## Legislative and Social Emancipation of Working Women in Croatia Under the Influence of Socialist Ideologies<sup>1</sup>

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#### ABSTRACT

The review of the relevant publication provides an analysis of the legal, economic, and ideological-social role of women as workers in Croatia, with an emphasis on the socialist era. The introduction presents a brief overview of how women's position in society as workers and contributors to the household budget in early Croatian history was impacted by social barriers. Furthermore, the position of women is analysed from the beginning of the Second Yugoslavia until the 1960s, when changes in legislation and society were followed by the socialist ideal of a woman as a quality worker and as a good mother. Therefore, this study addresses the question of whether the 1960s brought real positive changes for women in the social and economic segments of life or if that period marked a return to the traditional portrayal of a woman as a housewife who now carries the additional burden of a full-time worker. Finally, the analysis of the legislative and social approach to women in late socialism offers the possibility of observing today's progress from the relatively recent socialist order that conceived the idea of women as workers. One question has persisted throughout the history of Croatian women's emancipation in the workplace: does reality follow the law, or does it remain just a dead letter on paper?

### KEYWORDS

employment, Croatian history, women's rights, socialist ideology.

## Emanciparea legislativă și socială a femeilor muncitoare în Croația sub influența ideologiilor socialiste

#### REZUMAT

Articolul oferă o analiză a rolului juridic, economic și ideologic-social al femeilor ca muncitoare în Croația, cu accent pe epoca socialistă. Introducerea prezintă o scurtă prezentare generală a modului în care poziția femeilor în societate, în calitate de lucrătoare și de contributoare la bugetul gospodăriei, la începutul istoriei croate, a fost influențată de barierele »

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» sociale. În plus, poziția femeilor este analizată de la începutul celei de-a doua Iugoslavii până în anii 1960, când schimbările din legislație și societate au fost urmate de idealul socialist al femeii ca angajată de calitate și ca mamă bună. Prin urmare, acest studiu abordează întrebarea dacă anii 1960 au adus schimbări pozitive reale pentru femei în segmentele sociale și economice ale vieții sau dacă acea perioadă a marcat o întoarcere la imaginea tradițională a femeii ca gospodină care acum poartă povara suplimentară a unui angajat cu normă întreagă. În cele din urmă, analiza abordării legislative și sociale a femeilor în socialismul târziu oferă posibilitatea de a observa progresul de astăzi din ordinea socialistă relativ recentă care a conceput ideea femeilor ca muncitoare. O întrebare a persistat de-a lungul istoriei emancipării femeilor croate la locul de muncă: oare realitatea urmează legea, sau aceasta rămâne doar o literă moartă pe hârtie?

#### CUVINTE CHEIE

raport de muncă, istoria Croației, drepturile femeilor, ideologie socialistă.

### I. INTRODUCTION

Even though the beginning of women's participation in economic life is considered to be the period after the end of the Second World War, women paved the way for participation in the workforce at the very beginning of modern civil society and the market economy in Croatia. By studying the economic position of women from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, significant but gradual progress can be observed towards improving their position as participants in economic life.² Although this study examines the position of women as workers in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when social and economic life was dominated by socialist ideology, the historical, social, and economic context in which the aforementioned issue of the position of women was raised needs to be explained in further detail, focusing especially on the interwar period.

The economic and urbanisation crises at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, along with the lack of suitable education for women, limited the range of professions available to them. Between 1880 and 1910, there were slightly more than 2% unemployed men, while the remaining 18% were unemployed women; however, exact data cannot be given because there was no available statistical record of the composition of the workforce at that time.<sup>3</sup> The inclusion of women in industrial production reduced the problem of poor women from rural areas of Croatia;<sup>4</sup> for example, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a hundred female peasants worked in chair factories in Bakar and Ravna Gora.<sup>5</sup>

- 2 Ksenija Vuković, Tamara Šmaguc: Društveni kontekst izbora zanimanja žena u Hrvatskoj u razdoblju od kraja 19. do početka 21. stoljeća, *Ekonomska misao i praksa*, 1/2015, p. 298.
- 3 Agneza Szabo: Regionalno porijeklo i socijalna struktura stanovništva grada Zagreba između 1880–1910. godine, *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskog fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu*, 1/1984, p. 105.
- 4 Mirjana Gross, Agneza Szabo: Prema hrvatskome građanskom društvu, Društveni razvoj u civilnoj Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji šezdesetih i sedamdesetih godina 19. stoljeća, *Globus*, 1992, p. 141.
- 5 Agneza Szabo: Demografska struktura stanovništva civilne Hrvatske i Slavonije u razdoblju 1850–1880, *Historijski zbornik*, 1/1987, p. 205.

Furthermore, the period between the two World Wars on the territory of Croatia was marked by the foundation of the State of Slovens, Croats, and Serbs and then the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovens by the Serbian regent Alexander on 1 December 1918, which was later renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, In 1929, a dictatorship was introduced, which affected the political and intellectually complex lives of the people. The interwar women's movement in Yugoslavia was imbued with nationalism, and the image of the Yugoslav woman consisted of representatives of the hysterical and archaic past that needed to be nationalised to become new, true Yugoslav women. Women's position in Croatia in the interwar period<sup>8</sup> began to change during their childhood; however, there was a significant difference between developed and underdeveloped areas. Specifically, although both girls and boys attended public schools, further education was a rarity for boys, and such an option practically did not even exist for girls in rural areas, whereas girls in more developed areas had many more opportunities. An example of a possible exception in Croatia was the lace school in Lepoglava, which provided relatively good earnings.9 Conversely, women were more visible in higher education in more developed areas in the 20th century. For example, at the end of the First World War, women were allowed to attend mining, veterinary, legal, technical, and theological faculties in Croatia, and as early as 1938, women accounted for 22.8% of the students at Yugoslav colleges and universities.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the aforementioned educational progress, the patriarchal view of women's roles continues to segregate professional choices and contribute to the gender distribution of occupations. As a consequence of the aforementioned poor educational opportunities, women in developed areas are typically employed in lower-paid jobs that enable them to harmonise the roles of mother and worker. The special feature of the rural girl's earnings was that it was mostly invested in wedding supplies. However, the difference between women's and men's income was significantly higher in more developed regions than in the countryside. Furthermore, the importance of women's work in this interwar period was increasing for several reasons. Primarily, there was a need for an additional workforce, especially in the countryside. However, when the need for labour decreased, women were the first to lose their jobs, which was then reflected

