



REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN ON LEADING POSITIONS IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTAL UNITS AND REGIONAL SELF- GOVERNMENT IN OSIJEK - BARANJA COUNTY, CROATIA

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Abstract

The goal of this study is to meet the real situation of gender equality or inequality when it comes to jobs i.e. affairs in management / management working positions. Furthermore, this paper focuses on insight into the state of representation of women in management positions at different hierarchical levels of governing structures of local government units and regional self - government in Osijek - Baranja County, Croatia. Data were collected from publicly available sources and show the real situation in the Osijek-Baranja County in the month of October of 2019. With the many benefits of women managers, we conclude that we belong to a highly traditional society that does not deviate from the stereotypes, favours male gender group, and with it women are hindered in their career progress, especially to the levels of the top management.

Keywords: Women in management, Women in management structures, Osijek-Baranja County, Public companies

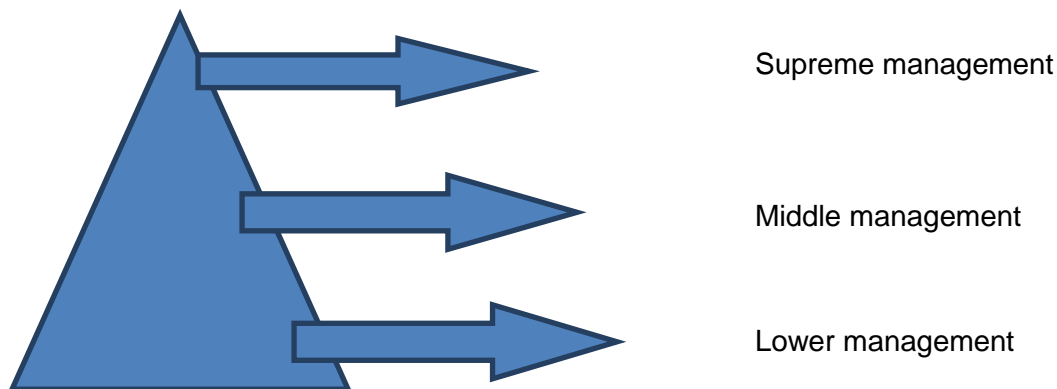


INTRODUCTION

One of the fundamental values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia is gender equality (Constitution, 2014)¹. Gender equality means that women and men are equally present in all areas of public and private life and that have equal status, equal opportunities to exercise all rights, and benefits equally from their achieved results (RH, 2017).

According to Rupčić (2018), the fundamental of a managerial job is working with people, and is hierarchically organized. We have top management (responsible for business performance), middle management (participation in coordination or communication role), and lower management (supervisors or team leaders).

Figure 1: Management levels



Source: Rupčić, N., 2018: Contemporary Management - Theory and Practice, May 2018, Rijeka: University of Rijeka Faculty of Economics.

When guided by the above hierarchy, the condition of women in management positions in the departments of local governments and regional (district) self-government in the Osijek-Baranja County will be analysed.

CHARACTERISTICS OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

Some of the features that women managers comprehend are integrity, initiative, self-development, problem-solving and a desire to succeed. According to the specified characteristics women are viewed as more successful than men. Women tend to view leadership and management as a process rather than an obsessive achievement of

¹ Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Article 3 - Freedom, equality, national and gender equality, peacemaking, social justice, respect for human rights, inviolability of property, preservation of nature and human environment, the rule of law and democratic multi-party system are the highest values of the constitutional order of the Republic of Croatia and the basis for interpretation of the Constitution.

a set results or a goal. They tend to connect with other people and to build quality relationships in the environment in which they are employed. They are more prone to teamwork and cooperation, that is, to connect with internal and external interest groups (Rupčić, 2013).

Furthermore, women are considered to be more honest and to be more capable, but also willing to listen to others, as well as to lead an open and honest dialogue. They are characterized by the greater empathy and emotional intelligence, that is, a sense of the needs of others and their understanding. They tend to listen more and to appreciate other's ideas and concepts, and they show excellence in the course of the learning process. One of the characteristics of women managers is to show more patience and tact when presenting bad or unpleasant news and information's to the employees and business partners. In the process of communication we note the transparent behaviour and for decisions which they have taken they argue with more information's. Women are also more flexible in adapting to the norms prescribed by the new set of circumstances.

