GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN BUSINESS
GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN BUSINESS

Final Report

Prof. Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela
Prof. Tina Kogovšek
Dr Maša Filipovič Hrast
Dr Barbara Lužar
Tjaša Toni, MA

Faculty of social sciences
UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
Client: MINISTRY OF LABOUR, FAMILY AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
Kotnikova 28
1000 Ljubljana
Client's administrator: Maruša Gortnar, MA

Contractor:
Faculty of Social Sciences

Contractor's administrator:
Dr Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela

Title of report:
GENDER EQUALITY IN DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS IN BUSINESS

Authors:
Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela, Maša Filipovič Hrast, Tina Kogovšek, Barbara Lužar, Tjaša Toni

CIP - Kataložni zapis o publikaciji
Narodna in univerzitetna knjižnica, Ljubljana

005.5:316.346.2(0.034.2)

GENDER equality in decision-making positions in business [Elektronski vir]: final report / Aleksandra Kanjuo Mrčela ... [et al.]. - El. knjiga. - Ljubljana : Ministry of labour, family and social affairs, 2015

1. Kanjuo-Mrčela, Aleksandra
280854016
# Contents

1. **Introduction** ................................................................. 5  
2. **Research plan and work methods** .................................. 7  
3. **Conceptual bases and review of research to date** ............... 11  
   3.1 Under-representation of women in decision-making positions in Slovenia, Europe and the USA ................................................................. 11  
   3.2 Reasons for the low number of women in decision-making positions in business . . . 13  
   3.3 Measures in selected European countries and the USA .................. 17  
   3.4 Laws, public policy and measures at the organisational level in Slovenia........... 23  
   3.5 Arguments for and against the introduction of quotas for decision-making positions in the business sector .............................................. 27  
4. **Presentation and interpretation of results of the empirical part** ... 33  
   4.1 Sample............................................................................. 33  
   4.2 Career path of female and male managers ................................. 34  
   4.3 Current work of survey respondents......................................... 38  
   4.4 Striking a balance between the private and professional lives of female and male managers ................................................................. 41  
   4.5 Opinion of female and male managers about women and men in management . . . 43  
   4.6 Measures for achieving gender equality in decision-making positions in the business sector ................................................................. 47  
5. **Conclusions and proposals for further measures and policies** ... 53  
6. **References** ......................................................................... 57

This publication is a part of the Include.All project, co-financed by the European Union from the funds of the PROGRESS programme. The European Commission is not responsible for the content and its further application, since it represents the views of the project implementing party. The Include.All project is co-implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the Managers’ Association of Slovenia and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption.
1. Introduction

The purpose of the research is to contribute to the understanding of the personal, social and organisational circumstances and factors that influence the promotion of men and women to the highest positions in Slovenian business. Past research on the position of women in Slovenian management (Kanjuo Mrčela 1996, 2000; Petelinkar 2005) has revealed various problems which women face on the path to decision-making positions and in their work as managers, and which are usually associated with existing stereotypes regarding the gender-determined roles of men and women in organisations and in private life. Particular attention in this research project was paid to factors which were shown to be important in previous research (such as the problems of balancing professional and private life). The research was designed to contribute in particular to the understanding of factors which have been under-researched or not researched at all, and which relate to organisational human resource and promotion policies.

Therefore we analysed the following from the perspective of gender equality:

a) the career paths and current position of female and male managers in Slovenia,
b) the balancing of the private and professional lives of female and male managers,
c) the opinions of female managers about women and men in senior management positions and about possible/feasible measures for achieving gender equality in decision-making positions in business.
2. Research plan and work methods

The main purpose of the research was to collect new data in an area which has not been systematically analysed in Slovenia to date on a large sample population of female and male managers. In the first months of our research our tools and research plan were based on conducting a follow-up review of the existing research results abroad and in Slovenia. Our research plan and tools were designed on the basis of the participation of the researchers in international projects which deal with the subject of the research or related areas.

Our main instrument of research was surveys, through which we sought to capture the largest possible sample of female and male Slovenian managers. We were aware that the response rate is reduced in large surveys; therefore, during the sampling process and final survey design, we attempted to achieve the optimal ratio between the scope and depth of the research and the expected response level of the female and male respondents.

Data collection was conducted from April to August 2014 in several phases and in cooperation with various stakeholders important for the content of the research. We collected the majority of the data through an online survey (1ka online survey programme (www.1ka.si)\(^1\)) by sending a link to the survey to email addresses from four relevant databases and/or by publishing the link on the websites of the relevant stakeholders. The survey questionnaire was distributed between the male and female respondents in paper form at two points in time. The details of the data collection procedure are described below.

Owing to the expected relatively small response to the survey we initially planned to collect data from multiple sources and to send the survey to as many addresses as possible. The basic plan was to collect the data with the help of the professional association Manager and the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services (AJPES). It became apparent during the data collection preparation phase that, on the basis of the data that the agency was able to supply, it was not possible to prepare a list of addresses of stakeholders relevant to the research.

In the first phase we sent an email message regarding the survey to approximately 1100 addresses from the Manager database, on 10 April and 5 May 2014. Subscribers to the Vključi.Vse e-newsletter were informed about the survey on 12 May 2014 (approximately 500 addressees). Due to the low number of responses we decided to increase the sample by sending the survey to the addresses listed in the databases of various other stakeholders important to the content of the research project.

An invitation to complete the survey was sent on 16 April 2014 to 4,036 email addresses belonging to female business managers, academics and civil servants, together with an invitation from Planet GV to a conference titled Excellence of Female Managers. The survey was also distributed in person to participants in the Excellence of Female Managers conference. The conference was held on 3 June 2014, and was attended by approximately 90 participants.

---

\(^1\) The authors of the report would like to thank Maja Mrzel for her assistance in the implementation of the surveys and the statistical processing thereof.
The survey was also distributed to 60 people, primarily young male and female managers (up to 44 years of age), at an event called 4 x 10 Minutes on International Experiences, which was held on 28 August 2014 at the Krka conference hall in Ljubljana.

We also attempted to increase the sample by using the list of members of the Slovenian Human Resources Association. An invitation to complete the survey was sent to 1,088 email addresses belonging to human resources managers and others who receive information through the Slovenian Human Resources Association's website. The announcement was made in two monthly HR newsletters on 6 May and 3 June 2014, and was also sent as an independent invitation on 22 May 2014. Upon the publication of the monthly newsletters the information was also posted on the Slovenian Human Resources Association's Facebook page, with a link to the newsletter, where an invitation to complete the survey was also published.

The invitation to complete the survey was also sent to the mailing list of the Slovenian Marketing Association (approximately 600 members) on 7 May 2014 as part of their e-news. The invitation to complete the survey was also published on the Association’s Facebook page.

The invitation was also sent to 750 email addresses from the Slovenian Public Relations Association on 16 May 2014. On 18 May 2014 the invitation to complete the survey was also published on the Slovenian Public Relations Association’s Facebook page, website and Twitter profile.

We received a total of 194 completed surveys (154 on 1ka and 40 on paper). After cleaning the data, 151 surveys (115 on 1ka and 36 on paper) were included in the final analysis. Despite intensive efforts we were unable to achieve the required level of response to the survey to allow us to carry out a more complex analysis. In spite of this, however, the sample size allowed us to carry out a basic descriptive analysis and a bivariate analysis according to certain characteristics of the respondents (gender, position within the company). Although we cannot assume that the sample obtained is representative for the population of male and female managers in Slovenia, the size and breadth of its recruiting channels are sufficiently large to serve as the basis for a sufficiently informative preliminary analysis of the situation in the research area concerned. We also feel that it is important to point out that this is the first such broad and systematically designed research project in Slovenia. Although the sample does not allow for generalisations covering the entire population, in order to reveal more significant differences in the viewpoints of male and female managers we did indicate the points in which the differences in the responses are statistically significant by gender. We used the basic descriptive statistics method for the analysis, and we also used an independent samples t-test and a chi-square test to check the differences between the genders.

After collecting the data with the help of the survey we also held a group expert workshop. We invited business professionals and researchers in the field of gender equality and organisations to share their thoughts in a guided discussion (Prof. Maca Jogan (FDV), Prof. Nevenka Černigoj Sadar (FDV), Prof. Milica Antić Gaber (FF), Sonja Šmuc (Manager Association), Boris Dular (Krk), Tomaž Berločnik (Petrol), Franci Pliberšek (MIK), Boštjan Škufer Zauseršek (Simobil) and Tjaša Kolenc Filipčič (Triglav).\)

The advantage of the research approach employed is that it struck a balance between the academic and business spheres in the formation of recommendations for policies and measures.

We held several meetings and were in constant contact with the commissioner of the research (Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs). The meetings were intended to provide a forum

---

2 The expert workshop was carried out with 8 participants; Ms Tjaša Kolenc Filipčič could not attend due to other business obligations.
for exchanging opinions and obtaining comments from the client regarding the research and the preparation of the professional bases for research in the field, as well as for harmonisation with other work on the Vključi.vse project, within the framework of which this research was conducted.

During the course of the research, as can be seen, we included the relevant stakeholders from three areas – academic/research, business (professional workshop) and political/institutional (active cooperation with the client). The inclusion of a wider circle of participants contributed not only to the higher quality of the work performed but also to increased opportunities for later effective dissemination of the research results and the measures and policies proposed on its basis to a broad and diverse audience (academic, political and business).
3. Conceptual bases and review of research to date

Business management positions have long been a subject of analysis in sociological and organisational literature, which contributes to the understanding of economic events and the distribution of power in organisations, corporate systems and society. In the second half of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st centuries, the gender dimension was introduced into business administration analysis, revealing the masculinity of the management profession and managerial work. Research revealed various causes of vertical professional segregation by gender and noted a connection between the general gender arrangements in place and the obstacles to gender equality in the corporate world. Below we present empirical data and results of analyses which indicate gradual changes in the area under consideration and establish the reasons for them. The data relate to the Slovenian economic environment and, in order to contextualise the research, certain European countries and the USA. Environments were selected in which either noticeable changes have occurred in the past few decades and/or well-developed research has been conducted in the field in question.

3.1 Under-representation of women in decision-making positions in Slovenia, Europe and the USA

In October 2013 in the European Union, women accounted for 17.8% of senior management positions in the largest publicly traded companies (Figure 1), of whom less than 3% were CEOs of those companies. In comparison with data for April 2013, the percentage of women in senior management positions had increased by 1.2% (from 16.6%), but despite this women make up a quarter of the membership of executive bodies in only five European countries (Finland, France, Latvia, Sweden and the Netherlands; European Commission, 2014). The percentage of women on the boards of directors3 of the largest American companies (which characteristically have a single-tier system of corporate governance) on the Fortune 500 list in 2012 was 16.6% (Catalyst 2013f), and 16.9% in 2013 (Catalyst 2014). In 2013, 4.2% of the CEOs of these companies were women (Catalyst 2013d).

In Slovenia the percentage of women in decision-making positions at the largest publicly traded companies was higher in the same period than the European average (21.6% in October 2013) (European Commission 2014) and the percentage in the USA, but even so it is not very high if we take into account the fact that the majority of women in Slovenia are highly educated (60% of all new college graduates are women) and part of the workforce (the employment rate of women in 2011 was 64.8%). At lower levels of management the percentage of women is higher, but the higher you go on the hierarchical scale of the organisation/company, the fewer women there are. For instance, in 2010, 29.5% of female managers worked in production

---

3 In the text we use the term “board of directors” when speaking about countries that use single-tier corporate governance systems and the term “management board” or “board” when speaking about countries that use two-tier corporate governance systems or countries with different systems.
and operational units, 45.9% in other company units, 26.4% were directors and members of management boards and 32.9% were directors and CEOs (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia 2010).

Figure 1: Representation of women and men on the management boards of the largest public limited companies in the EU, October 2013

In Slovenia there are more women in decision-making positions in other institutions; in 2013 the senior management of the Bank of Slovenia comprised 40% women (the EU-28 average was 18%) and the senior management of the Supreme Court of the Republic of Slovenia comprised 37% women (the EU-28 average was 35%), while the national parliament comprised 33% women and the Government of the Republic of Slovenia comprised 21% women (European Commission database on women and men in decision-making positions, 2014).

In the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men, the European Commission as early as 2010 set the question of the representation of women in senior management positions high among its policy issues. In March 2011 the Commission called on companies to self-regulate with regard to gender equality on supervisory boards. Since not much progress was made over the course of a year, in November 2012 the European Commission proposed the introduction of quotas that would offer women greater opportunities in selection processes. The European Commission’s proposal is at least 30% representation of women among board members by 2015 and 40% by 2020. On 20 November 2013 the European Parliament voted decisively in support of the directive. The Directive is currently being discussed by the EU Council (European Commission 2014).

