proportion countries.

The reconciliation policies in Sweden and Finland have been quite generous and aimed at creating equal opportunities for men and women for a long time. Both countries have a universal breadwinner ideology. The Netherlands has a very strong male breadwinner ideology and a high value of domesticity, which has determined the political discourse and policy lines concerning childcare and maternal leave for many years. Only in recent decades the Netherlands started to move towards a caregiver parity model, in which the importance of women on the labour market is stressed. The French follow this caregiver parity model for a much longer time. A strong framework of rules exists, which aims to ensure the possibility to return to the previous level of employment after childbirth and provisions like childcare are on a reasonable level. In Ireland and Greece the framework for reconciliation policies still has to develop fully. This can be attributed to persisting patriarchal and conservative values in society. The family care model is still very evident in Greece, which for example leads to only little availability of childcare. Again, this hypothesis cannot be confirmed fully due to the fact that the positions of France and the Netherlands are reversed to what was expected.

This chapter summarized the similarities and differences between the case study countries on the explaining variables. The next chapter will address if the presumed relationships between these variables and the outcome variable (the proportion of women in Parliament) exist.

Conclusions and recommendations

The international community and the European Commission have acknowledged the importance of increasing the number of women in important decision-making positions. These institutions see underrepresentation of women in decision-making as an important obstacle to the democratic development of countries. When more women participate in decision-making it is more likely that their interests are taken into account, which is important for the position of women in society.

In the introduction of this thesis it was shown that the proportions of women Parliamentarians in European countries differ largely. In 2006 the proportions ranged from 9% to 48%. This fact led to the following research question: *How can the different proportions of women in the single or lower houses of the national or federal Parliaments of European countries be explained?*

To answer this question, six case study countries were selected that have been connected to the European programme 'Women and men in decision-making' from the start; three countries with high proportions of women Members of Parliament (Sweden: 48%, Finland: 42% and the Netherlands; 38%) and three countries with low proportions of women Members of Parliament (Greece: 14%, France: 13%, Ireland: 13%).

The theoretical framework was set up around the sub research question: *Which factors in a national system could have an influence on the proportion of women representatives?* Previous studies on this topic have focused primarily on features of the political system. The ambition of this research was to also include other possible explaining variables. Features of the administration were included to be able to say if the general level of policy attention for gender equality matters. Socio-economic variables were included to also incorporate the general position of women in society.

Literature has suggested that the *history of suffrage* determines the current representation of women in Parliament; countries with an earlier date of universal suffrage are expected to have higher levels of women MP's than countries which introduced this right later (Mateo Diaz & Millns, 2004). Secondly, the *system of representation* is said to play a certain role how many women reach Parliament. It is said that overall proportional representation systems are more likely to have high numbers of women in their Parliaments than plurality and majority systems (European Commission, 1997). The results of this research did not confirm these statements because Ireland formed an exception in both cases. This country introduced universal suffrage around the same time as the three high-proportion countries and the votes are distributed according to the principle of proportionality. Other factors than the history of suffrage and the system of representation seem to play a more important role in determining the current number of women in Parliament.

Literature also stated that *parity mechanisms* (strategies used to increase the proportion of women in decision-making positions) are likely to influence the proportion of women in Parliament. The success of these mechanisms is said to depend on the degree to which political parties support them (Krook, 2001a; Mateo Diaz & Millns, 2004). Previous research also showed that *party political ideas* are influenced by the *pressure from women's organizations* for equal representation (Lovenduski, 1993).

The comparison of the three high-proportion and the three low-proportion countries showed that the two political variables in which the two groups of countries differ clearly from each other are the degree of pressure from women's organizations for equal representation, and the extent to which political parties have responded to these claims with organizational change. The three high-proportion countries all have/had women's organizations that actively made claims for equal representation, and

political parties that responded with the introduction of a political party quota. This process has not occurred in low-proportion countries. In the three low-proportion countries, pressure from women's organizations for equal representation is low. In Ireland political parties do not see the point in actively including more women; they regard such an active strategy as 'old-fashioned feminist thinking'. The French women's organizations did not want to participate in formal politics and in Greece the women's lobby is not very active. The French and Greek governments did recently introduce constitutional quota, but this is not broadly supported by political parties and in effect so far unsuccessful. In France parties rather give up parts of their subsidies than changing their selection procedures. In Greece the first elections with this system are still to be held so conclusions on its effectiveness are not yet available.

From these research results it can be concluded that pressure for equal representation and the organizational response of political parties form a more important explanation for a certain number of women in Parliament than historical and structural factors.

A second central variable that was taken into account in this research is the administration. The theory of representative bureaucracy states that passive representation among public employees will lead to active representation in bureaucratic outputs (Keiser et al. 2002). Following this idea, a higher number of women in Ministries is said to be favorable for policy developments on gender equality. Therefore the *proportion of women that were working for the Ministries in 2006* was compared. Bleijenbergh and Roggeband (2007) state that the existence of *equality machineries* allows the entrance of feminist ideas into the political debate, promotes women's interests and gives access to the women's movement.

Unfortunately the total proportions of women working for the Ministries in 2006 were not readily available for France and Ireland. However, the fact that in Greece the total proportion of women employees in the Ministries, and the proportions of women in top positions in Ministries are much larger than in the Netherlands, can lead to the conclusion that there is no direct link between the number of women in the administration and a high or a low number of women in Parliament.

The comparison of gender equality machineries in Ministries resulted in a rather scattered picture. In Sweden and Finland the policy attention for gender equality is high and the equality machinery is quite active. But this is also the case in France and in Greece. In the Netherlands and Ireland, the attention is quite low however. The existence and activity of an equality unit therefore is not connected to a high or low proportion of women in Parliament. It can however be seen as a sign of a commitment to a general gender equality approach, which mainly focuses on issues related to equal opportunities on the labour market and other issues (such as violence against women).

The third central research variable focused on socio-economic factors. The choice of this variable was based on the assumption that the opportunities women have to advance in society could influence their choice to become a MP. Therefore, figures on the participation of women on the labour market, the number of women in top positions and the gender pay gap were compared. Socio-economic reconciliation policies were also compared to provide a possible explanation for this situation.

