

BAROMETER

of GENDER EQUALITY

for Political Parties in Albania

2023



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Table of Contents

List of abbreviations	4
List of figures	5
List of tables	5
List of charts	6
1. Introduction	7
2. Research methodology	9
3. Gender Perspective of Parties' Organizations and Internal Regulations	10
3.1 Legislation on Gender Equality, Statutes and Internal Rules of Political Parties	10
3.2 Structures of Political Parties for Achieving Gender Equality and the Gender Perspective of Political Parties' Organization, Internal Regulations and Statutes	14
3.2.1 SOCIALIST PARTY	15
3.2.2 DEMOKRATIC PARTY	18
3.2.3 FREEDOM PARTY	21
4. Representation of Girls and Women in Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties – Parliamentary and Local Elections 2003 – 2023	23
5. Experiences and Perceptions of Girls and Women Members of Political Parties in Albania regarding Gender Equality within Political Parties	32
5.1 Findings: Quantitative Component – Survey of Women and Girls Members of the Socialist Party, the Democratic Party, the Freedom Party	32
5.2 Findings: Qualitative Component – Focus Group and Interviews with Women and Girls Members of the Socialist Party of Albania, the Democratic Party of Albania and the Freedom Party	42
6. Conclusions	49
7. Recommendations	52
8. Bibliography	55
9. Annex	56

List of Abbreviations

PSD – Social Democratic Party of Albania	PBL – Liberal Democratic Union Party
PDR – New Democratic Party	PDS – Social Democracy Party of Albania
AD – Democratic Alliance Party	PK – Albanian Conservative Party
PASH – Albanian Future Party	LSI – Socialist Movement for Integration
PAA – Agrarian Environmentalist Party	MEGA – Greek Ethnic Minority for the Future
PBDNJ – Party for Human Rights	PKKA – National Conservative Party of Albania
PL – Freedom Party	PS – Socialist Party
PR – Republican Party	PPSH – Labor Party of Albania
PDIU – Party for Justice, Integration and Unity	PKSH – Communist Party of Albania
PD – Democratic Party	AMIE – Alliance of Macedonians for European Integration
PKD – Christian Democratic Party of Albania	AGD – Alliance of Women MPs
PDS – Social Democracy Party of Albania	AKK – National Alliance of Women Municipal Councillors
PBL – Liberal Democratic Union Party	FGSSH – Socialist Women's Forum of Albania
PLL – Legality Movement Party	OS – Socialist Organization
PBK – National Front Party	FRESSH – Youth Forum of the Socialist Party
PDK – Christian Democratic Party of Albania	FRPD – Youth Forum of the Democratic Party
PBD – Democratic Union Party	LDGSH – Women's League of the Democratic Party of Albania
PBKD – Democratic National Front Party	KGSE – Commission for Statutory Guarantees & Ethics
PESH – Albanian Emigration Party	NGO – Non Governmental Organization
PSHA – Albanian Homeland Party	WFD – Westminster Foundation for Democracy
PRDSH – Party of Albanian Democratic Reforms	OSCE – Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
BD – Democratic Conviction	NDI – National Democratic Institute
PSKSH – Social Christian Party of Albania	UN – United Nations
PASSH – Albanian Socialist Alliance Party	RSI – Robert Schuman Institute
LZHK – Movement for National Development	EDM – "Equality in Decision Making" Women's Network
PÇSH – Party of Albanian Affairs	
APPD – People's Alliance for Work and Dignity	
ASHE – Albanian European Alliance	
AP – People's Alliance	
PV – Independent Candidate	

Lista e Figurave

Figure 1 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2001 Parliamentary Elections	23
Figure 2 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2005 Parliamentary Elections	24
Figure 3 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2009 Parliamentary Elections	24
Figure 4 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2013 Parliamentary Elections	25
Figure 5 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2017 Parliamentary Elections	25
Figure 6 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2021 Parliamentary Elections	26
Figure 7 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2003 Local Elections	27
Figure 8 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2007 Local Elections	28
Figure 9 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2011 Local Elections	28
Figure 10 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2015 Local Elections	29
Figure 11 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2019 Local Elections	29
Figure 12 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties in the 2023 Local Elections	30

List of Tables

Table 1 – Political Parties' Regulations, Documents and Policies on Gender Equality	22
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List of Charts

Chart 1 – Representation of Girls & Women, candidates and elected, from different Political Parties over the years, Parliamentary Elections 2001 - 2021	26
Chart 1A – Representation of Girls & Women, candidates and elected, for Mayor from the different Political Parties over the years, Local Elections 2003 - 2023	30
Chart 2 – Representation of Girls & Women in Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, as well as elected women (in %), in the Parliamentary Elections 2001-2023	31
Chart 2A – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties running for the Mayor’s Office in the Local Elections 2003-2023	31
Chart 3 – Age of Survey Participants	32
Chart 4 – Education of Survey Participants	33
Chart 5 – Profession of Survey Participants	33
Chart 6 – Do Women and Girls Practice their Profession while Being Involved in the Party	34
Chart 7 – Main Channels of Entry in the Party for Women and Girls	34
Chart 8 – Impact of Select Indicators Inhibiting/Obstructing Women from Becoming Part of Political Parties	36
Chart 9 – Issues that Women and Girls Consider Most Challenging in Politics	36
Chart 10 – Influence of Select Difficulties for Women and Girls within the Party	37
Chart 11 – Main Tasks of the Women's Forum in the Party	39
Chart 12 – Opinions of Girls and Women on the Effectiveness of the Women's Forum in Supporting Women's Participation in their Political Party	39

1. Introduction

Equal participation in politics and the guaranteeing of equal access in political life are essential for democratic development and sustainability. In this connection, Albania has made numerous legislative efforts to promote women's participation in social and political life. The movement for gender equality in politics and decision-making, which started more than 20 years ago, reached a milestone achievement with the approval in Parliament of the Law "On Gender Equality" in 2008 – of foundational import for all movements and subsequent endeavors for gender equality in Albania. In follow up, continued improvements of legislation, such as the Electoral Code, the Law on Local Self-Government etc., have been addressed – with a view to stipulating legal provisions which effectively guarantee gender equality in politics and decision-making at all levels.

As a result of the countless efforts by human rights activists, local and international organizations and women and girls within political parties, the representation of women and girls in politics and decision-making has increased exponentially. Currently, women and girls make up 34.30% of the Albanian Parliament and 70% of the Albanian Government. As per the outcome of local elections held in 2023, women comprise 42.19% of Municipal Councils members nationwide and 8 women have been elected as Mayors out of the 61 Municipalities in Albania.¹ As it can be noted, the figures of representation feature historically high levels in domains where the legislation provides for a quota and a mechanism of strict sanctions backing its implementation. On the other hand, in the case of selection of candidates for the Mayor's Office – a domain where legislation does not provide for a quota – opportunities provided by political parties for women to run in elections are much smaller. For example, in the 2023 local elections, women comprised only 15 candidates out of the 143 total – with only 8 of them being elected to the Mayor's Office.

Ongoing efforts for the empowerment of girls and women in politics show that, notwithstanding the significant increase in representation by numbers as a result of legislative improvements and the continuous advocacy for the increase of women's role in decision-making, there still exist numerous barriers thwarting their real empowerment and equal opportunities to be part of politics. Improvements in legislation, regulations on candidate lists' quotas and other measures undertaken thus far have brought about a significant improvement in terms of representation, however genuine empowerment demands the removal of barriers which women themselves identify as main obstacles.² Some of the barriers identified by the women and girls themselves in the study's framework, comprise:

internal democracy of political parties

balanced access to political finances

balanced access to media

meritocracy and competition within parties

gender-based violence in politics

¹www.kqz.gov.al

²Edlira Cepani & Raquel H. Pena. Nationa Democratic Institute- "Gender, Money and Politics", 2017
http://www.platformagjinore.al/publikime/#EDM_publikime

The "fragile" position of elected women is a consequence of a process that has oftentimes shown a lack of interest by political parties and relevant institutions to step up efforts addressing the real empowerment of women in politics and decision-making. All these barriers create a climate which promotes gender inequality, as manifested by the low level of women's involvement in the political scene³, thereby posing the risk that endorsed policies remain solely a formal attempt to fulfill legal requirements. Indeed the situation risks creating two parallel realities – one on paper, with rights of women for equality in decision-making positions formally fulfilled, and another living reality, lacking real chances for women to compete and be equal to men within political parties.