European Commission data (European Commission 2014) show that the situation in Slovenia and Europe regarding gender equality in decision-making positions in business is gradually improving, since the percentage of women in senior management positions at the largest publicly traded companies in October 2013 had increased in comparison with data from October 2010 in 22 of the 28 European Union Member States. The largest growth was in France (17.4 p.p.), Slovenia (11.8 p.p.), Italy (10.4 p.p.), the Netherlands (10.2 p.p.) and Germany (8.8 p.p.) (Figure 2) (ibid.). All of the countries listed except Slovenia and Germany (only the cities of Berlin and Nuremberg) introduced statutory quotas in public limited companies. By way of comparison, the percentage of women on boards of directors in the USA, where no quotas
were introduced, increased by just 0.9 p.p. (Catalyst 2014b). The data indicate that significant improvements occurred primarily in countries which adopted or plan to adopt statutory measures or held intensive public debates on the issue of equal gender representation in decision-making positions.

**Figure 2:** *Change in the percentage of women in management boards, EU, 28 October 2010 – October 2013*

![Graph of percentage points change in management boards]

*Source: European Commission, database on women and men in decision-making positions*

The discussion on gender equality in decision-making positions in Slovenian business had been marginalised until recently, but the topic has gained importance with the European Commission’s initiative.

### 3.2 Reasons for the low number of women in decision-making positions in business

Research in Slovenia and other countries (Burke and Mattis 2000; Vinnicombe et al. 2008; Kanjuo Mrčela 1996) indicate that the reasons for the low number of women in decision-making positions in business can be found at **three levels** (individual, organisational and social). At the **individual level** the causes are associated with a lack of suitable experience and competences among women, their lower level of ambition, self-confidence, larger number of obligations outside the work environment and fewer management skills. Many researchers (Burke and Mattis 2000, Terjesen et al. 2008, Singh et al. 2008) note that, in the past three decades, women have significantly increased their human capital and also acquired experience in management positions, but this has not significantly increased their presence in senior management positions. It is important to point out the connections between personal and structural factors. Certain characteristics are frequently attributed to and expected of all women or all men, irrespective of whether they actually possess them. Examples are the expectation that women have higher levels of emotion and empathy, and that men have higher levels of courage and rationality. **Statistical discrimination** affects and precludes promotion, even for
very ambitious women without care obligations,\(^4\) while for men, with regard to promotion, gender functions as a “glass elevator” (invisible accelerator) even in environments in which one could expect the promotion of women, e.g. in feminised occupations, organisations or industries. Men, who are expected to advance, are frequently put in situations in which they can acquire the relevant experience and demonstrate leadership potentials. Wharton (2012) believes that “discrimination in hiring” is more unconscious than conscious among employers, who are burdened with prejudices regarding the qualities and abilities of men and women.

Unconscious prejudices associated with gender play a significant role in employment procedures and promotion. The unconscious prejudices were discussed by Wennerås and Wold (1997) in their evaluation of excellence in science in their well-known article “Nepotism and sexism in peer-review”. They found that both male and female evaluators of applications for postdoctoral fellowships were biased, as female applicants for postdoctoral fellowships needed to have 2.5 times more publications in order to receive the same evaluation. Wennerås and Wold pointed to the results of several studies which indicated that women and men evaluate the quality of men’s work as higher than that of women when they know the gender of the individual, but not when the gender of the same individual is unknown. After the pioneering work of Wennerås and Wold, numerous analyses addressed gender bias in the evaluation of excellence in scientific work and achievements, and showed that “excellence” is a socially constructed concept and that men and women in certain fields expect it of and ascribe it to men more than women.

The type of experiences possessed is also related to the opportunities offered. Women are often placed in positions which turn out to be “one-way streets” (or hitting “glass walls”) with respect to promotion (e.g. working in human resources, from the ranks of which senior management is rarely recruited), while men are more often placed in strategically important areas (e.g. sales, production or finance, from which senior management is frequently recruited) (The Glass Ceiling Commission 1995b, iv, p. 15; Kanjuo Mrčela 2000, p. 58; The Economist 2010; Barsh 2011). At the organisational level there are invisible, informal obstacles to gender equality (“glass ceilings”) in organisational cultures, hiring methods, bonuses and work organisation, which are characterised by various forms of discrimination against women due to the existence of social definitions of male and female workers and jobs, closed/internal labour markets, non-transparent hiring processes, informal male networks, a lack of female manager role-models, managers who are inclined towards the promotion of men, and the queen bee syndrome, which refers to the fact that many female managers do not support the promotion of women (due to the fear that they will be identified with other women and therefore degraded from the status of “exceptional woman”), double standards in the evaluation of success of men and women and the existence of unconscious prejudices. The prevailing methods of work organisation, such as a culture of long working days, are androcentric, as men adapt to them better than women (the majority of whom, and more frequently than men, provide care and have difficulties delegating it to other family members). Such practices are even more intensive during times of economic uncertainty, such as, for example, the current economic and financial crisis.

Analyses indicate that structural factors – the number and positions of men and women in an organisation – also determine the aspirations and behaviour of men and women. Rosabeth Moss Kanter pointed this out as early as 1977 in her work Men and Women of the Corporation,

\(^4\) Research has shown that female managers are less likely to decide to have a family than their male colleagues (Wacjman 1998) due to gender-specific pressures in the highest positions (e.g. the feeling that they must constantly prove themselves, Singh et al. 2007).
where she defined the concept of “token” women, stigmatised not due to their gender, but due to their lack of numbers. The McKinsey Company Report (2007) confirms the existence of the phenomenon of tokenism and finds that if there are only one or two women in decision-making positions, they feel marginalised and isolated from discussions and socialising, often with the assumption that they advocate issues seen primarily as “women's” (Bilimoria 2000). If there are three or more women in decision-making positions, this creates a critical mass which leads to more balanced communication and cooperation. The primacy of men in executive positions leads to a situation in which the management practice and corporate culture are suffused with values and images that are more familiar to men than women, which puts women in an isolated position. It is difficult for women to advance in such an environment. Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) state that women prefer less competitive environments. In a series of laboratory experiments, Gneezy, Niederle and Rustichini (2003) found that women are even more lacking in ambition when they have to compete with men for senior management positions, even though in the test groups women and men were equally successful at work. Competition is a particularly big challenge for women when it happens in a male-dominated environment (Pande and Ford 2011).

The literature reveals highly varied findings with regard to the effect of a CEO’s gender on work organisation methods and on his/her management style. Some analyses have indicated that female managers have a specific style of management and organisation for their own work and that of others. In 1990, Sally Helgesen repeated Mintzberg’s classic analysis of the work of managers (from 1968), but instead of male managers (whom Mintzberg had studied) she analysed female managers and found that in comparison with Mintzberg’s managers, women worked at a different tempo, planned their work and non-work activities better; had more personal and written contacts; were more committed to the “ecology of leadership”; expressed a higher level of identification with their job; and exchanged more information with their colleagues. Later research (including in Slovenia) indicated fewer differences between men and women. It is possible that Helgesen’s results have been affected by time (several decades have passed between her and Mintzberg’s research) and other factors, which have not been taken into account as much as gender. On the basis of data on the growing flexibility and precarity of employment and work organisation within companies, today it seems that despite the desirability of “feminine” management styles (people-orientated, democratic, taking account of the need for balancing work and private life), radically different and less friendly work organisation and management styles are increasingly present, and both male and female managers are adapting to them.

The results of older Slovenian research on the reasons for the low number of women in decision-making positions in business revealed individual reasons. In research conducted in 1993 (Kanjuo Mrčela 1996), the interviewees, women and men at senior management positions, named the following reasons for the low number of women at the highest decision-making positions: women’s family obligations, lack of self-confidence, emotional instability, more frequent absence from work, lower expectations of women, and also the existence of stereotypes about female managers and gender-based discrimination in employment and promotion. The interviewees did not recognise the reasons mentioned in the literature on other countries (e.g. about American management), such as a lack of informal connections, lack of female role models, and a negative attitude towards female managers among subordinates.

In research conducted in 2002, female managers named the following reasons for the low number of women in management positions: women’s family obligations (rated 3.7 on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means “I totally disagree” and 5 means “I totally agree”), a lack of informal connections (3.4) and a society which makes it impossible for women to hold high positions
Gender equality in decision-making positions in business

(3.2), while in 1993 by far the highest-ranked reason was a lack of specialist education for women (Kanjuo Mrčela et al. 2012, pp. 211–212; Kanjuo Mrčela 1996, p. 152). The majority of women interviewed in 2002 also stated that they were responsible for half or more than half of the daily household tasks (Kanjuo Mrčela et al. 2012, pp.211–212). Women in 2002 also reported on isolation in a male-dominated environment (a rank of 3), while they less frequently reported on lack of specialist education (2), lack of women's managerial aspirations (2) and men's superior managerial capabilities (1.6). In comparison with 1993, in 2002 far fewer women listed their own characteristics, such as a lack of education or lack of motivation, as the main obstacle. In 2007 the Slovenian magazine Manager conducted research among male and female managers (the majority of respondents were CEOs and their assistants and deputies) on the topic of women in senior management positions (Humar 2007 in Toni 2014). The respondents named the following reasons for the lower number of women (than men) in influential positions: an established tradition regarding the division of gender roles in society (37.5%), women being less ambitious (17%), women not knowing how to promote themselves (15%), women being obstructed by their male colleagues (12.9%), women being too thin-skinned (9.1%), women not exploiting social networks well enough (7.7%) and women being less capable (0.8%).

Although women are supposed to be more skilled in interpersonal relationships, in the business world success in communication and contacts with (important) other people are shown to be male advantages. Thus the research indicates that women are still frequently excluded from informal networks (so-called “old boys networks”) and that they lack social capital (Burt, 1998). This indicates a lack of appropriate mentorship or sponsorship of younger/less experienced women. There are also fewer women who can be role models to other women.

The level of gender equality with respect to holding decision-making positions also depends on the institutional and broader social framework, which can either promote or obstruct an increase in the number of women in decision-making positions in business (legislative measures, corporate governance codes, laws in the area of gender equality, generally held values and beliefs about the division of labour and gender-based social roles). In European countries and the USA, gender equality (in business) is addressed by national policies and various programmes and measures, in some countries more often at an organisational level (USA and UK), and in others at the level of the state (Norway, Finland, France, Spain and Slovenia). Within the institutional framework, regulations can vary between the “liberal” model, where the state is not involved but supports organisations taking the initiative for increasing the number of women in decision-making positions via less strict regulations that give these organisations a policy framework and encourage the voluntary introduction of gender equality, to “strict laws”, which introduce, for example, gender quotas. The majority of European countries and the USA introduce reforms and measures or corporate governance codes more often than adopting laws that enable increased gender equality in decision-making positions. The choice of policies and measures in different environments is connected to support from the business, political and wider social arenas. Recently, increasing support for gender equality has come from the civil society. Public opinion research in the EU (European Commission 2012a) has shown that the majority of Europeans of both genders see the reasons for under-representation of women in decision-making positions primarily in the prevalence of men in business who do not have enough confidence in women (76%) and the fact that women are more burdened than men by family obligations (68%). A significantly smaller proportion of European women and men believe that the reasons are connected with characteristics which are specific to women, such as:

- women being less prepared to fight for a career (29%)
• women being less interested in holding responsible positions (28%)
• women not always having the necessary qualities and abilities to hold responsible positions (21%).

A large majority of European women and men (88%) agree that women should be equally represented in senior management positions in companies, since they are equally qualified to occupy such positions as men (62%) and because it concerns equal rights between women and men (58%). The participants in the survey stated that in order to achieve balanced gender representation on the management boards of companies they would use independent goal setting in the companies (31%), binding legal measures (26%) and voluntary measures, such as non-binding corporate governance codes in public limited companies (20%). If the legal provisions took into account the strict requirement regarding the qualification of the candidates for the positions, they would be supported by three quarters (75%) of Europeans.

3.3 Measures in selected European countries and the USA

One of the most important measures for ensuring gender equality in decision-making positions in business that has been introduced recently in some European countries is gender quotas. The first country in Europe to implement this measure for management bodies of privately held public limited companies, particularly publicly traded companies, and state and municipal companies was Norway in 2003 (Teigen 2012, p. 71; Storvik and Teigen 2010, p. 4). The greatest advance also occurred in this Scandinavian country, since on the basis of laws on quotas adopted in 2009 women now hold 40% of positions on the boards of publicly traded Norwegian companies (Teigen 2008 in Storvik and Teigen 2010, p. 8). Quotas are well-established in Norwegian politics, but they were a new phenomenon for companies, particularly private ones. Teigen (2012, pp. 74–75) notes that statutory quotas for boards were introduced as a counterbalance to the extreme domination of men in the Norwegian business sector, as in the majority of areas the senior decision-making positions in companies are held by men (84%), and thus form the Norwegian power elite. There is a long-held belief in the Norwegian business world that gender equality has to occur naturally and gradually, i.e. organically. Since there was very little initiative and few women in senior decision-making positions, this prompted the emergence of the political will to introduce quotas (Teigen 2012, p. 77). Their long-standing tradition of promoting gender equality (including the introduction of quotas), which had had more pronounced results in Norway than in other Scandinavian countries, also contributed to the decision (Teigen 2012, p. 75). Statutory quotas which regulate the gender composition of the boards of public companies were introduced as early as 1981 by the Gender Equality Act, which was the only statutory prescription of quotas in Norway for over 20 years. With an amendment to the Companies Act in 2003 the same requirements with regard to quotas were imposed on the boards of public corporations and private companies (Teigen 2012, p. 77). Upon the adoption of the quota legislation, a two-year transitional period was mandated in order for the companies to comply with the quota requirements voluntarily, and the number of women on boards grew significantly during that time. Companies then had until 1 January 2008 to satisfy the statutory requirements regarding quotas because, since 2008, Norwegian law has required that public limited companies have a minimum of 40% representation of each gender on their board. In the event of failure to comply with the law the final penalty is liquidation of the company (Gomez Ansón 2012, pp. 33–34). Statutory regulation of quotas for
Storvik and Teigen (2010, p. 7) list three reasons why the introduction of quotas in Norway was successful. The first is the fact that the introduction of quotas took almost ten years, which means that there was sufficient time for a reasonable introduction, a public debate and obtaining media support. The second factor is sanctions, which in the worst case means the liquidation of the company if it fails to comply with the law. The third important factor is the existence of various databases, in which women who were interested in holding positions as board members entered their details and CVs, and companies had access to those databases to search for suitable candidates. These databases were often accompanied by special programmes designed to train women for board positions.

