



**COMPENDIUM
OF GOOD PRACTICES
FOR ADVANCING WOMEN'S
POLITICAL PARTICIPATION
IN THE OSCE REGION**

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Compiled on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of
the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

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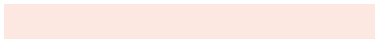



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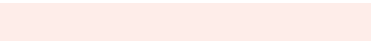
Foreword

The understanding that equal and meaningful participation of women in political and public life is necessary for the effective functioning of a democratic society is increasingly rooted. The year 2015 marked the 20th anniversary of the United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted unanimously by 189 countries, as an agenda for women's empowerment globally. The OSCE participating States have also recognized and committed to gender equality through a number of international and OSCE documents.

While we have seen some progress with regards to women's political participation, today only about a quarter of parliamentarians in the OSCE national parliaments are women, and there is a significant number of OSCE participating States where women make up only 10 to 20 per cent of parliaments. Within OSCE region, 34 surveyed countries, on average, have about 27 per cent women in municipal councils are women, and, only 12 per cent in the case of mayors. These numbers reflect a significant discrepancy between international standards and commitments undertaken by the participating States and the reality of women's under-representation.

Now is the time to have a serious discussion about this reality gap, to challenge the *status quo* and to identify steps and actions to be taken urgently by all. With this in mind, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) prepared this *Compendium of Good Practices for Advancing Women's Political Participation in the OSCE Region* to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The compendium reflects on progress made and identifies some of the continuing challenges in achieving gender equality in politics. It consolidates available information on good practices, experiences and case studies in the OSCE region, while emphasizing effective actions and successful interventions. The compendium focuses on women's participation in parliaments, political par-



ties, elections and local politics. It contains recommendations for legislators, political parties, governments, international actors, civil society organizations and academics.

I hope that this publication will be widely used by gender equality advocates and experts, diplomats and politicians, development workers, civil society representatives and academics across the OSCE region to advance women's political participation. It will certainly become a guide for OSCE/ODIHR's efforts and programming to support OSCE participating States in this area in the future.

Michael Georg Link
Director
OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

Acknowledgements

This compendium was prepared by ODIHR following an expert meeting on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, organized in May 2015 and attended by leading gender experts, politicians, members of parliament and representatives from academia and civil society organizations from across the OSCE region.

Special thanks are extended to Meg Munn, former Member of Parliament and former Minister for Women and Equality of the United Kingdom. This publication would not have been possible without her dedication and hard work drafting it. The expertise and contribution of Hannah Roberts, an international expert, also deserves to be mentioned, particularly with regards to the chapter on women's participation in elections.

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Executive Summary

The Fourth UN World Conference of Women was held in Beijing in 1995, seeking to address the view that progress in achieving gender equality had been insufficient. Governments, therefore, agreed on the United Nations Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, which sets out critical areas of concern important to the empowerment of women. The Platform for Action recognized the fairness and benefits of both genders being involved in decision-making, but also that without women in politics, women's interests are less likely to be addressed. The representation and participation of women at all levels of decision-making are essential to the goals of equality, development and peace.

To mark 20 years since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action, ODIHR has published this compendium of good practices to reflect on where progress has been made and identify some of the continuing challenges in achieving gender equality in politics. The compendium explores the participation of women through political parties, in elections, local politics and in parliaments, recognizing that these should be seen as connected and related areas.

The compendium begins by setting the progress in women's political participation in the context of their position in wider society. While there is some good news, the OSCE region is still a long way from equal outcomes for men and women. There are significant improvements in health and education, and many women enjoy greater legal rights. However, discrimination in law persists in many countries, particularly in family law, and violence against women and girls continues. There has been progress in political participation in national parliaments, but this progress is slow and uneven, below the UN Economic and Social Council recommended target of 30 per cent and a long way from the goal of gender parity. Globally, the average in September 2015 reached 22.5 per cent female parliamentarians, up from 11.3 per cent in 1995. Parliaments in the OSCE region have an average of 25.7 per cent women's representation, but with wide variation among participating States, from a high of 50 per cent to around

10 per cent in a few states. Progress has been particularly slow for women who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. The lack of data in other areas of political life, such as locally elected offices and executive roles, makes it hard to measure progress.

As the gatekeepers to democracy, political parties are central to achieving greater women's participation. Good practices to encourage the recruitment and retention of women members are essential to increasing the number of women active in political parties, including through separate structures, such as "women's wings" that bring together women party members to help identify and advocate on issues that are important for women and to provide support and influence. Parties need to ensure that both men and women have equal opportunities to develop skills to become effective political activists. Guaranteeing that men and women will have positions of responsibility within the party is an important mechanism to achieve this. The introduction of internal party quotas, or formal policies that secure equal representation of women and men, ensures that women can take on elected positions of responsibility and are represented in decision-making bodies. Candidate selection processes within parties can either be barriers for women or provide opportunities. Voluntary party quotas and legislated quotas have contributed to increasing the number of women elected, but in some circumstances party members who are not supportive of them have undermined their implementation. There are a few examples of states encouraging political parties to promote women's political participation, but these are rare. The development of gender action plans for political parties can more effectively embed gender equality in these structures. It is also important that political parties see women not only as members but also value them as experts and champions, taking up leadership positions and actively participating in internal party dynamics.

Gender issues affect all aspects of an election. It is a key point when women's elected representation may increase and also an opportunity to examine wider issues, including female representation in election management bodies, party processes and campaigning, voter education, polling obstacles, and the impact of campaign finance arrangements. OSCE/ODIHR has extensive experience in the role that election observers can play in identifying the extent that gender has been mainstreamed into election processes. Every election has different elements, including the electoral system and local context. Reports on elections are opportunities to reflect on how changes can be made to ensure greater gender equality in the future.

Women's political participation in local government has been neglected and deserves greater focus. There is little comparative data and information on the use of temporary special measures to increase the level of women's representation in locally elected bodies, yet many decisions that affect everyday life are made at the local level. For men and women new to political activity, learning through different roles in the political party and then being local representatives can build confidence, interest and success in furthering their careers in politics.

Across OSCE participating States, a high level of women's representation in parliament does not necessarily mean a high level in local politics, while some countries have higher women's representation at the local level than nationally. The reasons behind these variations are many and specific to each environment. Across the OSCE, the proportion of elected mayors who are women is generally significantly lower than the proportion of women in other locally elected positions. There is a need for more research to determine how to increase women's representation in locally elected bodies and as mayors.

Women's participation in parliaments is crucial to improving the representative nature, accountability and quality of democracies, and has a profound impact on the way politics is practiced in terms of policy-making agendas and political content. Yet, despite the many international conferences, documents, exhortations and commitments, and with a small number of exceptions, parliaments remain a long way from parity between women and men. Of the top performing countries in the OSCE, most use some form of quota – either legislated or a voluntary party quota. The headline figures for each country do not identify differences in women's representation between political parties. Understanding different temporary special measures used by countries will help make better sense of their effectiveness in the same context.

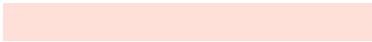
Two important aspects in developing gender-sensitive parliaments are parliamentary working conditions and the extent to which gender is mainstreamed within the work done by parliaments. These two aspects are often interrelated with the work of women members of parliament (MPs) and are usually dealt with by women's organizations or caucuses within parliament. Women are generally the prime motivators for change to a more gender-sensitive parliament. Parliaments, as institutions, could do a great deal more to mainstream gender equality by developing their own gender action plans, taking the responsibility away from individual MPs. Women's parliamentary caucuses act both as supports to women MPs and as mechanisms to influence policy. Most



caucuses are successful in raising policy issues of concern to women and communities more broadly, usually achieving legislative change.

This compendium concludes that a more thorough understanding of the differences between countries and political parties that have made good progress and those still struggling is necessary. The need for better data and transparency of processes is important. Greater recognition of the importance of socio-political contexts, political processes and the need for civic activism, coupled with clear political leadership, is required. Political will is important in making change; generating political will means understanding the political environment, understanding what incentives for change exist and what temporary special measures have the best chance of being implemented.

In addition to the good practices found in this compendium, a number of recommendations are made to assist those working on improving the participation of women in politics. Capitalizing on good practices in supporting greater participation of women in all aspects of political life will contribute to improvements across OSCE region and beyond.



Introduction

*"...[F]ull and true equality between men and women is a fundamental aspect of a just and democratic society."
(OSCE, Moscow Document, 1991)*

The issue of equality between women and men has been a global concern for several decades. The 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed everyone's entitlement to all the rights and freedoms set forth in the Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.¹ Recognition of the need for states to take action in the area of women's rights, including their participation in public and political life, came formally in 1979, when the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.² Described as an international bill of rights for women, to date it has been ratified by 189 states and is counted among the international treaties enjoying the broadest support. A dedicated committee of experts periodically reviews CEDAW's implementation by countries.

The Fourth UN World Conference of Women was held in Beijing in 1995, and its participants believed that progress in achieving gender equality had been

1 The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, article 2, <<http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>>.

2 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979, article 4, paragraph 1, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/>>.

insufficient. Governments, therefore, agreed on the Beijing Platform for Action, which sets out critical areas of concern important to the empowerment of women. Integral to the Beijing Platform for Action was the recognition of the importance of political participation. It called for urgent action to address the constraints and obstacles holding back the advancement and empowerment of women all over the world.³

The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action represent important steps in clearly articulating the need to translate the aims of CEDAW into actual change. They recognized not only the essential fairness of both sexes being involved in decision-making, but that without the presence of women their interests and needs are less likely to be addressed. Furthermore, it recognized that women's perspectives at all levels of decision-making are essential to the goals of equality, development and peace. Most recently, the global 2030 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals approved by UN Member States on 25 September 2015 further highlight the need to take into account women's perspective, in global development efforts. For example, Goal 5 specifically targets ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life. At the same time, Goal 10 seeks to reduce inequality within and among countries and emphasizes the need to continue addressing root causes of inequality by promoting social, economic and political inclusion, irrespective of age, sex, disability, "race", ethnicity, origin, religion or economic or other status.⁴

To mark 20 years since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action, ODIHR has published this compendium of good practices to reflect on where progress has been made and identify some of the continuing challenges in achieving gender equality in politics. The scope of the compendium is limited to the 57 participating states of the OSCE and does not address women's participation in

"States Parties shall take in all fields, in particular in the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures, including legislation, to ensure the full development and advancement of women, for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men."

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

3 The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women Beijing Declaration, adopted in 1995, articles 181 – 194, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/decision.htm>>.

4 The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, adopted in 2015, <http://www.un.org/sga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1&Lang=E>.

appointed public offices, government-appointed committees and other advisory bodies, civil service and public administration, or the judiciary.

Making progress

The words of the Beijing Declaration are as true in relation to the last 20 years as they were for the decade leading up to 1995: “The status of women has advanced in some important respects, but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people.”⁵

Overall, there has been progress in women’s political representation, particularly at the level of national parliaments. In September 2015, on average women made up 22.5 per cent of parliaments worldwide, up from 11.3 per cent in 1995.⁶ Some countries are doing much better than others in championing gender equality. Most countries, however, have failed to achieve the UN Economic and Social Council target of 30 per cent women’s representation; only 17 of the 57 OSCE participating States are at 30 per cent or above.⁷ There is need for a more thorough understanding of the different measures applied by the countries that have made progress and those still struggling. This requires greater recognition of the importance of various factors that make a difference, such as socio-political context, political processes and the need for civic activism, coupled with clear political leadership.

In taking action to address inequalities in women’s political participation, many countries have adopted temporary special measures, defined in Article 4 of CEDAW as measures intended to “accelerate *de facto* equality between men and women”.⁸ In 2004, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) committee established to oversee the convention clarified the meaning of temporary special measures by way of

5 Beijing Declaration, *op. cit.*, note 3, article 5.

6 Inter-Parliamentary Union database, <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>>, Data as of December 2015.

7 *Ibid.*

8 CEDAW, *op. cit.*, note 2; “Adoption by States Parties of temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women shall not be considered discrimination as defined in the present Convention, but should in no way entail as a consequence the maintenance of unequal or separate standards; these measures shall be discontinued when the objectives of equality of opportunity and treatment have been achieved.”

Table 1. Women in national parliaments worldwide

Region	% of women*
Nordic countries	41.1%
Americas	27%
Europe - OSCE member countries (including Nordic countries)	25.7%
Europe - OSCE member countries (excluding Nordic countries)	24.2%
Sub-Saharan Africa	23.3%
Asia	19.3%
Arab States	19.1%
Pacific	13.4%

*Regions are classified in descending order of the percentage of women in the lower or single house of national parliaments.
Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union database, <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>>, Data as of December 2015.

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23 on political and public life and General Recommendation No. 25, on article 4, paragraph 1, of CEDAW, on temporary special measures.⁹ At times, non-identical treatment of women and men is required in order to address the differences between women and men and to pursue the goal of substantive equality, including equitable access of women and men to all spheres of life. General Recommendation No. 25 makes clear the need to address the underlying causes of discrimination against women within each country's context. It sees temporary special measures as "part of a necessary strategy by States parties towards achieving de facto or substantive equality of women with men in the enjoyment of their human rights and fundamental freedoms."¹⁰

Policymakers also need to better understand the diversity and impact of temporary special measures. The use of temporary special measures has often become part of an ideological discourse rather than understanding them as technical measures to achieve more equal outcomes. There are three main challenges in the implementation of temporary special measures. First, unilateral proposals to introduce them or their incorrect implementation can lead to political polarization and misunderstandings. Second, issues arise when temporary special measures are introduced at the last minute, without sufficient time given to political parties for preparation and necessary capacity building. Third, when these measures lack enforcement mechanisms, their implementation depends solely on good will.

9 CEDAW General Recommendation No. 25, adopted in 2004, article 4, paragraph 1, <[http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/General%20recommendation%2025%20(English).pdf)>.

10 *Ibid.*, article 18.

There are also a broad range of measures included under the umbrella of temporary special measures, such as electoral quotas (reserved seats, party quotas, legislative quotas); soft quotas (voluntary quotas, informal targets and recommendations); party funding regulations; campaign support; outreach or support programmes; targeted recruitment and promotion; and allocation and re-allocation of resources. Finding the right balance between the specific measure and context is important.

Temporary special measures are only as effective as their formulation and implementation, and there is no universal model suitable for all countries. Legislative quotas, while legally binding, do not always automatically produce desired changes in the number of women elected. At the same time, internal party quotas, although only voluntary measures, have been more effective in achieving higher representation of women in some countries. This will be further examined in Chapters 3 and 4 of this compendium. However, whichever type of special measure is used, whether legislative or voluntary, when designed properly and in response to the specific circumstances of the particular country, special measures can ensure that women and men are able to compete for public office on equal terms.

OSCE and gender equality in politics

ODIHR, an independent OSCE institution, is tasked with assisting OSCE participating States to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms; to abide by the rule of law; to promote principles of democracy; to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions; and to promote tolerance and non-discrimination throughout their societies. The Office's gender equality work is strongly rooted in international standards and OSCE commitments.

OSCE participating States have committed themselves to specific policies in support of gender equality. The 2004 OSCE Gender Action Plan sets out the framework with a comprehensive plan, focusing on both internal action within OSCE organizations and on specific tasks to support participating States in achieving gender equality.¹¹ ODIHR implements many activities and programmes to support participating States in their efforts to advance gender

11 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 14/04, "2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality", Sofia, 7 December 2004, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/23295>>.

equality in politics and, drawing on its experience, has a range of resources available on this topic (see Box 1).¹²

The 2009 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life calls for states to consider taking specific measures to achieve the goal of gender balance in political and public life and to encourage political parties to promote equal participation of women and men, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public office.¹³ Recognizing the importance of periodically reviewing implementation of its commitments, the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action created an opportunity for OSCE participating States to reflect on progress and plan for the future.

The compendium

The objective of this compendium is to critically assess progress and efforts in advancing women's political participation in the OSCE region. This publication brings together existing knowledge and good practice, drawing on the expertise of the OSCE/ODIHR and other human rights organizations. It considers what needs to be done to promote faster progress towards gender parity in politics, while also recognizing the importance of embedding those prac-

Box 1: Selected ODIHR resources on women's political participation:

Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties (2014)

This handbook encourages political party leaders, men and women alike, to support the integration of gender aspects into internal political party decision-making processes.

Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region (2013)

The study is concerned with the presence and operation of dedicated women's parliamentary bodies, alternatively referred to as parliamentary structures for women MPs, that promote gender equality and women's representation.

Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan (2011)

The report sets out the general picture of women's representation in OSCE participating States and reviews the impact of each of the institutional strategies discussed in its Six-Step Action Plan.

Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections (2004)

The guidance provided in this handbook is intended to ensure that as ODIHR's election observation activities draw conclusions on the extent to which an election process meets OSCE commitments and reflects universal principles, they take fully into account how the election process affects both women and men.

12 All OSCE/ODIHR publications on gender equality and women's political participation can be accessed online, see: <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/gender>>.

13 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09 "Women's Participation in Political and Public Life", Article 3, Athens, 4 December 2009, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/40710>>.

tices in the hands of the authorities of participating States, in order to reach sustainable progress.