In addition, the lack of female leaders and the lack of sustained support for women in politics not only affect the present, but also create a distorted picture for future generations with regard to their perception of political life. Researchers reason that on account of the sphere of politics being culturally perceived as largely dominated by men, the low level of political participation by women is associated with the persistence of stereotypes. This in turn affects the next generation, leading to a low level of motivation to participate in politics, especially among young girls, thus nurturing a gender gap in politics.⁴

Furthermore, a series of studies undertaken inside and outside the country show that empowerment of women within political parties, equal access to resources, increased capacities and internal democracy of parties, represent the main indicators of the real and sustainable empowerment of women and girls in politics.⁵

Women's capacities to become political representatives, to run for political offices, as well as their ability to articulate issues of interest, comprise important factors with regard to the way they see and perceive themselves as representatives and effective voice for the community and in particular for other women.⁶

Enabling the effective participation of women in political processes demands the establishment of a solid system for their support and development. This system would have to convey a clear vision of gender equality in decision-making processes, in order to encourage women's political engagement and promote their participation in politics and pursuit of a political career.

In view of the above, this study aims to investigate and bring to light the main dynamics regarding gender equality within political parties – starting from the statutes, internal regulations, policies and documents endorsed by political parties to the spaces, perceptions and concrete experiences of women within their respective parties. The research endeavors to highlight the positive steps taken by political parties that can be further developed as good practices, as also to identify the problems which create barriers preventing women and girls from availing of equal opportunities and access to all political developments. The study concludes with pertinent recommendations regarding steps that need to be taken for the removal of barriers preventing women and girls from having equal opportunities and equal access to all political developments, especially in view of the fact that these barriers comprise potential (at times hidden) causes of discrimination against women within the parties and obstacles to their political career.

³Eden B. King, Mikki Hebl, Jennifer M. George, Sharon F. Matusik (2010) Understanding Tokenism: Antecedents and Consequences of a Psychological Climate of Gender Inequity
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/247570267_Understanding_Tokenism_Antecedents_and_Consequences_of_a_Psychological_Climate_of_Gender_Inequity

⁴Sarah Glatte & Catherine E. de Vries, Gender Norms and Gender Gaps in Political Participation in Unified Germany
http://catherinedevries.eu/Glatte_DeVries_Feb2015.pdf

⁵Edlira Cepani & Raquel H. Pena, Westminster Foundation for Democracy - Women Access to Right Wing Parties, 2022
http://www.platformmagjnore.al/publikime/#EDM_publikime

Rumbidzai Kandawasvika-Nhundu, The role of political parties on womens participation and representaion
<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/the-role-of-political-parties-on-womens-participation-and-representaion-en.pdf>

⁶Asiyati Lorraine Chiweza, Women in Local Government - A Potential Arena for Women's Substantive Representation, 2016,
<https://www.cmi.no/publications/5930-women-in-local-government-potential-malawi>

2. Research Methodology

The Gender Equality Barometer for Political Parties in Albania has been carried out on the basis of a methodology consisting of several elements designed to obtain an encompassing picture, including the gender perspective present in political parties' main documents and policies (through the assessment of party statutes), as well as the experiences pertinent to women's representation in political parties in Albania (through surveys and interviews). For the present research, the 3 main political parties in Albania were selected, featuring the highest number of members and the highest number of mandates in the Albanian Parliament, viz. the Socialist Party (SP), the Democratic Party (PD) and the Freedom Party (PL) (former Socialist Movement for Integration).

The process for the compilation of the Gender Equality Barometer adhered to a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods.

The first phase carried out an evaluation of available documentation (desk review) from political parties. During this phase of the study, basic documents for the functioning of political parties (statutes, policies, supporting documents of women and girls' structures, manifestos, programs and other structures) were assessed, complemented with research on legislation specific to this field.

Quantitative indicators focused on the number of women represented in party decision-making structures and in leadership positions, the number of women candidates in the last 15 years, the number of policies and support structures for women, etc. Qualitative indicators focused on policies, the gender perspective featuring in party documents and programs, the access of women and girls to political affairs, etc.

The second phase of the search, by tacking stock of the information obtained through the "desk review", focused on the experiences of women and girls within political parties. During this phase, interviews, focus groups and a large survey were conducted, focusing on the perceptions and experiences of women and girls within political parties, as well as the practical implementation of policies, statutory provisions and political party programs.

30 individual interviews were conducted with women and girls engaged in political party life, catering to the discussion of personal experiences and perspectives, as also the gathering of various recommendations and information, including aspects of "stories untold". Interviewees were selected based on their standing within the party and offices held, including leaders of women's structures, high-level party leadership, as well as party representatives in the Parliament and Municipal Councils.

A focus group with women and girls from political parties was conducted with a view to the further investigation through the discussion in group of women's experiences and issues they face within political parties, their access to party structures and decision-making processes, as well as their access to political party finances and the formulation of policies addressing gender-based violence in political parties, etc.

In order to ensure an encompassing spectrum of information garnered by the research, an online survey was conducted with 204 women and girls who are members of political parties, with a view to further the understanding of women's experiences, the opportunities and barriers they face within the political party, the dynamics of decision-making processes and representative structures, their access to finances, etc. The sampling during this phase of the research consisted of a heterogeneous group of women party members – featuring diverse positions, ages, backgrounds, political experience, ethnicity and different abilities.

3. The Gender Perspective

of the Organization and Internal Regulations of Political Parties in Albania

3.1 Legislation on Gender Equality, Statutes and Internal Rules of Political Parties

The strengthening of the legal and institutional framework regarding gender equality, gender-based violence and domestic violence comprise long-standing priority country commitments, catering also to the concomitant harmonization of the national legal framework with the international one, based on: the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Additional Protocol, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Sustainable Development Goals, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, as well as the Gender Equality Strategy 2021-2030.

The national legal framework and the recognition and respect of equal legal rights between women and men are underscored by Article 18/27⁷ of the **Constitution of the Republic of Albania**, upholding the principles of equality and non-discrimination:

“Everyone is equal before the law and no one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic condition, education, social status, or parentage.”

The Constitution guarantees fundamental human rights and freedoms, as well as **political freedoms and rights**⁸, with Article 45/1 stipulating that every citizen who has reached the age of 18, including those doing so on the elections' day, enjoys the right to elect and be elected.

Gender equality means equal participation of women and men in all areas of life in equal standing and equal opportunities to enjoy their rights and fulfill their obligations in society, equally benefiting from development achievements.

In order to increase the participation and representation of women in politics and decision-making structures, as well as the level of fulfillment of their legal rights, continuous efforts have been made not only with a view to harmonizing the national legal framework with the international one by way of laws specific to these issues, but also the enhancement of the Albanian legislation as a whole. A number of the main pertinent laws are dealt with in detail in the following:

⁷Constitution of the Republic of Albania, 2017. Chapter I, Article 18, point 2, page 9. <https://klp.al>

⁸Constitution of the Republic of Albania, 2017. Chapter III, Article 45, point 2, page 9.

Law no. 9970 dated 24.07.2008 "On Gender Equality in Society". As per its object, this law regulates basic issues regarding gender equality in public life, the protection and equal treatment of women and men, the equality of opportunities and chances for the exercising of rights and their participation and contribution to development in all areas of life. The law stipulates special measures providing guarantees for a minimum level of participation at 30% quotient for the under-represented gender in political and decision-making positions, as well as for the protection from discrimination in the educational sector, employment, the media,⁹ etc. Specifically, Article 15 decrees the following:

Article 15



1. Equal gender representation in all bodies of legislative, executive and judicial powers and in other public institutions, is attained when:

a) the representation at a level of at least 30% is ensured for each gender, including in pertinent governing bodies;

b) the selfsame compliance with procedures and criteria for competition and appointment in these bodies are guaranteed for each gender;

c) the inclusion of at least 30% of each gender in the candidate lists for elections to local representative bodies is ensured;

ç) the inclusion of at least 30% of each gender in the candidate lists submitted by political parties for the proportional system of elections for the Parliament of the Republic of Albania is guaranteed;

d) the inclusion of at least 30% of each gender in the administrative bodies of the central and local election processes is ensured.

Pursuant to Law no. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 "**On Gender Equality in Society**", the **Council of Ministers Decision no. 400**, dated 30.06.2021, approved the "**National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030**", and "**Action Plan**", defining the roadmap towards a society where all individuals, regardless of age and gender, enjoy equal opportunities to develop their potentials; tequally participate in political and public decision-making; to elect and be elected; to pursue life-long education and training; to be employed and hired in pursuit of advancement in new professions, rising above gender stereotypes and the gender division of labor; to influence the country's socio-economic development and to avail of support to develop socially and economically; to create healthy families, where parents share responsibilities equally and where communication is the key to solving problems; to live free from violence and harmful practices; and a society where vulnerable groups are prioritized and support is dedicated to their empowerment and access to equal rights and opportunities in all areas of life – a society where equality is not confused with uniformity and where no one is left behind.

⁹Law no. 9970, dated 24.07.2008, "On Gender Equality in Society", Part III, Article 15, page 6. <https://www.mod.gov.al>

At the local level, **Law no. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government"** foresees a series of obligations guaranteeing gender equality, both in representation and in benefiting from services. The obligation to guarantee gender equality in decision-making structures encompasses the appointment to offices ranging from deputy mayor/mayor and administrators of administrative units up to the governing boards of various local institutions that must implement and respect gender equality.