The most frequently stated reason for why the statutory quotas for boards were not also transferred to many private limited liability companies was that this would have interfered with the autonomy of private ownership. The majority of limited liability companies are family-owned small and medium-sized enterprises, where the owners are also the members of the board. The quotas, despite only being implemented in public limited companies, made it easier for women to access high-powered positions in the Norwegian business sector, since there are not a lot of public limited companies but, in terms of profits and employee numbers, they are the largest and most successful companies in Norway (Teigen 2012, pp. 71–72).

In addition to Norway, mandatory quotas for privately held public limited companies have also been introduced in the following European Union countries: Spain (2007), Belgium (2011), France (2011), Italy (2011) and the Netherlands (2011). The countries differ with regard to sanctions (in some countries, the sanctions for failing to comply with quotas have not been introduced), transitional periods for the introduction of quotas, etc., but they all share the desire to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions in business (Toni 2014). Sweden and the UK are also considering introducing quotas for private companies (Gomez Ansón 2012, p. 32). Fagan and González Menéndez (2012) find that the percentage of women in senior management positions rose in countries in which the quota system has been introduced. According to the European Commission’s report, in October 2013 the countries in question had the following percentages of women in decision-making positions at the largest companies: Belgium 16.7%, France 29.7%, Italy 15.0%, the Netherlands 25.1% and Spain 14.8% (European Commission 2014). In all of these countries the percentage of women had increased in comparison with October 2010: Belgium by 6.3 p.p., France by 17.4 p.p., Italy by 10.4 p.p., the Netherlands 10.2 p.p. and Spain by 5.3 p.p. (ibid.).

According to European Union data from June 2014, the quotas in force at state-owned companies were also introduced in Austria and Greece, and in 2015 the introduction of quotas for supervisory boards of the largest public limited companies is planned in Germany (European Commission 2014, Toni 2014). According to data from the Directorate-General for Internal Policies for 2012, in addition to the countries mentioned, quotas for state-owned companies were also introduced in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium and Italy (Directorate-General for Internal Policies 2012 in Toni 2014).

A less binding measure which was introduced in certain countries is the Corporate Governance Code. It includes recommendations for good practice and is based on voluntary compliance and the “comply or explain” principle. Such measures are examples of so-called non-binding acts, which nevertheless have a significant impact on determining the composition of supervisory boards and management boards or the boards of directors of publicly traded companies.
companies. The corporate governance codes in several European countries recommend a composition which reflects gender diversity, as this ostensibly has a positive effect on the management board's effectiveness. These national codes have a greater impact in countries where companies are required to publish their annual reports, in which they state how they have fulfilled the recommendations of the codes (in accordance with Directive 2006/43/EC on statutory audits of annual accounts and consolidated accounts). The European countries which have introduced corporate governance codes are Finland, Belgium, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK (Gomez Ansón 2012, pp. 35–37). Slovenia has had a corporate governance code since 2009.

In Finland a new corporate governance code was adopted in 2009 and one of its recommendations is that both genders are represented on management boards (Korvajärvi 2012, p. 116). The situation in Finland with regard to the context of women in decision-making positions in business is of interest for Slovenia, since Slovenia and Finland are similar in many ways. Women in Finland are highly educated, well-represented in the labour market and even in lower management and supervisory positions, but not in senior positions (Korvajärvi 2012, p. 117). Similarly, women have held senior positions in politics for many years. Terjesen and Singh (in Korvajärvi 2012, p. 121) believe that women would rather dedicate themselves to careers in politics than in business. Among the reasons for this, Korvajärvi (2012, pp. 125–126) refers to gender segregation in education and professions, which prevents women from acquiring the competences they need to assume senior positions in business. This lack of opportunities for access to senior positions arises from the structural position of women on the labour market, traditionally defined relations between men and women and the cultural understanding of the role of women, competences, gender equality and gender itself (Korvajärvi 2012, pp. 125–127).

Analyses indicate that neither public opinion nor the culture of Finnish organisations is inclined towards the introduction of quotas. The reasons for the differences between the genders in the Finnish economy are understood as individual and personal, not collective and cultural, and therefore legal recommendations, codes of behaviour, programmes for empowering women, support from politicians, media and shareholders are seen as urgently required in order to ensure increased gender equality in decision-making positions and selection procedures for members of company management boards.

The introduction of the code in 2009 brought positive changes, as several companies which previously had had only men in senior positions appointed women to positions on their boards after the introduction of the code (Hart, Kovalainen and Holli 2009 in ibid., p. 121). Women also began to take the highest positions, i.e. president of the management boards of public limited companies (Korvajärvi 2012, p. 121). European Commission data indicate that, in October 2013, women in Finnish public limited companies held a full 29.8% of positions in management bodies, which is a 3.9 p.p. increase in comparison with October 2010 (European Commission 2014). However, the total number of positions in management bodies of Finnish companies increased at the same time, which in fact means that the percentage of women in decision-making positions rose only slightly. It is also necessary to take into account the fact that, in 2010, despite heavy promotion of the code, there were still 32 Finnish publicly traded companies without women on their boards. These were primarily small and medium-size enterprises, which have more time to implement the code. This indicates that the feminisation of the management boards of public limited companies is a slow process, and often only one woman is appointed to a management board (Korvajärvi 2012, p. 121).

The position of women in Finnish companies which are (partially or majority) state-owned is better in comparison to the position of women in privately held companies, since they are subject to the Act on Equality between Women and Men 1995), which stipulates that these
companies must have equitable relations between women and men in decision-making positions. Thus, in 2008, women made up 35% of the management boards of state-owned companies, while the figure for publicly traded companies was just 12.6%. The Act on Equality otherwise does not recommend specific percentages with respect to gender representation, but Hart, Kovalainen and Holli (2009 in ibid., p. 116) state that in practice, state-owned Finnish companies as an “equal percentage” follow a ratio of 40:60 for the representation of women to men in senior positions. The presence of women on the management boards of publicly traded companies greatly depends on the scope of state’s ownership in those companies, and partially also on the sector in which the company operates. Women are less present in senior positions in the IT sector and in industry, and much more so in state-owned enterprises energy and telecommunications and finance, where the state has a ownership share and where mergers with Swedish companies have taken place (Korvajärvi 2012, p. 120).

In 2008 Finland adopted the Action Plan for Gender Equality, which gives more precise guidelines on equal gender representation, but this also only applies to state-owned companies. The plan mentions that the Finnish government is committed to the promotion of women in senior positions and that state-owned companies must have a minimum of 40% of each gender in decision-making positions, and the government must take gender equality into account when appointing its candidates. The promotion of women to senior positions is also assisted by the actions of prominent individuals, as, for example, the minister of social affairs and health who in 2006 proposed gender-based quotas for the management boards of Finnish companies in line with the Norwegian model in a column in the Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. Together with the prime minister, he sent 100 of the largest Finnish publicly traded companies a letter in which they invited them to find a way to use women’s professionalism and their competence in decision-making, which can contribute to the success of the company (Linnainmaa 2010 in ibid: 116). In 2012 the Finnish Chamber of Commerce introduced a mentorship programme for women in executive positions, in which women with experience in senior management positions worked as mentors. The programme became so popular that it attracted applications from around 250 women in executive positions, and 42 were selected. The programme took more than a year.

In the United Kingdom neither the state nor companies are inclined towards the introduction of gender/women’s quotas for decision-making positions in business, as both sides are convinced that appointments to board positions have to be made on the basis of needs of companies and the skills and capacities of the candidates (Davies 2011). In the UK the prevailing opinion is that a proactive approach on the part of companies will increase the number of women on boards much faster than legislative force (Davies 2011). Therefore, in 2011, the government, on the basis of the work and research of Lord Davies, issued various recommendations to companies how to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions, and introduced the initiative “Think, Act, Report”, which aimed at promoting gender equality at the workplace. They recommended the percentage of women at positions on boards to companies listed on the London FTSE 350 and FTSE 100 exchange. This meant that companies on the FTSE 350 exchange could set their own targets for how many women they wanted in decision-making positions by 2013 and 2015, while companies on the FTSE 100 had to reach a minimum of 25% women in board positions until 2015 (Davies 2011). By April 2013 the recommendations had been followed by 39 companies on the FTSE 100 and 35 of the remaining FTSE 350 companies (Davies 2013). Some of the recommendations relate to executive positions, i.e. the percentage of women on executive boards by 2013 and 2015 (Davies 2011). In addition, the document invites the companies to make annual disclosures of the percentage of women on their boards and in other senior positions, and the percentage of women employed in the company as a whole (ibid.). In the report, senior managers recruiting companies are encouraged to draft
voluntary codes of conduct and thus support and incorporate the recommendations of achieving more diverse boards in the FTSE 350 companies; into their operations, attention is also paid to investors, who play an important role in encouraging companies to increase the percentage of women in decision-making positions (Davies 2011).

The code of conduct of public limited companies was also amended with the requirement that all companies specify in their annual reports their policy with respect to achieving diversity on the board, the targets they have set to that end, and their plans for implementation. The code also charges companies to take account of diversity when evaluating efficiency (Davies 2011), and since 2010 has also included the requirement that companies when seeking and appointing candidates for positions on boards take account of success and objective criteria, and should also appropriately take account of the advantages of having a diverse board, including gender diversity (Financial Reporting Council 2012). Furthermore, through the “Think, Act, Report” initiative, the government is encouraging companies to demonstrate publicly that they are aware of women’s potential and support transparency of the position of women in the workplace (Government Equalities Office 2014b). As part of this initiative the government invites companies to start thinking seriously about the meaning of gender equality in the workplace – in important areas such as hiring and keeping women at the company, their promotion and pay (ibid.). The government encourages companies to implement measures in areas where needs for change have been identified, and to also report transparently about their measures and programmes and share examples of good practice with others (ibid.). The initiative has received public and voluntary support from 178 companies (Government Equalities Office 2014a in Toni, 2014).

Lord Davies’ data from May 2013 indicate that 17.3% of company board positions on the FTSE 100 were held by women, while they held 13.2% of positions on the boards of FTSE 250 companies (Davies 2013). The percentage of women increased by 6.8 p.p. or 6.5 p.p. since 2010, before the publication of the recommendations (ibid.). According to European Commission data, in October 2013 women held 21.0% of the positions on the boards of the largest British companies, which is a 7.7 p.p. increase since October 2010 (European Commission 2014).

Companies in the UK also independently carry out various initiatives through which they seek to increase gender diversity at all levels, which is important in the long term for ensuring a selection of candidates with sufficient knowledge and experience to hold decision-making positions in organisations: programmes for balancing professional and family life (flexible working hours, shorter working hours, working from home, etc.); maternity programmes which include advice and support for expecting and young mothers in the areas of assertiveness, balancing professional life and the needs of children, career development and maintaining a strategic focus at work; networking programmes and programmes for forming groups with similar interests, through which they seek to connect women within companies and outside of them and make it possible for them to support each other and start thinking about even higher career goals; mentoring and reverse mentoring programmes, in which people in lower positions are mentored by people in senior positions, whereby the latter gain new insights and ideas, and younger employees demonstrate their talent; sponsorship programmes; company promotional programmes for students; and training programmes and workshops which draw attention to unconscious prejudices, etc. (Cranfield School of Management 2013, Government Equalities Office 2014b).

In the United States, similar to the UK, neither business nor politicians are inclined towards government interventions into the business sector such as the introduction of quotas (Gomez Ansónova 2012, p. 34). In comparison with various measures from the past, such as the prohibition of discrimination of employees based on race, skin colour, faith, gender or nationality,
based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission 2013b), in recent times there has been much less government intervention in business in the area of gender equality. One of the rare more wide-ranging measures at the federal level was the introduction of the Diversity Policy Disclosure Rule. This requires companies to disclose whether or not diversity is a factor in considering candidates for nomination to the board of directors – and if so, they have to explain their approach (U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission 2009, 2012; O’Sullivan 2010 in Toni 2014).