Aimed at gender experts, human rights activists, development workers, diplomats and politicians, as well as academics, the compendium uses data from published sources to identify recent trends in women's political participation. It aims to stimulate further evidence-based research, to inform policy-making and programming, as well as to encourage further advocacy efforts for women's political participation. Drawing on presentations from a meeting of international experts in Warsaw in May 2015, it looks at the reasons behind varying levels of representation and identifies gaps in information and understanding.¹⁴ The examples of good practice drawn from around the region seek to evoke discussion and reflection, through a better understanding of the importance of context and the elements needed to achieve sustainable progress.

This compendium begins with the wider context in which women's political participation takes place, recognizing the importance of national leadership alongside grass roots activism, while also recognizing the multiple and intersecting discrimination suffered by women from ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups.¹⁵ By briefly considering women's advancement in other spheres, it sets the efforts to promote women's political participation in the context of the general position of women in society.

The publication then explores different aspects of participation of women by focusing specifically on political parties, elections, local politics and parliaments. While women's political participation covers a wider array of issues, these four areas are perceived as the most critical and are the focus of OSCE/ODIHR programming. The compendium also recognizes that these should be seen as connected and related activities. The significant focus on the achieve-

14 The Expert Meeting on 20th anniversary of Beijing Platform for Action was organised by the OSCE/ODIHR on 26 and 27 May 2015 and gathered 40 leading gender experts, politicians and representatives from civil society organizations from across the OSCE region to analyse good practices, shortcomings and new approaches to advancing women's political participation in the OSCE region. More about the event is available at: <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/160126>>.

15 The term "marginalized" is used in the present publication, rather than the term "vulnerable", to shift the focus from helplessness and passivity of such groups to the conditions and situations that create marginalization to the continued detriment of such groups. See: UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association (2014 Annual Report A/HRC/26/29), page 5, article 12, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session26/Documents/A_HRC_26_29_ENG.DOC>.



ment of women in parliaments can obscure the need for women's participation in other facets of political life. Working predominantly to increase parliamentary representation without similar efforts in political parties and political movements, as well as in local politics, may be one of the reasons change has been hard to achieve and embed.

Despite the many laudable commitments and international declarations on equality in decision-making over the last 20 years, progress has been unsatisfactory. By considering different aspects of women's political participation, the compendium seeks to inspire greater efforts to put into action these international obligations and commitments.

New and more thoughtful and sustained efforts will be needed if the Beijing Platform for Action's goal of women's equal participation is to be reached. A determination to capitalize on good practices to develop comprehensive strategies for supporting greater participation of women in all aspects of political life could begin to see significant improvements across OSCE countries and beyond.



Current trends in women's roles in society in the OSCE region

“Achieving the goal of equal participation of women and men in decision-making will provide a balance that more accurately reflects the composition of society and is needed in order to strengthen democracy and promote its proper functioning.”¹⁶

The wider picture

In a recent publication, UN Women put forward the argument that to achieve equality three interrelated areas must be addressed: “re-dressing women’s socio-economic disadvantage; addressing stereotyping, stigma and violence; and strengthening women’s agency, voice and participation.”¹⁷ Tackling any of these three issues has a positive effect on improving equality and assists change in the other two areas. For example stereotyping, stigma and violence can hold women back from taking part in politics, while increasing the number

¹⁶ Beijing Declaration, *op. cit.*, note 3, article 181.

¹⁷ *Progress of the World’s Women 2015–2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights* (UN Women, 2015), p.13, <http://progress.unwomen.org/en/2015/pdf/UNW_progressreport.pdf>.

of women in politics can push governments to take seriously issues, such as violence and socio-economic disadvantage. While recognizing this interrelationship, this compendium is concerned with the third area – participation. To understand the context for political participation, trends in women’s wider role in society are key.

Since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action, there have been some important achievements, yet numerous challenges remain. Across the world, illiteracy has been reduced, maternal mortality is down by 45 per cent since 1990 and economic development is now gaining pace in numerous countries. More girls are in school, more women are working, more women are in elected positions and they are assuming leadership positions. Women are guaranteed greater legal rights. Almost all of the national constitutions adopted since 1995 include guarantees for gender equality, whereas only 79 per cent of constitutions enacted before then contain the same protection.¹⁸

Women’s involvement in all types of media is increasing everywhere, although they are still often a minority, and the subject of stereotypes. One study revealed that only 24 per cent of news subjects worldwide were women, up from 17 per cent in 1995. Women were featured in only 19 per cent of stories on politics and government in 2010, compared with 7 per cent in 1995. For economic news, women were featured only 20 per cent of the time.¹⁹

At the same time, we are still a long way from equal opportunities and outcomes for men and women. Only half of working age women are in the labour force globally and women earn much less than men.²⁰ Discrimination in the law persists in many countries, particularly in family law. Violence against women and girls continues with high mortality rates, even in developed countries, and there are widespread violations of the sexual and reproductive health rights of women. An estimated one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, the vast majority at the hands of a husband or part-

18 “No ceilings: The Full Participation Project”, Clinton Foundation & Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2015, <<http://noceilings.org/report/report.pdf>>.

19 *Ibid.*

20 *Progress of the World’s Women 2015 – 2016, op. cit.*, note 17, p.10.

ner.²¹ About 800 women die every day, largely in the developing world, from mostly preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.²²

Since 2006, the World Economic Forum has been measuring countries' gender gaps in four areas at the global level: education, health, economic participation and political empowerment. The 2014 report shows progress but notes that, while "eight countries have fully closed the gender gap on both the health and education sub-indexes, no country has closed either the economic participation gap or the political empowerment gap."²³ The European Commission, in its annual 2014 report, noted that "gender gaps in employment and decision making have narrowed in recent years but women still account for less than a quarter of company board numbers despite representing almost half of the employed workforce (46 per cent)."²⁴

The UN 20-year review of progress against the Beijing Platform for Action notes that the proportion of women graduates in tertiary education has generally increased. The vast majority of OSCE countries have a higher proportion of female graduates than male.²⁵ However, female employment rates in OSCE countries have remained considerably lower than men's. There is considerable variation between countries, although the percentage of women in work increased in most countries between 2000 and 2008. The employment rates of men and women declined thereafter due to the economic crisis. While the gender gap in employment rates diminished during the crisis years in most countries, this has been due to a worsening of men's situation rather than to the improvement of the position of women. Encouragingly, many countries are seeing a slow, but noticeable, increase in the number of female managers.²⁶

21 "How widespread is violence against women?", UNiTE to end violence against women factsheet, United Nations Department of Public Information, DPI/2498, February 2008, <<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/VAW.pdf>>.

22 "No ceilings: The Full Participation Project", *op. cit.*, note 18.

23 The Global Gender Gap Report 2014, The World Economic Forum, <<http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2014/>>.

24 "Commission outlines remaining key challenges on gender equality", European Commission – Press release, 5 March 2015, <http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4552_en.htm>.

25 "Trends in gender equality in the ECE region", Beijing+20 Regional Review, UN Economic & Social Council, November 2014, <<http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/Gender/documents/Beijing%2B15/ECE.AC.28.2014.6.E.pdf>>.

26 *Ibid.*

Trends in women's political participation

While women's representation in parliaments in the OSCE region now stands at an average of 25.7 per cent, there is a wide variation among the OSCE participating states, from a high of 50 per cent to around 10 per cent in a few states. The OSCE average falls well below the 40 per cent target recommended by the Council of Europe in its Recommendation Rec (2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, and only 17 participating States have reached the UN Economic and Social Council target of 30 per cent.²⁷ Limited data, as will be discussed in other chapters, in other areas of political life makes it hard to measure progress. Statistics are also rare in relation to women's participation in civil society as activists, community workers and agents of change, yet many countries report that women are often found in these roles, roles that can offer an alternative arena for influence, particularly where women face barriers in accessing political roles.

The UN regional review for the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action notes that "in 2013 the share of women in UNECE²⁸ countries' national parliaments varied from 9 per cent in Hungary and Ukraine to 40 per cent in Sweden. The five Nordic countries – Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden – are the closest in achieving equal representation of men and women in their national parliaments."²⁹ The good news is that many countries have achieved significant increases over the last 20 years. Twenty countries had increases of more than ten percentage points, and five countries – Belgium, France, Italy, Kyrgyzstan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had an increase of 20 percentage points or more. However, some countries are struggling. Ukraine, Armenia and Georgia are at the bottom of the list with Hungary, the only country to have less women's representation in 2015 than in 1995 – down from 11.4 per cent to 10.1 per cent. Elections in 2014 and 2015 also resulted in some worrying figures, with a number of OSCE countries seeing a reduction in the percentage of women in parliament: Croatia was down

27 These countries include: Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Spain, Norway, Andorra, Belgium, Denmark, Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany, Serbia, the F.Y.R. of Macedonia, Switzerland, Portugal, Italy, and Austria. Inter-Parliamentary Union database, *op. cit.*, note 6.

28 United Nations Economic Commission for Europe comprises of 56 states and includes most OSCE participating States, excluding the Holy See and Mongolia, <http://www.unece.org/oes/member_countries/member_countries.html>.

29 "Trends in gender equality", *op. cit.*, note 25.

Box 2. Canada's first cabinet with equal numbers of women and men

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, sworn in November 2015, announced a young and ethnically diverse cabinet. Delivering on his pre-election promise of gender parity, he named a ministerial team with 15 men and 15 women. Women ministers have been entrusted with portfolios such as international trade, public services, international development and environment and climate change.

For a full list of Canada's ministers see <<http://www.parl.gc.ca/parliamentarians/en/ministries>>.

by 8.6, Uzbekistan by 6, Bulgaria by 4.6, and Latvia by 3.7 per cent.³⁰ Research shows that if the current trends persist “gender parity in OSCE national legislatures will only be achieved more than half a century from now.”³¹

While it is not the main focus of this compendium, it is worth noting that women's participation in executive and expert structures is an important element of participation too. Governance structures that reflect the equal participation of women and their equal enjoyment of benefits from state interventions can be called truly democratic, representative and inclusive. Alternatively, when women are not given an equal opportunity to govern, countries risk missing out on a great deal of talent and expertise.

Currently, only about 17 per cent of government ministers worldwide are women, and even when in the high executive positions, women are entrusted with overseeing mostly social sectors, such as education and the family.³² Nonetheless, there are pockets of success. Finland's *Act on Equality between Women and Men* has introduced a 40/60 gender quota or “minimum percentage of both women and men in government committees, advisory boards and other corresponding bodies, and in municipal bodies, exclusive of municipal councils”³³ More recently, Canada's prime minister, elected in 2015, delivered on his gender-parity campaign promise – the ministerial team for the first time in Canada's history is equally balanced between men and women (See Box 2). To track progress and identify challenges and successes, there is a need for regular reliable data on women's representation in the executive in the OSCE region.

30 *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review*, (Geneva: IPU, 2015), <<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/WIP20Y-en.pdf>>.

31 *Gender Equality in Elected Office: a Six-Step Action Plan*, (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2011), p.53, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/78432>>; Inter-Parliamentary Union database, op.cit., note 6.

32 “Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation”, UN Women, 2015, <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures#sthash.sfmGIGe2.dpuf>>.

33 Jaana Katriina Kuusipalo, Report from Finland, European Database Women in Decision-making, <<http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Finland.htm>>.

The UN Beijing+20 review also observed that common factors of success include the recognition of gender inequality, the political will to promote change, effective national equality mechanisms accompanied by financial resources to implement changes, along with collaboration between women's organizations and the state. European Union standards on gender equality have also exerted an important impact, even beyond EU states. However, the UN Beijing+20 review found that despite the gains in increased representation, stereotypes still permeate much of the media and education.³⁴

The introduction of legislated quotas has led to some of the most significant increases in women's political representation. For example, Slovenia introduced a quota in 2005, which was followed by a rise from 12.2 per cent women MPs to 36.4 per cent.³⁵ Albania's 2008 legislated quota saw a rise from 6.4 per cent in 2005 to 20.7 per cent ten years later.³⁶ Kyrgyzstan increased women's representation from 2 per cent in 2000 to 23 per cent in 2014, following the adoption of a 30 per cent quota for each gender on electoral lists in 2007. Other countries have also shown steady progress – in 2011 Serbia introduced a 30 per cent party election list quota, followed by increases to 21.6 per cent in 2008, 32.4 per cent in 2012 and 34 per cent in 2014.³⁷ Not all progress has been the result of legislated quotas. Iceland, one of the OSCE's top performing countries, achieved steady increases, with occasional small setbacks, through the use of voluntary party quotas. Each party sets its own rules, but with all seeking at least 40 per cent of each gender on electoral lists and within party structures.³⁸ In 1995, 25 per cent of its MPs were women, it reached a high of 43 per cent in 2009 and is now at 40 per cent.³⁹

34 "Trends in gender equality", *op. cit.*, note 25.

35 The law included three elements – a minimum gender quota for each list (rising from 20 to 40 per cent over the years), a requirement for alternating genders in the first half of the list and a sanction for failure to comply. Source: Irena Selišnik & Milica Antić Gaber, "Voluntary party to legal electoral gender quotas in Slovenia", 2015 <http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2610662>.

36 For each electoral zone, at least 30 per cent of the multi-member list and one of the first three names on the multi-member list must be women (Article 67, para. 6 of the 2012 Electoral Code). Presentation of Sonja Lokar, Executive Director, Central & Eastern European Network for Gender Issues, at OSCE/ODIHR Expert Meeting on 20th anniversary of Beijing Platform for Action, May 2015.

37 <<http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=RS>>

38 <<http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?country=109>>

39 Female MPs after each election were 1995 – 25%, 1999 – 35%, 2003 – 30%, 2007 – 32%, 2009 – 43%, 2013 – 40%. Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union database, *op. cit.*, note 6.

While faster increases are often seen through legislated quotas, particularly when they relate to elected representatives and not just candidate lists, quotas could be seen as short-term solutions to raise the participation of women, and fall short of seeking actual parity – a goal increasingly being pursued. The legislated quotas are usually applied in a narrow way, focusing on representation in parliament only, which, while important, is only one aspect of political participation. Representation at the local and executive levels should also be factored into a holistic approach. Moreover, quotas are far from being the only temporary special measures used to increase women's participation. While there are some data on the topic,⁴⁰ more in depth analysis is needed on how legislated quotas and other temporary special measures can contribute to lasting change and reduce gender inequality more widely and at different levels of governance. In subsequent chapters, the use of other temporary special measures and their impact will be explored.

Continued progress?

The reasons behind the political changes affecting gender equality are often country specific. Context matters – this includes not just the particular electoral or party systems, but also culture, socio-economic developments and history. Difficulties overcoming the barriers that women face can be exacerbated by cultural expectations in particular societies. Different political parties will also have different approaches to gender equality, which will relate to their ideology, leadership style and internal party democracy, but are also likely to include electoral considerations.

Women and men identify different barriers to entering politics. Women are more often overburdened with household and family responsibilities and presumptions of their gender roles that do not support them being leaders. For men these barriers do not factor in, and they mostly struggle with gaining support from the electorate and political parties, as well as access to campaign financing (see Box 3). Exploring these differences and addressing them in strategies

40 See for example Mona Lena Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2009); Mona Lena Krook, (co-edited with Susan Franceschet and Jennifer M. Piscopo), *The Impact of Gender Quotas* (New York, Oxford University Press, 2012); Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas (IDEA International, 2014); *Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe* (Directorate General for International Policies, European Parliament, 2013).

and programmes is critical for the success of women's empowerment initiatives.

Quotas and other temporary special measures, while necessary instruments and good starting points, on their own are not going to achieve the desired changes. They need to be complemented with other measures. Quotas help to promote a "critical mass" of women into politics.⁴² "However, participation is more than just numerical presence in decision-making forums. It is about the effective articulation of issues that matter to women and men and the ability to influence and monitor policies."⁴³ That means that after ensuring "critical mass",

a variety of gender-sensitive measures are needed to promote women in "critical power" and in "critical decisions". This will ensure that once elected, women can contribute effectively and meaningfully as MPs and local councillors.

A number of common threads have been identified as important for progress in gender equality. Leadership and political will do matter. Alongside these civic

Box 3. Barriers to entering politics for women and men

Barriers for Women	Barriers for Men
1. Domestic responsibilities	1. Lack of support from the electorate
2. Prevailing cultural attitudes regarding the role of women in society	2. Lack of finance
3. Lack of support from family	3. Lack of support of political parties
4. Lack of confidence	4. Lack of experience in "representative functions": public speaking, constituency relations
5. Lack of finances	5. Lack of confidence

Source: Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008.

41 The table is based on the survey conducted by IPU in 2006–2008 among 272 parliamentarians in 110 countries, 40% of respondents were men. Respondents were asked to identify the factors they considered to be the largest deterrent to entering politics. Different answers were provided by male and female respondents. See more in Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2008.

42 The Economic and Social Council in 1995 endorsed 30 per cent as the so-called "critical mass", believed to be necessary for women to make a visible impact on the style and content of political decision-making.

43 "The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20", Summary Report, UN Women 2015, p. 53, <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/02/beijing-synthesis-report#sthash.zX15RxoO.dpuf>>.

activism is important both within and outside political parties. The international organizations that bring political parties together in ideological groupings have a role to play, such as sharing good practice, conducting peer reviews and encouraging parties to take action.