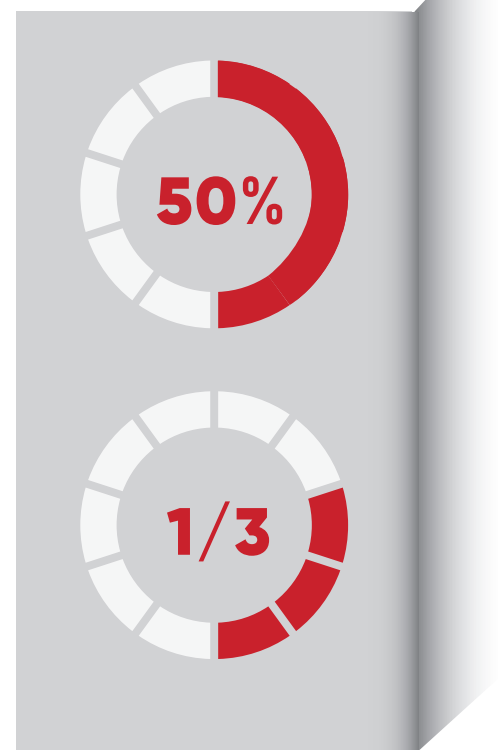
In addition, provisos foresee the mandatory collection of gender statistics by all state bodies, as well as the establishment of institutional structures and mechanisms for the advancement of gender equality. The complementing of the framework for the implementation of this law with sub-legal acts, among others with **Council of Ministers Decision no. 465** dated 16.07.2012 "On gender integration in the medium-term budget program", opened up the way not only to the planning of measurable gender objectives in budget programs of central institutions, but also to the undertaking of all further steps towards the general gender budgeting (GGB) in Albania.

Law no. 10019, dated 29.12.2008, "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", as amended, provides for the first time the obligation of electoral subjects to respect gender equality. This Code provides various provisions for the implementation of gender quotas, such as in the electoral administration, the second-level commissions and the composition of the Assembly as the elected legislative body.

The Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania established the obligation that multi-name lists of candidates for election to the Assembly guarantee that each gender is represented at no less than 30% rate. This guarantee foresees the inclusion of the gender quota criterion in the candidate multi-name lists submitted by political parties for elections to the Assembly and for each electoral district, stipulating that at least thirty percent of the list and/or one among the first three names enlisted must belong to either gender.

Amendments to this Code adopted in 2015 determined a quota of 50% men and 50% women in lists of candidates running for councilors' office in local elections, based on the "one-in-two mechanism", i.e. the alternation of enlistment between both sexes, in order to guarantee the effective attainment of the 50% quota.

With the 2020 amendments adopted through Law no. 101/2020 "On some additions and changes to Law no. 10019, dated 29.12.2008 "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", provisions on electoral freedom and gender equality¹⁰ were clarified and the "1-in-3 enlistment mechanism" was established for parliamentary elections, i.e. the obligation that one in every three candidates be from the under-represented gender. These changes sanctioned the removal of the financial fine¹¹ as the penalty foreseen for non-compliance with the gender quota and relevant mechanisms, as well as stipulated the prerogative of the Central Election Commission to reject submitted candidate lists in case of violations of the relevant provisos.



¹⁰Law no. 10019, dated 29.12.2008, "Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania", amended, Part I, Chapter I, Article 4, page 4, amended by Law no. 101/2020, dated 23.07.2020 <https://qbz.gov.al>

¹¹<https://shqiptarja.com/lajm/kqz-gjobe-ps-pd-e-lsi-nuk-br-kane-plotesuar-kuotat-gjinore>

The direct and active participation in public and political life of the underrepresented gender is a fundamental instrument for the consolidation of the democratic system. No provision of this law can be applied or interpreted in contradiction to or in violation of this principle.

Kodi



The Electoral Code also promotes gender equality in elected bodies and the electoral administration by:

- a) establishing gender quotas for the underrepresented gender at the level of at least 30% share of the Assembly of Albania and bodies of local government units;
- b) establishing gender quotas for the underrepresented gender at the level of at least 30% share of the composition of all levels of administration.

Law no. 10221/2010 "On Protection from Discrimination"¹² regulates the implementation and respect of the principle of equality in relation to gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, etc., aiming at ensuring the right of every person to enjoy: a) equality before the law and equal protection by the law; b) equality of chances and opportunities to exercise rights, enjoy freedoms and participate in public life; c) effective protection from discrimination and from any form of behavior that promotes discrimination.

With regard to the fight against gender-based violence and protection from violence, the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania and **Law no. 9669/2006 "On measures against violence in family relations"**¹³ which aims at preventing and reducing domestic violence and gender-based violence in all its forms, have significantly improved in recent years, although there persists a significant need for improvement of referral and prevention mechanisms in this sector.

With reference to the promotion and achievement of gender equality, other instruments that have been established within the framework of inter-party cooperation in elected bodies of central and local government, including:

Alliance of Women MPs

The Alliance of Women MPs (AGD) is the result of a movement launched by women MPs, aiming at the promotion of gender equality in parliament and advocating for the inclusion of the gender perspective in legislation.

Alliance of Women Councillors

The National Alliance of Women Municipal Councillors (AKK) & the 61 Alliances of Women Municipal Councillors in the country's 61 municipalities also aim at the implementation of protective and inclusive policies for women and the achievement of gender equality at the local level.

¹²Law no. 10221/2010 <https://kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1308053956-Ligji-per-mbrojtjen-nga-diskriminimi.pdf>

¹³Law no. 9699/2006 <http://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/ligj%20nr.%2047,%20dt.%2023.7.2018.pdf>

3.2 Political Party Structures for Achieving Gender Equality & The Gender Perspective of the Organization and Internal Regulations of Political Parties in Albania – Overview of Political Party Statutes

Political parties in Albania base their activity on **Law 8580, dated 17.2.2014**¹⁴. Accordingly, political parties are defined as "voluntary associations of citizens on the basis of ideas, convictions and views or common political interests, which aim to influence the life of the country through participation in elections and the representation of people in elected bodies".

Furthermore, the law requires that the creation of political parties be based on the evaluation of the program, statute or regulations of the party (Article 8), which amongst others specify the name, headquarters, goals, tasks, sources of financing, as well as of "the leading bodies and the instituting of the party" (Article 9, point c). So then the organization and internal functioning of political parties is a process.

The organization of political parties is premised on democratic principles, statutes and main internal documents. Statutes continue to be of outstanding importance for political parties, however their comprehension and respect continue to persist as challenges.

Internal discipline, freedom of thought, collegiality, personal initiative and self action, transparency of decision-making at all levels, competition of values and the system of meritocracy, the degree of centralization/decentralization in decision-making, independence from unwarranted influences and accountability vis-à-vis their membership base and the general population, the existence and implementation of complaints procedures, etc., represent some of the main principles for political parties' operation and existence.

Political parties play a decisive role in increasing the participation of women in politics and consequently in promoting democratic values. The involvement of women in politics and decision-making, as well as their placement in leadership positions, largely depends on political parties. Women in decision-making positions represent important actors in the process of creating better policies with a direct bearing on the lives of women and girls in particular, as also social life at large. Commitment to more equal representation in institutions has a direct impact on the reduction of injustices and increasing social cohesion.

Therefore in order to obtain a complete picture of the gender perspective of political party structures, by way of assessing their main documents and the experiences regarding the representation of women in politics and party structures, the study focuses on the three main political parties in Albania, which feature the highest number of members and the highest number of mandates in the Albanian parliament, viz. SP, DP and PL.

¹⁴https://kqz.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Ligji-per-partite-politike-2020_1.pdf

3.2.1 SOCIALIST PARTY ¹⁵

As a constitutional subject, the Socialist Party functions according to the organic law on political parties. The SP is the largest left-wing party in the Albanian political spectrum and the party with the largest membership.

According to its statute, the **Socialist Party (SP)** is a political party founded upon the principles of freedom, social justice, equal opportunities and human solidarity; basic human freedoms and rights as the rights of all citizens; political pluralism and free and fair elections; the responsibility for the promotion of equal opportunities for women, girls and youth and the special protection of these societal groups, as well as of children and the elderly; respect for the Constitution, international acts and the laws of the Republic of Albania; strengthening of the rule of law, respect for the principle of separation and balancing of powers, guaranteeing responsible governance seen as a contract among free citizens, as also decentralization for balancing the efficiency of the central government.

The statute represents SP's foundational act which includes the principles and norms according to which the party is built and functions. It foresees and regulates the organization of the party at the local and central levels. Whereas the largest share of procedural rules, criteria and processes that regulate relations and elections at all levels in the party is regulated by a special act, designated as the Book of Rules, compliant with the Statute.

Party bodies and leadership are elected through a fair and transparent election process, in accordance with the Party Statute, the Book of Rules, as well as the instructions of the relevant decision-making bodies¹⁶.