According to Rupčić (2013), given the awareness of their own vulnerability, women are more inclined to encourage co-workers but also to forgive mistakes. Generally, in a work environment, they tend to strike a balance and harmony. In the decision-making process, women tend to analyze more. They are more prone to perceive implications of decisions on all interest and influential groups.

Women and men managers does not represent opposite poles but variations of personal characteristics. Although these characteristics are more familiar to women, they are more or less the same as to men. Therefore, the person should be considered as a whole individual. When choosing a manager, it is necessary to be guided by an assessment of the achieved level of professional and personal development, and the situation in which it operates (Rupčić, 2018).

According to the McKinsey's survey "Women matter" by analyzing thousands of businesses in fifty countries, they determine how many men and women managers are employed, and then they proceed comparing the gender ratio to business results. It has been observed that companies with at least three women in management have significantly better results than those managed by men only. Moreover, the operating profit of a company is 90 % higher if women are involved in decision making. More recent research from the London Business School concludes that an equal balance between men and women is optimal for managing institutions. The combination of female and male approaches produces the best results (Business Journal, 2012).

Therefore, when taking into account research that has been done to this day from relevant sources, it is quite clear that more work needs to be done to strike a balance between

gender representations as the optimal solution from which the best results can be achieved when achieving the companies' goals.

STATISTICS DATA BY GENDER

According to data from 2017, at the Croatian level of a total of 4 124 531 inhabitants, the ratio represents 51,7% of women and 48,3% of men. The working age population (from 15 to 64 years of age) for women amounts 63,5%, while for men it is 68%.

In 2018, out of a total of 153 542 unemployed individuals, 56,8% were women. The number of persons employed in accordance to activity (2018) when observing a total percentage amounts 48,4% for women and 51,6% for men (CBS, 2019).

In the field of education, data for the academic year 2017/2018 are given from which can be seen that 57% of the total number of students enrolled is female. Students of the post - graduate studies in the vast majority were female (66,2%), and on the post - graduate doctoral study the percentage of females students amounts 54,3% (CBS, 2019).

When studying the literature that deals with the gender equality, it is noted that there were more educated women than men, while at the same time they are underrepresented when it comes to leadership positions, whether in government and public institutions or in the real sector. Although women invest more in their education, they do not have the same starting position when it comes to better paying jobs and managerial positions. Therefore, it is necessary that with the legislations regulate and provide more systematic and qualitative analysis of the current situation considering gender equality, with the active politics imposes an even greater obligation to legislation that should comply with the rules. Although laws have been passed on gender equality, the question is how much they are actually put into practice. It is quite superfluous and imposed to strike a balance between men and women and only in cases of fulfilling the legal obligation.

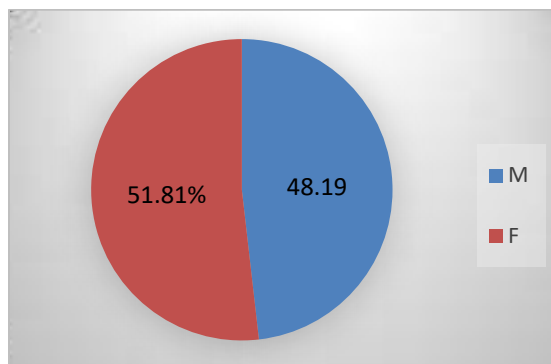
OSIJEK - BARANJA COUNTY IN NUMBERS

Osijek-Baranja County covers an area of 4152 km², where in accordance to the last population census from 2011 were settled 305 032 inhabitants. Because of the employment opportunities outside the borders of the Republic of Croatia and unfavourable economic movements in the Osijek-Baranja County (OBC, 2018), as estimated by CBS population has dwindled to 283 035 inhabitants, of whom 136 403 are men while 146 632 are women (Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018), which makes this ratio as almost the same throughout the Republic of Croatia.