When comparing the case study countries we saw that the gender employment gap of Greece and Ireland was in fact much larger than that of Sweden and Finland. Opposed to what was expected, the gender employment gap of the Netherlands is larger than the employment gap of France. A comparison of the gendered typologies of the welfare state regimes, on which reconciliation policies are based, showed a similar pattern. Sweden and Finland both follow the universal breadwinner model; in which the state provides care services without making distinctions based on gender. France

follows the caregiver parity model in which caregivers are supported equally by the state. The reconciliation approaches of the Netherlands, Greece and Ireland still show features of the traditional male breadwinner model and the family care model, in which women are primarily regarded as mothers.

France and the Netherlands are each others' mirror image when it comes to economical and political participation of women. When adding the fact that a large increase in labour force participation of women in Ireland and Greece (and an already high participation in France) did not (yet) result in a rise in political participation, it can be concluded that there is no automatic spill over effect from the labour force participation towards political representation.

A certain participation of women in important economic decision-making positions is also not automatically linked to the proportion of women in Parliament. The fact that women have the opportunity of advancing in political life does not mean they can also advance in economic life (i.c. the Netherlands). The opposite is also true (i.c. France). In general it should be noted that the participation of women in important economical decision-making positions is far from what can be considered a critical mass. These research findings suggest that policy lines that aim to increase political or economical representation by women, should take into account the differing forces that exist in both fields. Further research is needed to establish the character of these forces.

The most important conclusion from these research findings is that the current proportion of women in Parliament can be explained by the extent to which women's organizations have made claims for equal representation, and the extent to which political parties have responded to these claims with programmatic and organizational change. A recommendation to the European Union could therefore be to actively support and stimulate national women's organizations to make claims for equal representation. This could be done by assisting financially and by facilitating the exchange of international knowledge on the topic and strategies. This intervention can be considered legitimate because Member States have already acknowledged the importance of increasing participation of women in decision-making (the topic has been uploaded to the European level). An advantage of such an approach is that the European intervention would not directly interfere in the national political discourse on the topic, but stimulates a bottom up process which can have a strongly national character.

For correct interpretation of these research findings, a few remarks should be made on the design of this research. The fact that the cases were selected on the outcome variable (the proportion of women in Parliament) has made it quite hard to prove causality. As a consequence of this selection criterion, the variance between countries on the explaining variables is high. This could be an explanation why the hypotheses on for example the features of the administration and socio-economic factors could not be confirmed. The case study countries differ for example largely on the history of labour force participation by women and the history and strength of policy attention for gender equality issues in general. In addition, these variables were measured by taking a snapshot of the current state of affairs, and only little attention was paid to how this state of affaires emerged. Further research could select groups of countries with similar developments on these issues, and focus on testing links with current levels of representation in order to identify actual causality.

Another remark that should be made on the design of this research is that the research findings are based on data derived from only six (European) countries. In order to increase reliability, the results should be tested in other countries as well.

Features of the administration and socio-economic factors were taken up in the theoretical framework as possible explaining variables, but the selected variables did not turn out to be possible explanations for the current level of women in Parliament. This does not automatically mean that the administration or socio-economic factors do not at all have an influence on the number of women in Parliament. Future research could include other administrative or socio-economic variables in the theoretical framework.

The features of the administration were narrowly defined here. Attention was only paid at the number of women working for Ministries. Interviewees also addressed the importance of the composition of the local administration for example (this is especially important in Sweden and Finland). Further research should also include this element in the theoretical framework.

This topic needs to be researched again in the future because many of these developments are ongoing. The fact that there is no spill-over effect from the increased labour force participation towards increased political participation in Ireland and Greece now, does not mean that it will not happen in ten or twenty years from now. Future research should also focus on the effectiveness of the recently introduced constitutional quota in France and Greece.

Future research should also look at the impact of European and International agreements on equal representation. It is interesting to see that the initiative of France and Greece to introduce constitutional quotas has not emerged from within parties (in fact many parties are quite critical about it), but seems to come forward from international pressure on the issue of equal representation. This assumption is derived from the fact that the proportions of women in Parliament in these two countries have started to increase after 1995, when the Beijing Platform for Action was established (see Figure 16). Conclusions of research on the effects of international pressure on approaches of countries to equalize representation of men and women in decision-making could contribute to improving international pressure as well.

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<http://web.eduskunta.fi>
- Website: Postbus 51
<http://www.postbus51.nl>
- Website: PvdA
www.pvda.nl/renderer.do/clearState/true/menuId/37348/returnPage/200022901/
- Website: Quota Database
www.quotaproject.org
- Website: Socialdemokraterna
<http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/>
- Website: SP
www.sp.nl/partij/gekozen/2ekamer.stm
- Website: Statistics Demography and Population
- Website: Statistics Finland
Women as percentage of elected MP's by party in Parliamentary elections 1945-2003
www.stat.fi/til/evaa/2003/evaa_2003_2004-05-31_tau_010_en.html
- Website: Statistics Sweden
The composition of the Riksdag 1929-2006
www.scb.se/templates/tableOrChart___32060.asp
- Website: Sveriges Riksdag
www.riksdagen.se
- Website: Themadossier Politieke Participatie, Vrouwen in de Tweede Kamer
www.e-quality.nl/e-quality/pagina.asp?pagkey=43196
- Website: Tweede Kamer
www.tweedekamer.nl
- Website: UNDP Gender related development index
<http://hdrstats.undp.org/indicators/268.html>
- Website: United Nations, Platform for Action, Decisions 'Women in power and decision-making'
www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm#diagnosis
- Website: VVD
www.vvd.nl/index.aspx?ChapterID=1145
- Website: Women and men in decision-making
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/women_men_stats/out/political_domain_en.xls
- Website: World Bank GenderStats
<http://devdata.worldbank.org/genderstats/home.asp>

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of interviewees

Sweden – dr. Kerstin Kolam

Dr. Kerstin Kolam is a researcher at the University of Umea, Sweden. Her central areas of expertise are public administration, local decision-making and gender.

Netherlands – dr. Inge Bleijenbergh

Dr. Inge Bleijenbergh is working for the faculty Management Sciences of the Radboud University in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. Her central area of expertise is decision-making in the European Union with a specific focus on social and gender equality policy. She has researched the role of labour unions on the national level, and focuses now on the role of women in organizations. Dr. Bleijenbergh has published articles on the importance of equality machineries, and the development of childcare in certain European countries.