Article 8/6 of the Statute provides:

The basic documents of the Socialist Party are: 1. the Program, 2. the Statute, and 3. the Book of Rules, which represents the document comprising the ideas, principles, strategy and political vision of the party¹⁷ (Article 11). The program is implemented through the political activity and the governing programs at the central and local levels.

Article 3, point 4, specifies that SP guarantees equal chances for the representation of women and men¹⁸.

An innovation introduced by the recent amendments to the SP statute in 2022 relates to the provision of the "SP Supporter" card for supporters of the Socialist Party. The supporter card is conferred by the Party Chair, following the request submitted by the interested party and the recommendation for membership issued by OS, FRESH and FGS¹⁹. This innovation increases the opportunities for engagement even for women and girls who are not party members, who can thus provide their contribution as supporters in different ways.

¹⁵Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022

¹⁶Statute of the Socialist Party, Part I, Chapter I, Article 8, point 6, page 9

¹⁷Statute of the Socialist Party, Chapter II, Article 11, page 10

¹⁸Statute of the Socialist Party, Chapter I, Article 3, page 8

¹⁹Statute of the Socialist Party, Part II, Chapter 3, Article 20, point 2, Page 14.

Furthermore, another amendment to the SP statute, representing a novel approach and an indicator of positive development with regard to gender equality in party structures, underscores that every Socialist Organization (SO) must be directed by two co-chairs, one for each gender²⁰, respectively (**Article 23, point 7**), i.e. each OS must be headed by a male chairperson and a female chairperson, who are designated as **co-chairs**. The implementation of this principle is also foreseen for all other levels of the SP structures.



Article 23 of the Statute deals with the formation of the basic organizational and electoral unit, namely the Socialist Organization (OS). This article determines that OS should be established in keeping with the principle of participation and leadership at a level of no less than 30% share for each gender (point 3, letter b)²¹;

Article 23/7. The activity of the Socialist Organization is directed by two co-chairs, one for each gender respectively, and the secretary/secretaries. Party members elect the secretary²².

Article 23/8. The FRESH youth group and the FGS²³ are established and operate in every Socialist Organization.

Article 33/2. Delegates are elected through voting by the party membership, according to the principle "one-member one-vote" and based on the representation quotient approved by the National Assembly for each administrative unit. The list of candidates running for election and the list of those elected as delegates must ensure an equal representation at 50% for each gender. Each list comprises a 10% share of young men and women up to 30 years old"²⁴.

Article 34/point 4, letter b. The Congress elects through a secret ballot from among the candidates running for office as members of the National Assembly. Voting for co-candidates for membership in the National Assembly is based on a separate list. Co-candidacies make up no less than 50 percent of the list for membership in the National Assembly. The Congress elects KGSE – the Commission of Statutory Guarantees and Ethics.²⁵

Article 37, point 3, paragraph 4, provides that: The list of candidates running for elections and the list of elected members to the National Assembly must ensure a representation of no less than 40% for each gender. Voting for each gender is to be based on a separate list. Whereas, 10% share of the membership is provided by the FRESSh membership.²⁶



With reference to the principles for election of party representatives in governance bodies, in addition to the criteria and procedures, Article 45 / point c of the Statute stipulates that: **in the selection of candidates, the principle of equality between men and women must be applied.**²⁷

²⁰Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 5, Article 23, point 7, page 15

²¹Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 5, Article 23, point 3, page 15

²²Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 5, Article 23, point 7, page 15

²³Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 5, Article 23, point 8, page 16

²⁴Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 6, article 33, point 2, page 19

²⁵Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 6, article 34, point 4, page 20

²⁶Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 6, Article 37, point 3, page 22

²⁷Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part IV, Chapter 7, Article 45, letter c, page 28

Article 64 - Socialist Women's Forum of Albania (FGSSh)²⁸

Article 64



- 1. The Socialist Women's Forum of Albania is a political organization that unites girls and women members and supporters of the party, aiming at the encouragement and increase of access and contribution by women and girls to the party.*
- 2. The program and activity of FGSSh converge with the Program, Statute and activity of the party.*
- 3. FGSSh establishes its own structures at the local and central level. FGSSh leaders must be party members and enter directly into the composition of governing bodies in the relevant party leading structures.*
- 4. The SP establishes/collaborates with women's groups or structures established on the basis of shared interests, profession or social and political initiatives.*
- 5. The main principles, general organizational and procedural rules, the operation and composition of the FGSSh governing bodies are determined by the statute.*

Article 47- Code of Ethics²⁹

The Socialist Party also has a Code of Ethics, which summarizes the criteria for ethical relations and communication within the party's structures and communication with voters, the standards of moral and ethical integrity, which must be met by every candidate during the exercise of his/her mandate as a representative of the Socialist Party in central and local bodies. Definitions of the Code are generic and there are no specific provisions related to gender. With a view to the articles of the statute cited in the above, it is noted that the SP has provide space and given importance to the representation of women in party structure and decision-making structures in the local and central government. Whilst this represents a positive indicator, the second part of this study investigates whether achievements remain largely at the formal level or else more favorable conditions have been effectively established for the implementation of the principles of equal access and gender equality within the party.

With reference to the SP statute, it can also be noted that the party has a permanent organization, with the Socialist Organization constituting the basic unit led by two co-chairs, viz. one from each gender. With reference to the delegates to Congress, the list of elected delegates must ensure a level of 50% representation for each gender. As for the National Assembly, the list of candidates and the list of elected members must ensure at least a 40% share of representation for each gender.

²⁸Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part VI, Chapter 12, Article 64, page 35

²⁹Statute of the Socialist Party 09.04.2022, Part III, Chapter 5, Article 23, point 7, page 15.

3.2.2 DEMOKRATIC PARTY

Explanatory Note: This section examines two statutes, in view of the fact that the Democratic Party, as of 2021, split into two parts; the latter are at present parties to a judicial process that is to settle contending claims and determine which of them (and therefore which statute) is to be officially recognized as the Democratic Party.

1. The Statute of the Democratic Party³⁰ refers to the following:

The Democratic Party (PD) is a political party whose political goals and foundational values are detailed and reflected in its program, as well as in other documents approved in accordance with the party's Statute.

The DP statute defines the founding political principles and values, the special criteria for all political functions within the party or political representation in central or local bodies, whereas the rules that guarantee a democratic process are defined in the sub-statutory acts.

The functioning of the DP is anchored in the principle of equality of opportunities with regard to the participation and representation of women and men, aiming at and promoting the participation and representation of women at not less than 30% rate of the total number of members at every body or level representation³¹.

Article 34, letter ë, provides that the representation of those elected by the LDG organization (Women's Democratic Union) to the DP Branch Assembly, which represents the party's highest decision-making body, is up to the level of 5% share of the total number of all members³².

Article 35, letter e, determines that the Local Chairwoman of the LDG is elected to the Party Branch Presidency³³.

Article 43, letter ë, determines that a limited number of representatives from partner organizations are elected to the National Assembly of the Democratic Party in equal numbers, with LGD and FRPD (Youth Forum of the Democratic Party) representing no more than 5% of the other members elected to the Assembly³⁴.

Article 44, point 3 also determines that members from the under-represented gender who are elected to the National Council should comprise no less than 30% of the total number of members. If quotas are not fulfilled by the ranking ensuing after voting, then their ranking is to be set separately from the general one³⁵.

Article 45, point 2, letter e determines that members from the under-represented gender elected to the Presidency of the Democratic Party should comprise no less than 30% share of the total³⁶.

³⁰Statute of the Democratic Party 18.12.2021 <https://pd.al> – lead by Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj

³¹Statute of the Democratic Party Head II, Article 9, point 5

³²Statute of the Democratic Party Head III, Article 34, letter e

³³Statute of the Democratic Party Head III, Article 35, letter e

³⁴Statute of the Democratic Party Chapter V, Article 43, letter e

³⁵Statute of the Democratic Party Chapter V, Article 44, point 3

³⁶Statute of the Democratic Party Chapter V, Article 45, point 2, letter e.

Article 58 - Partner organizations

The composition of the PD's includes partner organizations, such as³⁷:

- a) the Youth Forum (FRPD), Article 58/a
- b) the Women's Democratic League (LDG), Article 58/b

The foundational principles of the LDG structure are similar to those of PD. The Presidency of the Party endorses the Statute of partner organizations and its follow-up implementation (Article 58, point 3-4).

PD supports the political activity of partner organizations and guarantees the representation of partner organizations at all levels of political representation, with LDG's representation compliant with the minimum standard provided for by the law. (Article 58, point 3).

2. Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania 11.12.2021³⁸

The Democratic Party of Albania (PDSH) is a political organization of citizens coming together by their free will, engaged in its structures, organized at the national and local levels.

DPSH's functioning is based on values such as internal democracy, freedom of expression, collegiality, etc., as well as equality of chances with reference to the participation and representation of women and men, aiming at and encouraging the participation and representation of women at no less than 30% share of the total number of members in every body or level of representation³⁹ according to **Article 9, point 7.**

PDSH aims at promoting the respect for gender equality in party life and the participation of women in elected and executive bodies, in keeping with **Article 3, point 4, letter (e)**⁴⁰.