The Osijek-Baranja County comprises of 264 settlements located in 42 local self-government units, of which 7 has the status of the city: Beli Manastir, Belišće, Donji Miholjac,

Đakovo, Našice, Osijek and Valpovo , and 35 with the status of the municipality: Antunovac, Bilje, Bizovac, Čeminac, Čepin, Darda, Donja Motičina, Draž, Drenje, Đurđenovac, Erdut, Ernestinovo, Feričanci, Gorjani, Jagodnjak, Kneževi Vinogradi, Koška, Levanjska Varoš, Magadenovac, Marijanci, Petlovac, Petrijevc, Podgorač, Podravska Moslavina, Popovac, Punitovci, Satnica Đakovačka, Semeljci, Strizivojna, Šodolovci, Trnava, Viljevo, Viškovci, Vladislavci and Vuka (Osijek-Baranja County, 2019).

Figure 2. Ratio of men and women in the Osijek - Baranja County



Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018²

The obtained ratio shows a slightly higher percentage in favour of the female population, given the quality and nature of the working places and the specificity of the official jobs that result from them, such indicators can be considered as relatively even distribution of men and women in positions in local governments and regional self-government units (Bedečković & Ravlić, 2011).

The highest concentration of the population of Osijek-Baranja county live in cities, especially in the City of Osijek, which is the centre of the county, then in the cities namely Đakovo, Našice, Valpovo, Belišće, Beli Manastir and Donji Miholjac. As a rule, municipalities have several thousand inhabitants, only the Čepin municipality, which has more than eleven thousand inhabitants, stands out of this rule (OBC, 2015).

According to the data of the Croatian Pension Insurance Institute and the Croatian Employment Service on the December 31, 2018, the number of employed persons in the OBC amounted to 87 421 (with 5,8% of share in the Republic of Croatia); the number of unemployed individuals was 17 740 (with 11,9% of share in the Republic of Croatia), while the workforce encompassed total of 105 161 inhabitants (with 6,4% of share in the Republic of Croatia), and the unemployment rate was 16,9% respectively (Osijek-Baranja County, 2019).

²Central Bureau of Statistics, 2018, "Evaluation of the Croatian population in 2017", available at https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2018/07-01-03_01_2018.htm (October 23, 2019)

THE SHARE OF WOMEN IN THE LOWER AND MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGEMENT IN OSIJEK-BARANJA COUNTY

It has been noticed that in the West, especially in Europe, the number of women on leadership positions in the company's board of directors is increasing, while in patriarchal countries the number of women in leadership positions is negligible (Pavlek, et al., 2015). The Filaks director Mlivić Budeš in 2010 in the eve of the conference that was held in Zagreb called "Women - Drivers of Change" said that the position of women was improving, but mostly, the greatest reach of women in management has been in the middle level management. For the most part, women lead marketing or human resources departments, but to run a company is still very difficult to reach if you are a woman (After 5, 2010).

In the units of local government and regional self-government units, lower and middle levels of management imply head positions in the administrative departments and professional services of counties, cities and municipalities.

Table 1. Presentation of the total number and structure of mayors in county, city and municipal governments

COUNTY, CITIES AND MUNICIPALITIES	M	F	SUM
OBC	4	8	12
BIJELI MANASTIR	0	3	3
BELIŠĆE	0	4	4
DONJI MIHOLJAC	1	1	2
ĐAKOVO	3	2	5
NAŠICE	4	1	5
OSIJEK	7	4	11
VALPOVO	4	0	4
ANTUNOVAC	1	0	1
BILJE	0	1	1
BIZOVAC	1	0	1
ČEMINAC	0	1	1
ČEPIN	1	2	3
DARDA	0	1	1
DONJA MOTIČINA	1	0	1
DRAŽ	0	1	1
DRENJE	1	0	1
ĐURĐENOVAC	1	0	1

Table 1...