Continued progress can only be achieved by ensuring strong accountability mechanisms that support implementation of commitments. CEDAW, along with specific commitments made by OSCE participating States and those within the Council of Europe, provides a clear obligation to eliminate discrimination. However, the lack of strong accountability mechanisms means that states can sign these instruments, sometimes under international or domestic pressure, but are not held effectively to account for failure to make change. A country being a signatory to an international convention is important for those campaigning for change, whether in political parties or grassroots organizations. This approach has been deemed a “sandwich strategy”, with pressure for change from the top and bottom.⁴⁴

Changes in global politics, lack of political leadership supporting gender equality in many countries and the weakening of grass root women's organizations may see either stagnation in progress or, indeed, a decline in women's political representation. There is growing conservative and extremist resistance to women's and girls' human rights. The forces that prevent women's full political participation have long been recognized. “In all nations, cultural traditions and religious beliefs have played a part in confining women to the private spheres of activity and excluding them from active participation in public life.”⁴⁵

Economically there are also some worrying trends. In a recent speech, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, warned of growing and excessive inequality in countries. She cautioned that if these issues are not addressed then the growth potential of countries is likely to be lower in the years to come. One of the key elements is the disadvantage of women in the labour market, with an estimated 865 million women around the world not fully contributing to the economy.⁴⁶ As women are the first victims of

44 Sonja Lokar, *op.cit.*, note 36.

45 CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, adopted in 1997, <<http://www.refworld.org/docid/453882a622.html>>.

46 Statement by Christine Lagarde at “Lifting the Small Boats”, Grandes Conférences Catholiques, 17 June 2015.

economic inequalities, this has an indirect effect on their ability to participate in various spheres of life, including in public office.

Multiple discrimination

The statistics represent the situation affecting women in general, but there are particular groups of women suffering multiple disadvantages due to other personal characteristics or status, such as age, colour, ethnicity, gender identity, health condition, language, national, ethnic or social origin, physical or mental disability, religion or belief and sexual orientation. The UN Beijing+20 review noted that progress has been particularly slow for women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. Within some OSCE participating States the discrimination and exclusion of Roma and Sinti people, and especially women, is a well-documented phenomenon. Roma and Sinti women are particularly vulnerable with data showing disadvantage in all areas of life – education level, employment rate, health status, reproductive rights and public and political participation. They are also severely under-represented in politics.

The OSCE has a clear mandate to support the political participation of Roma and Sinti women outlined in the 2003 OSCE Action Plan on Roma and Sinti,⁴⁷ and the 2013 Ministerial Council Decision to enhance efforts to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti, with a focus on Roma and Sinti women, Youth and Children.⁴⁸ Both are supported by the 2011 Resolution of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly on this topic.⁴⁹ The 2004 OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality commits the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) to address specific issues relating to the participation in public and political life of women belonging to national minorities and, in policies and projects developed by the HCNM, to take steps necessary to counter the double discrimination suffered by these women, as appropriate

47 OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 3/03, “Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area”, Maastricht, 1 and 2 December 2003, <www.osce.org/odihr/17554>.

48 OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 4/13, “Enhancing OSCE Efforts to Implement the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti Within the OSCE Area, With a Particular Focus on Roma and Sinti Women, Youth and Children”, Kyiv, 9 December 2013, <www.osce.org/mc/109340>.

49 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution, “Promoting Policies on Equality between Women and Men of the Roma Population, Belgrade, 6–10 July 2011, <www.osce.org/odihr/81073>.

within the context of the High Commissioner's conflict-prevention mandate.⁵⁰ Additionally, the OSCE/ODIHR Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues has a specific mandate to work with national and local governments, civil society and international organizations to promote equal opportunities for, and the protection of the human rights of, all Roma and Sinti.

In the OSCE region, further research is needed to assess the scope of the problem of women suffering multiple discrimination, to fully disaggregate relevant data and to analyse the barriers to their political participation. According to the proceedings from an OSCE Expert Roundtable Women as Agents of Change in Migrant, Minority and Roma and Sinti Women in the OSCE Region, "there is simply not enough understanding and knowledge of the double discrimination that women from minority groups face. The lack of research and data, including data on access to health care, services, education and participation in the labour market and public life by minority, migrant and Roma and Sinti women is a significant obstacle."⁵¹

There are multiple causes of this under-representation that need to be tackled across the OSCE region. Patriarchal values lead to the undervaluing of women, as most communities are led by men. Women are not expected to be part of the public sphere or to take part in politics. This leads to extremely low representation of minority women across the OSCE region in public and political life. The phenomenon of "family voting" has been observed, where the husband votes for all adult members in the household, within a context of extremely low women's participation.

In the OSCE region and beyond, women and minorities tend to be treated separately as under-represented groups, with measures to promote political participation of these two groups taking different forms.⁵² There is usually a lack of interplay between such measures or insufficient consideration given to the unique challenges faced by minority women. Karen Bird writes, "While there may be no general formula for adjudicating the representational needs of

50 OSCE Ministerial Council, Decision No. 14/04, "OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality", Sofia, 7 December 2004, <<http://www.osce.org/mc/23295>>.

51 "Women as Agents of Change in Migrant, Minority and Roma and Sinti Women in the OSCE Region", Proceedings from an expert roundtable, OSCE, 2014, p.2, <<http://www.osce.org/sec/retariat/115941?download=true>>.

52 Mala Htun, "Is Gender like Ethnicity? The Political Representation of Identity Groups", *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3, September 2004, pp. 439–458.

women and ethnic minorities simultaneously, further comparative analysis of the solutions that have been worked out, with careful attention to contextual circumstances, will help us to develop better knowledge in this domain.”⁵³

Conclusion

The overall position of women in most societies is improving, with significant progress in education and health. Yet in important spheres, such as the economy and politics, there is still much to do. Access to money and power are still areas beyond the reach of most women. Understanding what makes a difference and how women can achieve equality is important, not just in terms of fairness but to ensure greater progress for society and representative democracy.

However, the push for equality in developing countries and post conflict situations is sometimes perceived to be due to external political pressure. It may be a requirement in order to receive financial aid. Pressure to enshrine changes required by international partners in legislation can be a short-sighted strategy.

Lack of political will among local political leaders can contribute to the failure to achieve cultural change, despite strong local advocacy by women.

Substantial analysis of the barriers that hold women back and strong government will to overcome them, including a range of temporary special measures, is needed. More than this, there is a need to tackle social biases that hold women back from entering and advancing in employment and politics. Recognizing the legitimacy of women’s place in all spheres of life, including the public one, is needed to alter the way women are viewed and the roles they have, in order to achieve lasting change.

53 Karen Bird, “Engendering Minority Participation in Public Life”, *Political Participation of Minorities: A Commentary on International Standards and Practice*, edited by Marc Weller, Oxford University Press, 2010.

Women's participation in political parties

“The participation of women in political parties is important because it provides a path to power and political decision-making. It leads to participation in parliaments and other elected bodies, as well as nominations to positions in the cabinet or other political offices and the judiciary.”⁵⁴

Only the very well-known or very rich are able to build political careers without the routes provided by existing political parties. Greater equality in political life for women will, therefore, take place through the action of political parties. Political parties are often called the “gatekeepers” of democracy, and of women’s representation and political participation in particular.⁵⁵ “They are crucial instruments in ensuring participation in political life and the expression of the will of the people, which should form the basis of the authority of the government in a democratic state.”⁵⁶ Political parties, thus, have a responsibility to represent equally the views, needs and interests of women and men.

54 *Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, Report of the Secretary-General, 2000*, <<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/ecn6-2000-pc2.pdf>>.

55 *Handbook on Promoting Women’s Participation in Political Parties*, (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2014), p.15, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/120877>>.

56 *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation*, (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR-Venice Commission, 2011), p.11, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/77812>>.

Parties, often through nominating bodies, choose who is selected for candidate lists and who gets a chance to compete for elected positions. This gives parties concrete instruments to promote the under-represented groups, such as women, who have been excluded historically from the political system. Placing the responsibility for women's political participation into the hands of parties shifts the discourse from focusing on women's lack of resources, political ambition or capacities, to the institutional and cultural barriers that they face. It brings back to the institutions, such as political parties, the responsibility to promote change and to take action to remedy the under-representation issues.

States have a role in how “they regulate the internal functioning of parties, in accordance with democratic standards such as transparency, consultation of members, equality and non-discrimination. To this end, the state can promote special measures, through legislation or other methods, in order to increase the participation of women and achieve gender equality in political parties.”⁵⁷ “Legislation on political parties can promote, through the establishment of enticements, the full participation and representation of women and minorities in the political process.”⁵⁸ While independent, political parties often get access to state resources and taxpayers' money, such as access to state funding or state property. In turn, states and citizens have a stake in knowing how political parties function and in ensuring that they do so according to principles of democracy and equality.

There are examples of states encouraging political parties to promote women's political participation. In Lithuania, the government brought women from political parties together in organizations known as Milda clubs. These clubs, funded through a state budget, hold seminars, training events, provide networks for women politicians and lobby to get more women elected. State initiatives to promote women's participation in parties should be equally extended to parties representing the interests of persons belonging to national minorities, including parties organized by ethnic minority groups, where applicable.⁵⁹ This type of state support is rare, however, and generally it is political parties

57 *Gender Equality in Elected Office*, *op. cit.*, note 31.

58 *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation*, *op. cit.*, note 56, p.45.

59 For additional examples and information, please refer to OSCE/ODIHR gender equality publications accessible at: <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/gender>>, as well as European Institute for Gender Equality “Good practices on political representation” webpage accessible at: <<http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/sweden/tools-combat-dominance-techniques>>.

that bear the responsibility of attracting members, including women, encouraging their activism and supporting their development into candidates, representatives and leaders.

Box 4. Gender sensitive party

The Swedish Social Democratic Party produced a handbook for women on how to gain real influence and power within the party. It encourages women to get more involved in the party, advises them on becoming active, to learn about party structures, argues for women to be half of every decision-making body and sets out the problems they may encounter.

Source: *The Power Handbook*, Social Democratic Women in Sweden, <<http://www.socialdemokraterna.se/upload/webbforalla/s-kvinnor/s-kvinnor/dokument/Makthandb%C3%B6cker/Makthandboken%20-%20Engelska.pdf>>.

Recruitment and retention

Members are the political lifeblood of parties. ODIHR's *Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties* lists the benefits of recruiting more women. These include combatting falling party membership, improving the policy agenda of a party by taking account of female, as well as male, perspectives, expanding the pool of women available to run for public office, and improving a political party's public image to male and female voters.

There are a number of practices that can help parties to recruit and retain women members in order to build what can be described as a gender-sensitive party. It is important to

ensure women are welcomed to the party with meetings in convenient and friendly places and at times when women can attend. Financial support for caring responsibilities or the provision of child care is important. Separate women's wings or organizations within parties provide solidarity among women and opportunities for political development. Parties should also tackle sexist language and practices that reinforce the dominance of particular groups who are seeking to maintain power and privilege within the party.⁶⁰ Some gender-sensitive training programmes may be put in place by the parties for all members to promote non-discriminatory working relations and respect for

60 "Dominant techniques often used by men to assert themselves over women for instance by treating women as invisible, ridiculing them, withholding information, putting them in a double bind and shaming them". "Tools to combat domination techniques" webpage, European Institute for Gender Equality, <<http://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/good-practices/sweden/tools-combat-domination-techniques>>.

diversity in work and management styles.⁶¹ Importantly, recruitment and promotion practices within parties should be equal for women and men, while being particularly supportive to women as needed. Recruitment and promotion should ensure that the expertise and capacities of women and men are valued and assessed on equal terms. Parties should also ensure that women are well represented in party decision-making processes. To be inclusive of women of different ethnic backgrounds, parties may need to make special outreach efforts to women belonging to national minorities, including taking into account linguistic and cultural considerations.

Supporting women to be active

With declining interest in political parties across established democracies it is in the interest of parties to support the involvement of all their members, both men and women. Yet barriers still exist to women becoming fully active. Often key positions continue to be held by men and, thus, the perspective of women is not fully integrated into the work and decisions of the party. It remains a challenge for women to access political parties on equal terms. In addition to ensuring parties are attractive to women to join, there needs to be good internal party democracy and transparency, support for developing women's confidence and for increasing their chances for political success through activities such as mentoring and women's wings, along with equal access to resources.

Consideration needs to be given to ensuring that both men and women have equal opportunities to develop skills to become effective political activists. Guaranteeing men and women will have positions of responsibility in the party is an important mechanism to achieve this. The introduction of internal party quotas, or formal policies that secure equal representation of women and men in political parties, ensures that women can take on elected positions of responsibility and are represented in decision-making bodies within parties. This has several benefits: It ensures that a female perspective is incorporated into the work of the party both in terms of organizational issues and policy de-

61 See: Beijing Platform for Action, Chapter I of the Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4 to 15 September 1995, A/CONF.177/20 and Add.1, <http://www.un.org/esa/gopher-data/conf/fwcw/off/a--20.en>; and Strategic Objective G.2. "Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership". See also para. 103, *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR-Venice Commission, 2011), <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/77812?download=true>>.

velopment; it gives women the experience of party responsibility, which helps to prepare them for other political roles; it increases women's name recognition, which is important for future electability; and it reinforces to women considering joining that they are welcome in the party and portrays the party to the public as being open to men and women.

Sometimes it is argued that women are being forced to take on roles. Although there may be initial challenges, the experience of a number of parties shows that women will come forward. Approaching women to ask them to take on responsibilities can help to overcome the tendency of many women to feel they are not qualified or capable. This, however, needs to be done in an appropriate way, not late in the day in order to meet a quota, but as part of the continuing and routine involvement and development of party members of both genders.

Box 5. Cross-country mentoring

International Mentoring for Women Politicians, a joint programme of Forum 50%, the Embassy of Denmark and Nordic Chamber of Commerce, aims at increasing women's representation in the Czech Republic, by sharing experiences from countries with high levels of women in politics. Politicians from the Nordic countries with significant experience in local, regional or national politics act as mentors to Czech female politicians currently engaged in local, regional or national politics. The 18-month programme includes seminars and visits, as well as regular contact between mentors and mentees who are matched on the basis of experiences, interests and political focus.

Source: "Women in politics – joint project of the Nordic Chamber and Forum 50 % on political mentoring", <<https://birgerblog.files.wordpress.com/2014/12/women-in-politics-intro-to-mentoring-project-08-2014.pdf>>.

Women's wings and mentoring programmes

Women's organizations within parties, sometimes called women's wings, and mentoring schemes have many benefits. They can go a long way to provide the solidarity among women that is important to sustain significant women's representation. ODIHR's *Handbook on Promoting Women's Participation in Political Parties* covers, in depth, the strategies that parties can use to support women's greater involvement.

Women's wings can be organized in different ways and take on different functions. They may be a formal part of the party linked to decision-making, a separate organization with a board, members, membership fees, statutes and a budget, or an informal part, acting more as a network for women members to support each other. Sometimes separate organizations are set up with their own rules, members, membership fees and boards. They can serve to influence the party agenda and ensure that the interests and needs of women

and men voters are included. Some take on the role of communicating with women voters, others focus on recruiting women and supporting and developing candidates.

Mentoring schemes are increasingly developing as a successful way to support women to take on roles within their party and to seek elected office. During the OSCE conference *Women as Agents of Change in Migrant, Minority and Roma and Sinti Communities* in 2012, mentoring networks were identified as being key ways that isolation and disempowerment could be overcome. This led to the production of a brief guide setting out the way to develop such networks.⁶² The initial mentoring methodology was developed in 2002 by KVINFO - the Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity - and targeted the employment and integration of migrants and refugee women living in Denmark. It was subsequently used as a political mentoring programme for immigrant women. As a result, five women from ethnic minority backgrounds contested elections in Denmark, and three of them were elected.⁶³

Candidate preparation

“Political parties are the primary and most direct vehicle through which women can access elected office and political leadership.”⁶⁴ For some, although not all parties, there is an expectation that candidates will have spent some time in the party gaining experience and demonstrating a commitment to the political goals and aims of the party. Parties are well placed to build women’s capacity and experience and to support them in standing for office. Men and women both benefit from encouragement to consider running for elected office. Because of persistent traditional divisions of roles and responsibilities in many societies, women often have to deal with the additional concern of how they will manage family and professional responsibilities. In many cultures women also have to overcome negative social attitudes. There may also be variations between communities within a society, with women from particular majority

62 *Creating Mentor Networks in the OSCE Region: A Practical Roadmap* (Vienna: The Danish Centre for Information on Gender, Equality and Diversity, OSCE Secretariat, 2014), <<http://www.osce.org/secretariat/163006>>.

63 *Ibid.*, p. 43.

64 *Empowering women for stronger political parties: a guidebook to promote women’s political participation* (NDI, UNDP, February 2012), <<https://www.ndi.org/files/Empowering-Women-Full-Case-Study-ENG.pdf>>.