In addition, **Article 31, letter (g)** determines that: representatives by partner organizations, LDG and FRDSH, elected to the Branch Assembly, ought to comprise up to 10% of the total number of all members elected to the Branch Assembly⁴¹.

Article 32, letter (a) specifies that: the Local Chairs of LDG and FRDSH are members of the Branch Presidency enjoying full rights⁴².

Article 32, letter (c) stipulates that: the number of women elected to the Presidency should not be less than 30% of the total. In case this criterion is not met in the ranking resulting from the voting, then their ranking is set apart from the general one, until the required quotient is met⁴³.

³⁷Statute of the Democratic Party, Chapter VII, Article 58

³⁸Statute of the Democratic Party <https://pdsh.al> – lead by Z. Sali Berisha

³⁹Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania 11.12.2021 <https://pdsh.al>

⁴⁰Statute of the Democratic Party, Chapter I, Article 3, point 4, letter e, page 3

⁴¹Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter I, Article 9, Item 7, Page 5

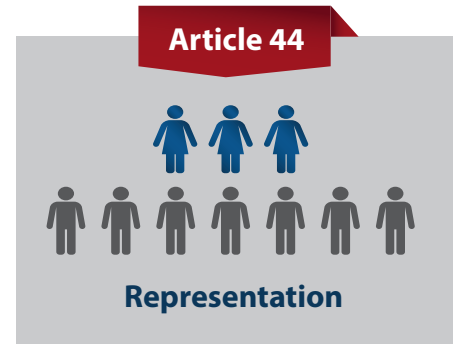
⁴²Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter III, Article 32, letter a, page 16

⁴³Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter III, Article 32, letter c, page 16.

Article 42, letter (dh) defines that: representatives of partner organizations, each to be represented in equal numbers, should comprise no more than 10% of the number of other members elected to the National Assembly.⁴⁴

Article 44, point 3 determines that: the number of members elected to the National Council from the under-represented gender must be no less than 30% share of the total. In cases where this criterion is not met in the ranking resulting from the voting, then their ranking is set apart from the general one, until the required quotient is met.⁴⁵

Article 47, letter (e) stipulates that: the under-represented gender should comprise no less than 30% of members elected to the Party Presidency.⁴⁶



Article 58

PD is also composed of partner organizations such as:

- (a) the Youth Forum of the Democratic Party, article 58/a
- (b) the Women's Democratic League (LDG), Article 58/b
- (c) the "December '90 Grouping".

The foundational principles of their structure are similar to those of PDSH. The approval of the Statute of the partner organizations and the continued follow-up implementation are carried out by the Presidency of the Party. The latter endorses the statute of partner organizations and its follow-up implementation. DPSH supports the political activity of partner organizations across the country and guarantees their representation at all levels of political representation, with LGD's representation abiding to the the minimum standard provided for by the law (Article 58, point 2/3).

In summary, the DP Statute sets a 30% quota for the representation of women in the Steering Committee and the National Council of the Party. Furthermore, the women's forum (the LDG) is tasked with the representation of its members' interests in all party structures. The DP statute underscores that the functioning of the women's forum aims at encouraging women's participation in policy-making and the party's decision-making structures, as well as their engagement in political functions, albeit there are no provisions regarding the forum's financing and functioning. Article 55 of the DP Statute regarding party finances does not provide specifications regarding the financing of LDG.

⁴⁴Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter IV, Article 42, letter dh, page 21

⁴⁵Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter IV, Article 44, point 3, page 23

⁴⁶Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter IV, Article 47, letter e, page 25

⁴⁷Statute of the Democratic Party of Albania, Chapter VII, Article 58, page 30.

3.2.3 FREEDOM PARTY

The Statute stipulates that the Freedom Party (PL) is a political party espousing a social-democratic ideology, with an electoral character and a vertical organization from the base to the center, which exercises its activity throughout the country's territory and is organized at two levels, the local and the central. PL is founded upon the principles of internal party democracy, freedom of expression and belief, and the right to elect and be elected in keeping with the "one-member one-vote" principle. The basic documents of the Freedom Party comprise the PL Program and Statute.⁴⁸

Chapter XVII of the Statute (Partner Organizations) in Article 17.2 2 stipulates that: *Members of the Youth Movement for Integration (LRI) and the Women's Movement for Integration (LGI) are automatically bestowed PL membership, provided that they meet the criteria established in the statute.*⁴⁹

Whereas, the Statute's Article 17.3 determines that: *the Women's Movement for Integration is represented by a separate list of nominations for elections to PL forums, at all levels, in keeping with the principle of gender equality. Compliance with the gender equality principle is obligatory for all PL forums.*

Article 17.5 states that: Involvement in PL forums at the level of established quotas does not prevent the candidacy and election of representatives from these two organizations - young men, girls and women - beyond the determined quotas.

Article 17.6 determines that: The PL budget foresees separate budget voices for the Women's Movement for Integration and for the Youth Movement for Integration.

In summary, the PL statute features a provision providing that the Women's Movement for Integration be represented at all levels at no less than 50% rate (Article 17). In addition, the stipulation of the LGI budget line represents a commendable example, though there are no specifications regarding funding sources and operating terms for this budget line.

⁴⁸Freedom Party Statute, Chapter V, point 5.1, <https://partiaelirise.al/sta/>

⁴⁹Freedom Party Statute, Chapter XVII, point 17.2/3/5/6

In view of the above, referring to the Statutes of each political subject, it is noted that:

- The inclusion of the gender perspective in key party documents has significantly improved, serving the aim of bestowing an integral dimension to the design of policies and programs and creating equal conditions and opportunities.

- Statutes of the parties under review have been drawn up in compliance with the Constitution, the Electoral Code and laws with a gender focus; however, the level of knowledge on and implementation of statutory provisions continues to pose challenges, lest that they do not remain merely consigned on paper and superficial.

These provisions must be recognized and implemented by all party members – not only in view of benefits accruing to women and girls in the party, but also so that gender equality and the gender perspective are effectively integrated in the design of enhanced public and social policies, as well as in the creation of programs and implementation of projects. This is of crucial importance as the increase of the number of women determines gender responsibility in decision-making, as well as the nurturing of a fairer and more sustainable society.

- In summary, the assessment of various party documents and regulations shows that whilst the main documents enshrine values, principles and general provisions on gender equality, in a number of cases there is a lack of specific documents or policies addressing particular issues such as gender-based violence in politics, access to finance, etc.

	PS	PD	PL
Values and principles of gender equality cited in the statute or in other documents.	✓	✓	✓
Special measures (quotas or reserved seats) to ensure a balanced representation of women and men in the Presidency, Executive Commissions, Committees and Commissions within the party, etc.	✓	✓	✓
Commission for gender equality within the party.	✗	✓	✗
Gender equality program of the political party.	✗	✓	✗
Protocol for the prevention of and intervention against harassment and sexual violence within the political party.	✗	✓	✗
Special measures or programs and policies for the recruitment of young women and girls by the political party.	✓	✗	✗
Measures or programs undertaken for the sustainable support of women and girl candidates within the party.	✗	✗	✗
Special financial resources allocated to the women's forum and structures within the political party.	✗	✗	✓
Special financial resources allocated to women Candidates in elections.	✗	✗	✗

Table 1 – Political parties' regulations, documents and policies on gender equality

Despite all the statutory changes and improvements, there is room for improvement and work to be carried out with regard to functional democracy, equal access to resources and finance, etc., as the study brings to the fore and address through the recommendations presented in the following.

4. Representation of Girls and Women

in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties
- Parliamentary & Local Elections 2001 - 2023

The overview in the above, regarding statutory provisions on gender equality, presents a formally positive situation with reference to changes with a bearing on gender equality within political parties. These improvements to the legislation and basic documents of political parties represent ways for guaranteeing success in the political race and can have positive effects on political thought at large. However, in order to gain an understanding on the real trends of nominations and representation of women and girls in candidate lists for Parliamentary Elections and Local Elections during 2003 - 2023, data published on the Central Election Commission website have been summarized in terms of women and men candidates from different political parties.⁵⁰

Data show that, over the years, the Socialist Party of Albania has had a more pronounced tendency to place more girls and women in the candidate lists, followed by the Freedom Party and then the Democratic Party. The placement of women on candidate lists has also resulted in more women being elected at both the central and local levels.