- 6 Dalibor Čepulo (2022): Croatian Constitutionalism from Autonomy to the State, in Lóránt Csink, László Trócsányi (ed.): *Comparative Constitutionalism in Central Europe* (ed.), CEA Publishing, Miskolc-Budapest, pp. 39–40.
- 7 Andrea Feldman (2004): Poričuči gladnu godinu: Žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918–1939.), in Andrea Feldman (ed.): *Žene u Hrvatskoj, Ženska i kulturna povijest*, Institut "Vlado Gotovac", Zagreb, pp. 235–236, 240, 245.
- 8 See more in: Chiara Bonfiglioli (2012): Revolutionary Networks. Women's Political and Social Activism in Cold War Italy and Yugoslavia (1945–1957), Utrecht University (Ph.D. dissertation).
- 9 Suzana Leček (2004): "Ženske su sve radile", Seljačka žena između tradicije i modernizacije u sjeverozapadnoj Hrvatskoj između dva svjetska rata, in Andrea Feldman (ed.): *Žene u Hrvatskoj, Ženska i kulturna povijest*, Institut "Vlado Gotovac", Zagreb, pp. 212–214.
- 10 Vuković, Šmaguc (2015): p. 302.
- 11 Branka Galić: Žene i rad u suvremenom društvu značaj "orodnjenog" rada, *Sociologija i prostor: časopis za istraživanje prostornoga i sociokulturnog razvoja*, 1/2011, pp. 25–48.
- 12 Marina Blagojević (1991): *Žene izvan kruga: profesija i* porodica, Institut za sociološka istraživanja Filozofskog fakulteta u Beogradu, Beograd, p. 73.

in the decline of their social status. Second, the increase in women's work was also influenced by changes in the family structure. Despite the continued existence of traditional "women's" and "men's" divisions of labour, these division patterns gradually disappeared as a result of the complexity of family structures.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, women's organisations in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia actively promoted women's rights in all spheres of life, advocating for the right to vote, equal pay for equal work, and civil marriage. The influence of the patriarchy on the position of women in the workforce gradually diminished, which meant that women were given the role of "economic partners" of men. Herefore, the position of women in the economic sense was no longer accompanied by strong patriarchal understandings, given that women were provided with an increasing number of opportunities in terms of contributing to the household budget. Despite everything mentioned above, women continue to be subordinated in all spheres of life, and their position is still far from equal. However, it is unclear how women's status progressed from the construction of the Second Yugoslavia until its collapse in the 1990s, all under the strong influence of socialism.

## II. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PERIOD FROM THE BUILDING OF THE SECOND YUGOSLAVIA TO THE 1960S

The construction of the socialist federation began as early as 1943 on the territory of the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia.<sup>17</sup> The role of the new government after the Second World War was aimed at dealing with previously acquired social practises and the transformation of society, and special attention was paid to the modernisation of society. Therefore, the postwar period marked massive social, political, and economic changes, which largely affected the position of women. The rights that women acquired in Yugoslavia were won by themselves, primarily through participation in the People's Liberation Struggle. Likewise, it is important to emphasise that women's equality was one of the foundations of communist ideology, and according to Lenin's understanding,

- 13 Leček (2004): p. 221, 223.
- 14 Darja Zaviršek (2012): Women and social work in central and eastern Europe, in Joanna Regulska, Bonnie G. Smith (ed.): *Women and Gender in Postwar Europe, From Cold War to European Union*, Routledge, London, New York, p. 53.
- 15 Older literature presented patriarchy as a system based on the authority of a man: the father. However, in recent literature, concepts such as dominance, subordination, phallocentrism, and androcentrism are associated with this institute, while asymmetry and marginality are associated with women as the other side in this relationship. See more in: Jasenka Kodrnja (2008): Žene zmije rodna dekontrukcija, Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, Zagreb, p. 51.
- 16 Leček (2004): p. 222.
- 17 Ljubiša Vujošević (1985): *Povijest Saveza komunista Jugoslavije*, IC Komunist, Narodna knjiga, Beograd, pp. 98–99.

"there can be no socialist movement if a large part of working women does not take a large part in it. We need women workers to achieve, not only before the law but also in life, equality with a men-workers. That is why women workers must take increasing participation in the management of companies and the management of the state." <sup>18</sup>

The social organisation of Yugoslavia can be said to have two characteristics: the rule of the working class and working people, as well as socialist production relations among people who are free and equal creators of their own common needs. <sup>19</sup> The labour market in the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought industrialisation, mass employment, urbanisation, and changes in economic opportunities and lifestyles that created a discrepancy in the position of women, previously closely and almost exclusively related to family values. <sup>20</sup> Additionally, the labour market of Yugoslavia caused two conflicts: the first concerned the role of the worker and the role of the father or mother, while the other was related to gender roles, in which the man in the family did not share familial chores with the woman. <sup>21</sup> Therefore, the Second World War marked a turning point in the expansion of the range of hitherto unavailable occupations for women, especially in low-paid service industries. <sup>22</sup>

In socialist theory, industrialisation opened up the possibility of working regardless of a woman's marital status, and with the organisation of social care for children, the position of working mothers became significantly easier.<sup>23</sup> In the postwar period, the number of employed women increased by approximately nine times because of postwar reconstruction and society's need for new cultural values and forms of socialism.<sup>24</sup> However, after the Informbiro Resolution, the attack of the Soviet Union on the Yugoslav government, military threats, economic blockades, and major droughts that destroyed the crops caused a general decrease in the number of employees, especially women, and the situation only improved in the 1960s.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, after the aforementioned Resolution of the Informbiro, the Soviet Union ceased to be a model for