Box 6. Attracting members, candidate preparation and policy matters: the United Kingdom Conservative Party

The Conservative Women's Organisation has several different roles which are clearly articulated on their website:

- It is a grassroots network that provides support and focus for women in the Conservative Party;
- It reaches out to women in all parts of the community;
- It campaigns on issues of particular concern to women both nationally and internationally;
- It encourages women to be politically active and to get elected at all levels;
- It ensures that women's perspectives are taken into account because women see things differently to men; and
- It helps the Conservative Party capture women's votes.

Source: Conservative Women's Organisation webpage, <http://www.conservativewomen.org.uk/about_us.asp>.

or minority communities facing additional practical or psychological barriers, depending on cultural, linguistic or religious factors.

Negative campaigning can be a problem for all candidates. It can be particularly difficult for women when their personal lives, appearance or behaviour are made the subject of comments in a way that does not happen to men. Grida Duma, an Albanian politician, noted that, "Every time a woman wants to make herself heard, she runs the risk of being perceived as contentious, rather than strong. In an identical situation, a man is just considered to be a successful public speaker."⁶⁵ Parties need to work to combat this discrimination within their own parties, and towards women candidates in general.

Parties can support women to become candidates by identifying women with potential and desire to run, providing training, mentoring and support. The solidarity of other women and men party members to cope with negative reactions is important. Senior women and men politicians from within the party are important, as role models and can make

a real difference in promoting greater women's involvement.

Often women's wings and networks serve many of these functions. Specific programmes can be run by parties to encourage and support women to be candidates. These interventions, which should take place over long periods of time, are likely to be more successful and increase the number of women running as candidates. In transitioning democracies, international organizations often provide training for potential women candidates in the period leading up to a known election date. This is often too little, too late. Working with political parties to ensure that parties value and assess the skills and qualities of

65 *Empowering Women in Politics*, (Tirana: OSCE Presence in Albania, 2015), p.30, <<http://www.osce.org/albania/151051>>.

men and women potential candidates on equal terms and identify and support potential candidates at an early date is crucial.

Selection

Selection systems vary across the OSCE region according to the different electoral systems and the rules of parties. Selection processes can be biased against women, whether candidates are chosen by leaders of parties or by groups of members in the relevant electoral area. The reasons for this are many and varied, including selection boards made up of mainly men, women not usually being seen in the role of candidates, and some people holding the unfounded belief that the electorate will not vote for women. Some parties, committed to increasing the proportion and number of women candidates, nevertheless, have found that, despite taking action to ensure more women potential candidates or women present on short lists, men continued to be selected in greater numbers. Many parties have, thus, moved to using some sort of internal party quota. For example, the Social Democrats and Liberal Democracy Party in Slovenia both have quotas and targets of at least 40 per cent and 25 per cent women candidates, respectively.⁶⁶ Care should be taken to ensure that the selection process for candidates does not unintentionally exclude women from minority backgrounds. Pro-active measures may be needed to ensure that these women are able to access opportunities to be selected as candidates. Requirements for gender balance on boards tasked with selecting candidates and the introduction of gender-neutral, clear and transparent criteria for candidate selection are also recommended.⁶⁷

Legislated quotas obviously require political parties to comply with a minimum level of women candidates. Not all quotas are effective. The quota system must be compatible with the electoral system, and there must be rules to address issues such as rank order and effective legal sanctions. In a list system, if there is no requirement to place women in winnable positions on a list, the likelihood of electing women is not significantly increased.⁶⁸ For example, two

66 "Global Database of Quotas for Women," International IDEA and Stockholm University, Quota Project website, <<http://www.quotaproject.org/uid/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=SI#party>>.

67 *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation*, op. cit., note 56, paras. 101 and 113.

68 "Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe", European Parliament Directorate General for Internal Policies Note, 2013, <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/Join/2013/493011/IPOL-FEMM_NT\(2013\)493011_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/Join/2013/493011/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2013)493011_EN.pdf)>.

Box 7. Internal party quotas for candidates**New Democratic Party Canada**

The New Democratic Party (NDP) adopted a "Nomination and Affirmative Action Policy" that states, "New Democrats are committed to the goals of gender-parity and diversity, and recognize that one of the ways to help move these goals forward is by ensuring that our candidate team is gender balanced and reflects the diversity of the country." A goal of 60 per cent female candidates in seats deemed winnable was set, with special attention to seats where incumbents were not running, to try to ensure that affirmative action candidates become NDP candidates for election.

Source: *Candidate nomination in Canada's Political Parties* (William Cross Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada, 2006) p.26, <http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_5470.pdf>.

countries where the introduction of legislative quotas led to large increases are Belgium in its national parliament, which increased from 12 per cent in 1995 to 23.3 per cent in 1999, and 39.3 per cent in 2014, and France where local representation increased by 20 percentage points in a single election period between 1998 and 2004.⁶⁹ However, at the national level French parties at first chose to accept a financial sanction rather than comply with the law, and representation increased slowly at the first election, from 10.9 per cent to 12.3 per cent, subsequently rising to 18.5 per cent in 2007 and 26.2 per cent women MPs in 2012.

Stockholm University, supported by International IDEA, began a project in 2003 to look at the implementation and impact of both legislated and voluntary quotas. They have continued to maintain the Global Database of Quotas for Women, with the additional collaboration of the IPU since 2009. Currently, 22 countries in the OSCE region

use voluntary party quotas.⁷⁰ International IDEA has also identified the need for greater research into candidate-selection practices, given that they are crucial to ensuring that women can be in a position to stand for elected office.

69 "Electoral Gender Quota Systems and their Implementation in Europe", European Parliament Directorate General for Internal Policies Note, 2013, <[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493011/IPOL-FEMM_NT\(2013\)493011_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2013/493011/IPOL-FEMM_NT(2013)493011_EN.pdf)>.

70 These countries include: Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom. Data as of December 2015, Quota Project, *op. cit.*, note 66.

Financial support for women

Getting selected to stand as a candidate can be expensive. From nomination fee, to travel expenses, to producing promotional literature and funding child care, party members can find it difficult to compete against those with more resources – both money and time. Systems where candidates need financial support to get selected cause women and candidates from poorer socio-economic groups to be disadvantaged. For example, seeking selection in areas away from home brings extra travel costs. Some parties try to level the playing field between candidates by having spending limits or by providing all party candidates with an equal amount of funds for campaigning. Organizations present in a number of countries, such as Emily’s List in the United States, raise money specifically to support women candidates.⁷¹

Box 8. Access to finance for women candidates: Kyrgyzstan

The Election Code of Kyrgyzstan introduced in 2004 an election deposit for candidates for local elections varying from 1,000 to 5,000 Kyrgyz soms (about USD 25 to 100) depending on the election level (village or city). This deterred many women from participating. An analysis of the Election Code from a gender perspective recommended cancelling the election deposit for women. In October 2007 the code was updated and the deposit cancelled for all candidates.

Source: Nurgul Asylbekova, UNDP Country Programme Gender Coordinator Kyrgyzstan, <<http://iknowpolitics.org/en/2008/10/finance-laws-women%E2%80%99s-political-participation>>.

Beyond the stage of selection, financing of political campaigns can also act as a disincentive to women. A full discussion is found in IDEA’s *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: A handbook on political finance*.⁷² Electoral systems play a role, with candidates in majoritarian systems often being expected to raise their own campaign funds. Women usually struggle to access funding networks to raise money. A range of suggestions are listed to level the field, which include legislative and non-legislative means. For example, states that provide public funding to political parties can reward parties that reach specified proportions of women and men candidates. For instance, in Georgia in 2011, 10 per cent additional funding was provided where at least 20 per cent

71 Emily’s List is an American political action committee that aims to help elect pro-choice, female candidates from the Democratic Party in the United States. It was founded by Ellen Malcolm in 1985. The name is an acronym for “Early Money Is Like Yeast”. See more at: <<https://www.emilyslist.org/>>.

72 *Funding of Political Parties and Election Campaigns: A handbook on political finance* (IDEA, 2014), <<http://www.idea.int/parties/funding-of-political-parties-and-election-campaign-a-handbook-on-political-finance.cfm>>.

of the candidates were women. In 2013 this was increased to 30 per cent additional funding for at least 30 per cent women candidates.⁷³ Political parties can also take steps to support women, such as funding child care and travel costs and ensuring that central funds are used fairly to finance campaigns.

OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission reports note the importance of enforcement and “sanctions for non-compliance” with gender quotas.⁷⁴ Some countries have adopted a punitive approach to parties that do not reach the legal requirement of women candidates. For example, France reduces public funding for parties who do not meet the quotas,⁷⁵ and in Albania parties are fined for failing to comply with the gender quota for candidate lists.⁷⁶ This has, however, led to some parties choosing to accept the funding reduction rather than increase the number of women candidates. In Serbia, the non-compliant list is sent back for corrective action. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, political parties or coalitions are given five days to correct their lists and resubmit them to the Central Election Commission.⁷⁷ In cases where under-representation of people belonging to national minorities is a concern, incentives could also be devised to specifically encourage the inclusion of minority women candidates.

Gender Action Plans

A number of international organizations have recognized the importance of political parties mainstreaming gender equality as a crucial building block of greater political participation by women. ODIHR has begun to work with political parties in a number of OSCE countries using *gender audits* to develop gender action plans for political parties, with a view to embedding gender

73 Enhancing Gender Equality in Georgia project, UNDP Georgia webpage, <http://www.ge.undp.org/content/georgia/en/home/operations/projects/democratic_governance/enhancing-gender-equality-in-georgia.html>.

74 See for example, “Republic of Albania, Parliamentary Elections 2013, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report”, OSCE/ODIHR, 2013, p. 12, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/106963?download=true>>.

75 “Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice in OSCE Participating States”, OSCE/ODIHR, 15 October 2013, p.35, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/107073>>.

76 Albania, Parliamentary Elections 2013 Final Report, *op. cit.*, note 74, p. 12.

77 *The Atlas of Electoral Gender Quotas*, (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2014), <http://www.idea.int/publications/atlas-of-electoral-gender-quotas/upload/Atlas-on-Electoral-Gender-Quotas_3.pdf>.

equality into internal structures, processes and strategies of political parties (see Box 9).

In Georgia, three parliamentary political parties worked to develop plans that included organizing internal party meetings to discuss gender equality, both within the party and in society, improving co-ordination among women MPs within a party to raise issues of concern to women voters, countering negative media portrayal of women candidates and developing more active women's wings. Four parliamentary parties in Armenia underwent a similar process. Some already had women's organizations within the party but needed to consider how these could be better integrated within the party and, thereby, achieve greater influence over policy development. Communication with voters was a key issue, including considering using opinion polling to better understand the views of both men and women voters. Crucially, some parties have looked at how they can better support women in elected positions, as well as using their experience to inspire and support other women to seek elected office. Political party gender action plans represent comprehensive and strategic documents that provide a clear roadmap for political parties to further increase women's political participation and sensitize internal policies and procedures.

Box 9. Gender auditing of political parties

The ODIHR political party gender audit, or self-assessment, methodology includes a template with questions to determine the level of gender equality in key internal party processes, procedures, structures and policies. It helps in identifying discriminatory practices within political parties – whether direct or indirect, formal or informal – and provides parties with tools to adjust their policies and strategies, in line with gender equality principles. The methodology uses a three step approach: consultations and a self-assessment questionnaire, a party gender audit report, and the development of follow-up gender action plan for the party. The methodology was piloted by ODIHR in Armenia, Georgia and Tajikistan between 2013 and 2015, which produced 14 individual party gender audit reports and seven political party gender action plans.

Source: Project on Strengthening Women's Participation in Political Parties in the OSCE Region, Final Donor Report, OSCE/ODIHR, September 2015.

and sensitize internal policies

Benefits to parties of having more women candidates and representatives

Those campaigning for greater political participation of women generally do so because they are convinced that this is the just and fair thing to do, and they recognize the benefits to society of having equitable representation of women and men. There are, however, often good electoral reasons for political parties to take the issue seriously. A recent opinion poll by NDI in Georgia found that two thirds of people thought that there was no gender equality in the country and that there were too few women MPs.⁷⁸ An assessment of women's participation in Kosovo⁷⁹ noted that there was a gap between leaders' stated commitment and actual actions, but suggested that a high turnout of women voters in 2013 municipal elections increased party leaders' understanding of the power of women's votes. The Labour Party in the United Kingdom changed its approach significantly to embed gender equality in the party after coming to the understanding it was failing to attract women voters. Another United Kingdom party, the Conservative Party, openly states that one of the purposes of its Women's Organization is to win women's votes.

It is important that political parties see women not only as passive members, but also as political actors. Women MPs can and do make change, take leadership positions and participate in internal party dynamics when political party processes, structures and policies allow them to do so.

In many countries, political parties have yet to understand the possible benefits of greater women's participation. In others, insufficient numbers of women candidates and representatives can have negative implications electorally for parties. Sweden, which has had high levels of women's political representation, is one example where, for many years, all parties have subscribed to the benefits of women candidates.

"All parties in Sweden, however, compete to be perceived by voters as the most gender-equal party, the 'best student in class' – or at least not 'worse' than their rivals. Today, most party leaders describe themselves as feminists, and since 1994 the slogan 'every other seat for a woman' has become firmly rooted in

78 "Poll: Georgians want more gender equality and mandatory gender quotas", NDI Press release, 26 November 2014, <<https://www.ndi.org/georgia-gender-quota-public-opinion>>.

79 All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this text should be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244.

Swedish politics.”⁸⁰ However, change is not always positive, and changes in society mean that as xenophobic and patriarchal sentiments are becoming more vocal in Europe, more proactive measures are needed to sustain the gender-equality gains.

Conclusion

A number of political parties in OSCE countries have shown dedication to improving gender equality within their structures and organization. Developing parties that not only welcome women but seek to ensure they participate as equals with men is vital, especially if more women are to take on positions of responsibility within the party and in elected office. Parties that have active women participants at all levels will see benefits, as their policy platforms will reflect the interests of all members and, thus, represent more accurately the whole society. Many parties will also find that there are electoral benefits to having women candidates and representatives in greater number.

However, women still face additional barriers to being selected as candidates and, therefore, political parties that value women’s participation must be proactive and should put in place a range of support mechanisms to encourage and support women candidates. These measures need to be relevant to the particular context in which the political party and its leadership operate. All parties that struggle to achieve enough women coming forward as candidates need to ask themselves what more they need to do to overcome the barriers that are holding women back. Specific barriers faced by minority women should also be analysed with attention to possible strategies to overcome them.

Measures that have proved successful include:

- Targets or legislative or voluntary party quotas for gender-balanced selection of candidates;
- Separate women’s organizations to achieve greater solidarity of women members and provide the basis for building networks, mentoring and training projects for future candidates;

80 Sonia Palmieri Dr., *Gender-sensitive Parliaments: A global review of good practice* (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2011), p.81, <<http://www.ipu.org/pdf/publications/gsp11-e.pdf>>.

- Internal party quotas for positions of responsibility within party, and party delegations to ensure women members have equal opportunities with men to gain political experience, name recognition and electoral success;
- Future leaders programmes with equal access for men and women, including with measures to develop leadership potential among minority women; and
- Raising awareness about women's political participation among the general population.

Women's participation in elections

*"...[W]omen represent half the population, they hold up half the sky, and should have their fair share in making the decisions that affects their lives and their countries."*⁸¹

Elections are the gateway to political representation and power. Therefore, it is critical that the various aspects of an electoral process are considered with a view to understanding how women's participation may be promoted or deterred. To do this, a comprehensive approach is needed, considering all the different actors and stages of an election cycle, looking at the various ways that women can be involved, including as candidates, voters and in deciding and implementing the electoral framework and processes. Provision of gender-disaggregated data and women's involvement in policy development are two key actions for promoting women's participation in all aspects of an election. This chapter considers the current status in the OSCE region, and then looks at good practices in policy formulation, legal frameworks, election administration and political parties, as well as the media with respect to elections.

81 "Empowering Women to Change the World", Remarks to the Global Colloquium of University Presidents by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, Philadelphia, USA, 4 April 2011, <http://www.un.org/sg/selected-speeches/statement_full.asp?statID=1137>.

OSCE commitments and current status within the region

Low levels of women's political participation are often particularly evident during elections. Women's parliamentary representation is currently around 26 per cent across the OSCE region.⁸² This is an increase from 22 per cent in 2010, and just 15 per cent in 2000. Such advances, although not sufficient, show the positive effect of good practices in promoting women's political involvement in elections.

ODIHR assesses women's electoral participation through its election observation activities, which mainstream gender analysis as part of the overall reporting on the conduct of elections.⁸³ Among other things, election observation final reports provide public information on the status of women's participation and also make recommendations for further improvements. The Office also undertakes legal reviews of election-related legislation that can include recommendations related to gender.

The framework for ODIHR assessments is provided by the OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards. These include OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 on Women's Participation in Political and Public Life, which commits OSCE participating States to "consider possible legislative measures, which would facilitate a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making."⁸⁴ This builds on the legal framework of CEDAW, with which OSCE participating States have committed themselves to comply, as well.⁸⁵ Article 7 of CEDAW

82 This falls short of the Beijing Platform for Action target of 30 per cent, typically referred to as a benchmark. See, "Recommendation on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making, Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers, (2003)3, <<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=2229>>.