In American companies, programmes for ensuring equal opportunities for promotion of women and men are supported more by the needs of the business sector and the desire to stay ahead of the competition than by government orders (Toni 2014). In many American companies, the argument for the need for gender equality is supported by awareness of the diversity of the labour market and the importance of a company’s ability to attract and retain the most talented individuals in order to be successful (Calvert Investments, Inc. 2013 in Toni 2014). In addition, companies want to take advantage of and increase the financial benefits of employment and training of women at their company. Market needs (consumers) also support investment in women’s potential (ibid.). The directors of many companies are aware that there are certain obstacles that block women’s path to senior positions, and they believe that it is the company’s duty to pave the way for promotion for women (Catalyst 1993, pp. 7–8 in Toni 2014). Therefore they have introduced various programmes through which they seek to place more women in decision-making positions (training and programmes for the development of management skills and professional development, planning job succession, mentoring programmes, sponsorship, special committees or people in charge of ensuring equal opportunities, family-friendly policies and programmes, etc.). The logic of these initiatives is that companies which manage human resources strategically and take a proactive approach towards providing women with career opportunities will be able to more quickly exploit the advantages offered by a wide range of talented women who are qualified for senior positions (Dreher 2003, p. 545 in Toni 2014).

In the USA, there are initiatives at the inter-organisational level, i.e. the initiatives and activities of specialised organisations and institutions, such as the (now defunct) Glass Ceiling Commission and Catalyst, whose goal is to create increased opportunities for women in business through research, information and promotional work.

One of the larger challenges for increased participation of women in senior positions – ensuring a sufficient number of suitable candidates – is being solved in the USA through various databases of potential female board members, such as that published in 2010 by Agenda (published by The Financial Times and containing the “Diversity 100” – 100 carefully vetted male and female candidates for membership in corporate boards and leading positions in academic institutions) or the database Diverse Director Datasource from 2014 (Toni, 2014).

Undoubtedly some of the most significant institutional measures in European countries and the USA, which offer both women and men more equal opportunities for establishing themselves in decision-making positions, are measures aimed at striking easier reconciliation of professional and family life.

Maternity leave is provided in the majority of EU countries, and is intended for mothers of new-born children for health reasons and as a social right, and some countries also provide paternity leave, which is intended for fathers of new-born children just after birth (International Network on Leave Policies & Research 2013). In accordance with Directive 2010/18/EU, all EU Member States must provide at least four months’ parental leave, intended for care of the child up to a certain age (ibid.). This type of social arrangement is aimed at making it easier for
Conceptual bases and review of research to date

Young mothers and fathers to balance work and private life, but the results of various research initiatives have shown that these generous social policies, which for the most part are used by women (due to the pressures of social norms and expectations), do not have unequivocal effects on gender equality. Research by two Swedish economists has shown that paid parental leave which lasts a year or longer is a threat to career promotion (Clark 2010 in Toni 2014). According to the results of these studies, women in Nordic countries on average hold between 27 and 37% of management positions, while this percentage in Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA, where maternity leave is more limited, is between 34 and 43% (ibid.). Henrekson and Stenkula (2009, pp. 16–17 in Toni 2014), who compare the systems in the USA and Sweden, state that a significant and legally enforced parental leave for child care usually causes a situation in which women reduce their efforts toward professional promotion and put more time and energy into raising children and household chores (they cite research stating that highly educated women in the USA are more likely to return to work as soon as possible than the same group of women in Sweden (Dex et al. 2005 in ibid.)), and can also lead to increased statistical discrimination of women by employers, since women are always the ones who take on the greater part of the burden of raising and caring for children. Therefore it is necessary to accelerate the development of measures and policies which support gender equality in parenting.

In addition to balancing work and family, other, less institutional forms of support for gender equality in decision-making positions have been implemented in European countries, which are not based on legislation. Research by the Austrian Institute for SME Research (2010) lists certificates, awards and recognition, charters, rankings and collections of examples of good practice among these.

3.4 Laws, public policy and measures at the organisational level in Slovenia

Slovenia has laws and public policy mechanisms at the national level that directly or indirectly affect women's opportunities for employment and promotion. Government policies and measures in Slovenia, in particular in the area of gender equality and balancing work and private/family life, are designed to prevent discrimination and ensure equal opportunities for women and men at different levels, in the context of various procedures and attitudes in employment and in the working environment. These policies and measures are only rarely comprehensively and specifically designed to create possibilities and opportunities for women to hold senior positions in business, but this should be one of their effects (Toni 2014).

In Slovenia equal opportunities for women and men are enshrined by law in the Slovenian constitution (Article 14) as well as the Equal Opportunities for Women and Men Act (ZEMŽM) and the Principle of Equal Treatment Act (ZUNEO). The provisions of the Employment Relationships Act (ZDR) are also important for employment and promotion. When drafting laws and other documents for providing equal rights for women and men, the Slovenian government takes account of international legal bases and starting points for the implementation of measures, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing Declaration and European Community directives, such as Directive 2006/54/EC on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation; it inter alia charges employers in Member
States with promoting the equal treatment of women and men in the workplace, in access to employment, professional qualification and promotion (European Union 2006 in Toni 2014).

The Republic of Slovenia's strategic document for achieving gender equality in various areas of the lives of women and men in Slovenia was the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men 2005–13 (ReNPEMZM). The resolution emphasised the importance of the equal representation of both genders in decision-making positions in the socio-economic sphere, and included its accomplishment among the twenty strategic objectives of gender equality policy (Resolution, p. 4). Two measures were envisaged to achieve this objective: 1) The establishment and implementation of mechanisms for systematic monitoring and support of balanced representation of women and men in decision-making positions in businesses, trade unions, associations and organisations, including special measures and programmes; 2) The establishment and monitoring of EU indicators of decision-making in the socio-economic sphere. In the evaluation of the implementation of the Resolution (Kanjuo Mrčela, Filipovič Hrast and Humer 2013), it was concluded that the objective was appropriately defined, but that the measures and their implementation did not contribute sufficiently to achieving the envisaged objective, since monitoring the indicators allows insight into the current situation, which can serve as the basis for improvements, but does not necessarily lead to increased representation of women in decision-making in business. Therefore it was concluded that in the future it would be necessary to supplement the measures with others that would contribute to systemic solutions, such as the introduction of quotas and support for projects and programmes that at the organisational level and through clearly defined mechanisms would promote balanced gender representation in decision-making processes (Kanjuo Mrčela, Filipovič Hrast and Humer 2013).

In 2004 the Decree on the Criteria for Adherence to the Principle of Gender Representation (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia, no. 103/04) was adopted, which refers to government bodies (consultancy and coordinating bodies, other working bodies and a delegation established by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia), representatives of the government in public companies and other legal entities under public law appointed by the government, and professional councils established by the ministries. The balanced representation of women and men means at least 40% of representatives of one gender in government bodies and professional councils, or among representatives of the government in an individual legal entity under public law. No sanctions have been laid down for failure to adhere to the decree.

In 2013 the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, in cooperation with the Female Managers Section of the Manager Association and the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, began implementing the Vključi.Vse (Include.All) project. As part of this project, in addition to research, information and promotional activities, the Manager Association, with the help of two selected Slovenian companies (Petrol d.d. and MIK Celje d.o.o.), is participating in the development of six modules on the basis of the Vključi.Vse measures and guidelines: determining a target percentage of women in senior management, educational programmes for women and career plans, career mentoring for women (and a recruitment scheme), sponsorship, hiring – of three candidates at least one woman, and targeted management and management of work performance (Manager Association 2014).

In Slovenia there are a few large domestic and multinational companies which implement organisational programmes or measures designed to increase the percentage of women in management, such as programmes for ensuring diversity, family-friendly programmes, flexible working hours and work locations. There are few companies that can be held up as
examples to others in terms of ensuring an increased number of women in senior management positions in comparison with other European countries and the USA (Kanjuo Mrčela et al. 2012, 204). Research from 2011, which was conducted on a sample of one third of the largest employers in the Slovenian economy, indicated that only seven of the 253 participating organisations had adopted by-laws or measures for balanced gender representation in management and executive positions, while six were planning to adopt such a by-law or measure (Robnik 2012, p. 9). The existing by-laws and measures include recommendations, a commitment by the highest decision-making body, rules, a code of business ethics and a defined goal for the development and promotion of women in the development of their careers (ibid.). In just over half of these organisations, the reason for the introduction of such a measure was the organisation’s commitment to the implementation of non-discriminatory employment and promotion, while a smaller percentage of the organisations stated that they want to provide opportunities for women’s potential (ibid.). One of these organisations has set an objective of having at least 20% women in senior positions within two years, while the majority of the organisations do not have precisely defined goals in a single measure – either with regard to time limits or target percentages (ibid.). Among the measures planned for implementation in various organisations in the future is the adoption of a declaration of increased representation of women on the boards of European companies, which was drafted by the European Commission, the adoption of by-laws for regulating this area, the adoption of measures through which organisations will be able to attract more women and thus expand the pool for middle and senior management, the introduction of mentoring programmes and the introduction of mandatory quotas in employment and promotion schemes (ibid.). The main reason put forward for the majority of organisations that have not implemented measures for balancing gender representation in decision-making positions was that they had not yet thought about it, and the rest stated that they already have a balanced representation of women and men in senior management positions, that they do not see any reason to adopt such a by-law, that they had already adopted a by-law on equality in general, that they already have an above-average percentage of women with respect to their sector, that there are fewer women in general in their sector, that they hire based on ability and not based on gender, that people hold positions with respect to their preferences and balance of professional and private life, that women can advance if they want to, that there is no interest in that, etc. (ibid., 10). A small percentage of these organisations expect an initiative and instructions from the state (ibid.).

The Corporate Governance Code, which arose in cooperation with the Ljubljana Stock Exchange, the Slovenian Directors’ Association and the Manager Association (Corporate Governance Code 2009, 2), when defining the composition of supervisory boards also states: “the participation of all genders, age diversity and as much diversity as possible in general” (ibid., p. 11 in Toni 2014). Therefore the Slovenian business sector has also received a document like those in several European countries, which envisages voluntary provisions based on the principle of “comply or explain” (González Menéndez et al. 2012, p. 6; Gómez Ansón 2012, p. 35). This means that companies will either have to adjust their employment methods to the statements in the code or explain their failure to adhere to the recommendations. In addition to the code we have two other documents that support gender equality in decision-making positions in business. Commitment for a Successful Future 15/2020 is a document which was drafted in 2011 by the Manager Association and contains steps that they recommend for managers in order to increase the competitiveness of the Slovenian economy, so that by 2020 Slovenia will be one of the 15 most developed countries in Europe (Manager Association 2013b). One of its essential conditions is increasing the percentage of women in senior management positions to at least 30% by 2015 and 40%
by 2017, which also reflects the gender makeup of the population, employees, percentage of educated inhabitants and equal distribution of talent (ibid.). The Manager Association’s document *Vključi.Vse* (Include.All) from 2012 contains precise guidelines for promoting gender equality. It presents the situation in the area of equality and measures through which companies can promote equality (in education, mentoring, employment plans and processes and success evaluations) (Blatnik et al. 2012). Support measures such as information and communications policies, measures in the area of work time and in the area of family services, maintaining contacts with long-absent co-workers and building your brand (through networking) serve above all to create an organisational environment which enables, supports and encourages the implementation of basic measures for balancing gender representation in decision-making positions (ibid.). The (female) authors of the document call on companies and organisations to “draft new policies which will enable the increased participation of women in management”, and emphasise that companies must themselves choose the measures that are best suited to and effective for their company (ibid., p. 17). The measures have to be adapted to the company’s culture, values and strategic orientations, and it is never reasonable to simply take on certain models from other organisations, since in that way you only introduce measures that are in accordance with their values (ibid.). Furthermore, measures work best if they are implemented in combination with others, since the effect of a combination of measures is greater than the sum of the effects of their individual parts (ibid., p. 16). It is also important that the individual goals be measurable, appropriate, realistic and time-defined in order for the company to be able to achieve them.

One contribution towards ensuring gender equality in business (and thus also in decision-making positions in business) that has been in place in Slovenia for a decade, is obtaining a Family-Friendly Company certificate. This consultancy/auditing procedure verifies and promotes organisational practices which are helpful for striking a balance between one’s professional and private lives. Certificates have been obtained by more than 130 companies and other institutions in Slovenia (Ekvilib Institute 2013).

The Manager Association has conferred two awards for several years: the Female Manager-Friendly Company and Artemida, and thus actively works to promote successful management practices in Slovenian companies, emphasises the importance and role of women in management and executive positions in Slovenian companies and promotes senior female managers and their roles in creating added value in companies and organisations (Manager Association 2013a).

In Slovenia there are initiatives and programmes oriented towards the development of female entrepreneurship, such as the Female Entrepreneurship website, which offers various advice, training and seminars for female entrepreneurs, and the mentoring programme at the Y Institute, which is designed to encourage young female entrepreneurs, facilitate their development and help them realise their potential with the help of experienced mentors (Y Institute 2013). In 2013, the Meta Institute in cooperation with the KonektOn entrepreneurship centre implemented a project called F2F – female entrepreneurs to female entrepreneurs for equal opportunities in entrepreneurship, which offered business mentoring support to women entering the entrepreneurial environment (KonektOn 2013 in Toni 2014).