Finland – dr. Eeva Raevaara

Dr. Eeva Raevaara has written a PhD on a comparison of gender equality policies of France and Finland. At the moment she is working at the Finnish Gender equality unit.

Greece – dr. Maria Stratigaki

Dr. Maria Stratigaki is assistant professor and director of the Centre for Gender Studies at the Department of Social Policy, Panteion University (Athens, Greece). She focuses on gender and social policy, gender equality policies and European social policy. She has worked in the European Commission (DG V- Equal Opportunities Unit) from 1991-1999. Her tasks included actions promoting women in the decision-making and the design of EU gender mainstreaming strategy.

Ireland – dr. Yvonne Galligan

Dr. Yvonne Galligan is Reader in Politics and director of the Center for Advancement of Women in Politics at Queen's University in Belfast (Northern-Ireland). In her research dr. Galligan has focused on the importance of developing mechanisms to monitor progress in achieving gender equality.

France – dr. Eléonore Lépinard

Dr. Eléonore Lépinard has written a book on the struggle for parity in France. She is currently working at the University of Montréal, Canada.

Appendix 2: Comparison of research variables

	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Start of universal suffrage (both rights to vote and to stand for election)	1921	1906	1919	1952	1944	1918
Number of women in Parliament after elections held before July 2007 ¹	165/349 47.3%	75/200 37.5%	58/150 38.7%	48/300 16.0%	107/577 18.5%	23/166 13.3%
Number of women in Cabinet ¹	10/22 45%	12/20 60%	11/27 41%	2/41 5%	11/33 33%	5/25 20%
Number of women <i>senior</i> ministers ¹	10/22 45%	12/20 60%	5/18 28%	1/18 6%	11/33 33%	3/15 20%
Number of women <i>junior</i> ministers ¹		6/9 67%		1/23 4%		2/20 10%
System of representation	Proportional	Proportional, open lists	Proportional, national lists	Plurality	Plurality	Proportional, single transferable vote system
Requirement for qualification	Local political office	Local political office	Long party career	Local office / already acquired much publicity elsewhere	Local political office	Local political office

¹ Website: Database women and men in decision-making

	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Parity mechanisms						
Constitutional quota? ²	No	No	No	Not for national elections	Yes	No
Quota in electoral law? ²	No	No	No		Yes	No
Party quota for electoral lists? ²	Yes; most political parties use quota of 40 or 50%	No (but there are influential quota for municipal boards and committees)	Yes, but minimal. Labour party: 50%	Yes, but only socialist movement: 40%	Yes, but minimal. Socialist Party: 50%	Yes, most political parties use quota, ranging from 25-50%
Pressure from citizens (i.e. equal representation)	Radical, both from within and outside political parties. Demonstrated when reversals occurred.	From within political parties, in close cooperation with government.	Radical in 1960/1970s, but mostly on other issues than political participation. Did inspire government to take on target. Later less radical due to strong institutionalization.	Present, but only very low pressure and not very successful.	Did not want to participate in formal politics. Not successful due to closed political/administrative system.	Low priority, soft pressure and strategically to late in political game.

² Website: Quota Database

	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Central Administration <i>Number of departments</i> ³	12	13	14	19	16	15
Proportion of women employees in 2006 ⁴	60%	47.5%	41%	47.12%	?	?
% women N-1 ³	39%	15%	8%	30%	13%	27%
% women N-2 ³	43%	38%	20%	34%	27%	11%
Number of women in population ³	4.575.000	2.688.000	8.263.000	5.628.000	32.489.000	2.132.000
	50%	51%	50%	50%	51%	51%

³ Database: Men and women in decision-making – year: 2006

⁴ Finnish data based on 2004

	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Type of gender welfare regime	Universal breadwinner	Universal breadwinner	Male breadwinner, shifting recently towards caregiver parity	Family care model	Caregiver parity	Caregiver parity
Maternal leave						
Family right/ individual right	Family right	Family right	Women only	Women only ⁵		Women only
Paid/unpaid	Paid		Paid; equal to salary, with a maximum of EUR 172,48 per day		Paid	Unpaid, unless arranged differently in contract
Duration	480 days, which are shared between parents. Both parents have a non-transferable right to 60 days of leave. Fathers can take up 10 days paternity leave after childbirth ⁶ .	263 week days (+/- 44 weeks, 11 months). Of which 140 are for the mother only, the other 158 days can be divided between the mother and father. Fathers can take 6-	16 weeks - min. 4 weeks before due date - always 10 weeks delivery leave - min. 42 days obliged leave	15/16 weeks	At least 14 weeks	26 weeks, + 16 weeks of unpaid leave - min. 2 weeks before due date - min. 4 weeks after delivery

⁵ Pantelidou Maloutas (2003)

⁶ Website: Försäkringskassan

			12 days after childbirth and another 6 within parental allowance period. On average men take 15 days ⁷ .			
Flexibility	High	High	Has to be taken up in one time			
Parental leave						
Family right/ individual right	<i>Taken up in maternal leave arrangements</i>	<i>Taken up in maternal leave arrangements</i>	Individual	Paid leave is a transferable right of the mother to which the father is entitled only if the mother does not make use of it.		
Paid/unpaid			Unpaid, unless arranged otherwise in collective agreements	Unpaid, unless arranged otherwise in labour contract		Unpaid, but right to take up 56 weeks if combined with maternity leave
Duration			13 times weekly working hours. Standard: work for 6 months, half time	2 hour reduction of daily working hours (paid) Or: 2 years unpaid leave		14 weeks per child, max 14 weeks per year. Longer if employer agrees. May be taken at once, or in separate

⁷ Kovalainen (2003)

Flexibility (number of years it stays valid)	New government agreed; from 13 to 26 weeks Per child, one time, until children are 8 years old. Can be spread out in 2 or 3 parts, with periods of min. a month	until child is 6 years old (public sector only). Puts a stop to career possibilities.		blocks of min. 6 weeks. If employer agrees; separable into hours or weeks.
Childcare ⁸				Extended from 5 to 8 years.
Right for subsidy	When both parents work/study and the child is enrolled in a certified childcare facility ⁹	Employed parents	Working parents.	Not widely available
Funded by	Partially employer, partially (dep. on costs childcare, both parents 1/6, or 1/3 for single parent) government (dep. on salary)	State. Employer usually grants 5% of gross earnings to each worker for each child, plus 10% for the spouse (independent of	State. Besides public facilities also provides subsidies for childcare at home	