83 *Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections*, (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2004), <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/13938>>.

84 Also see: paragraph 40 of the 1991 OSCE Moscow Document, which commits OSCE participating States to a range of measures to enhance women's participation; paragraph 23 of the 1999 OSCE Istanbul Document, which commits participating States to gender equality in policy-making; as well as the general non-discrimination commitments in paragraphs 5.9 and 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

85 Document of the Moscow Meeting of the Conference on the Human Dimension of the CSCE, Moscow, 1991, paragraph 40.2, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/14310?download=true>>. Two of the 57 OSCE participating States – the United States and the Holy See – have not acceded to or ratified CEDAW.

makes explicit reference to “ensur[ing] to women, on equal terms with men, the right to vote in all elections and public referenda and to be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies”, as well as “to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government”. State parties are required to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women” and, importantly, CEDAW recognizes that temporary special measures aimed at accelerating *de facto* equality between men and women should not be considered discriminatory. This is reaffirmed and elaborated upon in authoritative interpretations by the treaty monitoring body, the CEDAW Committee, in particular in General Recommendations No. 23 on political participation and No. 25 on temporary special measures.

Recurring shortcomings in women's electoral participation are evident from ODIHR's electoral observation and assessment mission reports. In recent years, recommendations have commonly referred to challenges with candidate registration, representation in election management bodies, access to campaign finance resources and media coverage, as well as election day irregularities and a lack of voter education. These challenges underline the need to further examine the different aspects of elections, to see what good practices there are for helping women advance through the electoral process.

Policy formulation

Women have the right to participate fully in and be represented in public policy formulation in all sectors and at all levels, including in elections. The participation of women in government at the policy level can facilitate the mainstreaming of gender issues and provide for more comprehensive policies. In line with CEDAW, states have a responsibility both to appoint women to senior decision-making roles and, as a matter of course, to consult and incorporate the advice of groups that are broadly representative of women's views and

interests.⁸⁶ For such consultations to be meaningful, there should be inclusion from across the political spectrum; information should be provided in a timely fashion for informed discussion; a clear and reasonable minimum timeline for the consultation should be set-up that should involve groups as early as possible in the process and provide them with sufficient time to prepare, discuss and submit recommendations on draft policies; suggestions should be taken into consideration; there should be dialogue on ways forward; and there should be a mechanism whereby decision makers provide, in due time, meaningful and qualitative feedback on the outcome of the consultation, including clear justification for including or not certain proposals.⁸⁷ Including women's groups in the development of legislation and in assessing the effectiveness of any special measures that are implemented is good practice.

In order to be able to see if there is equality of participation, gender-disaggregated data are needed. These allow stakeholders to identify what is being achieved (or not) and also to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of any special measures. Good practices include: legal requirements for data to be gender-disaggregated, for such information to be made immediately and easily publicly available, for it to be comprehensive (including voter registration, candidate registration and campaign finance) and for it to involve both state institutions and non-state agencies (including political parties).

Legal framework

The legal framework establishes the rules of the game for political participation of women and men. A constitutional framework should contain a gen-

86 CEDAW General Recommendation No.23 paragraph 28 notes that "States parties should also endeavour to ensure that women are appointed to government advisory bodies on an equal basis with men and that these bodies take into account, as appropriate, the views of representative women's groups. It is the Government's fundamental responsibility to encourage these initiatives to lead and guide public opinion and change attitudes that discriminate against women or discourage women's involvement in political and public life." Paragraph 46 also notes "Under article 7, paragraph (b), such measures include those designed to ensure:(a) Equality of representation of women in the formulation of government policy."

87 "Recommendations on Enhancing the Participation of Associations in Public Decision-Making Processes", from the participants of the Civil Society Forum facilitated by the OSCE/ODIHR on the margins of the Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association, Vienna, 15 and 16 April 2015, <<http://www.osce.org/odihhr/183991>>.

eral guarantee of equality between women and men.⁸⁸ The gender impact of the legislation, and any special provisions to promote women's participation, should be considered. Examination of legislation requires looking at issues in principle, and also at their practical effect. The 2013 Report of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice noted that good practices often involve constitutional, as well as legislative, requirements that political parties place women in realistic positions for election, apply quotas, guarantee the rotation of power, accountability and parity membership between women and men on their governing boards, and condition funding political parties on the integration of women in realistic positions on their candidate lists.

It is good practice for legislation to:

1. Require state authorities (particularly the election management body) to regularly and publicly provide gender-disaggregated data, consult with representative women's groups, and have policies and action plans on promoting the participation of women in the electoral process and within the institution;
2. Require non-state agencies, including political parties, to also regularly and publicly provide gender-disaggregated data and to have policies promoting the participation of women in the electoral process and within the organization; and
3. Require states to establish an enforcement mechanism and consequences for non-compliance with such measures.

Securing legislated special measures to promote women's participation is likely to increase awareness and the likelihood of good practices being undertaken, especially if an enforcement mechanism and sanctions are specified. A variety of legally prescribed special measures are possible, including setting numerical targets and quotas for women candidates and elected representatives, requirements for women in party leadership positions, the inclusion of women in senior management of election management bodies and the judiciary, coverage of women in the media, increased campaign spending limits for women, and additional public financing of women candidates. For example, within the OSCE region, some states have implemented a policy of additional or reduced

88 2013 Report of the UN Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice, (A/HRC/23/50), 19 April 2013, <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/RegularSession/Session23/A.HRC.23.50_EN.pdf>.

public funding according to the number or percentage of women candidates nominated by a party and also through earmarking funds for specific campaign activities related to gender equality. Other legislated measures that can be introduced to financially support and incentivize women candidates include tax-relief provisions and free childcare.

Gender-equality requirements within the electoral system (for example quotas and reserved seats) are often seen as game changers. However, when identifying the electoral system and appropriate gender-equality measures, not only the potential consequences for women's participation, but also other electoral impacts need to be taken into account. Given the importance of the local context, under international law, electoral systems are essentially a sovereign matter. However, national review of the differential impact of electoral systems on women's political participation is encouraged.⁸⁹ Generally, voluntary quotas by parties, as distinct from those that are legally prescribed, are often seen as less effective in promoting women's participation, but again the national context needs to be considered.⁹⁰ As stated in the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09, the OSCE calls on the OSCE participating States to consider possible legislative measures to advance a more balanced participation of women and men in political and public life and especially in decision-making". Furthermore, focusing on elections, it "encourage(s) all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making."⁹¹ Similarly, the Beijing Declaration calls on governments to "take measures, including, where appropriate, in electoral systems that encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-elective public positions in the same proportion and at the same levels as men."

Election administration

The election management body administers elections according to the legislation. The election management body leadership has overall responsibility

89 See UN General Assembly Resolution 66/130 on Women and Political Participation, adopted in 2011, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=%20A/RES/66/130>.

90 Quota Project, *op. cit.*, note 66. Also see: International IDEA, <<http://www.idea.int/gender/quotas.cfm>>.

91 OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 7/09, "Women's Participation in Political and Public Life", *op.cit.*, note 13.

for running a genuine election with integrity in which voters are confident. Therefore, it is important that women are part of this leadership, as well as being active at other levels of the administration, and that good practices are administered to promote women's participation.⁹²

Election management bodies should produce comprehensive gender-disaggregated data in real time, and also make summaries available. For example, listing the gender of all candidates in a local election is helpful, but such data can be difficult to use without a summary to facilitate analysis. It is also helpful for such data to be broken down to the lowest level, so that geographical variations can be identified. Gender-disaggregated data ideally cover: those elected, candidates, registered voters, those who actually voted, party leaders, accredited observers (by organization), accredited agents (by party/candidate), accredited media representatives (by outlet), and the election administration (at different levels). Where an election management body is also responsible for campaign finance oversight, it is helpful to provide gender-disaggregated data on campaign finance reports (by donors and expenditures).

Election management bodies should consult with representative women's groups for the development of policies and practices. It is likely to be more productive if consultation is regular, and covers all matters, not just "women's issues". Explicit policies established by the election management body on promoting women's participation, with accompanying implementation action plans, show positive commitment and increase the chances of successfully promoting women's participation. Likewise, at lower levels, the election administration can consult on matters, such as where polling is conducted so it is women-friendly, how to increase voter registration among women, how to target voter education and how to promote scrutiny of the process by local women.

Some obstacles to electoral participation are generally thought to disproportionately impact women and need to be addressed by election management bodies:

- Secrecy of the vote;
- Intimidation, threats, harassment and other forms of violence; and
- High nomination and campaign costs.

92 For more information see, for example *Inclusive Electoral Processes* (UN Women, 2015), <<http://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2015/7/inclusive-electoral-processes>>. Also, *Gender Equality and EMBs: A Best Practices Guide* (IFES, 2014), <http://www.ifes.org/sites/default/files/gender_equality_and_emb_best_practices_guide_final_2.pdf>.

Failure to protect the secrecy of the vote is usually assessed to be more detrimental to women. It includes family voting, illegal proxy voting and other forms of pressure in how to vote. It is important that election management bodies take active measures to explain and uphold the importance of secrecy and individual voting.

Intimidation, threats, harassment and other forms of violence are thought to disproportionately deter women from participating in the election process. Thus, an active approach is needed, including security services to mitigate against violence and intimidation. Any acts of violence should also be promptly and efficiently investigated, prosecuted and remedied.⁹³

High nomination and campaign costs are also generally more prohibitive for women than men, due to lower average salary levels, donors' preference for giving money to well-known (usually men) candidates and less established business connections to facilitate financing.

These obstacles could be overcome if excessive nomination fees are not set, clear campaign finance mechanisms are in place and provisions to level the playing field are enforced.

Women voters should also be easily able to register themselves, rather than going through an intermediary, such as a head of household, and change their registration information upon marriage when their name and address may have changed.

In some situations it may be advisable to set up women-only services, with female staff working to register women voters and candidates, and/or to have female polling staff. Additional emphasis and resources may be needed to promote women's participation in election observation training, to deploy female security staff and to have women election observers.

93 See para. 59, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Report on factors that impede equal political participation and steps to overcome those challenges, A/HRC/27/29, 30 June 2014, <http://ap.ohchr.org/documents/dpage_e.aspx?si=A/HRC/27/29>; and para. 6, UN General Assembly, Resolution 66/130 on Women and Political Participation, adopted in 2011, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=%20A/RES/66/130>.

Box 10. Political parties and elections

Ensuring places for women as candidates on electoral lists is no guarantee of women's representation. Pervasive cultural and historical factors create inequalities that are not easily combated by quotas and list requirements alone. Domestic responsibilities, for instance, are usually identified as the most important deterrent for women to enter politics. Party meetings at inconvenient times, as well as a lack of childcare facilities, deter many candidates with family responsibilities from becoming candidates. Moreover, women often receive less support and funding from their parties throughout the campaign period, or are even expected to surrender their mandates to male counterparts after the election. States should take necessary measures to ensure that such practices are prevented, as well as enact positive measures to help promote the candidacy of women.

Source: *Guidelines on Political Party Regulation*, *op. cit.*, note 58, para 135, p.60.

Political parties and elections

Political parties, as the vehicles of power, have a key role to play in promoting women's participation within the party and within election processes. The central role of parties is recognized in CEDAW Article 2, which calls on states to take "all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women by any person, organization or enterprise", with further reference to parties made explicit in General Recommendation 23. Thus, states are obliged to examine the participation of women within parties and, where necessary, require the adoption of strategies to promote women's participation. OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No. 07/09 "encourage(s) all political actors to promote equal participation of women and men in political parties, with a view to achieving better gender-balanced representation in elected public offices at all levels of decision-making." The Beijing Platform for Action calls on political parties to consider removing all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, and develop initiatives that allow women to participate fully in all internal policy-making and nominating processes.

It also refers to the incorporation of gender issues in parties' political agendas.

Again, gender-disaggregated data are needed so that such assessments can be made. This should include parties being required to regularly publicly state the number and proportion of women the party has at different levels, including in senior and regional leadership, on committees, nominated as candidates and as party members. Such data can also be an effective tool for acclaiming or shaming parties and for marking progress.

Stronger requirements that parties have public policies on how they promote women's participation within the party and more widely in politics could also be created. Specific measures could also be put in place, such as requiring a certain proportion of candidates to be women, having reduced nomination requirements

for women, being obliged to give extra party resources to women candidates and extra public funding being available for parties promoting women, as demonstrated in Box 11.

Box 11. Financial incentives to political parties

Type of approach	Example
<p>Additional public funding for political parties meeting legal criteria, such as including a certain number or percentage of either gender on their candidates' lists (Georgia case) or women elected candidates (Romania case)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Georgia</p> <p>→ Political parties with at least 30 per cent of a different gender on its candidate list receive an additional 30 per cent funding</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Romania</p> <p>→ State funding will increase in proportion to the number of seats obtained in the election by women candidates</p>
<p>Reimbursement of child care expenses incurred because of and during an election campaign</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Canada</p> <p>→ Child care expenses incurred because of the election are eligible for reimbursement and have to be reported in the campaign account</p>

Source: Barbara Joan Stonestreet, Working paper - Session 1.3 "Addressing the gender funding gap", Global Conference on Money in Politics, Mexico City, 3 – 5 September, 2015, <<http://www.moneyinpolitics.info/agenda/concept-note/>>.

The issue of candidate selection by parties is critical for enabling women to stand for office. There are multiple challenges in this. As set out in the previous chapter, most political parties have fewer women members and, therefore, a smaller pool from which to draw their candidates. Women can have less access to donors and financial networks, because of low economic status, limited financial independence and weak capacity to fundraise. There can also be resistance by party leaders, current candidates and elected representatives, who may not want to promote women's involvement, as this would change the system from which they have benefitted and risen to positions of power. Hence, there can be a need for mandatory requirements, such as public information on what the party is doing to promote a gender-positive approach and/or legal obligations for a proportion of candidates to be women.

There are also a number of voluntary measures parties can adopt to support campaign financing for women. These include organizing training and capacity development for women candidates, establishing internal party provisions to regulate fair allocation of campaign resources, and establishing special party funds for women.

Media

Public media also have obligations to promote women's political participation in general, and specifically in elections.⁹⁴ It is good practice for public media to have policies on and measures of coverage of women candidates and women's political participation issues. Similarly obliging private media to undertake such measures voluntarily can also make a positive difference. For example, there could be a binding or voluntary code of conduct with specific measures relevant to promoting women's political participation. Data are again needed in order to be able to assess the proportionality of coverage of women candidates.

In addition to the quantity of coverage given, it is necessary to consider the quality. Women have reported that the media's treatment of women candidates can be a disincentive to standing for election. Problems include, focusing on appearance and dress, questioning women's ability to undertake the role, and suggesting that women in politics are neglecting their families. Generally, the Global Media Monitoring Project's last report, from 2010, found that only 24 per cent of news subjects (the people in the news) are women.⁹⁵ In the OSCE region, low visibility of women candidates in the media and during campaigning has been observed by OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Missions in multiple countries.⁹⁶

94 CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, *op. cit.*, note 45.

95 "Who makes the news?", The Global Media Monitoring Project, <http://cdn.agilitycms.com/who-makes-the-news/Imported/reports_2010/highlights/highlights_en.pdf>.

96 *Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice in OSCE Participating States*, *op. cit.*, note 75, p. 35.

Conclusion

Numerous challenges to the *de facto* equal participation of women in elections remain. These include difficulties with getting nominated as a candidate by parties, access to finance, and the quality and quantity of media coverage. Also, violence and a lack of secrecy of the vote can have disproportionate impacts on women. As elections are the gateway to political power, it is important to identify and address such obstacles.

Temporary special measures, as established under CEDAW, can be undertaken to promote women's equal participation, for example through changes to the electoral system or increased funding for women candidates. For any development of electoral policies or practices, groups broadly representative of women should be consulted. There should also be gender-disaggregated data so that shortcomings and successes can be identified.

Box 12. Failure to cover women candidates and women's views in election campaigns

United Kingdom

Research on the media during the 2015 election campaign showed that women were better represented in broadcast media than in the national press. However, only 22.8 per cent of all individuals in the televised coverage were female and just 14.5 per cent of individuals mentioned in the press were women.

Source: Emily Harmer, "Politics as usual: Women, Media and the UK General Election 2015", <<http://blog.politics.ox.ac.uk/politics-as-usual-women-media-and-the-uk-general-election-2015/>>.

Canada

Research done in Canada found systematic evidence that women tend to be covered differently than their male counterparts because of their gender. Coverage of female candidates commonly fits into one of four roles: sex object, mother, pet and "iron maiden". News coverage perpetuates well-entrenched, but tired, stereotypes about men's and women's roles, abilities and aspirations. Media contribute to broader dysfunctions in how the genders see themselves and each other.

Source: Elizabeth Goodyear, "News media coverage of elections contributes to women's under-representation", <<http://womensuffrage.org/?p=22202>>.