Another example of good practice with regard to promoting gender equality in Slovenia is the High Heels Club, which was founded by the company Bisnode Slovenija in 2012 to promote meet-ups, mentoring, and the exchange of positive experiences and advice (High Heels Club 2014). The club holds monthly gatherings for women from various areas and sectors, at which they get to know each other, make contacts and plan future business cooperation (ibid.). The
conceptual bases and review of research to date

Club’s other important activities include the mentoring programme and project work among members, in the context of which individuals have access to female experts from various areas and sectors, through which they realise their own projects and ideas (ibid.).

3.5 Arguments for and against the introduction of quotas for decision-making positions in the business sector

Data for Slovenia, some European countries and the USA show that in spite of numerous measures at the organisational and institutional level, women are under-represented at managerial positions in business companies. The decision-making positions in the business sector represent positions of social power which are still mostly occupied by men, even after the introduction of the legal quotas in certain countries (France, Italy, Norway, Spain, the Netherlands and Belgium). At the same time, the most recent European Commission data for 2014 clearly show that the introduction of quotas, in addition to other measures, leads to an increase in the number of women in management positions in the largest listed companies. Numerous authors (Dreher 2003; Welbourne and Cycyota 2007; Storvik and Teigen 2010; Teigen 2012; Antić Gaber and Selišnik 2012; Lansing and Chandra 2012) have for years been noting that the increase in the number of women in the most senior positions has had many positive effects on the successful development of the economy and economic democracy from a gender perspective. There are many different arguments in favour of introducing quotas: the ever present arguments of fairness and democracy, recently also supported by increasingly important business aspects. Provision of gender equality guarantees that the senior positions are occupied by the best individuals. The analyses show that American companies are well aware of the importance of a company’s ability to attract and retain the most talented individuals in order to be successful (Calvert Investments, Inc. 2013 in Toni 2014). In the countries that introduced quotas, these turned out to be an effective mechanism for breaking the “glass ceiling”, i.e. obstacles that prevent women from occupying senior management positions and important decision-making positions in the business sector. Gender quotas in the business sector were introduced in these countries based on the following two criteria: 1) ensuring gender equality and 2) improving economic performance.

Norway is a good example to be analysed in detail, since it was the first country to introduce quotas for decision-making positions and in the business sector and because it has a long tradition of promoting gender equality. At first, the Norwegian public reacted strongly to the introduction of quotas for senior positions in the business sector. Two poles were created: those opposing quotas, i.e. mostly managers in the private industry and representatives of the employer organisations, and those in favour of them, i.e. politicians in senior government positions. One of the more important arguments for introducing gender equality in decision-making positions was the argument of competence. Those in favour of quotas presented the argument that members of boards of directors are usually recruited from male population talents, which implies that qualified and competent women are often overlooked as possible candidates. Another argument was used, namely that the integration of a larger number of women into decision-making positions in organisations would result in new perspectives and problem-solving techniques as women ostensibly have different experience, interests and positions than men. The principal argument of the government was that a gender-balanced board of directors would positively contribute to the profitability of companies. An argument against the introduction of quotas was based on the assumption that such legislation would
Gender equality in decision-making positions in business

lead to more competent men being replaced by less competent women. Those opposing quotas claimed that there was a lack of women with relevant business experience and that the recruitment of competent women must begin very early and progress from the top to the bottom of the organisational hierarchy in order to ensure a sufficient number of women candidates for members of the boards of directors. They also assumed that if gender quotas are prescribed by law and gender balance becomes more important than the selection of the most competent and talented members of the boards, this could lead to reduced scope of investments in Norwegian companies (Teigen 2012, p. 81).

Different surveys conducted after the introduction of quotas for the boards of directors in Norway showed different results regarding the positive or negative consequences of this legal regulation. Matsa in Miller (2012) warn about the cost of introducing quotas. They established that the Scandinavian companies which are not subject to quotas will have higher short-term profit than those which changed the gender structure of their boards of directors, since the employment of (additional) female members of these boards increases the labour costs of the company.

Gomez Ansón (2012, p. 34) analysed the basic purpose of quota introduction and claimed that the introduction of quotas and the related sanctions was successful, as supported by the data obtained, since the share of women in the boards of directors of public limited companies in Norway has been gradually increasing since 2003, i.e. to 9% in 2004, 12% in 2005, 18% in 2006, 25% in 2007, 36% in 2008 and 40% in 2009 (Teigen 2008 in Storvik and Teigen 2010, p. 8). Even though the number of women in boards of directors has increased significantly, the senior position of president of the board of directors is still usually occupied by men: only 5% are women (Storvik and Teigen 2010, p. 8). The share of women in the positions of general managers of companies listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange is even smaller, i.e. no more than 2%. Thus, the progress in gender equality is only visible in positions where it is required by law (Gomez Ansón 2012, p. 34).

The problem that occurred in the implementation of quotas in Norway was the lack of women with the necessary experience and qualifications to take up positions in the boards of directors. Prior to the introduction of quotas, the male and female directors were supposedly more alike in terms of their characteristics, while after the introduction of quotas, younger and more educated women, who had less experience but more chance of becoming members of other boards of directors compared to female executive directors of management boards, were nominated for these positions. Therefore, after the introduction of quotas, the average age structure of the Norwegian boards of directors was lowered, directors had less experience, and it was the lack of qualified women directors that was probably the main reason for the poorer efficiency of some Norwegian companies, as established in their research from 2010 by Ahern and Dittmar (in Gomez Ansón 2012) as well as Clark (2010). Women with experience are very welcome. Huse (2012) pointed out the “golden skirts” phenomenon – the elite group of female managers occupying positions on several boards of directors in Norway thanks to their experience. Clark (2010) reports that there are 70 women holding more than 300 positions between them on the management boards of Norwegian companies. Research from Spain has shown that the introduction of mandatory quotas also increased the share of women holding positions on several management boards (González Menéndez and Martínez González 2012, p. 195).

The effect of the introduction of quotas by law for the decision-making positions in the Norwegian business sector is thus unclear. On the one hand, the legal provisions on membership of the boards of directors allow women to achieve positions of power in the business sector, and
on the other hand, due to the reduced number of more experienced and qualified women competing for senior management positions, membership of the decision-making bodies is focused on a small group of more prominent candidates who are invited to several boards of directors in different companies, due to their reputation, which could lead to a concentration of power in the business sector. Teigen (2012, p. 87) pointed out that, due to these mandatory quotas, less experienced male members of the boards of directors are being replaced by female members, while on the other hand, men with the most power and membership of several boards of directors remain in the highest decision-making positions. It is therefore important that suitable female candidates are sourced from a constantly increasing pool of talent.

Even though Norway’s gender equality policy is more focused on decision-making positions in the public sector and only has a limited reach in private companies, quotas introduced by law are proof that changes leading to gender equality can also be introduced in the area where this has always seemed impossible – the business sector. Teigen also pointed out (2012, p. 89) that the Norwegian quota reform has reignited international discussion about the access of women to management positions. The long-term effects of quotas in Norway remain to be seen, as the introduction of female role models in the business world will bring about a change in the power relationships between the genders and the cultural perception of economic power as a domain reserved for men. Huse and Seierstad (2014) pointed out that the international discussion about women in decision-making positions diverts the focus of discussion about the boards of directors and their role – from thinking about dividing the value to thinking about value generation.

In the last decade, the legislation proposed or introduced on quotas in Europe and the USA provoked discussion in which the business world was mostly against their introduction, believing that this would prevent the best candidates from taking up the leading decision-making positions. Quotas in European countries which legislated for the share of women and men in decision-making positions were mostly supported by the national governments and social partners, in some cases also backed by institutional investors and other stakeholders on the market, some companies and business and professional associations.

Unlike the quotas prescribed by law in Norway, Sweden successfully increased gender equality in decision-making positions in listed private public limited companies without legal regulation (from 2% in 1995 to 9% in 2005), namely as a result of the political threat to introduce quotas and the influence of other economic institutions. However, the analyses have shown (González Menéndez et al. 2012, p. 14), that rapid and less prudent recruitment of women into management boards solely to avoid legal regulation was more a “cosmetic issue” and that women are recruited to management boards and attend only symbolically. As we have seen, Finland is an example of a country that established a high share of women in decision-making positions in state-owned companies on the basis of legal provisions. The cultural patterns in society and business interests are opposed to the introduction of quotas (in private companies), presenting the argument that individual competences should prevail in the selection of board members and, therefore, changes are encouraged in this segment of the economy by means of corporate governance codes.

It can be established that in spite of the positive effects of the introduction of recommendations or the good management practice codes and other measures, in certain European countries the introduction of quotas by law, or even the threat thereof, following the sample of Scandinavian countries, is still the strongest tool available to increase the share of women in decision-making positions in the business sector (González Menéndez et al. 2012, pp. 13–17).
Korvajärvi (2012) pointed out that, in addition to increasing the number of women in decision-making positions, it is also necessary to introduce measures for empowering women and making it easier for them to occupy the highest decision-making positions. The business and organisational incentives aimed at improving women's competences, e.g. through training, networking and mentorships are deemed essential for the promotion of gender equality in decision-making positions in the business sector (Gomez Ansón 2012, p. 39).

The quotas for the election lists of political parties (at least 40% for each gender) were introduced in Slovenia in 2005 whereas the discussion of quotas in the business sector emerged more recently. According to the survey carried out by the Manager Association in 2007, 80% of managers in the Slovene business sector were male and only half of the quota of female managers was achieved (Humar 2007a). A public opinion poll carried out on a representative sample in 2001 (European Commission 2012a) established high support for gender equality in the business sector and the introduction of quotas in Slovenia. The surveyed Slovenians are among those in the EU most in favour (95%) of gender equality in business decision-making positions. The reasons for the under-representation of women in decision-making positions seem to be mainly the prevalence of men in the business sector who do not have enough confidence in women (79%) and the fact that women are more burdened than men by family obligations (75%). Considerably fewer people believe that the reasons lie in the specific characteristics of women, namely that they are less willing to fight for a career (28%), that they lack interest in taking on positions of responsibility (28%) or that they do not have the required characteristics and abilities for responsible positions (16%). Most believe that women should be equally represented among the senior management positions in companies, since both women and men have equal rights (61%) and because they are equally qualified to occupy such positions as men (58%). The survey participants stated that they would use binding legal provisions to achieve balanced gender representation on the management boards of companies (32%), independent goal setting in the companies (29%) and voluntary measures, such as non-binding corporate governance codes for public limited companies (21%). If the legal provisions took into account the requirement regarding the qualification of the candidates for the positions, they would be supported by the majority of the participants in the survey (80%). The realistic target values of women and men in responsible positions were assessed to be 50: 50 (43%), 40: 60 (23%) and 30: 70 (10%), and the period in which the goal should be achieved up to 5 years (44%), 5–8 years (22%) and more than 8 years (8%). In the event of non-compliance with the legal provisions, the participants in the survey would use the following sanctions: fines (47%), annulment of appointment of the members of the over-represented gender (38%), annulment of decisions adopted by inappropriately structured decision-making bodies (31%), blocked applications to obtain public funding (19%) and winding up the company (11%).

In order to contribute to a well-argued discussion of the appropriate methods for ensuring gender equality in decision-making positions in the Slovenian business sector, we conducted a survey among male and female managers and discussed the findings with a group of experts. The results are presented below.
4. Presentation and interpretation of results of the empirical work

Below we present the results of the survey conducted on a sample of 151 managers in Slovenian companies and expert workshops in which 4 male and 4 female experts from the business and academic sphere participated.

4.1 Sample

Among the 151 respondents surveyed, 74% were women and 26% men. The average age of the respondents was 46 years. Half of the respondents had completed university or faculty education programmes (51%) and 46% held a master's or doctor's degree. A good third of the respondents were members of middle management (36%), another third held the positions of president of the management board, president of the board of directors or general manager (35%) and a somewhat smaller share held a position in senior management or as an executive director (29%) (Table 1).

Table 1: Survey participants by position

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President of the management board, president of the board of directors, general manager</td>
<td>43.6%</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management, executive director</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
<td>30.4%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member of middle management, member of lower management and other</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The area of work of the surveyed respondents reflected the sampling method in the following way: more than one third (37%) of the respondents were responsible for HR in their companies, 25% for other areas, 15% for marketing and 13% for finance. Most of the men worked in finance (43%) and HR (29%), while most of the women worked in HR (37%) and other areas (28%). Most of the surveyed respondents worked in medium-sized or large companies and only 15% of the respondents worked in small companies (up to 10 employees). On average, the share of employees in the respondents' companies who were women was slightly above half (53%). Most of the respondents worked in manufacturing (22%), financial and insurance activities (12%), information and communication activities (11%) and various other business activities (10%).
Table 2: Legal form of the companies

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public limited companies</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited liability companies</td>
<td>51.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Half of the respondents worked in limited liability companies (Table 2). In most of the respondents’ companies the two-tier governance system is used (89%), with an average of three management board members, one of them a woman. In 79% of companies the management board is led by a man. On average, there are five supervisory board members, one of them a woman. In 93% of companies the supervisory board is led by a man.