- 18 Franjo Kožul (1973): Samoupravni i radni status žene u Jugoslaviji (rezultati istraživanja), University of Sarajevu, Faculty of political sciences, Sarajevo, p. 23.; Bojana Đokanović, Ivana Dračo, Zlatan Delić (2015): Žene u Socijalizmu od ubrzane emancipacije do ubrzane repatrijarhalizacije, in Jasmina Čaušević, Emina Bošnjak, Saša Gavrić (ed.): Zabilježene: Žene i javni život Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. vijeku, Drugo dopunjeno i izmijenjeno izdanje, III. Part: 1945–1990, Sarajevski otvoreni centar, Fondacija CURE, Sarajevo, pp. 104–105.
- 19 Marinko Učur: Labour and Labour Relations in the Amandments to the Constitution of the SFR of Yugoslavia and the Associated Labour Act, *Zbornik Pravnog fakulteta u Rijeci*, 9/1988, pp. 143–144.
- 20 Mirjana Adamović (2011): *Žene i društvena moć*, Plejada, Institut za društvena istraživanja u Zagrebu, Zagreb, p. 114.
- 21 Marijo Volarević: Novi feminizam i kulturna promocija žene majke-radnice, *Obnovljeni život: časopis za filozofiju i religijske znanosti*, 2/2012, pp. 223–236.
- 22 Galić (2011): p. 26.
- 23 Vida Tomšić (1981): *Žena u razvoju socijalističke samoupravne Jugoslavije*, Novinarsko-izdavačka radna organizacija "Jugoslavenska stvarnost", Beograd, p. 91.
- 24 Tomšić (1981): p. 91.
- 25 Smiljana Milinkov (2014): Medijska prezentacija žene pedesetih godina prošlog veka u Jugoslaviji: retradicionalizacija društva vs. emancipacija na primjeru Autonomne pokrajine Vojvodine, Philosophy Faculty, University of Novi Sad, Novi Sad, pp. 179–180.

imitation, hence, plans for the mass inclusion of women in production were no longer implemented because quality took precedence over quantity. The lower level of education<sup>26</sup> was the key reason women remained only in more difficult jobs that required lower qualifications and paid lower wages.<sup>27</sup>

# 1. Legislation as a result of the socialist ideal of women as quality workers and good mothers

According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Croatia from 1947, based on the Constitution of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: FPRY):

"[w]omen are equal citizens with men in all areas of the state, economic and socio-political life. For equal work, women are entitled to equal pay as men and enjoy special protection in the employment relationship. The state protects the interests of the mother and the child, especially through the establishment of maternity hospitals, children's homes and kindergartens, and the mother's right to paid leave before and after childbirth."<sup>28</sup>

The aforementioned Constitution was a kind of turning point in the legislative improvement of women's position in Croatia, given that in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, laws from the 19<sup>th</sup> century were applied, which were in line with the later understanding of the position of women. Additionally, the problem was non-harmonised legislation, given that different laws were applied in Croatia and Slavonia than in the rest of Croatia, for example, in Zadar.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, the FPRY Constitution was supplemented by laws that regulated the position of women, so that the constitutional provisions would not remain just a dead letter on paper. Laws and decrees were mainly directed towards the realisation of women as workers and the protection of the rights of employed women during and after pregnancy, given that they contribute to the reconstruction of the country by working and giving birth.<sup>30</sup>

The Law on Social Security of Workers, Officials, and Their Families from 1950 allowed women to retire five years earlier than men and provided paid leave for mothers for six weeks before and six weeks after childbirth, 31 while the Decree on the Protection of Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers in Employment extended maternity leave to 90 days. Furthermore, the night work of mothers from the fourth

- 26 See more about the workers' education in Yugoslavia in: Gary K. Bertsch, Karen L. Persons: Workers' education in Socialist Yugoslavia, *Comparative Education Review*, 1/1980, pp. 87–97.
- 27 Iva Niemčić, Dijana Dijanić, Mirka Merunka-Golubić, Dijana Stanić (2004): *Ženski biografski leksikon: sjećanje žena na život u socijalizmu*, Centar za ženske studije, Zagreb, p. 142.
- 28 Zbirka Zakona, Uredaba i Naredaba Narodne Republike Hrvatske, Ustav Narodne Republike Hrvatske, Izdanje Narodnih novina, službenog lista Narodne Republike Hrvatske, 5/1947.
- 29 Ana Prokop (1969): Komentar Osnovnom zakonu o braku, Školska knjiga, Zagreb, p. 391.
- 30 Njemčić et al. (2004): p. 187.
- 31 Law on social security of workers and officials and their families (Cro. *Zakon o socijalnom osiguranju radnika i službenika i njihovih porodica*), Official Gazette of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, Articles 27. and 37.

month of pregnancy to eight months after birth is prohibited by the Law on Amendments to the Law on Civil Servants, while the Decree on Material Assistance for the Children of Workers and Civil Servants provided equipment for a newborn, a one-time allowance for families with several children, and cash allowances for children. The regulation also stipulated that a pregnant woman could not be fired and that companies employing more than 20 mothers must have a crèche or kindergarten. However, in practise, the mentioned provisions were not respected, therefore, on the initiative of the activists, kindergartens, crèches, and fun centres were established throughout Croatia, which significantly helped working mothers. However, with the introduction of the child allowance in 1951, kindergartens and crèches began to be supported exclusively from parental funds, which a large number of parents could not pay, which is why the number of children's institutions rapidly decreased.<sup>32</sup>

Although the state's social policy related to women was modernised, it continued to primarily help women employed in state-owned enterprises or institutions, considering that this was the only way they were able to exercise their rights. However, despite modernisation and urbanisation,<sup>33</sup> a large number of women were still engaged in agriculture, which meant that the aforementioned laws only applied to working women but not those engaged in agriculture, even though there was no significant difference in their working hours or the number of obligations.<sup>34</sup>

In conclusion, it can be stated that the constitutional and legislative regulations of Yugoslavia until the 1960s guaranteed equality in access to workplaces and the unity of personal income for work; however, in practise, it worked much differently, which was justified by the unfavourable qualification structure of women.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, Yugoslavia, with its anti-discrimination approach to labour legislation, was among the more advanced countries in the world; however, this did not prevent women as workers from being placed in an unequal relationship as part of economic or social emancipation.<sup>36</sup>