Women's participation in local politics

“Despite women’s central role in sustaining the family and society and their contribution to development, they have been excluded from political life and the decision-making process, which, nonetheless, determine the pattern of their daily lives and the future of societies.”⁹⁷

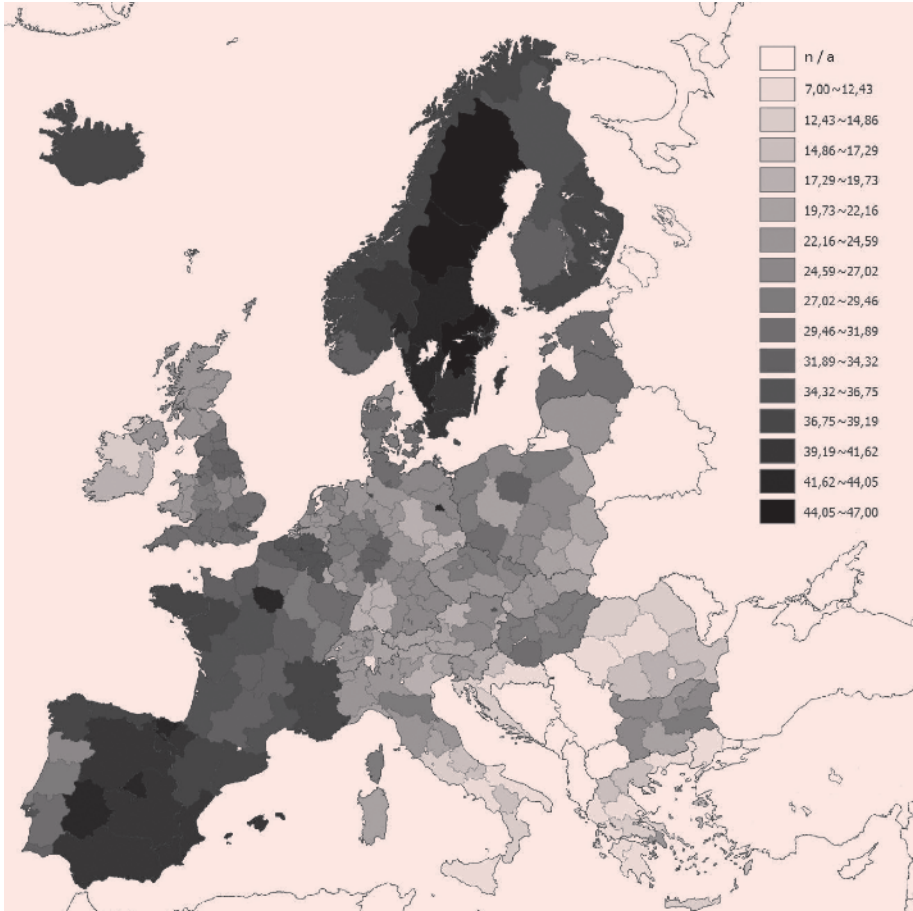
A neglected area

Women’s participation in local governments and decision-making is equally important and conditional for development of “a more productive and socially equitable society and state.”⁹⁸ While international standards on women’s representation apply to both national and local levels, much of the monitoring and most of the discussions start and finish with representation in national parliaments. There is little information on the use of temporary special measures to increase the number of women being elected as representatives at the local level. Yet many decisions that affect everyday life are made by locally elected bodies. Women’s wings within parties and mentoring schemes often

⁹⁷ CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, *op. cit.*, note 45, paragraph 9.

⁹⁸ Nadezhda Shvedova, “The OSCE Copenhagen and Moscow Documents: A short Commentary on the OSCE’s Contributions to Gender Equality in Political and Public Life”, *OSCE Yearbook 2011* (OSCE, 2012), p. 324, <<http://ifsh.de/file-CORE/documents/yearbook/english/11/Shvedova-en.pdf>>.

Map 1: The share of female local councilors in the regions of 30 European countries (percentages)



Source: Aksel Sundstrom, "Women in local political representation within 30 European countries: a comparative data set on regional figures", University of Gothenburg Working Paper Series 2013:18, p.7, <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1465/1465732_2013_18_sundstro--m.pdf>.

play an important role in identifying women to be candidates and in supporting women in local politics, but relatively little is written about this. Some political parties have introduced voluntary quotas and a number of countries have mandatory quotas for local elected office, alongside quotas for national parliaments – but these have been far less discussed. In areas where minorities

are geographically concentrated, local politics may offer particular opportunities for women belonging to national minorities to participate in political life.

Unlike national parliaments, however, there is little systematic data collection on women's participation in local politics and little publicity of that collected. Any data available do not receive the same attention given to the annual reporting of the IPU for national parliaments. The European Commission collects data every two years from EU countries. They show the average percentage representation of women at the local level is 36 per cent.⁹⁹ Given the number and range of different local elected positions, aggregated data are even less likely to provide information that illuminates the position of women in different countries, regions and parties than national level data. Nonetheless it should be possible to develop sets of data to be compared over time that provide important information on how well women are represented in local politics. Data should also be collected and disaggregated on the basis of ethnicity in order to examine differences between representation of majority and minority women and men, and to examine tendencies that might be linked to the ethnic composition of localities.

In 2013, Aksel Sundstrom undertook a study aiming "to provide the first comparative source of data on the share of locally elected women within and across the European countries." The thirty countries surveyed showed a wide variation in percentage of positions held by women, from 13 per cent to 43 per cent, see Map 1.¹⁰⁰ When compared to the same countries' percentage of women's representation at the national level, only 12 countries had a higher representation locally. The study points out that an overall percentage hides the variations between regions within countries. The variations between parties are also not evident. Not only is there a need for more regularly collected data, there is a need to be able to identify differences in localities and parties in order to identify practices that are succeeding.

Despite some efforts to highlight the need for greater participation of women in political life at the local level, the evidence efforts in this area is sparse. In

99 European Commission Database on Women in Decision-Making Positions, data as of January 2016, <http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/politics/municipal-councils/index_en.htm>

100 Aksel Sundstrom, "Women in local political representation within 30 European countries: a comparative data set on regional figures", Univeristy of Gothenburg Working Paper Series 2013:18, <http://www.qog.pol.gu.se/digitalAssets/1465/1465732_2013_18_sundstro--m.pdf>.

1999, the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities passed a resolution calling for programmes to encourage women to become more involved with the aim of ensuring “balanced participation by women in the political institutions of the region”.¹⁰¹ This goal was reaffirmed in the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy for 2014-2017. However, at the current pace of change, it is highly unlikely that the stated aim of the Council of Europe’s 1999 resolution will be achieved in the near future.

A route to political experience

One of the often cited problems with legislative quotas at the national level is that women elected as part of a quota might have insufficient experience. If men have more access to positions that allow them to gain political experience, including through holding local representative positions, then women will suffer, in comparison, with fewer opportunities to develop the required skills and knowledge. Equally, their names will be less well known, an important factor when seeking candidacy and election. Without experience at the local level, it is likely women will have even fewer opportunities to access roles at the national level and will find the adjustment more difficult.

For men and women new to politics, the idea of standing for parliament can be unthinkable. Learning through roles first in the political party then in local government can build confidence. If more women had the opportunity to take on local political roles it would be likely to increase the number of women confident in their desire to stand for parliament. Of course, being a local representative is valuable in its own right, and local representatives do not automatically go on to national roles. The arguments for equitable representation of women remain valid at all levels of political life.

A mixed picture

The situation across OSCE states is mixed. A high level of women’s representation in parliament does not always correlate with a high level in locally elected bodies, while some countries have higher local representation than national.

¹⁰¹ Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Resolution 85, “Women’s participation in political life in the regions of Europe”, 1999, <<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=849145&Site=Congress>>.

Many states see differences in the efforts that have been made in specific localities to achieve a higher proportion of women's participation. The expectation in most countries appears to be that it is the responsibility of political parties to achieve gender-balanced representation. There are a few exceptions – some of which are highlighted below – where governments have taken a lead on addressing this issue, by providing advice and support.

In countries with high levels of women's representation nationally, the reasons for lower participation at the local level may be surprising. In 1986, Norway had a woman prime minister with half the cabinet made up of women, and its parliament has continued to be among the highest performing in terms of women's representation. In 2013, women won 39 per cent of the seats in parliament. Yet research undertaken in 72 Norwegian municipal councils found that, on average, the percentage of women members was less than 30 per cent. Three reasons behind the disparity were identified, although these were not present in all local areas. They included the way parties select candidates, the willingness of women to come forward and whether voters would elect women. A history of high profile men in localities made it difficult for women to get votes. But most worrying was the experience of some women of being intimidated and ridiculed, excluded and accorded no respect. One woman believed that this explained part of the unwillingness of women to put themselves forward.¹⁰²

In Denmark, women gained 31.8 per cent of seats in the 2009 local elections – although the differences in party and location were stark. Studies have noted, however, that parties of the left have generally had a higher percentage of women as their political ideology stresses the importance of equality. A study in Denmark in 2009, to mark 100 years of women in local councils, noted significant differences between parties. It also highlighted significant differences between localities. Within the Copenhagen region, a number of municipalities had around 50 per cent women, significantly higher than many other areas.¹⁰³

Sweden, another Nordic country with high levels of national representation of women, also has high levels at the local level, with 43 per cent women's participation in municipal councils, municipal executive boards and commit-

102 "Here's why women are missing from local government", *Science Nordic*, 8 April 2015, <<http://sciencenordic.com/here%E2%80%99s-why-women-are-missing-local-government>>.

103 Ulrik Kjaer, "After the First 100 years: Women in Danish Municipal Politics 1909 – 2009", Collection of Articles on Danish Municipal Politics from a Gender Perspective, <<http://kvinfo.org/history/collection-articles-danish-municipal-politics-gender-perspective>>.

tees. Twenty-nine per cent of municipal boards are chaired by women. Women occupy 48 per cent of elected positions in county councils, and 45 per cent of county council executive boards are chaired by women.¹⁰⁴ A submission from Sweden to the European Database on Women in Decision Making identifies reasons for this success. It highlights the importance of the political consensus on principles of gender equality. This has led to significant investment in child and elder care, which supports men and women to have shared responsibilities at home. All political parties are also firmly convinced of the need to increase the number of women candidates.¹⁰⁵

Ukraine has much higher representation of women at the local level than nationally. The Ukrainian parliament had 30 per cent women's representation in 1985, but following the first multi-party elections in 1990, the percentage dropped to 3 per cent and remained in single figures for the next 20 years, rising to 11.7 per cent today. Yet women are much better represented at the lowest political level, with 51 per cent representation in village councils, 46 per cent in township councils and 28 per cent in city councils. This work is very intensive, including a lot of contact with citizens. The experience of women locally has not, however, directly led to greater numbers at the national level. Yet public opinion polls in Ukraine have shown greater support for increased women's representation among the public than among political parties.¹⁰⁶

Malta also has more gender-balanced representation in local council elections than at the national level. In 2013, the proportion of women local councillors was around 20 per cent, compared to 13 per cent in the Maltese national parliament. In contrast, women at one time held four out of six European Parliament seats. Some in Malta believe that women are more likely to be politically active either when an organization adopts family-friendly measures or when it is closer to home.¹⁰⁷ This may explain the difference in representational figures in Malta.

104 "The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action turns 20", *op. cit.*, note 43.

105 European Database on Women in Decision Making, <<http://www.db-decision.de/CoRe/Sweden.htm>>.

106 "Women's Participation in Politics and Decision-Making in Ukraine", Strategy Paper, Ukrainian Women's Fund, 2011.

107 Dr JosAnn Cutajar, "Women and political participation in Malta", commissioned by OSCE/ODIHR, 2014, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/126803?download=true>>.

Latvia also has fairly balanced representation at the local level, although 40.6 per cent of women candidates led to only 31.3 per cent elected members in 2013 down from 35.5 per cent four years earlier. Research on the impact of local government changes for women by the University of Latvia in 2011 found that the ratio of women in politics tends to increase outside Riga. She noted that “[t]he higher the political level, the more difficult it is for a woman to enter it on her own, without men’s support. The woman feels much lonelier in politics as the co-operation networks of women are much weaker than the informal networks of men. Although women also hold several of the highest public offices, the view prevails that in reality decision-making and policy-making take place at the level of executive power, where women in Latvia have not yet progressed to the leading positions. In politics of the highest level, the impact and the pressure of various interest groups manifest themselves more clearly by using financial resources and informal relations.”¹⁰⁸

Elected mayors

The representation of women as elected mayors is worthy of consideration. Although not all countries have such posts, where they exist, they generally have significant executive power. Across OSCE states the proportion of women elected mayors is generally significantly lower than the proportion of women in other locally elected positions. For example, in 2013 in Malta six out of 62 mayors were women, around nine per cent compared to over 20 per cent women local councillors.¹⁰⁹ In Romania, the situation is even more unbalanced, with only four per cent of mayors being women.¹¹⁰

Austria could be described as a country of mayors, with 2,534 towns, cities and municipalities with a mayor who can exercise considerable power and influence. Yet only 131 are women, or an equivalent of five per cent. Across the Austrian federal states, not one achieves a percentage in double figures and,

108 Agate Zake, “Women as leaders of local governments – situation before and after administrative territorial reform in Latvia”, University of Latvia, 2011, <http://www.evf.lu.lv/fileadmin/user_upload/lu_portal/projekti/evf/konferences/Doctor_2011/Raksti_doctor/RigaZake_11.11.2011.ppt>.

109 Cutajar, *op.cit.*, note 107.

110 Adriana Stefanel, “Lost in a men’s world: women in Romanian local politics”, *IJCCSEC*, Volume 2, Issue 2, 2013, <https://crosscultureenvironment.files.wordpress.com/2014/07/ijccsec-volume-2-issue-2-2013-adriana-stefanel-lost-in-a-men_s-world-women-in-romanian-local-politics.pdf>.

furthermore, most of the women mayors exercise this role in the smallest communities. One-hundred and twenty-four of the 131 women mayors work in areas with a population of less than 10,000 inhabitants. Of the ten largest towns, only one has a female mayor. The traditional expectations of mayors may explain this paucity of women – they are expected to be involved in every aspect of the local life. Coupled with an expectation in rural areas that women will run the household, it is perhaps no wonder that few women either wish to seek this office or are supported to take on the role.¹¹¹ Pay can be one of the reasons for the extremely low number of women mayors in Austria, with salaries for mayors ranging from under 2,000 to 8,000 euros a month – not particularly rewarding given the time investment that is expected.¹¹² A new project is making the number of women mayors more visible across the 2,000 or so local bodies, with information posted on a website with a gender atlas.¹¹³ In Austria, the first network of women mayors was founded in 2007 to increase women's participation at the local level. Regular workshops, training courses and meetings are held and mutual support offered to current mayors. Individual states also have web-based information on gender issues including political participation.

The situation in the United States is somewhat similar to that in Austria, with only 18.4 per cent of mayors of cities with populations over 30,000 being women. Women are slightly better represented on city councils, holding 26 per cent of city council seats. In the United States the vast majority of women mayors serve in cities with populations less than 100,000, and the proportion decreases as the populations increase.¹¹⁴

Barriers and solutions

CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, issued in 1997, makes explicit reference to the importance of recognizing the circumstances of women that create barriers to political participation and the need to act to remove them. While many of the solutions for women seeking election to local positions will be similar to those needed to increase participation in political parties and in par-

111 “Women’s Political Participation on the Local Level in Austria”, report supported by OSCE/ODIHR, January 2014, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/145551?download=true>>.

112 *Ibid.*

113 GenderAtlas project, <www.genderatlas.at/prototyp/articles/buergermeisterinnen.html>.

114 Mirya Holman, “Madame Mayor: Women’s Representation in Local Politics”, <<http://www.politicalparity.org/madame-mayor-womens-representation-in-local-politics/>>.

liaments, there are few case studies published to demonstrate how and where political parties and local governments have taken steps to remove barriers.

Temporary special measures are being used in some countries to advance women's participation in local politics, including legislated and voluntary quotas. In 2008, the Albanian Parliament passed a quota for no less than 30 per cent representation of each gender in all bodies of the legislative, executive and judiciary and other public institutions. It was also adopted in the electoral code, paving the way for inclusion of no less than 30 per cent women candidates on the lists for parliamentary and local elections. A recent change to the electoral code has increased the quota to 50 per cent for local elections, with a mandate that candidate lists alternate between the sexes.¹¹⁵

Other OSCE countries with legislated candidate quotas at the sub-national level include Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Serbia and Slovenia. In some countries, such as Italy and Belgium, decisions on quotas are made by sub-national bodies, so quotas and their enforcement may be different in different regions. A number of political parties have adopted voluntary quotas for local elections, including in Austria, Cyprus, Germany, Iceland, Norway, Romania, Sweden and Switzerland. In some countries, such as France and Greece, political parties have voluntary quotas for local elections that are higher than the legal requirement.¹¹⁶

Many women, in all countries, still bear the primary responsibility for family and household management. For this reason, it might be easier for women to take on local representative roles, rather than roles requiring them to be away from home, such as positions in national parliament. This suggests we should expect to see more women in local representative roles. Unfortunately, again, comprehensive data to test this hypothesis do not exist. The level of participation across OSCE countries is extremely wide-ranging, pointing to a complex range of issues that impact women's participation in elected local bodies. One study, undertaken in the United States, found that proximity to home of a legislature was important to women when considering whether to run for office. It concluded that the responsibilities of women at home hold them back, and the

115 "Albanian parliament approves changes to the electoral code regarding gender quota", <<http://www.crca.al/news-women-and-youth-politics/albanian-parliament-approves-changes-electoral-code-regarding-gender#sthash.cUtl6p6W.dpuf>>.

