

# Poland

Women in decision-making: **0.85/5**  
Socio-economic position of women: **2.14/5**  
Violence against women: **0.75/5**



## UNDERSTANDING POLAND

The 2011 introduction of a legal measure for 35% women on parliamentary electoral lists in Poland is welcome. However, it remains to be seen whether, without placement rules, women candidates will be allocated a fair proportion of winnable seats. At present, women hold little power within Polish political parties, none of which has a female leader.

Women's economic situation in Poland is precarious. When employed, women's wages are similar to men's; Poland has the lowest gender pay gap in the EU (1.9%). 51% of women aged 15-64 work full time, but large numbers are unemployed or inactive, with a significant factor being the lack of childcare facilities.

Poland has the lowest rate of pre-school infants in formal childcare of all EU countries. Only 2% of infants under 3 and 42% of those between 3 and school-age are in formal childcare. While almost an equal number of women and men without children under 12 are employed, among those with children the gender gap rockets to over 24%.

Poland's future ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on violence against women could improve awareness, prevention and services for victims in the country. In a 2009 Eurostat survey, 24% of respondents in Poland saw domestic violence as only a "fairly serious" problem and only 72% saw physical violence against women as "very serious".<sup>1</sup> At present, there are only 0.01 places in shelters for women victims of violence per 10,000 inhabitants.

There are many problems connected to sexual and reproductive rights in Poland due to strong religious influence: access to sexual education and contraception is limited, and abortion since 1993 is illegal except in cases of rape, if the foetus has severe abnormalities or if the woman is at risk of death.

## TRENDS:



In January 2011, the Polish Parliament approved a Gender Quota Bill for a minimum of election of the 35% women candidates for the 460-seat lower House of Parliament. There are no placement rules. The list is rejected in case of non-compliance. So far, no general election has been held under the new law. The rule does not apply to elections to the 100-seat upper House, the Senate, where women currently hold only 13 seats.

In June 2011, the European Court of Human Rights delivered its first ever judgment relating to Poland's abortion law. The court ruled that Poland repeatedly violated the human rights of the plaintiff by refusing her sufficient pre-natal diagnostic care.

In December 2012, despite strong opposition from conservative politicians and the Roman Catholic Church, Poland signed the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.



The economic crisis has worsened significantly the economic situation of women in Poland, pushing large numbers out of employment and into the informal economy, and into low-paid jobs in both the formal and informal sectors. In addition, austerity measures have led to cuts in social protection benefits.

A bill proposing to bring Poland's laws on abortion in line with many EU countries was rejected in October 2012, while another proposes to prohibit abortion in cases where there is a high probability of serious and irreversible damage to the foetus.

## Highlights

**24%**  
women in parliament and 20% senior ministers

**12%**  
women on boards and 11% presidents of the largest companies

**1.9%**  
gender pay gap

**14.4%**  
gender gap in full-time employment rates

**2%** of infants under 3 and 42% of those between 3 and school-age in formal childcare

**18** weeks maternity leave at 100% pay

Access to abortion is severely restricted

<sup>1</sup> Special Eurobarometer 344 - 2010