## 2. Female organised action as a movement of changes

With the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, civic feminist organisations could no longer continue their work, and the war marked their end. However, the war did not stop the activists of the women's proletarian movement, who became the inheritors of the development of the women's movement. The first document related to the start of women's organised activities in Croatia is the Resolution of the Assembly of Women

- 32 Njemčić et al. (2004): pp. 187-190.
- 33 See more in: Bette S. Denich: Urbanisation and woman's roles in Yugoslavia, *Anthropological Quarterly*, 1/1976, pp. 11–19.
- 34 Sara Tar (2021): *Žena u procesu izgradnje jugoslavenskog socijalizma, primjer Zadra*, University of Zadar, Zadar, p. 26.
- 35 Tomšić (1981): pp. 95-97.
- 36 Sanela Đurkan (2015): Rodna ideologija u socijalističkoj Jugoslaviji 1970-ih: prikaz analize sadržaja reprezentativnih hrvatskih romana, University of Zagreb, Zagreb, p. 28.

of the Drvar Valley, dated 21 August 1941.<sup>37</sup> Subsequently, the Anti-Fascist Women's Front, officially founded in 1942, entered the scene<sup>38</sup> as part of the Conference, which was praised by Josip Broz Tito, who stated that: "[w]omen are fighting today side by side with men for the freedom of the people of Yugoslavia [...] In this war, they are fighting today for the equality of women".<sup>39</sup>

One of the key authors who dealt with the issue of the position of women and their emancipation in Croatia in the relevant period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the sociologist and ethnologist Lydia Sklevicky, whose research subjects were war and postwar reports and records of women's organisations. She is also responsible for important information about the Anti-Fascist Front of Croatian Women.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, the Anti-Fascist Women's Front was the most massive women's movement in our region and beyond, which contributed in an extraordinary manner to the fight against fascism, for the general equality of women, and the freedom and emancipation of Yugoslav society as a whole. By participating in the People's Liberation Struggle, women won the legitimacy of the greatest revolutionary achievement: equality and the antifascist women's front grew over time into a strong socio-political factor in socialist Yugoslavia.<sup>41</sup>

The Front had three basic emancipatory roles: literacy and education of women; mobilisation for reconstruction; and encouragement of the construction of kindergartens to enable the employment of women and thereby establish their economic independence.<sup>42</sup> The aforementioned Front published the newsletter "Women in the Struggle", which offers an excellent insight into the state of women's position after 1945. The successor of that newspaper is the magazine "Žena", which is also a key source of information about the emancipation of women in the second half of the socialist period in Croatia.<sup>43</sup> In the aforementioned magazine, women were viewed as workers and heroes of work together with their male work colleagues. The magazine exalted the work and restoration of the country and the equalisation of "women's" and "men's" jobs. With its cover depicting a woman with a child and a rifle in her hand, the first edition immediately demonstrated the importance of women's positions, with an emphasis on

- 37 Marija Šoljan (1955): *Žene Hrvatske u Narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi*, Knjiga I., Rezolucija sa skupštine žena Drvarske doline od 21.VIII.1941., Izdanje glavnog odbora saveza ženskih društava Hrvatske, Zagreb, pp. 19–20.
- 38 Lydia Sklevicky: Organizirana djelatnost žena Hrvatske za vrijeme narodnooslobodilačke borbe 1941–1945, *Povijesni prilozi*, 3/1984, p. 90.
- 39 Adela Jušić, "Ja mislim, drugarice...". Available at: https://afzarhiv.org/items/show/481 (accessed on 16.11.2022).
- 40 Dunja Rihtman-Auguštin: Lydia Sklevicky (1952–1990), Narodna umjetnosti: hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkoristiku, 1/1990, p. 333.
- 41 Available at: https://afzarhiv.org/ (accessed on 16.11.2022).
- 42 Ivana Pantelić (2011): *Partizanke kao građanke*, Institut za savremenu istoriju, Evoluta, Beograd, p. 56.
- 43 Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević: Žena u borbi 1943/45, Izd. Konferencije za društvenu aktivnost žena Hrvatske, časopisa "Žena" i Instituta za historiju radničkog pokreta Hrvatske, Zagreb 1974, str. 522, Časopis za suvremenu povijest, 2/1975, p. 202.

combat.<sup>44</sup> From 1947 to 1951, texts promoting the work of women in the industry were published under the slogan "same work, same pay."<sup>45</sup>

However, the question is whether women were treated equally, as promoted by the Front. In particular, according to Sklevicky's research, women experienced various injustices, especially from male colleagues, and considering that over time the Front was perceived as a kind of threat to the Communist Party, it became only a tool in its hands. Finally, in 1953, by the decision of the People's Front, the Anti-Fascist Women's Front was abolished. Hat followed after the Front was the Conference for the Social Activity of Croatian Women, which in 1961 became part of the Socialist Alliance of Working People (more on that follows below).

## III. POST-1960S EVOLUTION: SIGNIFICANT CHANGES OR A REVERSION TO TRADITIONAL CONCEPTS?

In the 1960s, women seeking employment comprised 50% of the total number of unemployed in Yugoslavia,<sup>49</sup> and by the mid-sixties, this percentage decreased because of the increasing qualifications of female workers applying for jobs, the decrease in the number of unqualified workers applying for jobs, and their temporary employment abroad.<sup>50</sup>

The average growth rate of employed women in Yugoslavia between 1954 and 1974 was 6%.<sup>51</sup> In 1961, the proportion of women still working in agriculture was 42% because of the increasing abandonment of agriculture by men and frantic employment in the industry.<sup>52</sup> As per estimates, there were approximately 40,000 women in full-time employment in agriculture in Second Yugoslavia and approximately 9,700 women in Croatia.<sup>53</sup>

Since the mid-1960s, most women in the Socialist Republic of Croatia who did not engage in agriculture have been employed in economic organisations that belong to lower categories of expertise. This was caused, among other things, by the delay in improving women's qualifications under the pretext of being overworked, which kept