ERDUT	1	0	1
ERNESTINOVO	0	1	1
FERIČANCI	1	0	1
GORJANI	0	1	1
JAGODNJAK	1	0	1
KNEŽEVI VINOGRADI	0	1	1
KOŠKA	0	1	1
LEVANJSKA VAROŠ	1	0	1
MAGADENOVAC	0	1	1
MARIJANCI	1	0	1
PETLOVAC	1	0	1
PETRIJEVCI	0	1	1
PODGORAČ	1	0	1
PODRAVSKA MOSLAVINA	0	1	1
POPOVAC	0	1	1
PUNITOVCI	1	0	1
SATNICA ĐAKOVAČKA	0	1	1
SEMELJCI	0	1	1
STRIZIVOJNA	1	0	1
ŠODOLOVCI	0	1	1
TRNAVA	1	0	1
VILJEVO	0	1	1
VIŠKOVCI	0	1	1
VLADISLAVCI	0	1	1
VUKA	0	1	1
Total	39	44	83
	47%	53%	100%

Source: Author's survey, official web pages of counties, cities and municipalities.

In Osijek-Baranja County there are a total of 12 heads which serves in administrative departments and services, of which are 4 men and 8 women, which in percentage makes 67% of women and 33% of men.

In the towns of Osijek-Baranja County, there are total of 34 heads of various departments, of whom 19 are men (56%), and there are 15 women (44%).

In the municipalities, the mayors are mostly heads of the common administrative departments, except in the municipality of Čepin, which has 3 heads. In county municipalities, 57% of the heads of the common administrative department are women (21), while 43% are men (16).

The total ratio of men to women in the lower and middle management amounts 47% for men and 53% of women (39 men and 44 women heads, respectively). This ratio almost coincides with the male-female ratio in Osijek-Baranja County, which is shown in figure 2.

The presence of women on managerial positions of heads of administrative departments and services is significant in county and even municipal departments, but in the city departments such ratio is much smaller.

Indicators of gender structure and ratio of all employees in the county, city and municipal administrations and taking into account the ratio of 48 % of employed men and 52 % of employed women (see figure 3), refers to gender equality when we take into account the employment in the county, city and municipal administrations where there are employed even more women than men, but not in management positions. In order to reach leadership positions, women must get through a number of barriers, and with their work they have to strive to exceed surroundings expectations and to prove that they can be both mothers and wives and managers (Bedečković & Ravlić, 2011).

SHARE OF WOMEN AT THE TOP MANAGEMENT LEVEL IN THE OSIJEK - BARANJA COUNTY

Supreme level of management in the structures of local government and regional governments means the position of prefect, deputy-prefect, the president and vice president of the County Assembly, the mayor and vice-mayor, the president and deputy president of the city council, the head, and deputy-head and the president and vice president of the municipal councils.

Osijek - Baranja County

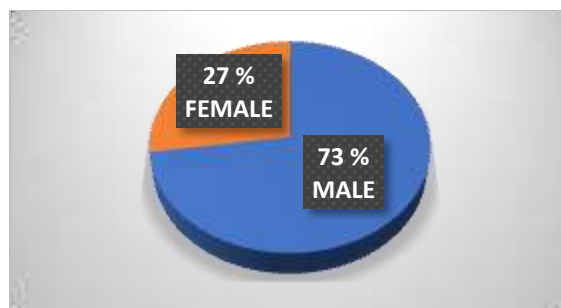
Table 2. The structure of officials seats in the Osijek-Baranja County.

Osijek - Baranja County	M	F
Prefect	1	0
Deputy-prefect	2	0
President of the County Assembly	1	0
Vice President of the County Assembly	2	0

Source: Author's study; Osijek-Baranja County (2019), available at: <http://www.obz.hr/index.php/zupan-ia> (10/25/2019)

From the table 2 it can be seen that on the functions of the top management in the structures of OBC there is not a single woman. The County Assembly has 40 men councillors and 15 women councillors.

Figure 3: Structure of councillors of County Assembly.