4.2 Career path of female and male managers

On average, men assumed their first management position earlier than women (29 years of age compared to 31 years of age). The gender difference is statistically significant. The reasons for the slower promotion of women differ, but one of the most significant, which was also pointed out by the participants in the expert workshop, is the role of women as caregivers. It is not merely the individual decisions of women but also the perception of their suitability for promotion in an organisation: “… Usually because they (i.e. women) are on maternity leave. And then they say – now she is going on maternity leave so she will not be promoted and when she comes back, she is not promoted because she just came back.” (expert no. 5)

The possibility of keeping the leading position also depends on the HR policy:

“… it all depends on the company’s values and approach. This means that when a woman goes on maternity leave, this situation is used to install a new person in her position. When she comes back, there is no job waiting for her. If, on the other hand, a person is important for you from the very outset and you want her to return after one year, you take steps to ensure that her deputy does not undermine her position.” (expert no. 6).

Table 3: Initiator of the beginning of a managerial career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The surveyed person</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The then superior</td>
<td>30.8%</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (the then colleagues, family, partner, other)</td>
<td>5.1%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test 5.755 Sig. .331*
The idea that the respondent should forge a management career was mostly their own among both men and women (men 64%, women 46%) (Table 3). The share of women with the support of their superior is somewhat higher (45% women and only 31% men), but the difference is not statistically significant. However, according to the other results of the survey (the somewhat lower self-confidence of women regarding their personal traits suitable for management, and the important role of the superiors in career development), external support can be extremely important for women.

“Women need much more encouragement than men. Somebody else sees something in you and pushes you forward.” (expert no. 4).

Both men and women are satisfied with their career paths so far, which was assessed with an average grade of 4 (on a scale of 1 to 5). No statistically significant differences between the genders were observed.

One half of the respondents see themselves in about the same position as now in five years. No statistically significant differences between the genders were observed. The most often stated reason for their assessment is either that they already occupy the highest position (men 55%, women 36%) or that they see more disadvantages than advantages, if promoted (men 20%, women 34%). A large share of respondents show ambition in promotion and they see themselves in a higher position in five years (44% of men and 46% of women), while the share of those who see themselves in a lower position is extremely small.

Even though the percentage of the ambitious persons among the surveyed respondents does not differ by gender, the members of the expert group referred to women's reluctance to occupy the most senior positions when these are assessed as less stable.

“Security is extremely important once we are aware how difficult it had been to achieve a certain position. If she has almost reached the top and then has to assume the risk of taking the highest position for half a year only to fall who knows where after that – this can be quite difficult for a woman.” (expert no. 3)

“I had serious talks with two women (about assuming a higher position, author’s add.) Both said no, and not because of the quotas or because of me but because people come and go in (...) too quickly, including the government. And then they would be unemployed. Men are different. Women think more rationally when climbing upwards. And when you fall, you know how difficult it was to climb.” (expert no. 8)

The respondents assessed the factors that were the most important for their career promotion in the last 10 years. On average, the key factors were assessed as follows (on a scale of 1 to 5): performance and business results (4.4), work experience (4.2), skills related to mutual relationships (4.1). The assessment of understanding of the political territory (2.5) and mentor’s support (2.9) were considered the least important. The only statistically significant gender-related difference was noted in informal relationships with colleagues, which men assessed as more important for their career promotion (3.5) than women (3.1). The lack of informal relationships seems to be one of the key factors for the smaller share of women in senior positions (Kanjuo Mrčela 1996; Kanjuo Mrčela et al. 2012, pp. 211–212).

Informal relations are built through membership of various organisations and associations. No gender-related difference was established in such inclusion. Most of them are (were) included in a professional association (75%) and different social and sports associations, clubs (social, sports, cultural and artistic, humanitarian) (75%), and one third participated in the student's organisation during the study period (35%).
Both men and women were convinced about their qualifications and skills when they took the current position (no differences between the genders); nevertheless, men were on average somewhat more convinced about their suitability regarding personal traits (4.5) than women (4.3) (the difference is not statistically significant). This was also pointed out at the expert workshop: “(Women, author’s note) Lack self-confidence. They are extremely self-critical.” (expert no. 2)

Table 4: Career development: It is more difficult for mothers than women without children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23.7%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>80.4%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=0.281 (p=0.596)

Table 5: Career development: It is more difficult for fathers than men without children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>84.1%</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

χ²=5.737 (p=0.017)

Men, more often than women, believe that it is more difficult for a father to forge a management career than a man without children and both believe that it is more difficult for a mother to forge a management career than a woman without children (Tables 4 and 5).

Table 6: Subject to stricter assessment standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>61.1%</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test

χ²=36.928 (p<0.01)
Almost all men believe that they have not been subjected to stricter standards than women when their work has been assessed, while 61% of women believe that they are subjected to stricter standards than men (Table 6). The result can be understood as the expression of the androcentric organisational culture and gender-specific criteria in the recruitment and promotion procedures.

“(…) the path of a woman is narrower. Not only narrower, it is a hurdle. And one of the obstacles (…) is stricter assessment in promotion. Not only in companies. When I conducted scientific research, the assessment was stricter, and this was confirmed by several other female researchers all over the world. Gender-bias – we have quite detailed data about that... And why is assessment stricter? This is because it is based on certain stereotypical assumptions.” (expert no. 1).

Among the persons in the highest decision-making positions, there are fewer (39.3%) of those who believe that they were subject to stricter standards than the persons of the opposite gender than among others (50%).

When assessing who provided support for the respondents during their career, advised them and helped them establish contacts, no gender-related differences were found. Most often, direct superiors (49%), family members (46%) and directors or managers (45%) were stated.

Direct superiors were mostly men (73%), family members were women for men (79%) and men for women (85%). For both men and women, the key superiors and directors who helped them in the career promotion were men. We were interested in finding out whether the gender of the key person for the promotion of the respondents differed based on their position in the company. No major differences were found among the male and female presidents of the management board (or general managers). Somewhat more often, the presidents were aided by men (i.e. colleagues at work, friends) compared to persons in lower positions, which can be explained with the presence of men and women in senior positions. The importance of the superiors (senior management in particularly) compared to formal procedures for promotion is also supported by the assessments of the surveyed respondents of the promotion procedures in their current working environments.

**Table 7: Procedures of promotion to senior management positions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>depend on the formal procedures,</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>predetermined and measurable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>selection criteria</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>depending on the priorities,</td>
<td>60.5%</td>
<td>60.8%</td>
<td>60.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opinions and decisions of senior</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other:</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson’s chi-square test</td>
<td>2.491</td>
<td>Sig.</td>
<td>.288&lt;sup&gt;es&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Several surveyed respondents (60%) reported that the procedures of promotion to senior management positions in their companies mainly depended on the priorities, opinions and decisions of senior management. Less than a third of the respondents believed that they depended on the formal procedures, predetermined and measurable selection criteria (Table 7). No statistically significant differences between the genders were observed.

The key role (direct) of the superiors in promotion was also confirmed by the experts:

“.. someone must pull when people worth pulling out of the pool are discovered.” (expert no. 1)

“Our basic task is to use all resources available – capital, human resources, and get the best out of them. (...) to recognise all these potentials, obstacles that occur; (...) regardless of gender, race, etc. (...) senior managers must set things up so that everything runs smoothly, that the apex is reached, that we can identify any obstacles, regardless of whether a man or a woman is concerned, for any reasons, if they are having a crisis (maternity leave, ...) ... if they do, we make it possible to find a solution and to reach the others ...” (expert no. 6).  

Active human resources policy not left to coincidence would help in the promotion of women:

“So far, the research has shown (...) that the item career development was the most problematic. Companies do not have this. There are very few companies that do this. If they did it systematically, then theoretically they should be able to get the same number of men and women and direct them, gradually.” (expert no. 2)

The answers concerning the balancing of professional and private life during career development mostly show that women are more burdened. The respondents were forced to limit their personal free time most (4.1), women more than men (4.1 against 3.8). Women also had to limit their friendships and time for socialisation more than men (3.7 against 3.2). The respondents did not consider that factors such as the partner’s career or attitude to their work, medical problems or similar obstructed their career paths to a great extent. The most often indicated problems related to the career were care for children and relatives (2.5), women more than men, other (e.g. youth: 2.2) and the request for the consideration of their free time (2.0).

4.3 Current work of survey respondents

On average, the respondents spent 10 hours per day working, and no differences were found between men and women. During weekends, women work somewhat more than men; men spent on average 2 hours and women 3 hours working for their jobs, the difference being statistically significant.

The respondents assessed that, on average, they have the most influence in their companies on the selection of core colleagues, work organisation and task allocation (both 4.3) and the least on financial decisions (3.6). These were the only areas where the gender difference was statistically significant, at a 10-percent significance level; men have more influence in this area than women.

Male and female managers assessed that their management style was mostly characterised by a focus on people and a focus on tasks (both 4.5), democracy (4.1) and vision (4.0). The answers of men and women differ in terms of task delegation and competition (assessed as somewhat more significant for themselves by men compared to women).
What the respondents liked most in management work on average was challenges (4.6), personal development (4.5) and working with people (4.3), while the significance of income was assessed as less important by both (3.7). The only gender-related difference was noted in the assessment of reaching compromises – this was assessed somewhat higher by men (3.3) than women (3.0).

Regarding connections with other people in senior positions in the business sector, politics, trade unions, economic associations and similar, no statistically significant differences were found between men and women, and regarding the intensity of connections, men had more frequent daily and weekly connections with all categories, compared to women. The respondents were most often in contact with the members of the management board, directors (in 88% of cases this was daily or weekly contact), and the president of the management board, general manager (in 78% of cases this was daily or weekly contact).

In the past year, 72% of the respondents spoke at a public meeting and 66% had an interview or issued a statement for the press. No statistically significant differences between the genders were observed.

Most of the respondents (95%) have already been mentors to younger colleagues (no gender differences).

More women than men received mentorship support (6.2 compared to 4.2). The male respondents on average were mentors to fewer women than the female respondents in the last 3 years, on average (3.0 compared to 7.2); there are no statistically significant differences in mentors helping men.

If they had to recommend a younger colleague for promotion to a management position, the most important characteristics that the respondents would consider, in addition to appropriate education and work experience, are: reliability (78%), courage and determination (72%) and emotional intelligence (70%) (Table 8). The ranking of these characteristics differs in men and women – the latter find reliability, emotional intelligence and courage the most important, while for the former it is courage, reliability and emotional intelligence. A difference (not statistically significant) was found between the genders in the assessment of the significance of other characteristics: diligence and ingenuity are important for men, innovativeness for women.

| Table 8: Choosing between a male and female candidate of comparable skill and experience |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| I would select a woman because I believe women have less opportunities for promotion in my area than men | 30.6%  | 39.8%  | 37.5%  |
| I would select a man because I believe men have less opportunities for promotion in my area than women | 11.1%  | 3.7%   | 5.6%   |
| Other (please specify):               | 58.3%  | 56.5%  | 56.9%  |
| Total                                | 36     | 108    | 144    |
| Pearson's chi-square test            | 3.300  | Sig.   | .192a  |
Even though more than one third of the respondents were in favour of positive discrimination for women, most would **not prioritise selection based on the gender they believe to be under-represented in their line of work**. Very few respondents (5.6%) would give priority to a man due to a smaller chance of promotion. Most women and men who explained their answer underlined that **gender was not an (important/suitable) criterion for selection**; instead, they would select on the basis of “competence, ... the set of personal traits required for the position, ... abilities, ... soft skills”.

A part of the respondents would select on the basis of “a feeling”, “intuition”, i.e. **non-measurable and subjective criteria**. A part of the respondents would prioritise women due to their (better) characteristics, i.e. they would **statistically discriminate men** because according to them, women:

“have better emotional intelligence ... are more efficient ... have a different perspective of the world ... are more persistent in achieving a task ... are better ... while women often have an advantage over men in certain positions, due to a different profile, are better team members, have smaller egos and are less inclined to abuse a position of power, are more efficient and essential in teams, are more realistic and goal-oriented.” No respondent pointed out a characteristic in which men would be better than women.

At the expert workshop, we also discussed the characteristics of men and women:

“... I prefer working with women because they are more reliable than men.” (expert no. 7)

Some of the responses have demonstrated that, on the one hand, specific “female” characteristics are expected from women, while on the other hand, they are seen as one of the men in responsible positions (and are expected to behave like men when it comes to care obligations):

“...the values of women representation in a company can only be included if we believe that a woman adds value. And we will have the right women in the right positions only once we all believe that a mixed balance and gender structure in a company is good. Why do I take great risk when saying we want “real women”: it’s because we don’t want “women” posing as men. At least I believe nobody wants that. As we can see, women often assume the role of quasi men in order to succeed in the men’s world. Nothing is achieved by this. We got a woman and ensured a quota – those in favour of quotas would tick the box and be happy. But in fact, we did not achieve a positive effect or a balanced perspective.” (expert no. 8)

“The girls in the senior positions at our company are also the heads of their families. If a family agrees, one is appointed leader.” (expert no. 7)

“I must say that the most ambitious women rarely take a year off for maternity leave. I never asked her to come back. I must say that they were back immediately after giving birth, like a silent driving force in the background. Whether this is good or not – that is a different matter. They were like men: you have a child, then have a drink with your friends and back to work next day. Women are similar.”  (expert no. 6)
4.4 Striking a balance between the private and professional lives of female and male managers

Most of the respondents (92%) currently have a partner with at least a degree level of education (71%). The partner’s attitude to their work is mostly positive (4.4); no statistically significant differences between the genders were observed.