⁸ European Parliament (2006)

⁹ Website: Postbus 51

				his/her employment/income).		
Social expenditures 2003 ¹⁰						
<i>Cash allowances</i>	396.1 (1.6% of GDP)	405.5 (1.7%)	204.5 (0.8%)	221.4 (1.3%)	495.7 (2.1%)	662.2 (2.3%)
<i>Care services</i>	358.4 (1.5% of GDP)	322.9 (1.3%)	145.2 (0.5%)	102.6 (0.6%)	134.4 (0.6%)	76.0 (0.3%)
<i>Total</i>	754.5 (3.1% of GDP)	728.4 (3.0%)	349.6 (1.3%)	324.0 (1.9%)	630.1 (2.6%)	738.2 (2.5%)

¹⁰ Purchasing power parities per inhabitant - (% of GDP)

Appendix 3: Number of women representatives after every election - per country

Year	Sweden ¹		Finland ²		Netherlands ³		Greece ⁴		France ⁵		Ireland ⁶	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
1907												
1908												
1909												
1910												
1911												
1912												
1913												
1914												
1915												
1916												
1917												
1918					1/100	1.0%						
1919												
1920												
1921	5/349	1.4%									4/153	2.6%
1922					7/100	7.0%					2/152	1.3%
1923											3/153	2.0%
1924												
1925					6/100	6.0%						
1926												
1927											1/153	0.7%
1928	4/349	1.1%										
1929					7/100	7.0%						
1930												
1931												
1932	6/349	1.7%									2/153	1.7%
1933					5/100	5.0%						
1934												
1935												
1936	10/349	2.9%										
1937					3/100	3.0%					1/138	0.7%
1938											2/138	1.4%
1939												
1940	18/349	5.2%										
1941												
1942												
1943											2/138	1.4%
1944	20/349	5.7%									4/138	2.9%
1945			17/200	8.5%					33/586	5.6%		
1946					4/100	4.0%			30/586	5.1%		
1947									42/619	6.8%		
1948	28/349	8.0%	24/200	12.0%							4/147	2.7%
1949												

1950												
1951			29/200	14.5%				22/627	3,5%			
1952	34/349	9,7%			7/100	7.0%	1/300	0,3%				
1953												
1954			30/200	15.0%					6/147	4,1%		
1955												
1956	39/349	11,2%			13/150	8.7%	2/300	0,7%	19/627	3,0%		
1957									4/147	2,7%		
1958	42/349	12,0%	28/200	14.0%			4/300	1,3%	8/579	1,4%		
1959					13/150	8.7%						
1960	43/349	12,3%										
1961							2/300	0,7%		5/144	3,5%	
1962			27/200	13.5%				8/482	1,7%			
1963					14/150	9.3%	1/300	0,3%				
1964	44/349	12,6%					2/300	0,7%				
1965									4/144	2,8%		
1966			33/200	16.5%								
1967					12/150	8.0%			11/487	2,3%		
1968	53/349	15,2%						8/487	1,6%			
1969									2/144	1,4%		
1970	49/349	14,0%	43/200	21.5%								
1971					13/150	8.7%						
1972			43/200	21.5%	15/150	10.0%						
1973	74/349	21,2%						8/490	1,6%	4/144	2,8%	
1974							6/300	2,0%				
1975			46/200	23.0%								
1976	75/349	21,5%										
1977					18/150	12.0%	10/300	3,3%		7/144	4,7%	
1978								20/491	4,1%			
1979	92/349	26,4%	52/200	26.0%								
1980												
1981					27/150	18.0%	13/300	4,3%	26/491	5,3%	9/144	5,4%
1982	95/349	27,2%			29/150	19.3%				7/166	4,2%	
1983			62/200	31.0%								
1984												
1985	108/349	30,9%					10/300	3,3%				
1986					30/150	20.0%			34/577	5,9%		
1987			63/200	31,5%						13/166	6,6%	
1988	131/349	37,5%							33/577	5,7%		
1989					38/150	25.3%	17/300	5,7%		13/166	7,8%	
1990							16/300	5,3%				
1991	115/349	33,0%	77/200	38.5%								
1992										20/166	12,0%	
1993							19/300	6,3%	35/577	6,1%		
1994	141/349	40,4%			49/150	32.7%						
1995			67/200	33.5%								
1996							19/300	6,3%				
1997									63/577	10,9%	20/166	12,0%

1998	149/349	42,7%		54/150	36,0%			
1999			74/200	37,0%				
2000						26/300	8,7%	
2001								
2002	158/349	45,3%		55/150	36,7%		71/577	12,3%
2003			75/200	37,5%	56/150	37,3%		23/166
2004						42/300	14,0%	
2005								
2006	165/349	47,3%		58/150	38,7%			
2007						48/300	16,0%	107/577
2008							18,5%	23/166

- ¹ Website: Statistics Sweden
- ² Website: Statistics Finland - *Women as percentage of elected MP's by party in Parliamentary elections 1945 – 2003, number and %*
- ³ Website: Parlement & Politiek
- ⁴ List provided by National Parliament through email
- ⁵ Website: Assemblée Nationale - *Les femmes élues députés depuis 1945*
- ⁶ Website: Oireachtas

	Year women received right to vote	Year right to stand for election	Year first woman elected/appointed to parliament
Sweden	1921	1921	1921
The Netherlands	1919	1917	1918
Finland	1906	1906	1907
France	1944	1944	1945
Ireland	1918	1918	1923
Greece	1952	1952	1952