- 44 "Učestvujemo u obnovi domovine", *Žena u borbi*, 14–15/1945, pp. 16–17.
- 45 Reana Senjković: Ugljen i šminka. Narativi o jugoslavenskoj radnici na ponudi posttranzicijskom sjećanju, *Etnološka tribina*, 41/2018, p. 178.
- 46 Renata Jambrešić Kirin (2008): *Dom i svijet. O ženskoj kulturi pamćenja*, Centar za ženske studije, Zagreb, p. 23.
- 47 Available at: https://afzarhiv.org/ (accessed on 16.11.2022).
- 48 Mario Febekovec (2005): *Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žena Hrvatske 1945–1990*, Hrvatski državni arhiv, Zagreb, pp. 5–8.
- 49 See more in: Janez Malačić: Unemployment in Yugoslavia from 1952 to 1975, Eastern European Economics, *Taylor and Francis*, 4/1979, pp. 85–109.
- 50 Iva Dujmović (2016): *Radnice u Jugoslaviji 1960–1980. Uloga i položaj u industriji i društvu i slučaj Rijeka*, University of Rijeka, Rijeka, p. 36.
- 51 Tomšić (1981): p. 91.
- 52 Dujmović (2016): p. 35.
- 53 Livada et al.: Ekonomski i društveni položaj žena u poljoprivredi i na selu, Konferencija za društvenu aktivnost žene, *Tisak "Epoha"*, 2/1967, pp. 15–23.

them in lower-paid jobs. Not only in Croatia but throughout the entire former Yugoslavia, women were employed in lower positions, and very few women managed to advance to better-paid positions. The workers attributed this to the woman's absence from work due to family obligations. Diana Pearce coined the phrase "feminisation of poverty" in 1978 to describe the concentration of poverty among women, especially among female-headed households, because of men's low wages and their generally poorer living standards. Diana Pearce coined the phrase "feminisation" among female-headed households, because of men's low wages and their generally poorer living standards.

Therefore, if the percentage of employed women in Croatia is analysed, as reported by the population census, it can be noticed that it was just 38.38% of all women in their 60s, and that increased to 43.26% in their 70s. However, it must be acknowledged that the 1970s were also the high point for the percentage of employed women, since their drop was once again observed in the 1980s and 1990s, and their decline was again recorded in 1981 and 1991 at 40.95% and 38.52%, respectively. Such an oscillation in the share of employed women was greatly influenced by the poor adaptation of working women as mothers and the migration of Yugoslav workers abroad (more on this follows below).

### 1. Housework as "a woman's natural role"

Despite the economic emancipation of women, housework was still considered a woman's natural role and is labelled unproductive. According to a 1959 survey by the Federal Bureau of Statistics, over 60% of female workers did all the housework alone on weekends. However, statistics reveal that as many as 42% of women themselves were imbued with traditional-conservative ideology. Therefore, one section of women wanted the traditional way of family relations, while the other section wanted a more modern way, but in both variants, women's desired to work conflicts with the traditional patriarchal ideology. The clash of traditional and modern approaches to life lead to difficulties in assimilating new trends brought about by urbanisation and to a discrepancy between modern approaches and the way men and women were raised. In the 1960s, there was a fusion of consumerism and socialism, shopping and production, as well as traditional and modern gender roles. 58

The Constitution of 1963 gave special protection to women workers,<sup>59</sup> and the socialist government introduced numerous decrees to facilitate the simultaneous fulfilment of a woman's role as a quality worker and as a good mother. For example, the Decree on the issue of women's work during pregnancy or menstruation exempts

- 54 Dujmović (2016): pp. 38–42.
- 55 See more in: Diana Pearce: The feminisation of poverty: Women, work, and welfare, *Urban and Social Change Review*, 11/1978, pp. 28–36.
- 56 Njemčić et al. (2004): p. 349.
- 57 Marko Mladenović: Neki problemi porodice u suvremenom jugoslavenskom društvu, Konfrerencija za društvenu aktivnost žene, *Tisak "Epoha"*, 1/1967, p. 10.
- 58 Lea Horvat: Figura domaćice u šezdetima: knjiga za svaku ženu, *Quorum, Kikagraf,* 4-5-6/2013, pp. 323–329.
- 59 Constitution of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, Official Gazette No. 14/1963, Article 37.

women from work that requires standing for long durations, or the Decree on the opening of nurseries by companies. <sup>60</sup> However, according to data from 1966, the available day care for children covered only 5.4% of their needs, which meant that a very large number of employees had no place for their children during working hours. Likewise, the number of household assistance services and open-type catering restaurants that would help working parents was insufficient. <sup>61</sup> Additionally, the Law on Labour Relations of Pregnant Women gave the woman the right to transfer to an easier job than the previous one and to retain the income that she had in her old workplace. However, this created a significant burden for units with a large number of employed women, which is why companies continued to employ male workers and thus avoid paying for sick leave due to pregnancy or a child's illness. <sup>62</sup> Therefore, despite the socialist government's attempt to enable women to perform both the roles of workers and mothers without conflict, such a policy was difficult to apply in practise due to the burden of the housework borne by women. <sup>63</sup>

### 2. Cross-border employment of Yugoslav women

The policy of connecting the Yugoslav and European markets was maintained in sociology and economics from the second half of the 1960s until the 1980s. Such an understanding led to a significant number of Yugoslavian workers migrating abroad. The cross-border movement of Yugoslavian workers to other European countries destroyed the myth of full employment in socialism, the artificial maintenance of low personal incomes, and the tendency of egalitarianism, which resulted in the generalisation of low living standards across all social categories, changes in the development policy of the 1960s, and a shift towards capital investment technology. The aforementioned factors of emigration from Yugoslavia caused the abandonment not only of backward sectors but also of the most developed sectors. As per estimates, in 1962, there were more than 110,000 workers from Yugoslavia in Western European countries. In the same year, the Yugoslav state leadership decided to adopt legal regulations for managing the employment of Yugoslav citizens abroad, which was the first positive attitude towards economic emigration without condemning those going abroad as an act of hostility.