116 Quota Project, *op. cit.*, note 66.

further women have to travel, the less likely they will be to try and combine a political role with domestic life.¹¹⁷

A seminar organized by the Danish Institute for Democracy in Christiansborg in 2012 identified some of the problems for women representatives at the local level and suggested solutions.¹¹⁸ The importance of a culture that treats women fairly was highlighted, along with ensuring meetings fit with other responsibilities. Support, such as child care and social benefits for elected representatives, was also recommended. The need to ensure funds are divided equitably between men and women to enable them to seek election was also identified. Adriana Stefanel, writing about the low levels of women's representation in local and national politics in Romania, notes that being "pro women" (supportive of women's equitable representation) is often considered residue of communist period propaganda. In Romania, women in elected positions at the local level are rare.¹¹⁹

Conclusion

Improved collection and comparison of data on women in locally elected bodies must be a priority. Although data on national parliaments are more readily accessible, the role of local level participation cannot be underestimated, and research should not be neglected. States and parties may be focusing on improving figures at the national level, due to the fact that each year the release of IPU figures is highlighted in the media. While many international organizations are undertaking work at the local level in developing countries, positive stories do not receive the same amount of attention as national figures, likely impacting support for this type of work.

Equally important, a failure to focus on increasing women's participation in local representative bodies means women are missing out on the ability to influence policy at the local level. They also may miss out on the opportunity to develop the representational skills that are fundamental to the role of a national politician.

117 Rachel Silberman, "Gender Roles, Work-Life Balance, and Running for Office", *Quarterly Journal of Political Science*, Volume 10, Number 2, 2014, pp. 123-153, <<http://dx.doi.org/10.1561/100.00014087>>.

118 "Women in Politics", Seminar Report, DIPD Christiansborg, 2012.

119 Stefanel, *op.cit.*, note 110.

A more thorough analysis is needed of the barriers to women's participation in local politics, including the barriers that may be faced by women belonging to minority and marginalized groups in particular. Tackling harassment and intimidation, where they exist, and creating more gender-sensitive local legislatures are both important tasks. There is a need to ensure the elected roles in local bodies can be undertaken by men and women at convenient times and balanced with professional and family responsibilities. Addressing other barriers, such as the burden of family responsibilities, including child and elder care, unequal pay and weak co-operation among women's networks, is necessary. Political parties have the important task of reaching out to women and providing them with equitable opportunities to run.

A better understanding is needed of where temporary special measures are being used to advance women's participation in local politics, and to what effect. Good-practice examples of parties and regions that have managed to increase women's participation need to be more widely disseminated, and role models of successful women in local politics and their achievements should be highlighted.

Box 13. Strategies to advance women's participation in local politics

Austria

In order to increase the proportion of women in municipal and provincial politics, training courses and mentoring programmes for female politicians and women interested in politics are organized by the government in all provinces.

Netherlands

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations and the Netherlands Association of Mayors are keen to encourage more female mayors as one of the most visible positions in local government. They have set up an orientation programme, subsidized by the ministry, to give likely mayoral candidates the opportunity to learn more about the role.

Norway

The government is implementing a project "Local Election Day" targeted at municipal councils with fewer than 30 per cent women councillors. Seventy-two out of 428 municipalities will be required to arrange a meeting – to which all political parties are invited – focusing on how to recruit more women to local politics and the need to increase the proportion of women candidates at the top of party list. The Ministry will then undertake research about the level of women participating in each local council and develop an analysis of the reasons for the low proportion of women, along with recommendations for improvement.

Source: UN Beijing 20 year review reports

Women's participation in parliaments

“We will encourage countries to adopt measures that guarantee women’s equal access to political leadership that promote women’s engagement in elections and that build the capacity of women to be effective leaders.”¹²⁰

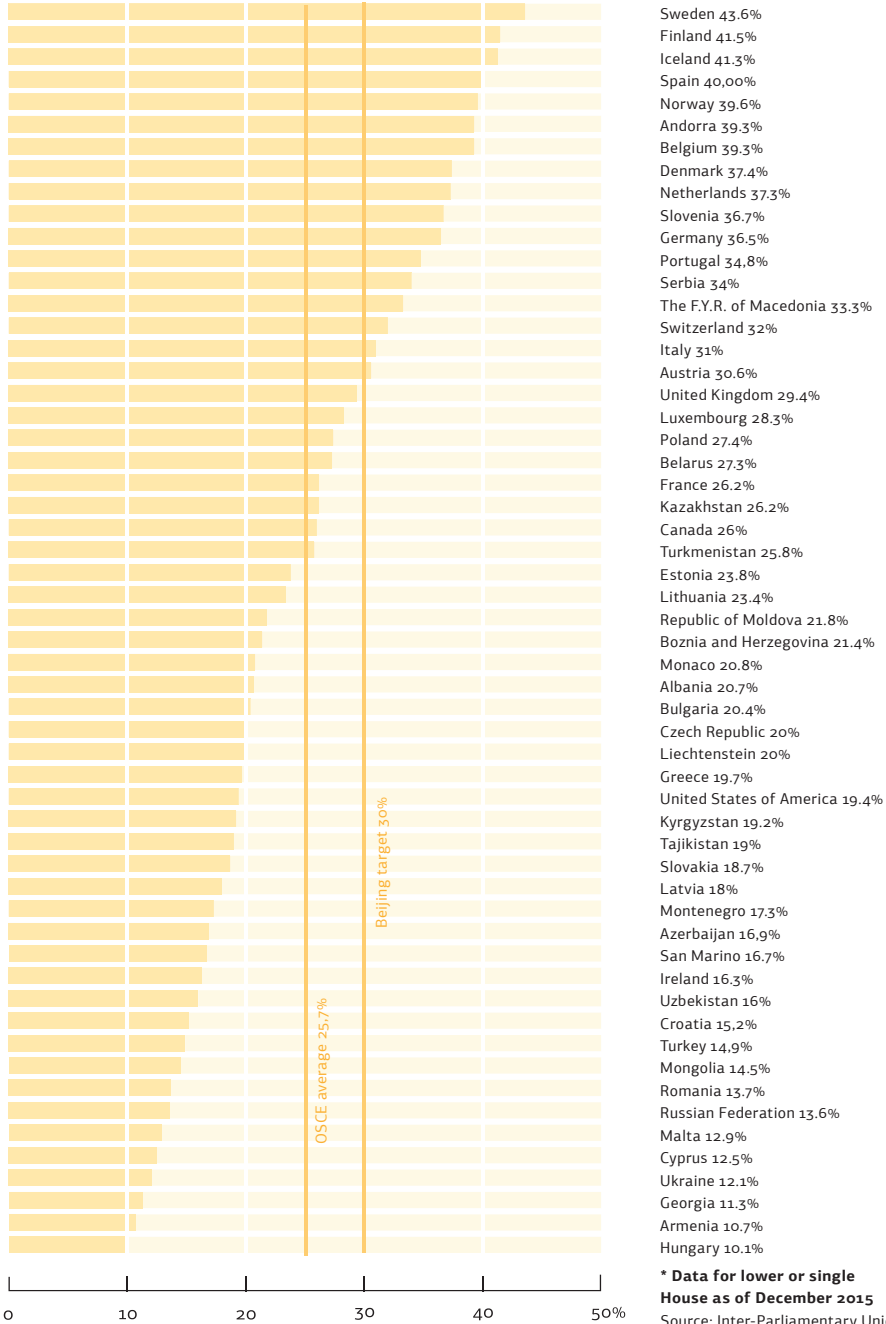
Women’s participation in parliaments is crucial to improving the representative nature, accountability and quality of democracies, and has a profound impact on the way politics is practiced in terms of policy-making agendas and political content. Yet despite the many international conferences, documents and commitments, with a small number of exceptions, parliaments remain a long way from parity between men and women. Andorra, with a parliament of 28 members, had reached 50 per cent or more women representatives for a number of years but, following elections in early 2015, the proportion of women MPs is now just under 40 per cent. Only 17 OSCE countries are currently above the 30 per cent target set by the UN Economic and Social Council to be reached by 1995 (50 per cent by 2000). Only four countries can boast more than 40 per cent women MPs in their lower or single houses – Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Spain. Belgium has reached the 50 per cent target in its Upper House. Denmark was above 40 per cent in its national parliament but, following elections in 2015, is now at 38 per cent.¹²¹

120 “The Future We Want”, UN Secretary-General’s remarks to the General Assembly on his Five-Year Action Agenda (New York, 25 January 2012), <<http://www.un.org/sg/STATEMENTS/index.asp?nid=5825>>.

121 Inter-Parliamentary Union database, *op. cit.*, note 6.



Figure 1: The proportion of women in parliaments in the OSCE region*



* Data for lower or single House as of December 2015
 Source: Inter-Parliamentary Union database, <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/world.htm>>.

Tracking the changes

The IPU provides regular information on the progress of women's representation in national parliaments, with supplementary statistics on the world and regional averages and historical data going back as far as 1997.¹²² It also produces an annual snapshot of progress and setbacks of women in parliaments. In a review published in early 2015, to coincide with 20 years since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action, it notes that countries around the world have made substantial progress towards the 30 per cent goal, with the global average rising from 11.3 per cent in 1995 to 22.1 per cent in 2015. However, in 2014, the rise was only 0.3 percentage points, begging the question as to whether an invisible barrier has been reached. The figure for women's representation in the parliaments of the OSCE region has reached 25.7 per cent.¹²³

Temporary special measures

The IPU data tell us the overall percentage of women in a parliament, but for each country there are many different variables that need to be examined. For example, all but two of the 17 OSCE countries above 30 per cent use some form of quota, with slightly more using voluntary party quotas than legislative quotas, and Spain using both. Finland and Denmark, two countries who have performed consistently well, do not use quotas at all, although Denmark previously had legislative quotas. This suggests that there is an acceptance of women in parliament within their parties and within the population. This acceptance has been developed over a long period of time through the application of a mixture of state policies and programmes, civil society advocacy, women's empowerment initiatives, education and media activity.

Legal quotas have led to significant increases in many countries. Between 2000 and 2010, across 13 OSCE states using legislated quotas, the proportion of women elected to lower houses increased by ten percentage points, although it is possible that some of that increase is attributable also to other initiatives and trends. However, in some countries the gains were modest, due in part to the poor design and implementation of the quotas and to the ineffi-

122 *Women in Parliament: The Year in Perspective*, annual publication of Inter-Parliamentary Union, <<http://www.ipu.org/english/perdcls.htm#wmn-year>>.

123 *Women in Parliament: 20 years in review, op.cit.*, note 30.

cient nature of sanctions for non-compliance. Political will is also important, along with pressure from external organizations and civil society. In certain circumstances, male party members have sought to limit the impact of quotas pointing again to the importance of design and sanctions. For example, in Armenia, to fulfil the required 20 per cent party list quota, “substitute” women were included on some party lists, to be substituted by a male candidate later. Twenty-six women withdrew their candidacies from their party election list in the 2012 elections.¹²⁴ A similar practice was observed in Kyrgyzstan.¹²⁵ This challenge can be addressed by ensuring that the electoral law has provisions that specify that a woman who withdraws from parliament must be replaced by another woman candidate. Thus, where political and public support is strong, well designed legislated quotas can achieve important increases in women’s representation.

Voluntary party quotas have also made a difference, as shown by the high number of OSCE countries that have successfully used them. It has been observed that parties whose ideologies includes explicit support for equality generally tend to have higher percentages of women’s representation.¹²⁶

The Quota Project, a database developed by International IDEA and Stockholm University, seeks to maintain a database of the range and nature of party quotas being used.¹²⁷ Country-level data, however, do not identify where there are differences between political parties and obtaining full information on political parties’ voluntary quotas can be challenging.

Information highlighting different approaches is important to identify where temporary special measures are being successfully used by some political parties to achieve higher women’s representation. Comparing the statistics of women’s representation in political parties in parliaments can help increase understanding of what has made a difference in a given context. Some political parties achieve high levels of success, but the country figure is much lower due to the performance of other parties (see United Kingdom parliament example). In countries where only some parties have voluntary quotas, changes in wom-

124 “Political participation of women in 2012 parliamentary elections of Armenia”, Gender Studies Centre of the Association of Women with University Education, Yerevan, 2012, <<http://www.osce.org/ru/yerevan/116091>>. See also *Gender Equality in Elected Office*, *op. cit.*, note 31.

125 *Review of Electoral Legislation and Practice in OSCE Participating States*, *op. cit.*, note 75, p. 34.

126 *Gender Equality in Elected Office*, *op. cit.*, note 31, Chapters 5 and 6.

127 Quota Project, *op. cit.*, note 66.

en's representation within parliament will often be due to changes in levels of success for more inclusive parties.

The effects of voluntary and legislated quotas should also be analysed on the basis of ethnicity. Additional measures may be needed to ensure that quotas

Box 15. United Kingdom Parliament – party differences

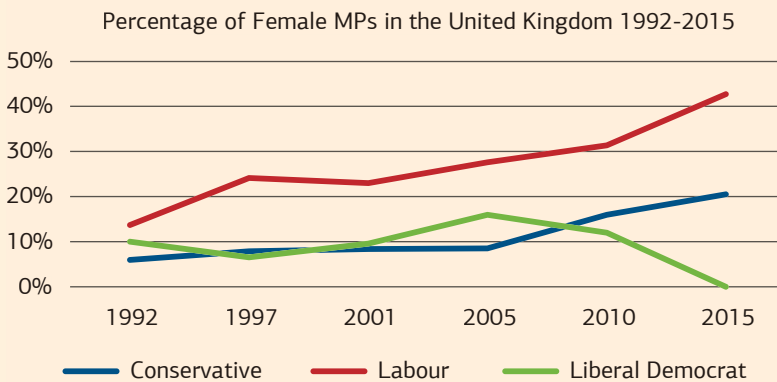
In the United Kingdom Parliament, there are major differences between three main political parties, which until 2015 were the largest three parliamentary parties. In 2015, the Scottish National Party gained 55 seats becoming the third largest party in parliament.

Women first gained the right to be elected to parliament in 1918, but until the 1980s the proportion remained steadfastly below five per cent. In a majoritarian system, women across all political parties were predominantly elected in marginal seats, many losing their seat when the party's fortunes declined. This began to change in the 1980s.

The **Labour Party** introduced internal party quotas for party positions and encouraged women to stand for parliament. In 1997, "all women shortlists", where women candidates had to be nominated for seats deemed winnable, were used for the first time. The result was a significant increase, more than doubling the number of female MPs. Labour had 101 women MPs and the other parties just 20 between them. Following a legal challenge, all women shortlists were not used in the 2001 election, and the number of female MPs declined slightly. This led to a change in the law to allow for temporary special measures to be used by parties. Labour returned to using all women shortlists for all subsequent elections.

The **Conservative Party**, conscious it was being left behind, worked to increase its numbers by developing an "A list" of candidates for the 2010 election, with equal numbers of men and women. Local parties were encouraged to choose from the list, but many did not. A significant rise was seen, however, from 8,5 per cent to 16 per cent, with a further rise to 20 per cent in the 2015 election.

The **Liberal Democrats** have discussed the issue but have yet to take any steps to ensure women are chosen. Their loss of all but eight seats in the 2015 election left them with no female representation.



not only benefit women belonging to majority communities. Similarly, in countries with quotas or reserved seats designed to increase representation of people belonging to national minorities, gender equality principles should be observed to avoid situations where men from minority communities are the main beneficiaries of such mechanisms.

Gender-sensitive parliaments

Gender-sensitive parliaments are parliaments that respect and deliver on gender equality. Among several aspects in developing gender-sensitive parliaments, two are most prominent: parliamentary working conditions and the extent to which gender is mainstreamed within the work done by parliaments. These aspects are often linked (though not exclusively) with women MPs, usually through women's organizations or caucuses within parliament, acting as prime motivators for change to a more gender-sensitive system. Importantly, the efforts to introduce gender-sensitive parliaments place the responsibility for change not only on women MPs, but also on the institution itself and on male MPs, as well.

While much has been written about the need to encourage more women to stand for parliament, there is also the need to ensure that women remain in parliament once elected.

Issues that affect retention include the working conditions, such as difficulties of managing caring responsibilities, parliamentary working hours incompatible with other responsibilities and sexist behaviour belittling women and their contributions in parliament. There is rising concern that women MPs in some countries are subject to violence, aggression and harassment. Importantly, there is also the question of women MPs having the opportunity to actually influence policy-making in parliament and the question of capacity and a conducive environment that facilitates women's input. There is some evidence suggesting that women MPs remain in parliament on average for less time than male MPs.¹²⁸ The reasons behind this may be electoral – being elected in less safe seats or being placed lower on a list. It may also be due to the difficulties of working in a parliament that is not gender-sensitive and having to deal

128 Juan Rodríguez, "Does decentralization obstruct or enhance women's political opportunities? Multilevel government, cabinet appointments and ministerial durability in Spain", <<https://ecpr.eu/Filestore/PaperProposal/43d9f61f-f1f8-406e-9620-ceoc3667719f.pdf>>.

with barriers, such as gender stereotypes in society, lack of family support and the unpaid workload of women.