Appendix 4: Labour force statistics

Table 8: Labour force survey – Annual results 2006

	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Total employment (1000)						
<i>Total</i>	4 429	2 443	8 261	4 452	24 770	2 039
<i>Men</i>	2 331	1 266	4 552	2 727	13 298	1 172
<i>Women</i>	2 099	1 178	3 709	1 725	11 472	866
<i>Women %</i>	47.39%	48.22%	44.90%	38.75%	46.31%	42.47%
Total employment rates ⁱ						
Age 15-64						
<i>Total</i>	73.1	69.3	74.3	61.0	63.0	68.6
<i>Men</i>	75.5	71.4	80.9	74.6	68.5	77.7
<i>Women</i>	70.7	67.3	67.7	47.4	57.7	59.3
Age 55-64						
<i>Total</i>	69.6	54.5	47.7	42.3	37.6	53.1
<i>Men</i>	72.3	54.8	58.0	59.2	40.1	67.7
<i>Women</i>	66.9	54.3	37.2	26.6	35.2	39.1
Part-time employment as a share of total employment						
<i>Total</i>	25.1	14.0	46.2	5.7	17.2	-
<i>Men</i>	11.8	9.3	23.0	2.9	5.7	-
<i>Women</i>	40.2	19.2	74.7	10.2	30.6	-
Employed persons aged 15 and more by economic activity (main job)						
Agriculture						
<i>Total</i>	2.2	4.7	3.3	5.0	3.9	5.7
<i>Men</i>	3.3	6.4	4.3	6.7	5.3	9.0
<i>Women</i>	1.0	2.8	2.1	3.2	2.4	1.3
Industry						
<i>Total</i>	21.9	25.7	20.2	33.6	24.2	27.5
<i>Men</i>	33.3	38.5	30.0	45.6	35.0	39.4
<i>Women</i>	9.3	11.9	8.2	21.6	11.8	11.3
Market services						
<i>Total</i>	37.5	36.8	41.9	35.3	36.6	39.2
<i>Men</i>	43.0	38.3	44.1	34.0	38.0	36.3
<i>Women</i>	31.5	35.2	39.1	36.6	35.0	43.1
Non-market services						
<i>Total</i>	38.3	32.8	34.6	26.2	35.2	27.6
<i>Men</i>	20.4	16.8	21.7	13.7	21.8	15.3
<i>Women</i>	58.2	50.1	50.6	38.6	50.8	44.3

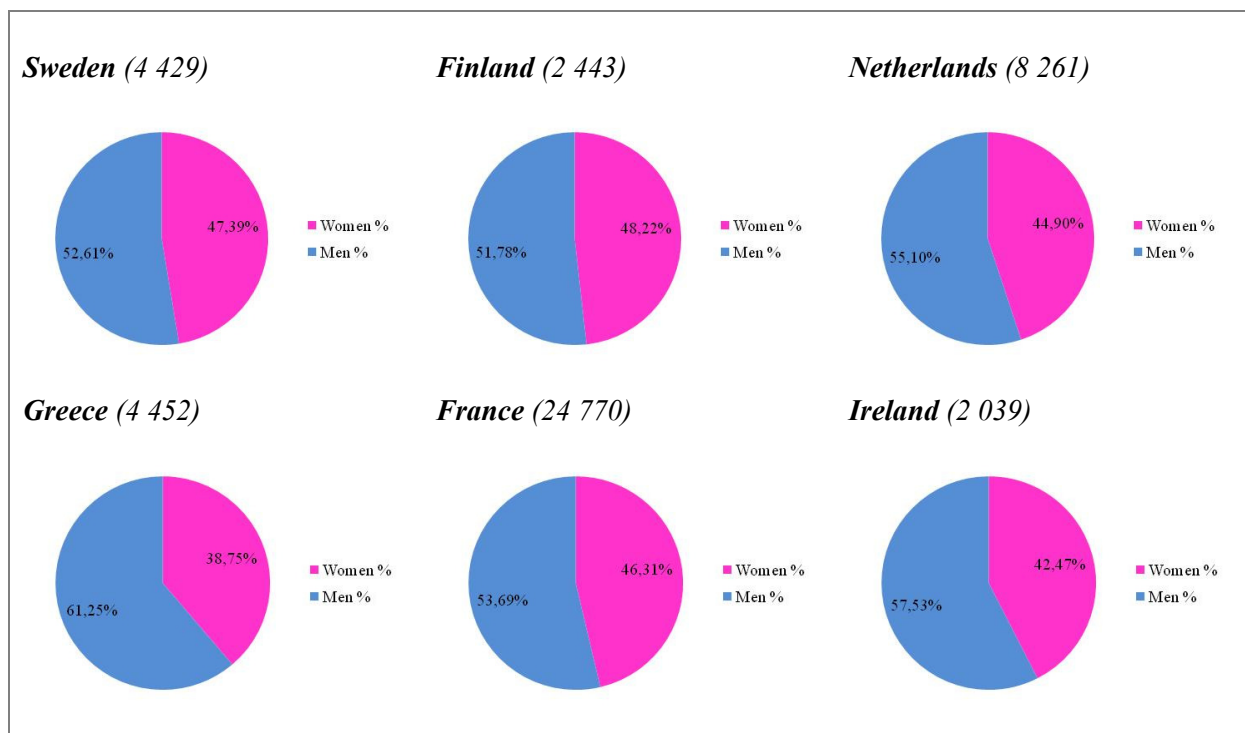
	Sweden	Finland	Netherlands	Greece	France	Ireland
Skilled non manual						
<i>Total</i>	44.3	44.1	47.5	40.0	39.1	38.1
<i>Men</i>	43.2	43.6	47.7	34.4	39.9	37.2
<i>Women</i>	45.6	44.7	47.2	45.6	38.2	39.3
Low skilled non manual						
<i>Total</i>	27.8	22.8	26.5	17.8	24.7	30.1
<i>Men</i>	14.5	9.0	15.2	7.6	11.8	15.7
<i>Women</i>	42.5	37.5	40.1	27.8	39.4	49.4
Skilled manual						
<i>Total</i>	21.8	24.9	16.6	32.1	26.2	22.7
<i>Men</i>	36.8	40.6	27.6	49.7	41.8	36.5
<i>Women</i>	5.3	8.2	3.2	14.7	8.4	4.0
Elementary occupations						
<i>Total</i>	6.0	8.2	9.4	10.1	10.0	9.2
<i>Men</i>	5.4	6.9	9.5	8.3	6.5	10.6
<i>Women</i>	6.6	9.5	9.4	11.9	14.0	7.3
Employees aged 15 and more						
Number of employees						
<i>Total</i>	3 955	2 129	7 207	595	21 979	1 704
<i>Men</i>	1 978	1 051	3 866	287	11 392	896
<i>Women</i>	1 978	1 078	3 342	308	10 587	808
Usual hours worked per week						
Full timeⁱⁱ						
<i>Total</i>	39.9	39.2	38.9	41.0	39.1	-
<i>Men</i>	39.9	40.1	39.1	41.6	39.8	-
<i>Women</i>	39.8	38.2	38.1	40.4	38.0	-
Part time						
<i>Total</i>	25.4	20.5	19.5	20.8	23.2	-
<i>Men</i>	21.5	19.5	19.3	21.5	22.7	-
<i>Women</i>	26.5	20.9	19.6	20.6	23.3	-
% of employees with limited duration contract						
<i>Total</i>	17.3	16.4	16.6	2.7	13.5	3.4
<i>Men</i>	15.4	12.6	15.4	3.3	13.0	2.9
<i>Women</i>	19.1	20.0	18.0	2.2	14.0	3.9
Total unemployment (1000)						
<i>Total</i>	337	204	336	41	2 477	93
<i>Men</i>	173	101	167	21	1 213	56
<i>Women</i>	164	104	169	19	1 263	37
% of unemployed for 1 year and +						
<i>Total</i>	15.2	25.2	43.0	48.2	42.3	32.3
<i>Men</i>	17.0	28.4	45.8	50.6	42.8	39.4
<i>Women</i>	13.2	22.1	40.3	45.6	41.7	21.5