In the 1960s, the trend of female labour migration from Yugoslavia to the countries of the European Economic Community also started. However, it was challenging to hire

- 60 Aida Spahić (2014): Zabilježene Žene i javni život Bosne i Hercegovine u 20. Vijeku, Sarajevski otvoreni centar, Sarajevo, p. 128.
- 61 Mladenović (1967): pp. 10-11.
- 62 Dujmović (2016): p. 29.
- 63 Manuela Dobos: The Woman's Movement in Yugoslavia: The Case of the Conference for the Social Activity of Women in Croatia, 1965–1974., *A Journal of Women Studies, University of Nebrasca Press*, 2/1983, p. 50.
- 64 Silva Mežnarić: Jugoslavenska sociologija (vanjskih) migracija pokušaj sistematizacije, *Migracijske teme 1*, 1/1985, pp. 79–80.
- 65 Vladimir Ivanović (2012): *Geburtstag pišeš normalno: jugoslovenski gastarbajteri u SR Njemačkoj i Austriji 1965–1973*, Institut za suvremenu istoriju, Beograd, pp. 55–57.

Yugoslav women because of the different regulations, long waiting periods, and priority employment of citizens of the community. In 1973, a "family reunification permit" was passed, which led to a mass migration of women and children from Yugoslavia to find work but not necessarily better working conditions. Women abroad worked in jobs that were not attractive to the domestic population, such as the industrial sector, the tertiary sector, and health care, and they mostly did hard, "male" jobs, such as turning, assembly, and bricklaying. These women represented cheap labour, often working illegally for lower wages and with questionable or non-existent job security protections. However, it should be emphasised that compared to other female migrants, Yugoslavian workers had a good education, and only 11.3% of female migrants in 1971 had no schooling, which included those who had completed 1 to 3 grades of primary school. The problem lay in the fact that general education rather than vocational education predominated in Yugoslavian schools, which classified Yugoslavian female workers, even those with high school education, as unqualified workers.

Migrant women were called "invisible migrations" and represented continuity in the subordination and exploitation of female labour, even though almost 40% of the total migration in Europe at that time was represented by women; therefore, it is questionable why this part of the population was so neglected. The reasons are found in the so-called "psychological reductionism" that led to women not being portrayed as true protagonists in the migration process; that is, their presence is rarely linked to production, and their economic function is ignored. Therefore, the role of women in migration was primarily economic, and their migration enabled the stabilisation of the foreign population, the normalisation of family relations, and the way of life, but on the other hand, it put women again in a disadvantageous position in the workplace.

# IV. LATE SOCIALISM: DID THE NEW LEGISLATION MEAN A BETTER POSITION FOR WORKING WOMEN?

In the 1970s and 1980s, an association called "*Woman and Society*" influenced the media portrayal of women through various forums to raise awareness among young people. 70 Additionally, as previously mentioned, the Conference for the Social Activity of Croatian Women has been dealing with issues of women's position in society since the 1960s and closely cooperates with state and social institutions. They believed that the emancipation of women was necessary for all spheres of life to achieve and ensure the equality already granted to them by the Constitution and laws. 71 Through

- 66 Melita Švob: Migracije žena Jugoslavije, Migracijske i etničke teme, 4/1990, pp. 5–7.
- 67 Švob (1990): p. 8.
- 68 Mirjana Morokvašić: Migracija žena u Europi, *Časopis za kritiku znanosti*, 38–39/1980, pp. 174–175.
- 69 Švob (1990): p. 5.
- 70 Andrea Feldman (2004): *Žene u Hrvatskoj; Žene i kulturna povijest*, Institut "Vlado Gotovac", Ženska infoteka, Zagreb, pp. 249–250.
- 71 Febekovec (2005): pp. 5-8.

the struggle for the expansion of women's rights, the conference emphasised the key problems that accompany Croatian women, especially social care, low qualifications, the position of female workers in the workplace, low employment of women, insufficient help for working mothers, etc. Finally, because of a disagreement with the draft of the republic's social plan and conservative decisions from 1971, they united with the national leadership of the Union of Communists of Yugoslavia, representatives of workers in Croatia, the League of Croatian Trade Unions, and the Croatian Congress of Self-Governing Managers. The aforementioned association resulted in a resolution as a draft of the 1974 Constitution.<sup>72</sup> The right to work for men and women was guaranteed. in addition to social and health insurance, the right to basic and further education. the prohibition of gender discrimination, equal pay for equal work was guaranteed for a working week of at least 42 hours and at least 18 days of rest per year. 73 However. the question is whether the legislative provisions have been applied or whether they remained just dead letters on paper. Therefore, a more detailed description of the legal regulations guaranteeing the rights of women as workers in late socialism is given below, along with a comparison with the real situation.

# 1. Legal protection of Yugoslavian female workers from 1971 to 1991 vs. application in practice

The abovementioned Constitution of the SFRY from 1974 already states in its basic principles that the social community, based on solidarity and reciprocity, ensured society's policy towards the family and social care for children, which includes ensuring, among other things, the health care of mothers and children and the special protection of women at work. Likewise, Article 239 stated that the rights of women at work in connection with childbirth, maternity, and child care, as well as obligations to ensure the funds necessary for the realisation of these rights, are determined by law, self-governing agreement, and social agreement.<sup>74</sup>

Key regulations in the field of labour relations and employment in the Socialist Republic of Croatia, some of which were eventually adopted after the independence of Croatia by the Law from 1991,75 were the Associated Labour Act,76 which was later supplemented or partially replaced by the Law on Basic Rights in the Employment Relationship,77 Regulation on special conditions for the entry of a foreign citizen into

- 72 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Official Gazette No. 8-86/74.
- 73 Dobos (1983): pp. 48-53.
- 74 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Croatia, Official Gazette No. 8-86/74, Basic Principles (VI); Article 239.
- 75 Act on taking over federal laws in the field of labour relations and employment that are applied in the Republic of Croatia as republican laws (Cro. *Zakon o preuzimanju saveznih zakona iz oblasti radnih odnosa i zapošljavanja koji se u Republici Hrvatskoj primjenjuju kao republički zakoni*), Official Gazette of Republic of Croatia No. 34/91.
- 76 Associated Labour Act (Cro. Zakon o udruženom radu), Official Gazette of SFRY No. 53-764/76.
- 77 Law on basic rights in employment (Cro. Zakon o osnovnim pravima iz radnog odnosa), Official Gazette of SFRY No. 60/89.

joint work,<sup>78</sup> which was replaced by the Law on Conditions for Establishing Employment Relations with Foreign Citizens,<sup>79</sup> Act on the Protection of Citizens of the SFRY on Temporary Work Abroad,<sup>80</sup> Law on records in the field of work,<sup>81</sup> Law on obtaining and using foreign funds to increase employment and employment of returnees from work abroad,<sup>82</sup> and the Act on providing funds for partial financing of programs for the protection of the socially vulnerable population and workers whose work ceases to be necessary due to the restructuring of the economy.<sup>83</sup>

In the following section, the articles of certain mentioned regulations of the SFRY related to the protection of women as a particularly vulnerable group of workers will be analysed.