Parliamentary Elections 2001 - 2021

2001

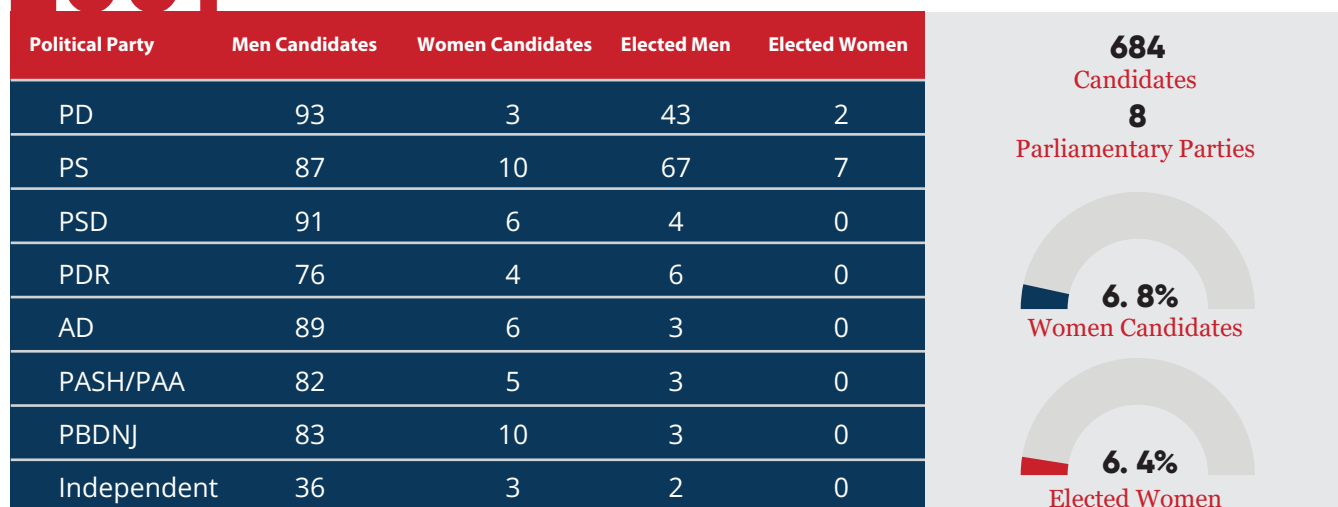


Figure 1 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2001

⁵⁰<https://kqz.gov.al/>

2005

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	94	4	53	3
PS	90	8	38	4
LSI	92	8	5	0
PR	94	4	10	1
PSD	89	18	5	2
PDR	91	8	4	0
PAA	90	6	4	0
AD	83	7	3	0
PBDNJ	82	2	2	0
PDK	41	4	2	0
PDSSH	95	5	2	0
BLD	88	12	1	0
Independent	9	2	1	0

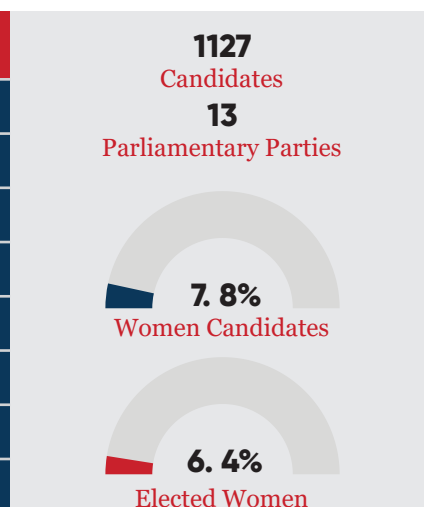


Figure 2 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2005

2009

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	105	39	59	10
PS	109	34	52	13
LSI	98	42	4	0
PR	104	37	1	0
PBDNJ	60	41	1	0

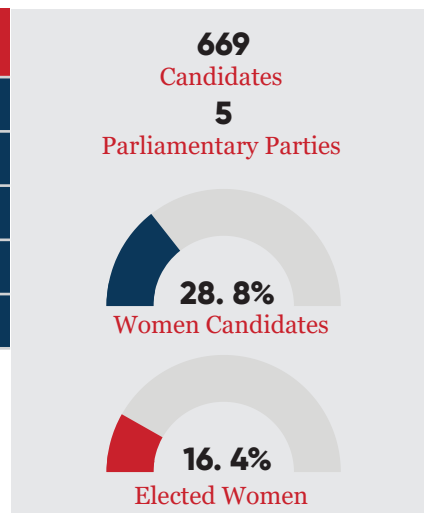


Figure 3 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2009

As the survey shows and the fieldwork conducted with political parties confirms, women and girls who are actively engaged in various political party structures have an above-average level of education. This in turn reveals that there exists invaluable potential that can be better exploited by women in political parties, particularly in view of expertise offered in the framework of policy making in various fields.

2013

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	106	44	47	10
PS	115	38	50	15
LSI	92	48	13	3
PDIU	86	51	4	0
PR	171	81	3	0
PKD	90	42	1	0
PBDNJ	76	43	1	0

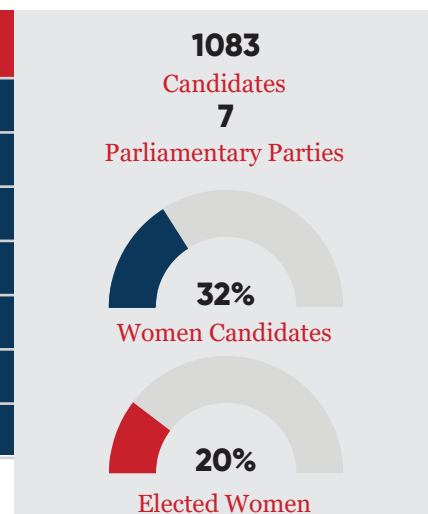


Figure 4 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2013

2017

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	153	41	32	11
PS	104	52	53	21
LSI	87	59	15	4
PDIU	81	63	2	1
PKD	89	54	1	0

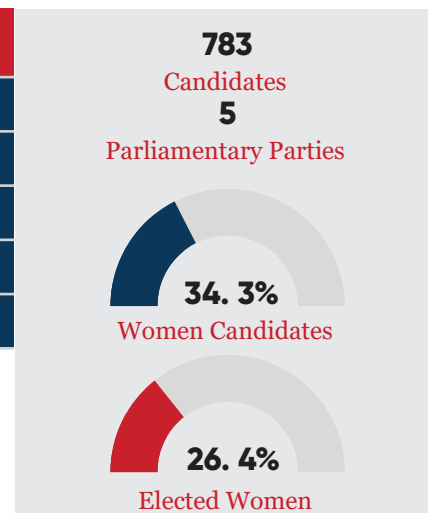


Figure 5 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2017

2021

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD / AN	102	51	42	18
PS	94	59	46	28
LSI	92	61	2	2
PSD	90	63	2	1

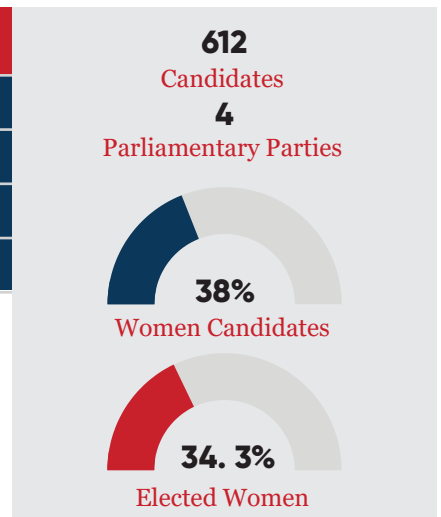


Figure 6 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Parliamentary Elections 2021