Source: Osijek-Baranja County, 2019 <http://www.obz.hr/index.php/vijecnici> (11/11/2019)

From the companies enlisted in the in county's property or co-owned companies, the company "Ulo hladnjača Ltd" and Miholjački poduzetnički centar Lokalna razvojna agencija Ltd" have a woman director, while the public institution County Development Agency of Osijek-Baranja County, "TERA Tehnopolis Ltd" "Slobodna zona Osijek Ltd", "Regionalna veletržnica Osijek Inc", "Zračna luka Osijek Ltd", "Cesting Ltd" and "Ekos Ltd" have men as directors.

Cities of Osijek - Baranja County

Table 3. Structure of official posts in the cities of Osijek-Baranja County.

	Mayor		Deputy mayor		President of the City Council		Deputy of the City Council		M	F	In total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
BELI MANASTIR	1	0	2	1	1	0	2	0	6	1	7
BELIŠĆE	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	5	1	6
DONJI MIHOLJAC	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	5
ĐAKOVO	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	5	1	6
NAŠICE	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	6	0	6
OSIJEK	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	5	1	6
VALPOVO	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	5	1	6
Total	7	0	10	4	7	0	13	1	37	5	42

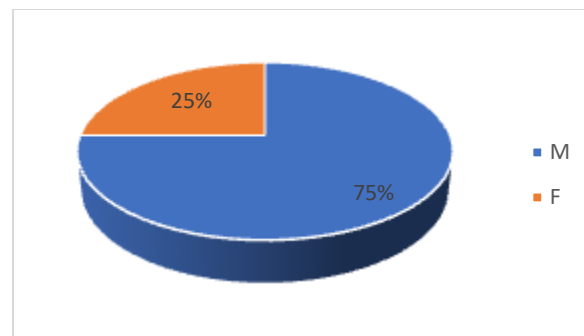
Source: Author's survey, official city website.

Top management positions in the city governments for the benefit of women are at a very low level. Only 12% of women hold top-level positions, and there is no women mayor or city council president, only deputies. The woman deputy of the president of the city council has only the City of Đakovo, while Donji Miholjac and Našice do not have any women in senior management structures.

Councillors in the city council

The City of Osijek has 10 women and 27 men in its City Council⁵. From the 18 councillors, Beli Manastir has 6 women⁶. Belišće has 7 women councillors out of a total of 17 councillors⁷. Donji Miholjac: out of 15 councillors has only 2 women⁸. Đakovo has 6 women city councillors out of a total of 20⁹. Našice has 4 women councillors out of 17 councillors¹⁰. The city of Valpovo has only one woman councillor out of a total of 17 councillors¹¹.

Figure 4: The structure of councillors of the City Councils.



Source: Author's Survey, official cities websites.

⁵City of Osijek: <https://www.osijek.hr/gradska-uprava/gradsko-vijece/vijecnici/> (11/11/2019)

⁶City of Beli Manastir: <http://www.beli-manastir.hr/beli-manastir-2/gradsko-vijece/> (11/11/2019)

⁷City of Belišće: <https://www.belisce.hr/gradsko-vijece-grad-belisca/> (11/11/2019)

⁸City of Donji Miholjac: <https://www.donjimiholjac.hr/sadrzaj/clanovi-gradskog-vijeca> (11/11/2019)

⁹City of Đakovo: <https://www.djakovo.hr/index.php/gradsko-vijece/gradsko-vijece> (11/11/2019)

¹⁰Town of Našice: https://nasice.hr/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=4682:Collectors-City-City-grada-nasica&catid=252&lang=en&Itemid=1234 (11/11/2019)

¹¹City of Valpovo: <https://valpovo.hr/sastav-gradskog-vijeca/> (11/11/2019)

City-owned or co-owned companies

The City of Osijek, the industrial, administrative, judicial and cultural centre of the County, has only one woman in its companies and also companies in which the City owns shares; it's the company "Športski objekti Ltd". Other companies have male managers in their leadership ("Gradski prijevoz putnika Ltd", "Osječki sajam Ltd", "Poduzetnički inkubator BIOS Ltd", "Regionalna veletržnica Osijek Inc", "TERA Tehnopolis Ltd", "Tržnica Ltd", "Ukop Ltd", "Unikom Ltd", "Vodovod-Osijek Ltd", "Zavod za stanovanje Ltd", "Zračna luka Osijek Ltd" and "Obnovljivi izvori energije Osijek Ltd").