The IPU published a review of good practice in gender-sensitive parliaments in 2011.¹²⁹ It includes a full discussion of the issues and, importantly, looks at the role of parliaments as institutions in improving gender sensitivity, rather than seeing male and female MPs as the primary mechanism for change. Surveys of parliamentary staff were carried out to identify steps that have been taken to improve parliaments. Many found codes of conduct regulating behaviour to be important, alongside policies and procedures to tackle sexual harassment. Symbolically, most parliaments would celebrate International Women's Day and hold debates and meetings on gender issues, while far fewer had developed systematic processes to ensure that parliaments met the needs of their male and female representatives and provided equitable opportunities for men and women MPs to participate in policy-making.

Parliaments also vary a great deal in the roles women have, with many parliaments lacking female leaders, even where the proportion of women MPs is relatively high. For example, while Uzbekistan has a 30 per cent candidate quota and 16 per cent female MPs, at the beginning of 2016 the parliament has no women in decision-making roles, such as speaker, deputy speaker or committee chair.¹³⁰ Even where women are chairs of committees, there are still clear demarcations, with women more often overseeing "soft" issues seen as suitable for them, as opposed to "hard" issues that are more commonly led by men. A survey conducted by the IPU of 89 parliaments found that there were 42 female chairs of social affairs, family and culture committees and 20 in education, as opposed to eight in home affairs and five in public works.¹³¹

In most parliaments, the speaker has a key leadership role. There are comparatively few female speakers. In August 2015, there were 46 female speakers presiding over one of the houses of the 190 parliaments (76 bi-cameral), which amounts to just 16.8 per cent of all posts.¹³² In the OSCE region, the

129 Palmieri, *op. cit.*, note 80.

130 "Nudinjon Ismoilov is appointed as the Speaker of the Legislative Chamber", 12 January 2015, <<http://www.uz24.uz/politics/spikerom-zakonodatelnoy-palati-parlamenta-izbran-nuridzhon-ismoilov>>.

131 Palmieri, *op. cit.*, note 80, p. 20.

132 See <http://www.ipu.org/parline-e/parlinelist.asp?typeform=yes&NbRecords=1000>, data as of 1 September 2015.

following countries have a female presiding officer of parliament or one of its houses, as of 1 September 2015: Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Finland, Greece, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkmenistan and the United Kingdom.¹³³

Parliaments also need to ensure that women MPs have the opportunity to develop their skills on equal terms with their male colleagues. Few parliaments systematically check that this is the case by analysing participation in training events, delegations and access to information. Some women's caucuses play this role, and international organizations offer opportunities for women to network and access web-based information.¹³⁴

The impact of women's caucuses

Solidarity between women can be an important bulwark against the difficulties of a predominantly male environment. Women's caucuses can assist women to work together to achieve change, both in terms of the operation of parliament and the development of policy platforms on issues of importance to women and men. Some debate has focused on whether there is a need for a critical mass within a parliament in order to achieve these changes.¹³⁵ It is more likely that achieving

Box 16. The "Equal Opportunities" caucus in the parliament of Ukraine

The "Equal Opportunities" caucus in the parliament of Ukraine, the Verkhovna Rada, was officially launched in 2011. Its establishment was met with scepticism, as there had been several previous attempts to establish a cross-party group of parliamentarians to promote gender issues. Obstacles included deeply rooted divisions between political parties in Ukraine, the low level of women's representation in the Verkhovna Rada (eight per cent from 2009 to 2012), and a lack of women's solidarity. Soon after its establishment, the caucus submitted three draft laws, related to prevention of domestic violence, prohibition of trafficking in children, and provision of equal social protection rights to single mothers and fathers. Since the previous convocations of the parliament, the caucus has grown in its membership, from 12 women and three men, to 47 MPs (11 men and 36 women). In 2015, the caucus successfully advocated for a legislated 30 per cent women's quota in party lists in the local elections law. The caucus is actively engaged in peace-building processes in the eastern portion of Ukraine and on socio-economic issues related to the protection of rights of internally displaced persons.

Source: A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs, *op. cit.*, note 135, p.39.

133 See Women Speakers of national parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union website, <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/speakers.htm>>, data as of 1 September 2015.

134 See, for example, International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics, <<http://iknowpolitics.org/en>> and Women's Democracy Network, <<http://www.wdn.org/>>.

135 A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE region (OSCE/ODIHR, 2013), p. 10, <<http://www.osce.org/odihr/105940>>.

Box 17. Women's parliamentary network in Serbia

Following parliamentary elections held on 6 May 2012, the proportion of women elected to the National Assembly of Serbia reached 33 per cent, an increase from 54 to 82 representatives. Capitalizing on the momentum created by the positive results of the 2012 elections, the women elected seized the opportunity to discuss the feasibility of establishing a women's parliamentary body – Women's Parliamentary Network – that is informal in nature, with no leadership structure per se. The members agreed to introduce a “troika” co-ordination system, whose members are rotated from among the political parties represented in the Network, starting with the political party with the highest number of seats in the parliament. The Network welcomes close co-operation with relevant parliamentary committees, women's NGOs, men MPs and international organizations working in the field of gender equality.

Source: Women's Parliamentary Network of Serbia, <<http://www.womeninparliaments.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Serbia-WPN-Washington.pdf>>.

change is a factor of the ability of a group of women, however small or large, within a parliament to exercise influence, persuade others, men and women, that there is a benefit to the changes they wish to see. Women's caucuses in many countries have been successful in raising women's concerns in parliament and in tackling discriminatory laws. The women's caucus, set up at the entity level in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, changed the political and the work climate, creating allies for women representatives in the work they were doing and focusing on issues of concern to women voters. These included advocating for improving maternity leave and child care, increased sanctions for those convicted of domestic violence, and equality in employment.¹³⁶ This exemplifies how women's caucuses can be established in different governance configurations.

Studies have, however, found that cross-party women's caucuses are difficult to establish in highly polarized political environments.¹³⁷ This should not come as a surprise, as politics is about ideology, and being female does not determine similar views on all issues. Some parties choose to have their own female caucuses within parliaments, seeking to influence policy within their ideological position.

In Canada, the Liberal Women's Caucus was founded in 1993 and worked successfully to influence both the party's policy platform and to ensure that the policies and procedures of parliament became

136 “Women's caucus is a first for Bosnia and Herzegovina”, US AID website, <<https://www.usaid.gov/results-data/success-stories/women%E2%80%99s-caucus-bih%E2%80%99s-first-cross-party-inter-ethnic-issue-based-caucus>>.

137 *A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs*, *op. cit.*, note 135, p. 51.

friendlier to women.¹³⁸ This does not preclude co-operation across parties on specific issues. For example, in the United Kingdom in 2010, despite the absence of a cross-party caucus, women from all parties came together to defeat a government proposal to grant anonymity to those charged with rape. The campaign was so effective that the government rapidly dropped the proposal. In ethnically divided societies, women's caucuses can provide an opportunity for women to work together across ethnic lines.

The establishment of caucuses at both local and national levels can also create an important connection channelling local policy priorities to the national level.

The IPU found that most caucuses had been successful in raising policy issues of concern to women, usually achieving legislative change.¹³⁹ Domestic violence was the issue most often cited.¹⁴⁰ This was also found to be the case in the study of support for women MPs in OSCE countries, with the top two activities of women's parliamentary bodies being "influencing policy and legislation" and "coalition building around an issue".¹⁴¹

Conclusion

Progress has been made in increasing the number of women MPs across OSCE over the last 20 years. This progress, however, is not uniform and the use of temporary special measures has been central to increasing the proportion of women in parliaments. The work of the IPU in monitoring and tracking the proportion of female MPs in parliaments has been extremely valuable in focusing on the issue. Nonetheless, there is a need now to look beyond the country-level figures to better understand the role of political parties in improving gender equality in representation. It is crucial to explore how the numeric representation of women can be further supported and channelled to increase women's influence in policy-making at all levels.

138 Jackie F.P. Steele, "The Liberal Women's Caucus", *Canadian Parliamentary Review*, Summer 2002, <<http://www.revparl.ca/english/issue.asp?param=83&art=253>>.

139 For an overview of existing women's parliamentary caucuses around the world and the work they do, see Inter-Parliamentary Union Database on Women's Caucuses <<http://w3.ipu.org/en>>.

140 Palmieri, *op. cit.*, note 80, Chapter 5.

141 *A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs*, *op. cit.*, note 135, Chapter 5.

Not only is it fair to have more women MPs, it is clear that they do make a difference in raising issues of importance to women (and men) voters, bringing valuable skills and knowledge to policy-making, tackling issues of discrimination, and taking steps to further increase the proportion of women MPs. There will be no progress on gender equality without stronger involvement of male MPs, and gender equality is the primary responsibility of a parliament as a whole. However, most parliaments and political parties are still not gender sensitive, and women find that their role is limited through lack of equal access to positions of power and through the failure of parliaments to adapt their working practices to the needs of women, as well as men. Women may also lack the access to networks that support their continued development in parliament. Ensuring that they can develop in their role is essential if they are to be fully equal in parliaments.

Conclusions and recommendations

“Human rights emphasize the dignity and freedom of the individual, but their realization depends heavily on solidarity and collective action.”¹⁴²

Since the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action there has been progress on increasing the political representation of women, but not as much as hoped. The political participation of women takes place within the context of individual countries, each with their own culture and structure helping to determine women's ability to participate in politics. Some countries have achieved much more progress than others, providing us with examples of good practice from which we can all learn. There is no one size fits all model, and for a strategy to be successful it must take differences into account.

Of course, women may be subject to more than one form of discrimination. As well as gender discrimination they could suffer disadvantages due to race, ethnicity or their socio-economic situation. Policymakers need an increased awareness of how these issues intertwine and an understanding of how to tackle them. Such differences contribute to the different levels of women's participation – measures to promote women's political activity should benefit both majority and minority communities. Additional targeted measures may be required to promote participation of minority women.

142 *Progress of the World's Women 2015–2016, op. cit.*, note 17, p.9.

Pressure for progressive change can come from many different directions – international and regional organizations, including the UN and the OSCE, the national level, through the action of governments, by political parties and civil society. They may highlight progress, or the lack of it, acting as motivators for change.

Many states have committed to increasing women’s participation, through CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the OSCE Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and the OSCE Ministerial Council Decision on Women’s Participation in Political and Public Life. More recently, at the United Nations summit in September 2015, states agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development that includes a specific development goal on gender equality and women’s empowerment.¹⁴³ How are these international documents and OSCE commitments used in achieving change? What is the mix of accountability mechanisms, persuasion and self-interest that could encourage more progress? Is there a need for new accountability mechanisms and dialogue? Are there also issues with the technical aspects of translating international law and commitments into implementation in the domestic legal framework?

Temporary special measures have been effective in many countries, and their intelligent use can foster progress in all aspects of the political process. Should states have a greater role and do more? This compendium outlines examples of states adopting approaches that encourage greater female participation in politics, including legislative measures.

Recommendations

Cross cutting

The political system must be seen as a whole, not just the particular part that might appear to be vital for specific interventions. Having a thorough understanding of the context is required before international organizations attempt to support any reform. Societal change can take a long time, so beginning with embedding gender equality in political parties is an important step.

¹⁴³ The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, *op. cit.*, note 4.

We need more and better data on the levels of women's political participation, particularly in overlooked aspects of the political system, such as locally elected bodies. Accurate, detailed and regular data are essential to understanding the position of women and to be able to measure progress and assess what works. This has implications for public administration procedures, changes to legal frameworks, and other measures to make data-gathering possible and sustainable. The use of temporary special measures needs to be clearly studied, taking into account the political and socio-economic context, as well as the electoral system in which they are applied. The data should include information broken down by political parties and different regional areas, as well as aspects such as ethnicity and the situation of marginalized groups.

Political parties

Political parties are central to achieving greater female participation. Women's participation in them is important to ensure their perspective is fully integrated into parties and to gain political access and experience. A number of parties have found there to be an electoral benefit in increasing the number of female members, candidates and elected representatives.

Developing a gender action plan for the political party is a comprehensive way to make progress. Good data are needed, along with gender-sensitive procedures and rules, to ensure the party recruits, supports, promotes and retains women. The party can increase opportunities for women to seek political office by ensuring that they are encouraged to develop their experience, promoting women's active participation in all party processes, and ensuring that the candidate-selection process assesses the skills and qualities of women and men candidates on an equal basis. There are many mechanisms from which parties can choose to embed gender equality throughout their structure and processes.

Political will is important in making change – generating that political will means understanding the political environment, and understanding what incentives for change exist and what temporary special measures have the best chance of being implemented.

Elections

Elections are the gateway to political representation and power. A comprehensive approach is needed, considering all the different actors and stages of an

election cycle, looking at the various ways that women can be involved, including as candidates, voters and in deciding and implementing the electoral framework and processes.

Some obstacles to full electoral participation are generally thought to disproportionately impact women. These include: difficulties with getting nominated as a candidate by a party, access to financing, and the quality and quantity of media coverage. Also, violence and a lack of secrecy of the vote can have disproportionate impacts on women.

To develop positive electoral processes that support women's *de facto* equal participation, it is necessary to have gender-disaggregated data. Civil society and interest groups broadly representative of women should be consulted in the development of policies and practices.

Temporary special measures to promote *de facto* equal gender participation can include provisions in the electoral system (often seen as game changers) and other measures, such as increased funding for female candidates. Parties can be asked to provide public information on their policies to promote women's political participation within their parties and more widely in politics and the proportion of women in senior and candidate positions. They can also be required to have a certain proportion of female candidates.

Experience has shown that, while special measures help galvanize public support and raise the participation of women, they are only temporary measures, to be used until equality is reached. A host of other gender-sensitive measures need to be put in place to ensure that, once elected, women can contribute effectively and meaningfully as MPs and local councillors.

Local Politics

Women's participation in local politics deserves greater focus. Locally elected bodies should not be seen as less worthy of participation, or less worthy of study, than national institutions. They provide a broad range of services to the public and have an enormous influence on people's day-to-day lives. For many men and women, local government is the starting point for a political career and an arena to gain experience. If more women had the opportunity to take on local political roles, it would be likely to increase the number of women confident in their desire to stand for parliament.

There needs to be wider recognition that the commitments made under CEDAW are equally relevant to locally elected bodies. Difficulties with translating this international law into actual implementation at the more local level should also be addressed. Regular, reliable and comparative data are required to highlight progress on the local level, similar to IPU data for women's parliamentary representation. Until there are clear data, it will be difficult to understand what is working and where there are problems. A starting point would be national statistics on local level participation, gathered by the state.

Locally elected bodies need to consider how they are mainstreaming gender equality issues into their organization and structure to ensure that women participate in local decision-making and have equal opportunities within local legislatures. Tackling substantive barriers affecting women's participation in local politics is necessary, by addressing stereotypes and intimidation, establishing working hours allowing balance between private and professional life, providing competitive and equal pay, investing in social benefits, care for children and elders, and supporting co-operation networks among women. Increasing the number of women candidates in political parties and introducing voluntary measures to improve the status of women and promote a gender-equality agenda in political parties is equally important.

Parliaments

Women's equal participation in parliaments is crucial to improving the representative nature, accountability and quality of democracies. Well-designed legal quotas, as well as voluntary party quotas, have made a difference in many countries, often also supported by a mixture of state policies and programmes, civil society advocacy, women's empowerment initiatives, education and media activity. However, the progress has been slow and not universal, requiring good national data and analysis of the differences among political parties in how they have applied temporary special measures and their impact on real figures.

Once women are elected, working conditions should be created for them to remain in parliament, to participate meaningfully and equally in policy dialogue and influence the parliamentary agenda. Gender-sensitive parliaments should address the difficulties of managing care responsibilities, adjust parliamentary working hours to ensure balance between private and professional life, tackle sexist behaviour, aggression and belittling of women and their contributions

in parliament. This also includes mainstreaming gender into the work done by parliament and in its procedures.

Parliaments also need to ensure that women MPs have the opportunity to develop their skills on equal terms with their male colleagues. Crucially, the efforts to introduce gender-sensitive parliaments should place the responsibility for change not only on women MPs, but also on the institutions themselves and on male MPs, as well.

Finally, an important bulwark against the difficulties of a predominantly male environment can be served by establishing and supporting women's caucuses. Such caucuses assist women to work together to achieve change, both in terms of the operation of parliaments and in terms of the development of policy platforms.

Conclusion

Twenty years after the launch of the Beijing Platform for Action we need renewed effort to achieve change. CEDAW has 189 country signatories, but progress has been slow and uneven. At the same time, the range of successes should lead us to believe that greater efforts will lead to greater benefits.

Pressure from the membership of political parties, civil society organizations and the media can make a real difference to the willingness of national and regional political leaders to support policies to increase women's political participation.

Activism and solidarity among women and men are important, both to achieve change and, crucially, to maintain it. Challenging gender stereotypes and promoting women's place in the public sphere, allied with political will and an understanding of the benefits to be gained, can achieve lasting change.

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