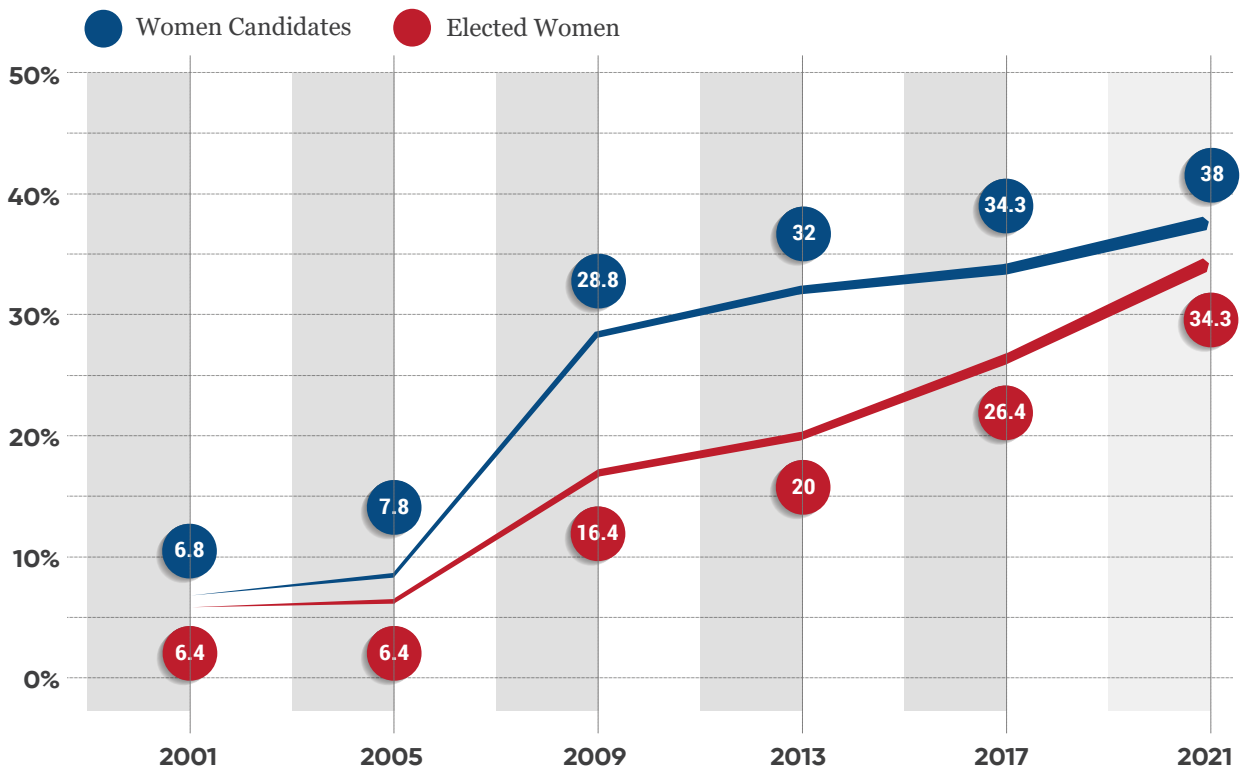
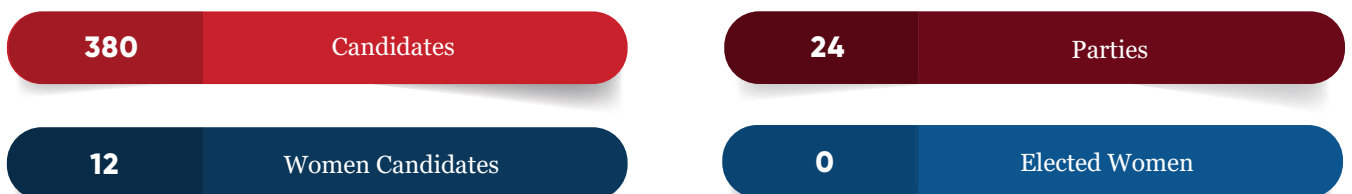


Chart 1 – Representation of Girls & Women, candidates and elected, from different political parties over the years, Parliamentary Elections 2001 - 2021 (% based on the total number of candidates and elected members)

2003

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD+PR+PBL	60	0	23	0
PS	59	1	33	0
PBDNJ	22	3	2	0
PDS	44	1	1	0
PLL	3	2	0	0
PSD	32	2	0	0
PDR	31	2	0	0
Independent	19	1	0	0
PBK	16	0	0	0
PDK	12	0	0	0
PKSH	10	0	0	0
PSH	9	0	0	0
PBD	3	0	0	0
PBKD	3	0	0	0
PESH	2	0	0	0
PAP	2	0	0	0
Pkons	2	0	0	0
PSHA	1	0	0	0
PRDSH	1	0	0	0
PKDSH	1	0	0	0
PMP	1	0	0	0
PSKSH	1	0	0	0
PASSH	1	0	0	0
PBKDSH	1	0	0	0

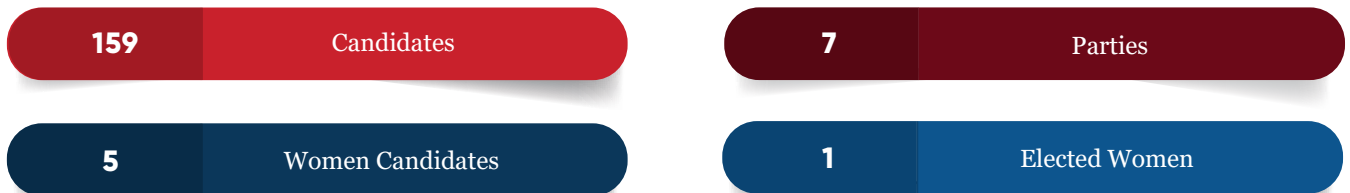
Figure 7 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2003



2007

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	42	0	23	0
PS, LSI, PSD, PDS, AD	51	4	25	1
PD, PR	9	0	5	0
PD, PAA	3	0	1	0
PKSH	16	0	0	0
PBDNJ	11	0	3	0
Independent	27	1	0	0

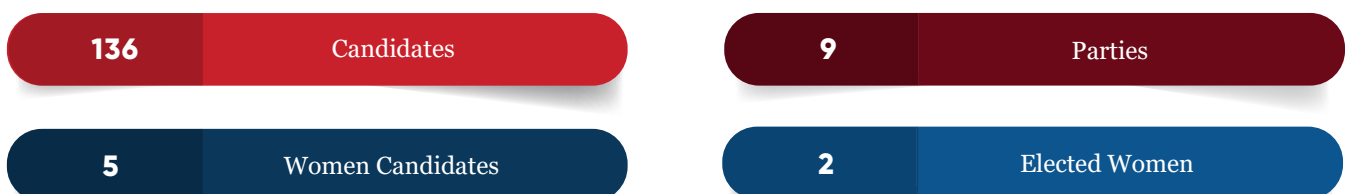
Figure 8 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2007



2011

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD	49	2	28	0
PS	63	2	32	2
LSI	11	0	2	0
PR	2	0	1	0
PBDNJ	1	0	0	0
LZHK	1	0	0	0
PKSH	1	0	0	0
PÇSH	1	0	0	0
Independent	2	1	0	0

Figure 9 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2011



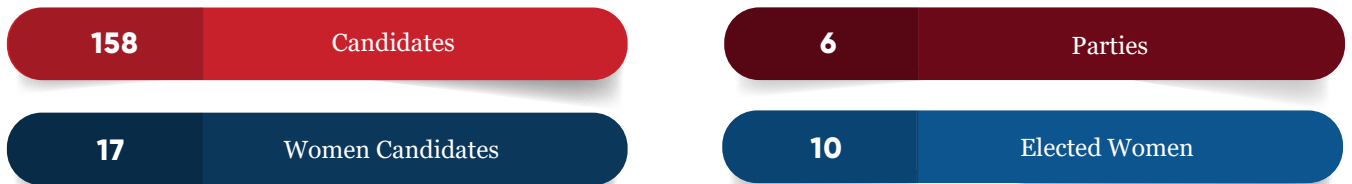
2015

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
APPD*	59	3	13	2
ASHE*	45	13	38	8
PBDNJ	5	0	0	0
PFM	2	0	0	0
AP	3	0	0	0
Independent	13	1	0	0

*APPD (PD, PR, PAA, PLZHK, PBKD, PKSH, PPKD, PBD, PDRE & PLDSH)

*ASHE (PS, LSI, FRP, PSV91, PADSH & PUK)

Figure 10 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2015



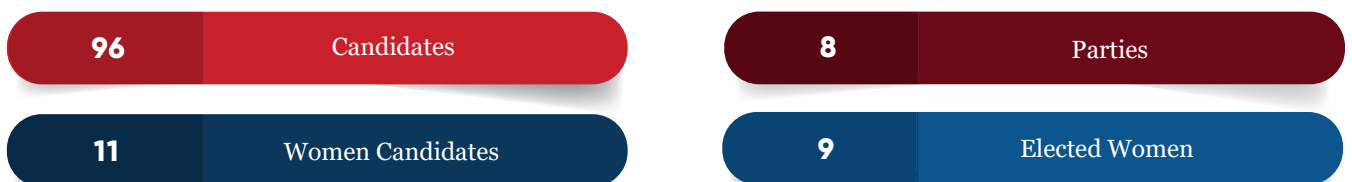
2019

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
PD*	0	0	0	1
PS	53	8	52	8
BD	17	3	0	0
PKSH	2	0	0	0
MEGA	1	0	1	0
SHN	4	0	0	0
PKKA	1	0	0	0
AMIE	1	0	0	0
Independent	6	0	0	0

*The Democratic Party did not participate in the 2019 Local Elections.

In the Municipality of Shkodra, the incumbent, Mrs. Voltana Ademi, continued to hold the Office of Mayor.

