

**Review of Emilia Golik's master thesis, *The Implementation of the European Work-Life Balance Directive in the Gender Discourse in Poland* (2024), submitted to Graduate Program in Gender Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, Prague.
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The intention of Emilie Golik's thesis was evident from the beginning of thinking about it - to examine work-life balance as a policy that, although part of the policies of all European Union countries, needs a critical feminist core for its implementation.

The research design of the thesis itself moved from a theoretical discussion of the concept of work-life balance to an analysis of a specific event (i.e., implementation of the work-life balance directive) in which work-life informs understandings of gender relations in a specific time and place. The work on this shift of focus was - as is often the case in thesis writing - intermittent. The final decision to focus the analysis on the discursive construction of the implementation of the European Directive on work-life balance in Poland in 2022-2023 was made only in the last months of the research. This is one of the reasons why the presented thesis would ideally require further rewriting.

The theoretical part of the thesis begins with a rather broad discussion of the definition of gender, interpretations of dualisms, and the term patriarchy, to finally arrive at a discussion of what a woman is in terms of both liberal and Marxist feminism and Simone de Beauvoir's feminism. Further, when the author of the thesis summarizes the understanding of work-life balance, she draws more on the management studies literature. The first theoretical section was written when the intention of the thesis was a theoretical discussion; the second section of the literature review deserves to be reworked from the perspective of sub-disciplines and literature closer to gender studies.

I consider the subsection on the development of gender equality in Poland to be well-researched. In it, the author also briefly describes the conditions of recent years in which the understanding of work-life balance and family policies has been transformed in the spirit of the policies of the ruling Law and Justice party. With the help of sociological and feminist research, the author also describes the general population's attitudes toward work and family organization issues. She also focuses on the transformations of work and family arrangements in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, which have further highlighted the need for adjustments to work-life balance and remote working (these issues have also been the primary subject of the discussed Labor Code changes).

The choice to analyze the media debate centered around adopting the new directive was good. From the final sub-chapter of the theoretical section, it is clear that although the implementation of the directive in Poland marks a step in the right direction also from a gender equality perspective, the framing of the adoption of the new legislation became crucial for the Polish government at the time. It is on the specific framing of the legislation by government actors and other affected groups that the analysis itself focuses on.

Although the media discourse initially seemed virtually nonexistent, after a more thorough search, Emilia Golik came up with a research sample, which she understandably structured around important discursive positions and voices in the debate. The text analysis itself does not fully exploit the potential of critical discourse analysis, but it focuses on essential aspects of the texts - their clarity, structure, emphases, and omissions. The analysis is quite descriptive. It highlights a crucial moment - the presentation of the implementation of the directive by the Minister of Family, Labor, and Social Policy, Marlena Małag, and the position of other actors against this governmental interpretation. Changing the Labor Code is, among other things, a matter of political struggle between the government and the opposition. Significantly, the work-life-balance legislation is co-opted by the neoconservative agenda of the former government in Minister Małag's interpretation, even though one of the important objectives of the legislation at the European Union level is precisely gender equality (the author summarizes this in particular on pp. 66-67). This is mentioned in the analysis, but it would be beneficial to compare this instance of the cooptation of gender equality policy with similar cases outside Poland.

The writing style is sometimes too conversational, and a more neutral and scholarly style could be adopted. Although the thesis has undergone some changes compared to the first versions of the chapters, it would still require further rewriting. Emilia Golik has shown great interest in the topic and the ability to summarize and compare other research findings (especially in the section on the current situation in Poland), but the analytical part suffers from descriptiveness.

To conclude: The submitted diploma thesis meets the criteria for a successful thesis. I recommend a “good” grade (3), and the candidate proceeds to the oral defense.

Lubica Kobová, January 27, 2024