There were 19% of divorced respondents; no statistically significant differences between the genders were observed even though the share of divorced persons was somewhat bigger among women (20%) than men (15%).

There were more women (18%), than men (13%) without children. On average, men have more children than women (2.2 compared to 1.9). The answers of the respondents regarding their involvement in the care for the children when they are/were young (Table 9) confirms the existing knowledge of excessive burden of women in the private sphere.

Table 9: Who stays at home with a sick child?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always me</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually me</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I share this obligation equally with someone else</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>25.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usually somebody else (partner, other parent, family member)</td>
<td>38.2%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Always somebody else (partner, other parent, family member)</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson's chi-square test: 27.212, Sig. .000a

The occupational obligations of women more often overlap with their private obligations compared to men (3.3 vs. 2.9).

Statistically significant difference was found between the genders in daily household work. Most often, women would cook, clean, shop, do the dishes, while men would take care of finance (Table 10).
Table 10: *Taking care of daily household work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Pearson’s chi-square test</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cooking</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.1%</td>
<td>58.9%</td>
<td>49.0%</td>
<td>16.055</td>
<td>p&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>71</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tidying and cleaning</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>45.5%</td>
<td>18.351</td>
<td>p&lt;0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.5%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>6.113</td>
<td>0.013</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Doing the dishes</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>35.9%</td>
<td>11.541</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Paying bills/care of finance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
<td>66.9%</td>
<td>5.013</td>
<td>0.025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>97</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.845a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>69</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>382</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, the respondents spend one hour and a half doing housework, 2 hours taking care of children (women more than men) and less than an hour taking care of other family members.

Outside working hours, the respondents mostly socialise with their colleagues on a monthly basis or less often (77%); no statistically significant characteristics between the genders were found. Women more often than men mainly socialise with women (42%), men usually socialise with men (26%), and about half of them spends equal time with both genders (men 55%, women 47%).

Most of the respondents would define the organisational culture in the company as family-friendly (84%), they also believe that the organisational culture of the company allows those in senior positions to use the existing possibilities to strike a balance between work and family life (84%). Nevertheless, one third of men and one half of women experienced symptoms of work overload in the past (exhaustion, stress or the feeling of total burnout) (Table 11).
Table 11: Symptoms of work overload in the previous year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>51.3%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>38.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>45.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very often</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test 12.650 Sig. .005

On average, men are more satisfied with the balancing of professional and private life than women (3.6 vs. 3.2).

4.5 Opinion of female and male managers about women and men in management

The respondents assessed that the following were the most significant reasons why there were fewer women than men in senior management positions:

- social stereotypes that prevent women from achieving leading positions even when they have all the required skills (3.4); women (3.6) agree with this more than men (2.7); the difference is statistically significant,
- the women’s burden of motherhood and care for the family (3.3)
- different upbringing of men and women (3.1).

Statistically significant differences were found in two reasons:

- the companies do not take care of equal treatment in promotion (average assessment of men: 2.3 and women: 3.2).
- lack of informal connections was assessed at 2.9 by women and 2.0 by men.

The following factors were assessed by the respondents as less important (average estimate under 3): lack of role models or mentors, less ambition among women, lack of required skills, authority or other required characteristics (determination, competitiveness, courage, self-confidence).

When talking with the experts, we discussed some other reasons for under-representation of women in senior positions. One of the participants mentioned numerous relationships between the genders and revealed gender-related double standards:

“We have more women – around 58%. Nevertheless, the percentage of female managers is smaller ... we also have segments reserved mostly for men, e.g. the technical department, etc. where this is rather logical.” (expert no. 5)
Others mentioned the overlapping of organisational factors and social environment factors, related to division of roles between men and women and family arrangements:

“My view of women’s role – we discussed this some time ago – is that it all originates from the family. If a family agrees that one person is a leader, they are more inclined to take leave, sick leave – this is the issue ... I think if a family decides who is more a father and who more a mother, it is those who work more.” (expert no. 7)

**Table 12: Men and women in organisations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Dev. level</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Men and women are treated equally in our organisation.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.51</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In my area of work, women have to work more for equal recognition than men.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-3.69</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male managers have greater influence than female managers in the adoption of important decisions in my company.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>-2.80</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents assessed that men and women were equally treated (4.1) in their organisation; men agree with this more than women. The difference is statistically significant. On the other hand, women assessed more often than men that they had to work more in their area of work than men for the same recognition and that male managers had more influence than female managers in the adoption of important decisions in their company (Table 12). These differences are also statistically significant.

**Table 13: Independence, social power and assessment criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Dev. level</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employment is the best way for a women to achieve personal independence.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>-0.55</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Social power is based above all on the networks of informal connections.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Dev. level</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>-1.98</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a rule, the work and behaviour of men and women in society are not subject to the same criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Dev. level</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>-3.15</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents believe that employment is the best way for a women to achieve personal independence (4.1, no difference between the genders). **Women more than men agree that social power is based above all on the network of informal connections and that as a rule, the work and behaviour of men and women in society are not subject to the same criteria** (Table 13).

The answers obtained regarding the promotion of women to senior positions indicate that **female managers assess the current situation more critically**. Most men believe that it is nowadays easier for women to access the highest decision-making positions in the business sector compared to the situation 10 years ago, while 45% of women believe it is so. Most women (55.3%) believed that it is equally or more difficult for women nowadays to reach the most senior decision-making positions in the business sector (Table 14).

**Table 14: Accessibility of senior decision-making positions in the business sector today and 10 years ago**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less difficult</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
<td>44.8%</td>
<td>52.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equally difficult</td>
<td>22.9%</td>
<td>36.5%</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More difficult</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>18.8%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pearson’s chi-square test**

|          | 10.148 | Sig.  | .006  |

Men who explained their answers indicated the following reasons why the situation was better today:

- **better standard, so that it is easier for women to decide for a career, because they are less limited by family life and motherhood than they had been in the past (extracurricular activities, babysitters, etc.);**
- **the crisis creates more opportunities and is less bound by stereotypes;**
• women gained self-confidence, the culture is also improving constantly;
• young generations are less burdened by the old stereotypes of men’s and women’s roles in money and family;
• stereotypes are disappearing with the development of the social community and the share of women in management positions is growing gradually but steadily.

and the following claiming that it is more difficult today:
• the situation is more difficult now, more complex, the conservatives have emerged again in this area, and the influence of the backward trends of the RCC has again increased.
• the mentality and social thinking in Slovenia have not changed.

Similarly, women said that it was less difficult today because:
• the number of women in senior positions is increasing and the trend will continue. Furthermore, occupations are being feminised and there are more potential female candidates for certain positions;
• due to competences, knowledge and partially because of higher level of equality – even though this is not a general phenomenon yet – access has been improved and the education and relationships in society have brought about different views;
• better awareness, openness;
• the character skills of women are being recognised more readily: making connections, emotional intelligence ... women are better in assuming the role of the counterparty and more willing to look for compromises;
• women became more insightful, hire babysitters and domestic help more willingly, and similar. Above all, there was an important shift in the notion that this was perfectly ok. Also, men contribute more to housework than they used to (or so I believe);
• the understanding for women in senior positions is improving, with each new generation, men find it easier to accept a female superior and, judging by the situation in our company, the number of women in management positions is increasing annually;
• the environment that we have been creating allows women to reach higher positions, should they decide that this is what they want;

or more difficult because:
• in spite of numerous “discussions” in the public and various movements, the situation has NOT changed;
• job problems related to motherhood – they prefer to employ men;
• men are still in the majority in the management positions in successful companies;
• women are mostly taking over companies in difficulties – the state was led by a women when it was in deep crisis;
• men lobbies are still too strong;
• no visible changes and achievements in this area in Slovenia. Stereotypes are still strong;
• data indicate that the situation has not yet turned in favour of women;
• the position is the same, only the access is hindered by other factors;
• when I started my career, society was less patriarchal than I believe it to be today (unfortunately);
• men stick together even more because of the problems in the business sector and are inclined to hire men. Women think in a different way which is currently not good for them;
• due to increasing expectations to work more, to assume more obligations that stretch the working hours;
because the knowledge and other competences in this corruptive sphere are not important, it is all about informal networks.

The answers were analysed and it was established, based on the position of the respondents, that almost one half of the surveyed presidents of the management boards (44.7%) believe that access is less difficult, 40.4% believe that it is the same and 14.9% that it is more difficult than it was 10 years ago. The surveyed persons in lower positions assessed access better (52.6% as less difficult and 32.3% as equally difficult).

4.6 Measures for achieving gender equality in decision-making positions in the business sector

Most women (83%) believe that smaller share of women in senior decision-making positions in the business sector is a problem that needs to be resolved while most men (54%) disagreed (Table 15). Gender difference is statistically significant.

Table 15: Is the smaller share of women in senior decision-making positions in the business sector a problem that needs to be resolved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No because</td>
<td>54.1%</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes because</td>
<td>45.9%</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson’s chi-square test</td>
<td>19.619</td>
<td>Sig. .000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The presidents of the management boards (73.6%) and other managers (74.5%) mostly agree that the smaller share of women in senior decision-making positions in the business sector is a problem that needs to be resolved.

Men who believed that this was not a relevant problem and explained their answers claimed:

“this is the problem of the owners; if a woman wants to reach the top, she will find a way; the culture of a company should allow for the selection of the most appropriate personnel; I believe that it is skills and competence that count, not gender; I don’t see it as a problem but it is a fact that all things need time to develop and the scope of possibilities will continue to grow; I don’t see any problems in the areas of gender, race or religious discrimination; this is not the biggest problem; there is too much attention devoted to this topic; women use their abilities and competences to resolve this problem by themselves; this is the wrong perspective, we should ask ourselves instead why fathers are not more included in the family; this should be regulated by the market.”

More than one third of the surveyed respondents (36.4%) believed that women would have better opportunities to take on senior positions if they established more informal social networks with women in similar or higher positions, one third (32.6%) believe that they should
develop informal social networks with men in similar or higher positions and one third (31%) believe that informal social networks have no impact on women’s opportunities to achieve senior positions.

Presidents of the management boards believe that women would have better opportunities if they established connections with women in similar or higher positions (43.8%), while more than a fifth (22.9%) believe that they should develop informal social networks with men in similar or higher positions and one third (33.3%) believe that informal social networks offer no special advantages to women.

Most female managers believe that women would have better opportunities to achieve senior positions if they established more informal social networks with both men and women. It is interesting that almost one half of men believe that networking would not be useful to women, while one quarter of women believe so (Table 16).

Table 16: Achieving senior positions through networking

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yes, particularly with women in similar or higher positions</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>36.2%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes, particularly with men in similar or higher positions</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>37.2%</td>
<td>32.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>45.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>31.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>129</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test 5.285  Sig. .071

The opinions regarding the introduction of quotas is divided among the respondents – half of them support quotas and the other half is against them (Table 17). More women than men believe that Slovenia should introduce quotas to ensure equal the representation of men and women in decision-making positions in the business sector. The difference is statistically significant. Quotas are more often supported by managers in senior positions (57%) than others (44%)

Table 17: Quotas for equal representation of men and women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No because:</td>
<td>81.6%</td>
<td>37.7%</td>
<td>49.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes because:</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
<td>62.3%</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test 21.512  Sig. .000
One of the experts commented as follows on the data that most women who participated in this survey, i.e. female managers, were in favour of the quotas:

“Because they know how difficult it was to reach this position. Those who are not up there but want to be are not telling. This needs to be revealed. The number would be even bigger.” (expert no. 6)

Men who expressed a negative opinion of the introduction of quotas argued as follows: “administrative encouragement/limitation will not yield any relevant results; this would lead to forced selection, discrimination, formality and prevent the selection of the best candidate.” Nevertheless, they were in favour of a “deregulated economy with minimum administrative obstacles; consideration of competence and requirements of a specific job, regardless of the candidate’s gender; introduction of adequate climate, know-how, promotion of the best people, regardless of the gender; this should be regulated by the market; establishment of women who possess knowledge, skills, determination and ambition, not through quotas.” Three men gave the following arguments in favour of quotas: “this would speed up the growth in the percentage of women in management positions; this is appropriate” and “Scandinavia is a positive example”.

Women who support quotas claimed that they were “absolutely necessary since they would help the truly competent women reach the management positions; this is the only way to make a change; if we left things be, it would take centuries; sometimes, when the general culture is not supportive of certain patterns, it is necessary to introduce legal – binding – regulation”; because “unfortunately, the share of women in decision-making positions is falling; this is obviously how things are; leverage needs to be exerted in order to ensure that women are not overlooked because they are mothers/future mothers/wives or whatever is bothering them; for a certain period, women need to be recruited to the political sphere and the business sector in this manner; diversity is important; this is the only way to achieve a better society; we need to move on; the dogs bark, but the caravan moves on; the only reason for this is persisting stereotypes; because I believe many women are capable of taking on management positions but are not given a chance; nobody wants incompetent people in the management positions and, if a certain person is competent, I believe they should be appointed to a position regardless of their gender; men cling to their positions; things change too slowly if left alone; the number of senior managers is declining; we need more co-operation in the business sector and the political sphere because women are often discredited based on the gender; we have been waiting for too long for the situation to improve, which seems unlikely to happen.” Quotas are supposed to be introduced “for a certain period of time, until this becomes the established practice; temporarily, until we achieve a certain level of awareness in the business culture”.