The Associated Labour Act from 1976, a very important regulation of the time in the sphere of labour legislation, which was valid almost until the breakup of Yugoslavia, stated in Article 166 that workers/women in employment have the right to special protection for pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity (Article 166). He also stated that women can establish an employment relationship with working hours shorter than the prescribed full-time working hours, under the conditions and in the manner prescribed by law (Article 184 paragraph 10).<sup>84</sup>

The Law on Basic Rights in Labour Relations, which was repealed, among numerous articles, the two previously mentioned articles of the Associated Labour Act, <sup>85</sup> emphasises the right of working women to special protection during pregnancy, childbirth, and maternity (Article 3). The law also states that a working woman during pregnancy or with a child up to two years of age cannot work longer than full-time, that is, at night. The only exception is when a female worker with a child older than one year can work at night based on her written request. A single parent who has a child under the age of

- 78 Regulation on special conditions for the entry of a foreign citizen into joint work (Cro. *Uredba o posebnim uslovima za stupanje stranog državljanina u udruženi rad*), Official Gazette of the SFRY, No. 6/74.
- 79 Law on Conditions for Establishing an Employment Relationship with Foreign Citizens (Cro. *Zakon o uvjetima za zasnivanje radnog odnosa sa stranim državljanima*), Official Gazette of SFRY, No. 11/78 and 64/89.
- 80 Act on the Protection of Citizens of the SFRY on Temporary Work Abroad, Official Gazette of the SFRY (Cro. Zakon o zaštiti građana SFRJ na privremenom radu u inozemstvu), No. 15/80 and 61/88.
- 81 Law on records in the field of work (*Zakon o evidencijama u oblasti rada*), Official Gazette of SFRY, No. 2/77 and 21/82.
- 82 Law on obtaining and using foreign funds to increase employment and employment of returnees from work abroad (Cro. Zakon o pribavljanju i korištenju inozemnih sredstava za povećanje zaposlenosti i zapošljavanja povratnika s rada u inozemstvu), Official Gazette of the SFRY, No. 22/78 and 54/86.
- 83 Act on providing funds for partial financing of programmes for the protection of the socially vulnerable population and workers whose work ceases to be necessary because of economic restructuring (Cro. Zakon o osiguravanju sredstava za djelomično financiranje programa za zaštitu socijalno ugroženog stanovništva i radnika za čijim radom prestaje potreba zbog prestrukturiranja privrede), Official Gazette of the SFRY, No. 84/89.
- 84 Associated Labour Act (Cro. *Zakon o udruženom radu*), Official Gazette of SFRY No. 53-764/76, Articles 166. 184.
- 85 Law on basic rights in employment (Cro. Zakon o osnovnim pravima iz radnog odnosa), Official Gazette of SFRY No. 60/89, Article 93.

seven or a severely disabled child may work longer than full-time or at night only based on his or her written consent (Article 40). During pregnancy and childbirth, a worker has the right to maternity leave for at least 270 continuous days. Based on the findings of the competent health authority, a worker can start maternity leave 45 days before giving birth, and it is mandatory 28 days before giving birth (Article 41). When a child turns one year old, a female employee has the right to work half of the full time until the child is three years old if, in the opinion of the competent health authority, the child is in dire need of care given the state of his or her health and in other cases established by law. One of the parents of a severely handicapped child has the right to work half of the full time in the cases and under the conditions established by law (Article 42 paragraphs 3-4). If a worker gives birth to a stillborn child or if the child dies before the completion of the maternity leave, she has the right to extend the maternity leave for as much time as, according to the doctor's opinion, is necessary to recover from childbirth and the psychological state caused by the loss of the child, which is at least 45 days, and during this period, all rights are due based on the provisions of the maternity leave (Article 44). Furthermore, a female worker in an organisation in the fields of industry and construction cannot be assigned to work at night if her work at that time would make it impossible for her to rest for at least seven hours between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. the next day. The ban does not apply to a worker who has special authorisations and responsibilities or who performs health, social, or other worker protection tasks. However, exceptions could arise when workers are ordered to work at night when it is necessary to continue work that was interrupted because of force majeure that cannot be foreseen or when it is necessary to prevent damage to raw materials or other materials. A female worker may be assigned to work at night when particularly serious socioeconomic, social, and similar circumstances require it, with the condition that the organisation or employer for the introduction of such work obtains the consent of the competent authority in the Republic of the respective autonomous province (Article 45).86

# 2. Breakdown of the feminist struggle for a better position for women workers

After a detailed presentation of the key labour legislation that was supposed to be the foundation for the emancipation of women as workers, it is necessary to see how such a process took place in reality. Accordingly, it is important to point out that in 1978, the first feminist conference on the position of women in Yugoslavia was held under the official title "DRUG-CA žena. Žensko pitanje. Novi pristup?" organised by feminists from Belgrade, Zagreb, Sarajevo, and Ljubljana, who represented the first appearance of feminists on the public stage. They condemned the socialist approach to the women's issue because it was classified among class issues. During that conference, the importance of women's issues was highlighted for the first time with media support, and it also connected feminists from various parts of Yugoslavia. The last meeting of this type was held in Ljubljana in 1991.87

86 Law on basic rights in employment, Articles 3, 40–42, 44–45. 87 Spahić (2014): p: 133.

On the other hand, despite the efforts of feminists to improve the position of women, an analysis of the position of women as workers at the end of socialism in Croatia yields devastating data. Namely, in the 1990s, the position of women in Yugoslavia retrogrades back to patriarchalisation, and women returned home. In 1991, the number of employed women was the lowest since the establishment of socialism, and the role of women was lower than under some totalitarian dictatorships. Croatia followed that trend, like all countries in transition; thus a woman was again seen through the prism of motherhood as her basic identity, after which, as a secondary option, the identity of a worker followed. By affirming the role of mother and housewife, all historical efforts for a woman to be side by side with a man began to fade too quickly, but it remains to be seen whether modern Croatia has returned to the right path.