Beli Manastir does not have any women in the Board of Directors in its companies (Stanouprava Ltd, Entrepreneurial Centre Beli Manastir, Baranjska čistoća Ltd and Baranjski vodovod Ltd).

Belišće has women directors in companies Kombel Ltd. and Business Incubator Polet Ltd, while the Hidrobel Ltd and Local Development Agency of the city of Belišće Ltd are headed by men.

Donji Miholjac: of two of its owned companies (Komunalno gospodarstvo Park Ltd and Doroslov Ltd) one of them is headed by a woman.

Đakovo in its four city companies (Univerzal Ltd, Đakovački vodovod Ltd, Cito Đakovo Ltd and Entrepreneurial Centre Đakovo Ltd) does not employ women managers.

Našice: on the position of the Radio Našice is the only woman in the leadership of the company (beside are companies Našički vodovod Ltd, Našički park Ltd and Našice Development Agency "Nara") that are headed by men.

Valpovo: Valpovo Local Development Agency has a woman at the helm of the company, while Dvorac Ltd, Urbanizam Ltd and Valpovac Entrepreneurial Centre have men.

Municipalities of Osijek - Baranja County

Table 4: Structure of office posts in the municipalities of Osijek-Baranja County.

	Head		Deputy-head		President of the municipal council		Vice-president of the municipal council		M	F	In total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F			
ANTUNOVAC	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	4	1	5
BILJE	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	5
BIZOVAC	1	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	4	1	5

ČEMINAC	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	1	4
ČEPIN	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	4	2	6
DARDA	1	0	2	0	0	1	2	0	5	1	6
DONJA MOTIČINA	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	2	2	4
DRAŽ	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	3	2	5
DRENJE	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	4
ĐURĐENOVAC	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	3	1	4
ERDUT	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	1	5	1	6
ERNESTINOVO	0	1	2	0	1	0	2	0	5	1	6
FERIČANCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	2	0	5	0	5
GORJANI	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4	1	5
JAGODNJAK	1	0	1	1	1	0	2	0	5	1	6
KNEŽEVI VINOGRADI	1	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	3	3	6
KOŠKA	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	0	4	1	5
LEVANJSKA VAROŠ	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
MAGADENOVAC	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
MARIJANCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
PETLOVAC	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
PETRIJEVCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	4
PODGORAČ	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	2	3	5
PODR. MOSLAVINA	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
POPOVAC	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	0	5	0	5
PUNITOVCI	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	0	4	1	5
SAT. ĐAKOVAČKA	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
SEMELJCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	3	1	4
STRIZOVOJNA	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
ŠODOLOVCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
TRNAVA	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	1	2	2	4
VILJEVO	1	0	2	0	0	1	1	0	4	1	5
VIŠKOVCI	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	2	4
VLADISLAVCI	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
VUKA	1	0	1	0	1	0	1	0	4	0	4
Total	32	3	38	9	27	8	35	11	132	31	163
									81%	19%	100%

Table 4...

Source: Author's Survey, official web sites of municipalities.

In Table 4 are shown the positions of heads and presidents of the municipal council and their deputies in the Osijek-Baranja County. As expected, in most cases such functions is hold by men. Hereby, the top management in municipalities in total employs (only) 19% of women. Most municipalities have one to two women on top positions. Thirteen out of thirty-five municipalities do not have any women in their leadership. The exceptions are the municipalities of Ernestinovo, Punitovci and Trnava, which are led by women heads. Kneževi Vinogradi have 50% representation of women in top management, while for the municipality Podgorač we can say that has represented the majority (60%) of women that are present in the leadership of the municipality.