Source: European Communities (2007)

ⁱⁱ Employed/active persons as a percentage of same age total population

ⁱⁱ Full time or part time distinction in the main job is declared by the respondent. Except in the Netherlands (and Sweden for the self employed) where part time is determined if the usual hours are fewer than 35 hours, and full time if the usual hours are 35 or more.

Figure 19: Total employment (1000)



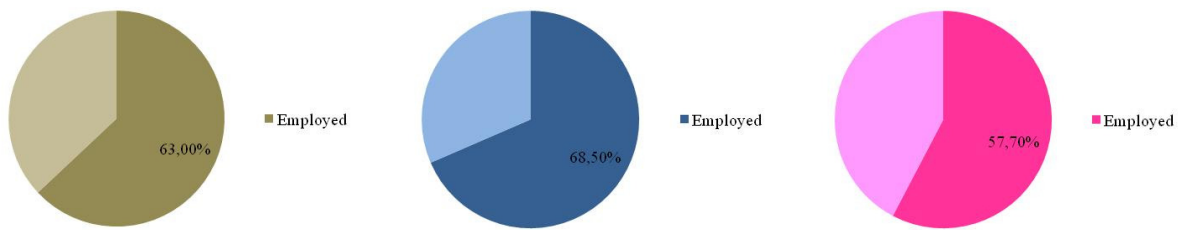
Source: European Communities (2007)

Figure 20: Employment rates (women and men aged 15-64) – 2006 ³¹

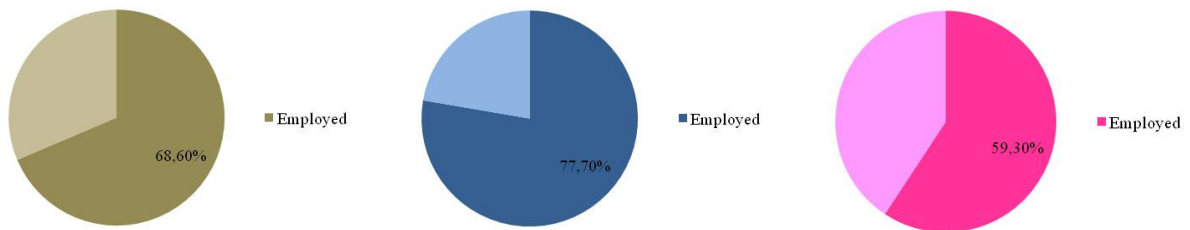


³¹ Employed/active persons as a percentage of same age total population

France



Ireland

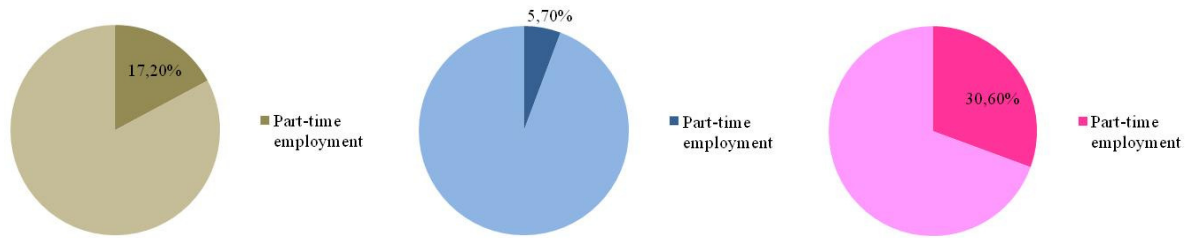


Source: European Communities (2007)

Figure 21: Part time employment as a share of total employment



France



Source: European Communities (2007)