### V. CONCLUSION

After reviewing the position of women as a part of the workforce in recent Croatian history, we can state that women had a very hard time winning their "place under the sun" in the workplace but also lost it very easily. Therefore, it remains to be seen how Croatia today, as an independent country, protects the rights of female workers legislatively and practically. Croatia is a member state of the European Union, which is obliged to apply relevant European legal frameworks that protect the rights of workers and human rights. However, a very important role is played by national legislation, starting with the Constitution as the most powerful act. The Croatian Constitution emphasises gender equality as a fundamental value and guarantees the right to work and choose an occupation, as well as the availability of jobs for everyone under equal conditions.90 Furthermore, the Gender Equality Act prohibits any form of discrimination in the sphere of labour relations, with an emphasis on the case of employment, promotion, professional training, equal pay for equal work, participation in workers' associations, reconciliation of professional and private life, and in the case of pregnancy, parenthood, and guardianship.<sup>91</sup> The currently valid Labour Act prohibits direct and indirect discrimination

"in the field of work and working conditions, and includes the criteria for the selection and conditions for employment, promotion, professional guidance, professional training and development, and retraining, under this Law and special laws."92

<sup>88</sup> Spahić (2014): p 133.

<sup>89</sup> Njemčić et al. (2004): p. 344.

<sup>90</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Croatia, Official Gazette No. 56/90, 135/97, 08/98, 113/00, 124/00, 28/01, 41/01, 55/01, 76/10, 85/10, 05/14.

<sup>91</sup> Gender Equality Act, Official Gazette No. 82/08, 69/17, Article 13.

<sup>92</sup> Article 7. par. 4.

The act also stipulates that the employer may not refuse to hire a woman if the reason for this is her pregnancy, nor may he offer an already employed woman to enter into an amended employment contract under less favourable conditions. The employer may not cancel the employment contract for pregnant women or persons during the use of

"maternity, parental, adoption leave, half-time work, half-time work for increased care and care of the child, leave of a pregnant or nursing mother, and leave or half-time work to care for a child with severe developmental disabilities"

15 days after the termination of use. Such actions are considered forms of the most serious violations by employers, and a fine is prescribed for the employer. The employer has no right to ask the pregnant woman for information about her pregnancy, except in exceptional cases. The employer's obligation to pay equal wages to persons of both sexes for performing equal work and work of equal value is also prescribed.<sup>93</sup> In addition to the aforementioned laws, the Anti-Discrimination Act<sup>94</sup> is also important for the equal position of women as workers as well as the Labour Market Act.<sup>95</sup> Numerous institutions deal with the suppression of discrimination based on gender and make it possible to report violations of women's rights in the workplace and in connection with employment. However, despite the developed legislation aimed at harmonising with Western countries, the question is whether Croatia has moved away from the historical problem of the inferior position of women as workers.

By analysing the latest statistical data from the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, we can observe that in October 2022, of the total number of employees in Croatia, slightly less than half of the population was female, which indicates an increase in the share of employed women. However, the average monthly net salary paid per employee in legal entities of the Republic of Croatia for the third quarter of 2022 was HRK 7,888 for men and HRK 7,323 for women, which implies that women still have an average lower salary than men, even though women are no longer exclusively employed in lower-paid jobs, although they are still predominantly represented in such jobs. For example, according to the data provided by the Croatian Bureau of Statistics, the occupations in which women were predominantly engaged in Croatia in 2022 were wholesale and retail trade, education, the processing industry, health care, and social welfare activities, public administration, and defence, mandatory social insurance, etc. Furthermore, according to Croatia's gender structure in management, men dominate in the highest positions and women make up only 6%, while in middle management, the advantage also goes to men. Therefore, the position of women in companies is 7.3 times

- 93 Labour Act, Official Gazette No. 93/14, 127/17, 98/19, Articles 7, 30-36.
- 94 Anti-Discrimination Act. Official Gazette No. 85/08, 112/12.
- 95 Labour Market Act, Official Gazette No. 118/18, 32/20, 18/22.
- 96 Croatian Bureau of Statistics: *Average monthly net and gross wages of employees by gender in 2022*. Available at: https://podaci.dzs.hr/2022/hr/31498 (accessed on 20.11.2022).
- 97 Croatian Bureau of Statistics: *Employees according to activities in October 2022*. Available at: https://podaci.dzs.hr/2022/hr/29230 (accessed on 18.11.2022).

less favourable than the position of men. However, such indicators are not the result of education, considering that the educational qualifications of women in the mentioned positions are equal to that of men; therefore, the reason must be sought in other sources. Newer research from 2018 on women in managerial positions reveals their opinion that the position of women has improved in the last ten years but that a satisfactory level of equality has not yet been achieved. Although the Croatian authorities, with projects such as the "Zaželi" project and with national policies, measures, and incentives, try to encourage the employment of women, it is questionable whether this is enough.

In conclusion, we can state that modern Croatia has moved away from the historically extremely subordinate position of women in the workplace and employment, but the author opines that significant changes will only come through a change in the perception of the population and the traditional attitudes that continue to exist in part of the population. "Women are already strong; it is about changing the way the world perceives that strength." (G. D. Anderson)

<sup>98</sup> See more in: Pere Sikavica, Fikreta Bahtijarević-Šiber (2004): *Menadžment: teorija menadžmenta i veliko empirijsko istraživanje u Hrvatskoj*, Masmedia, Zagreb, pp. 58–64, 85–87.

<sup>99</sup> Sonja Nidogon Višnjić, Nina Begičević Ređep, Violeta Vidaček-Hainš: Stavovi i percepcije žena na rukovodećim pozicijama o njihovom položaju na radnom mjestu, *Ekonomska misao i praksa*, 1/2018. p. 309.

<sup>100</sup> Ministarstvo rada i mirovinskog sustava: "Zaželi – program zapošljavanja žena". Available at: https://www.hzz.hr/projekti/zazeli-program-zaposljavanja-zena/ (accessed on 23.11.2022).