CONCLUSION

An analysis of the share of women in the top management positions in the official structures of the local governmental units and regional self - government in the Osijek - Baranja County indicated that there exists an imbalanced representation of women in official positions. Their participation in the performance of duties as heads of executive power at the level of local and regional self - government is only 17,06 % from the total number of official posts in the entire Osijek - Baranja County . It is necessary to emphasize the need to raise awareness and to support women for as much of their involvement in the structures of the executive authorities (Bedeković & Ravlić, 2011).

In line with Bedeković and Ravlić conclusions, an increase in the number of women managers is accompanied by changes in management theory and practice. While the managers of the past have based their authority mostly on political, economic or military power, in modern society, managers share their power with their employees, discuss with them of all issues relevant to the organization and letting them know that they are respected and that their opinions are also valued. Today's organizations therefore require a leadership style characterized by a focus on people, teamwork, participation and collaboration. Such and similar characteristics are typical of women and are close to the definition of women's transformational leadership style.

Despite new insights into the field of contemporary management, women still find it very difficult to reach management positions. The indicators obtained from the analysis of the employees structure of the county, city and municipal administration in the area of Osijek - Baranja county still show present influence of tradition, as well as the existence of prejudice that women are still not the "proper choice" for the management positions and jobs at different hierarchical management levels, especially at its highest, supreme level.

Considering the fact that in other Croatian counties the situation is not significantly different, it is considered important to emphasize the need for awareness and support women in order to strongly as possible involve themselves in the management structures on all levels. While with the significant elements of possible measures to achieve this goal are seen as moving away from the impact of the traditional division of jobs on men's and women's, and breaking stereotypes and supporting the view that men and women have the same potentials, opportunities and preferences to do all the jobs.

When it comes to the effectiveness of performing managerial tasks at different hierarchical levels of management, it is certainly necessary to keep in mind some of the characteristics of managerial tasks that are specific to each individual level of management. The first level of management requires role of a manager who is capable of motivating his subordinates and to perform short-term tasks whose performance depends on jobs at other levels of the organizational hierarchy.

For the effectively performing middle management jobs it requires the skill of establishing good environmental relationships, teamwork skills and conflict resolution skills, while the top level management tasks includes, among other things, entrepreneurial spirit, corporate culture design skills, as well as the ability to build and communicate a common vision for the development and growth of organization. These skills represent the backbone of the women's transformational leadership style, which, among other things, is characterized by a focus on people and direct action with subordinates, encouragement to participation and the power share, share of information's, teamwork and focus on collaboration, tolerance, openness and a good knowledge of various forms of interpersonal relationships that influence on the effectiveness in conflict resolution, which in turn result in increased productivity of the entire organization. The characteristics of women's transformational leadership style, viewed in the context of a shift away from the traditional division of jobs into men's and women's, form the basis for supporting the position of men and women of equal potential and predisposition to perform managerial tasks at a different hierarchical levels of management, but it's also the basis for supporting the position of importance of inclusion of women in all the segments of the contemporary Croatian society. In this sense, women themselves, above all, should stop thinking of themselves as persons whose jobs are reserved only for home, family and the upbringing of children. That is, their dominant and irreplaceable role in life, however, apart from the role of mother, wife and guardian of the family, is to exploit their own life opportunities and the opportunities offered to them, with the feminine power and potential that women carry, is not impracticable (Bedeković & Ravlić, 2011).

In Art.11, paragraph 2 of ZORS "The bodies of the state administration and legal entities that are predominantly state-owned are obliged to implement special measures and adopt action plans for the promotion and establishment of gender equality, every four years..."

The under-representation of women in social relations of the distribution of social opportunities and benefits is one of the most important indicators of the presence of covert sexual discrimination.

This research has presented the representation of women on leading positions in local and governmental units and regional self-government in Osijek - Baranja County, Croatia. The study covers the period of October 2019. It would be interesting to see the situation in other counties in Croatia (there are 20 of them). Also, in a few years the study should be repeated so that the progress could be attended.

The under-representation of women in decision-making bodies reflects the poor management of human resources within the society, that is, it indicates the social and economic detriment because of the decisions of bodies where there exists significant overrepresentation of one gender (Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, March 2012).

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