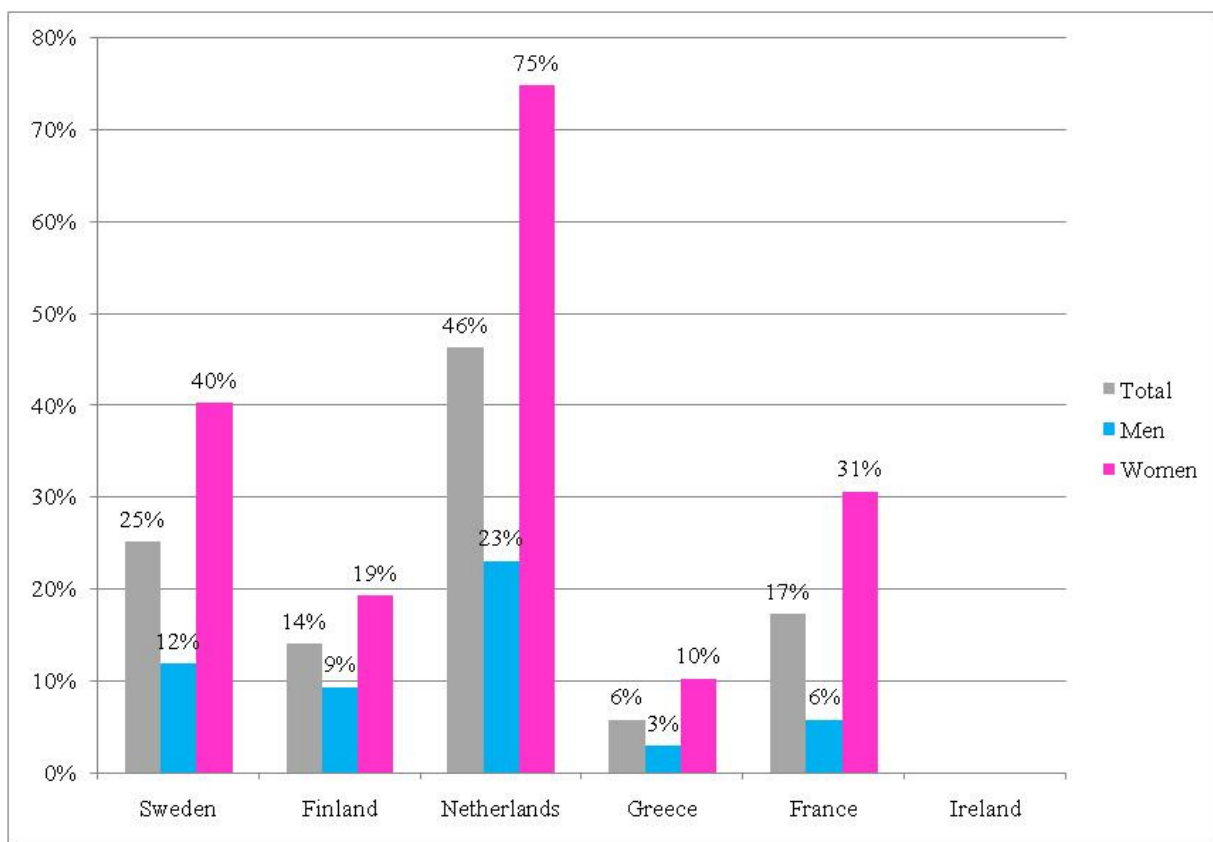
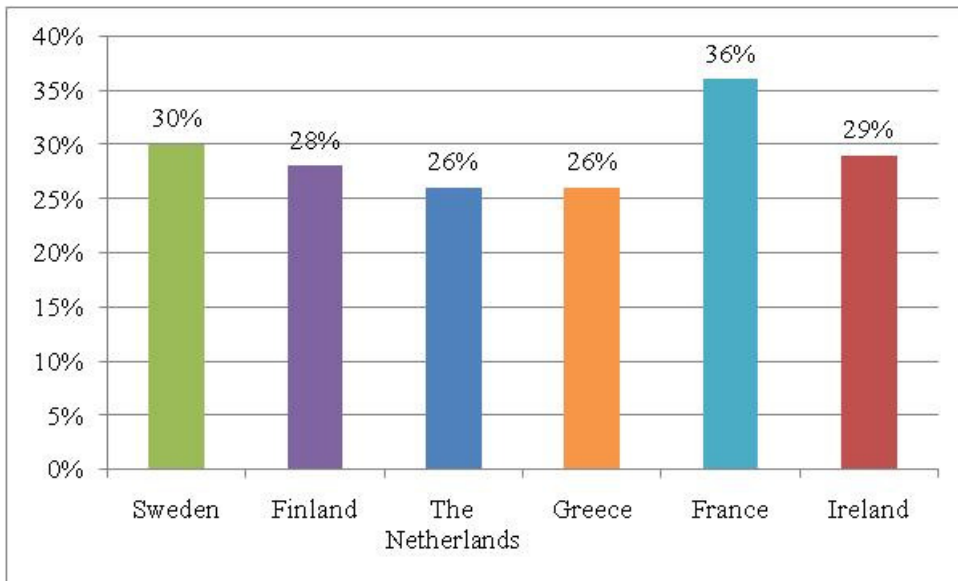


Figure 22: Part time employment as a share of total employment

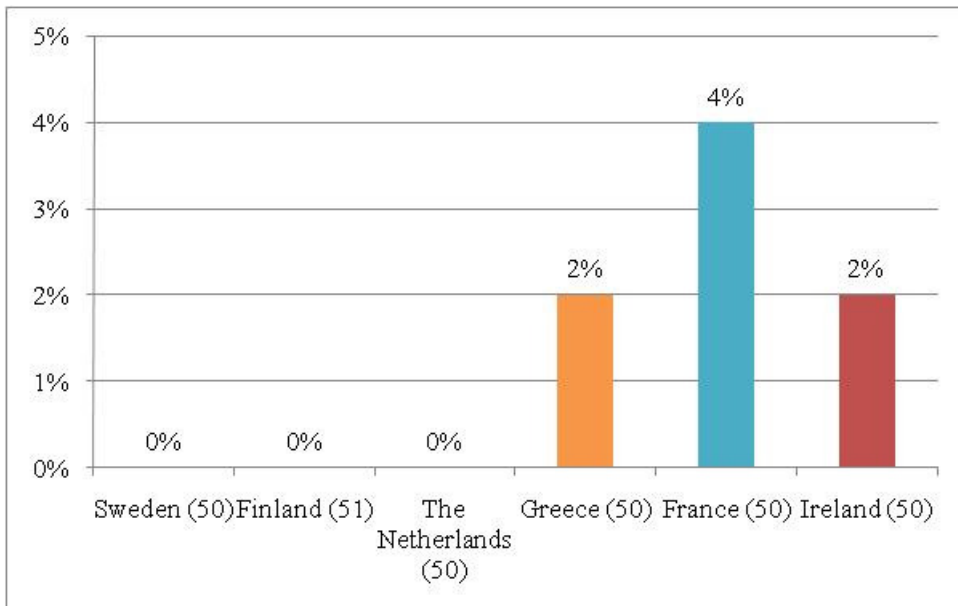
Figure 23: Percentages of women in managerial positions