Women also expressed negative opinions of quotas:

“... it is stupid that we use formulas to ‘command’ that women should be put in management positions. They should be encouraged in a different manner. Quotas are a typically male (that is a ‘technical’) idea. Quotas are not a solution: it is the awareness, changing the way of thinking, measures of help at home, etc.; I doubt this is the right way ... Assessments should be based on an individual competence, not gender ... women can achieve everything they want today, if they want to; Nothing will be achieved with quotas, this is pure statistics and the artificial arrangement of something that is regulated ‘naturally’. I think quotas are complete nonsense and only work in theory. In order to meet quotas we put women in positions they do not want to occupy, so they don't perform well and leave the impression that they are less successful than men; quotas will not address this problem because this is a process that will establish about the same career development conditions for men and women once the environment is changed. This means building, changing the situation in society (services that would ease some of women’s workload in their private lives, change of stereotypes that
it is the woman who must take care of the family and the man who is normally entitled to have a
career), in the business environments where women's work would be as appreciated as men's work;
quotas do not reflect available possibilities; quotas will not necessarily bring quality; quotas will not
solve the problem; quotas are not the best mechanism ... we can achieve this by ourselves, if only
we support each other! I don't want to be selected because of some quotas but because of my own
competence; something that is forced and stipulated by law cannot apply equally to everybody;
this would mean admitting that women are worse leaders and that they need quotas; gender is
irrelevant, it is important that the right person is appointed to a position, because this is the only
way that this person will be successful and happy; this must become the culture of behaviour in the
business sector.”

The result of the discussion of quotas at the expert workshop was the perception that quotas are not very popular but an efficient temporary stimulus for social and organisational changes:

“I am also one of the 81% who are against quotas but I would not mind them if they actually helped.
I am in favour of this happening naturally, but if we succeed, I support short-term quotas. To get the
ball rolling in the right direction” (expert no. 6)

“I am not particularly in favour of quotas either but probably, it is sometimes necessary to adopt
radical measures to push things forward.” (expert no. 8)

“I believe quotas are a desperate measure. Everything else, and waiting for things to happen naturally ...
Then you see that the gender works against you ... This means that no progress has been achieved.”
(expert no. 4)

The respondents work in environments where management positions were reserved for men. In addition to the presented data on the number of men and women in senior positions in the companies of the respondents, this is also supported by the data that the direct superior of the respondents was male in 60% and female in 16%; there are no major differences between the genders. Nevertheless most of the companies of the respondents (62%) pay no attention to equal representation of men and women in management positions during employment and promotion procedures.

The respondents know merely a few measures to increase gender equality. Only a few of them stated the following:

“family-friendly company, information on successful women entrepreneurs, quotas, paternity
leave, mentorship, raising employee awareness, a hundred initiatives of social partners and by
job, initiatives of the Managers’ Association of Slovenia – Include-all, support in the organisation
of family obligations, recommendations for the employment of female managers in the Managers’
Association of Slovenia, Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, Employment Relationships Act, law
regulating equal opportunities, better education of women, equal payment, requirements for quotas,
the Progress Programme, the Resolution on the National Programme for Equal Opportunities for
Women and Men”.

In most companies of the respondents (80%) they have not and are not planning to set up any measures to increase gender equality in decision-making positions. The principal reasons for not having set up or planning any measures are the assessments that equal treatment was not a problem that needs to be resolved and that this was not the management’s priority task (Table 18).
Table 18: Reasons for the absence of measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This is not a priority of senior management.</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The employees are not interested in this.</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is too much other work.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This is not a problem that needs to be resolved.</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify):</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pearson’s chi-square test 2.807 Sig. 0.591

The importance of senior management’s support for change was also pointed out by one of the experts in the workshop:

“Once you begin at the bottom and work down, I tell you, everything will work itself out... It is that simple. Once the agreement is reached on top, things just happen.” (expert no. 6)

Those who have introduced measures assess them to be efficient (79%) The respondents, female managers in particular, indicated the following measures established/planned in their companies:

“... provide the opportunity also to women and treat them equally as men; balanced representation on teams, projects; equality in promotion; many incentives in the framework of the initiative diversity and inclusion which allow us to create the environment that enables equal opportunities for promotion, regardless of the gender; the global project gender equality, reversed in Slovenia compared to other countries (more men in the company); a good system of flexible working hours; reduced amount of working hours, parental leave – legal option, compliance with the legislation, family-friendly company; quotas; possibility of mentorship, constant training at home and abroad, learning about different jobs, tasks, projects; the measures of the family-friendly company have been introduced with the aim of facilitating the work of the employees in the company and the alignment of professional and private life; policy of not doing overtime in the company, with the exception of some persons in management positions, that we have the possibility of aligning leave with school holidays (and the partner’s leave), the option of absence when children are being introduced into kindergarten or school, family-friendly picnics, visit by Father Frost for the children of the employees. Pregnancy is good news in our company, not a bad one, etc.; wish for efficient and healthy work environment; focus on competences, regardless of the gender; equal representation in management positions; mentor guidance for the young people with high potential, the project succession pyramid and career development is all about the true values of education: clearly expressed prudent opinions, good personal image; planned training of women for management positions; when applying for a job, no gender has to be marked up until the presentation step; legal provision on quotas; we take care of appropriate representation of women in management positions; we comply with the legal provisions; the measures are planned by a colleague who is in charge of the family-friendly company certificate, encourage the colleagues, be an example, maintain and promote self-confidence.”
5. Conclusions and proposals for further measures and policies

Our research work contributes to the understanding of career paths and the current position of male and female managers in Slovenia, alignment of their private and professional lives and provides an insight in the opinions of female managers about women and men in senior management positions and about possible/feasible measures for achieving gender equality in decision-making positions in the business sector. The results confirmed the results of the previous research concerning:

• small differences between the genders regarding ways of achieving the senior positions and the characteristics of managerial work of men and women,

• overburdening of women with care, which results in a double negative impact on the promotion of women (affects their actual time capacity and serves as the basis for statistical discrimination based on gender), and

• the existence of factors at social and organisational levels which hinder the promotion of women to senior positions (such as the social stereotypes about the roles and characteristics of genders, the importance of subjective and informal criteria in recruitment procedures, subjective influence of senior management on personnel selections and other, mentioned in the report).

The previous analyses, and the research work, presented in this report, indicate the need for combining the measures that regulate individual, organisational and social aspects of discrimination of men and women in decision-making positions in the business sector. In Slovenia, where women have already surpassed many personal obstacles for promotion (connected to the education, work status and the required experience), there seem to exist the possibilities for considering the organisational and institutional measures, including the introduction of the most binding measures to achieve gender equality, such as quotas. We will continue with the discussion of the circumstances and the method of introducing quotas and some other measures to be combined with the introduction of quotas in order to achieve the best possible results in the Slovenian business environment.

The proposed introduction of quotas is based on the understanding of the Slovenian business and social environment and consideration of good and bad experience with the introduction of quotas elsewhere.

As we have seen, the experience from other countries show that quotas are introduced when:

a) there are more women who could be promoted to (senior) management positions (considering education, employment status, experience), than are actually promoted;

b) other measures for improving gender equality have already been used (such as recommendations or even requirements in government documents and/or business codes) which turned out to be unsuccessful or too inefficient;

c) there is sufficient support for this (political, business, public opinion).
It is estimated that in the Slovenian business environment, the critical mass of women showing ambition for promotion and dissatisfaction with the current state has already been achieved and that quotas enjoy public support and would follow the existing (less successful) measures, as a complementary tool.

In the introduction of quotas and other policies and measures focused on improving gender equality in the business sphere gender equality in the business segment needs to be clearly outlined and promoted, so that quotas will not be perceived as an unwanted and forced obligation. The analysis of the survey conducted on Slovenian managers has shown how important it is to promote the **accurate definition of gender quotas** as a temporary measure allowing competent people to be promoted regardless of their gender. So, quotas have to be understood and presented as a mechanism that will help eliminate the invisible obstacles to establishing gender equality, prevent the promotion of a less or equally competent candidate solely on the basis of the gender (“glass lift”) or because gender is an obstacle for a better or equally competent female candidate (“glass ceiling”) for as long as the set quotas are reached.

The misogynist and ungrounded fear of the introduction of quotas needs to be revealed. The fear that by introducing quotas, the business standing of the companies/the economy could deteriorate, and the claim that competence and not gender should be taken into account when selecting managers are based on the wrong assumptions. First, that there are no women equally competent as men and second, that gender is not an important factor when competing for the highest positions of power. In other analysed countries, there were **two arguments most frequently used in favour of quotas** – the argument of fairness/democracy and the business argument; in both cases, we should avoid the essentialist explanation which connects certain personal traits with either men or women. For example, the claim that women can contribute specific features to management (better intuition, more empathy, democracy, precision or similar) is based on the generalisation of characteristics potentially possessed by some/most women as a result of socialisation, but at the same time absent in many women. For the same reasons, the arguments that women will be/are better managers than men are ungrounded.

**Quotas must be introduced gradually.** Regardless of a large share of women among educated and employed population and even among second-level managers, a few-year period must be set for the achievement of the agreed quota. This will prevent/limit the unwanted consequences, e.g. costs that might arise from increasing the number of members of the management boards (in order to achieve the required gender balance) or concentration of a small number of women (with experience, ambition, social networks) in several senior management positions.

The measure must be defined in **appropriate scope** – both regarding the ratio between women and men (e.g. 40: 60 or 50: 50) as well as regarding the types of companies (public, private) and positions (executive, non-executive) – and **appropriate sanctions**, which can be stepped up over time.

As there are differences between the genders in the areas of education, method of socialisation and experience of women and men, the establishment of an appropriate set of female candidates for senior positions in the business sector must be encouraged (e.g. through training, setting up databases of candidates).

At the level of a company/organisation, quotas must be supported by **other measures** which have been found to be useful in encouraging women for promotion. Appropriate **transparent and formalised organisational practices of recruitment, promotion and career development** are particularly important. The analysis has shown that most of the companies are not paying systematic attention to gender equality in decision-making positions.
In companies, these measures mostly mean those focusing on the balance of professional and private/family life but not those specifically intended for the promotion of women to senior positions. Practices known in other business environments (and some rare Slovenian companies or foreign companies operating in Slovenia) which were presented earlier in this report should be better developed.

The unconscious prejudices which prevent gender equality should be disclosed and changed at the level of organisations and society as a whole. This means raising awareness about the stereotypes and biases regarding the roles and characteristics of genders, which is a lengthy process that must be included in education and secondary socialisation. Data obtained with the survey prove that the recruitment procedures in most companies depend on the opinions of (senior) managers (more than the formal procedures). Several respondents reported that non-measurable and subjective criteria are being used in the selection of personnel but at the same time believe that gender is not an important factor when making a decision. It would therefore be reasonable to further investigate the existence and the impact of unconscious prejudices in managers (e.g. with experimental job applications, role playing games) and inform them of the results obtained and the methods for exceeding/restricting the role of unconscious prejudices.

Special attention must also be paid to informing, raising awareness and gaining support for the introduction of quotas among senior managers, since this is extremely important for the processes of organisational changes.

Since it was established that external support and incentive for career development was a very important factor for (young) women, the practices of sponsoring, mentorship and reverse mentorship should be used which can boost the self-confidence and help overcome the indecision of potential candidates for promotion.

Considering the results of the survey about the assessments of managers regarding the situation and the need for change further networking of women is to be expected and encouraged, as well as their active participation in the social and political environment.

Due to the negative impact of overburdening women with the care obligations, the existing mechanisms, policies and measures focused on better alignment of professional and private/family life, and particularly more intensive inclusion of men in care and housework obligations must be continued and further enhanced in order to achieve gender equality in the division of economic power at the level of organisations (policies, measures, programmes), society (values and expectations) and the state (politics, legislation, institutional framework).

Even though, as we have seen, Slovenian women are highly educated and active in the labour market, the deep-rooted social stereotypes and ideas (mostly wrong) about the characteristics of men and women, the gender equality issues have to be regulated in individual organisations as well as in the organisational environment. A combination of measures and programmes of empowering women (young women in particular), support by senior managers, renowned politicians, the media, academics and other relevant actors seems to be necessary for the change of methods and procedures of selecting the members of management boards in companies to ensure more gender equality in decision-making positions.
References

• Austrian Institute for SME Research. 2010. Study on non-legislative initiatives for companies to promote gender equality at the workplace – Contract VC/2008/0348; Synthesis Report
• --- 2013. Facebook's Sheryl Sandberg: »No one can have it all«. McKinsey Quarterly, april. http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organizationFacebooks_sheryl_sandberg_no_one_can_have_it_all (10. maj 2013).
Gender equality in decision-making positions in business

References


References


• Toni, Tjaša. 2014. Ukrepi za povečanje števila žensk na vodilnih položajih v gospodarstvu. Magistrsko delo. Ljubljana: FDV


