ABSTRACT

IMPORTED AND NON-OURS

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Estonia should accept and adopt socio-political values and principles, which are shared in Europe where issues of equal opportunities of men and women have been in agenda more than thirty years. The principle of equal treatment of men and women was prescribed in the Treaty establishing the European Economic Community. The Treaty of Amsterdam identifies that ensuring equal opportunities to men and women is one of the fundamental aims of the Union.

Estonia as accessing country has prepared national action plans and has made progress reports on different spheres of life. Estonia has some success in an acknowledgement and learning an issue and rhetoric of equal opportunity principle and policies. Gender equality policy and gender mainstreaming is in strategic planning phase where vision and goals are set up in workshops organised by the Equality Bureau.

Still there exists a gap between ‘right’ rhetoric and everyday talk about gender equality. Members of the parliament (MPs) are opinion leaders and national discourse builders; therefore shorthand reports from Riigikogu sessions were studied to follow equality discourse.

In Estonia gender issues and gender equality are new terms to think and work with. In 2002, ideas from shorthand reports from hearings of draft Gender Equality Act can be grouped under three main themes:

1. Women and men are performing their roles dedicated to them by nature.
2. Gender equality does not fit to Estonian society and culture.

Analysis of statements of MPs shows that gender equality and equal opportunity policy is not a genuine expression of committed political will towards the advancement of women. As male MPs consist 82% of Riigikogu, then a ‘poor man’ discourse is sharply brought up. MPs share their thoughts of their ‘hard life’ and impressions about phenomenon what they perceive as gender equality issue. They construct ‘gender’ and ‘gender equality’ in connection with men’s right to ‘Men’s Day’, necessity to take appropriate measures to tackle with men’s low average life expectancy, and women’s get within doors prior to men.