EU (27) average: 30%

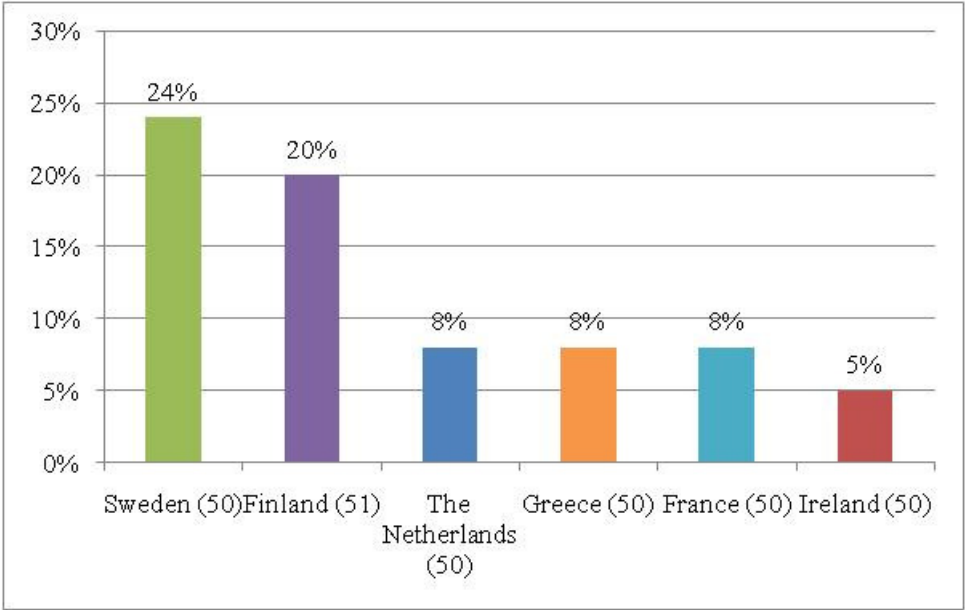
Source: Database: Women and men in decision-making (2006)

Figure 24: Percentage of women presidents of highest decision-making bodies of the largest publicly quoted companies



Source: Database: Women and men in decision-making (2006)

Figure 25: Percentage of women members of the highest decision-making bodies of the largest publicly quoted companies



(number of companies)

Figure 26: Percentage of women employee representatives in the highest decision-making bodies of the largest publicly quoted companies

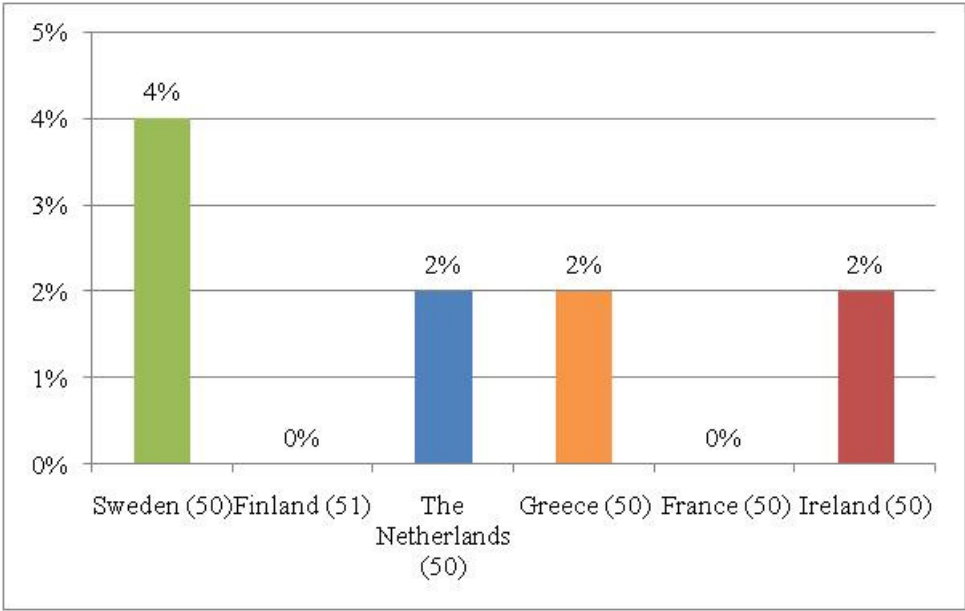
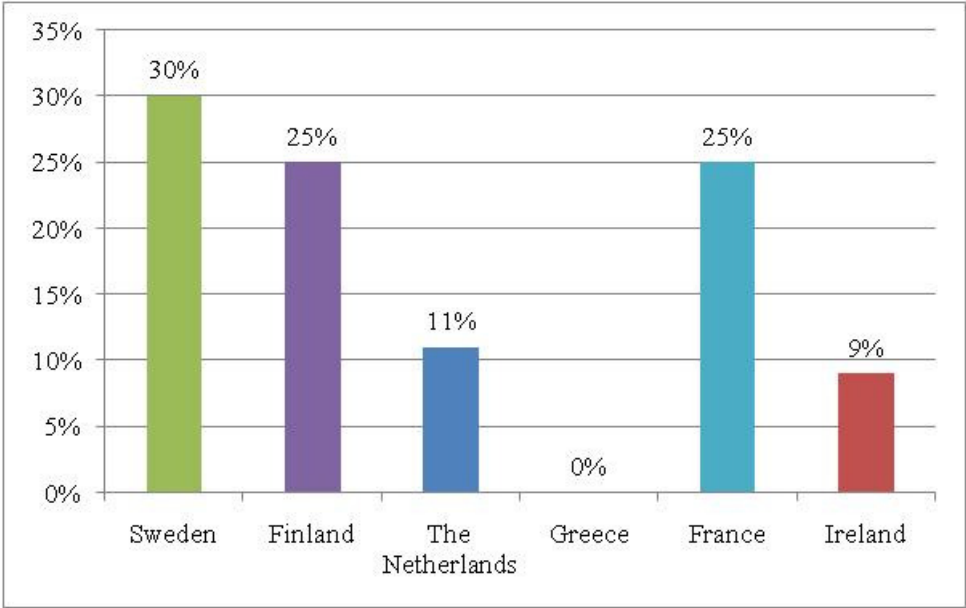


Figure 27: Percentage women members of highest decision-making body Central Banks



EU (27) average: 15%. In France the head of the daily executive body is a woman. She is one of the four women heads in Europe (EU 27) (database: Women and men in decision-making, 2006).