Figure 11 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2019



2023

Political Party	Men Candidates	Women Candidates	Elected Men	Elected Women
BF	58	3	7	0
PS	52	8	45	8
PD	11	3	0	0
PDIU	0	1	0	0
The LEFT FRONT	1	0	0	0
TOGETHER MOVEMENT	1	0	0	0
MEGA	1	0	1	0
PEISH	1	0	0	0
The NEW MOVEMENT	1	0	0	0
Independent	2	0	0	0

Figure 12 – Representation of Girls & Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, Local Elections 2023

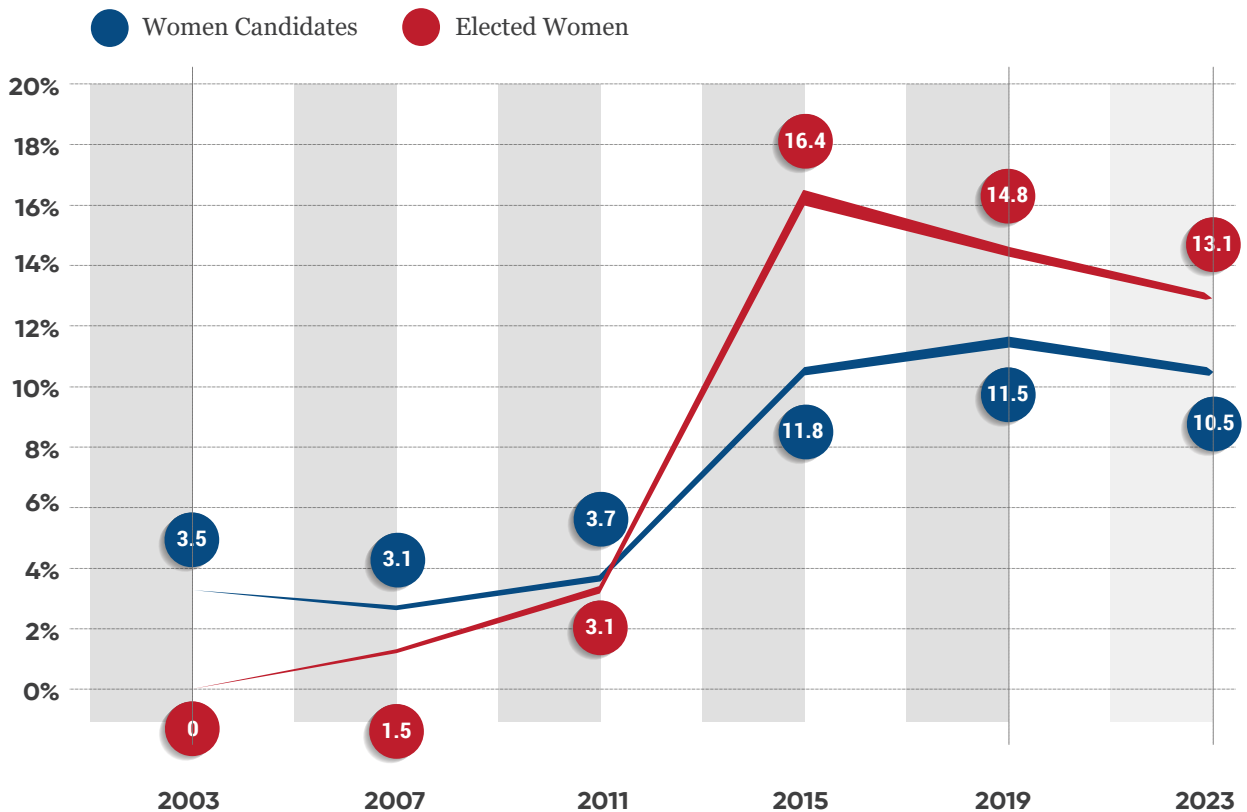
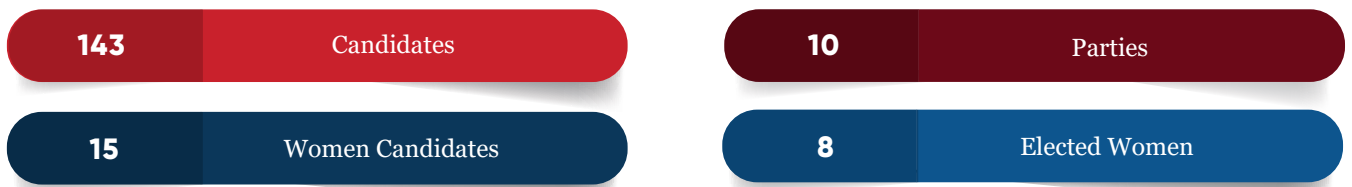


Chart 1A – Representation of Girls & Women, candidates and elected, for Mayor from different Political Parties over the years, Local Elections 2003 - 2023 (% based on the total number of candidates and elected Mayors)

The following chart, composed of the percentage of girls and women candidates and the percentage of elected women, clearly reveals that when women and girls are given the opportunity to run as candidates in majoritarian processes (or open lists), a high percentage is elected to office. This in turn demonstrates that the lack of women in elected positions is not a result of women candidates' failure to win pertinent electoral competitions, but rather the fact that women are not endorsed as candidates by the political parties.

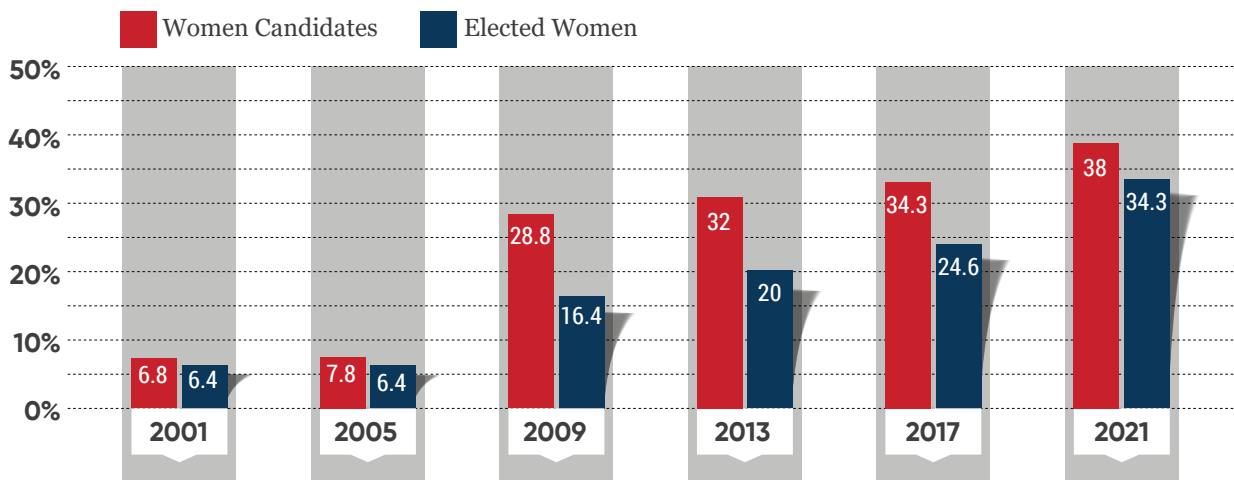


Chart 2 – representation of Girls and Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties, as well as elected women (in %), in the Parliamentary Election 2001-2021

On the other hand, it is noticed that especially in the case of elections for local government, a high percentage of girls and women running as candidates for the Mayor's office have won the elections, which means they garner the majority of votes from their respective communities – thereby countering the myth that women and girls have less chances to be voted in elections premised on a majoritarian model or open candidate lists.

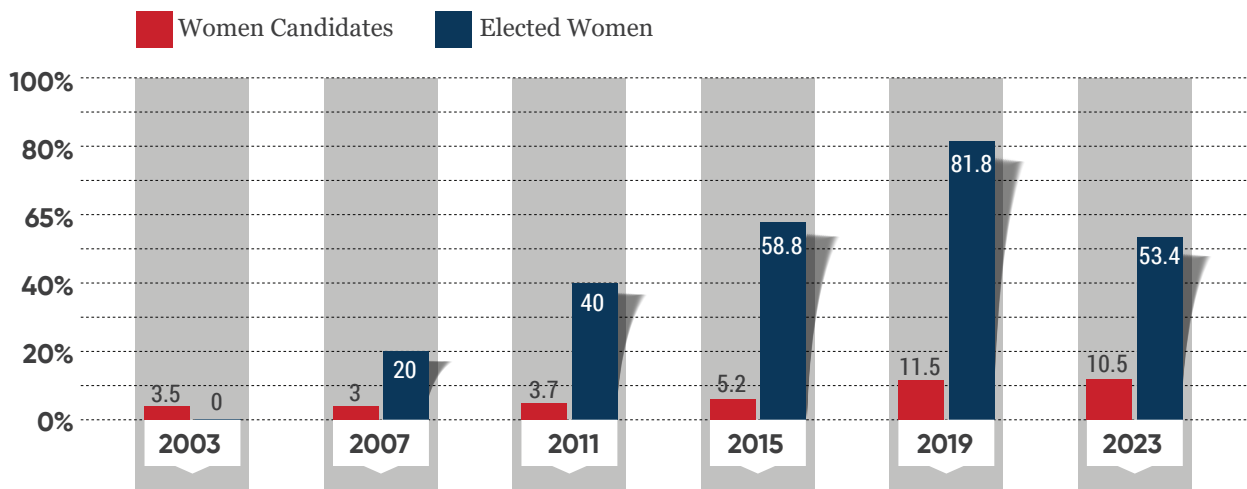


Chart 2A – Representation of Girls and Women in the Candidate Lists of Different Political Parties running for the Mayor's Office in the Local Elections 2003-2023

5. Experiences and Perceptions

of Women and Girls, Members of Political Parties in Albania regarding Gender Equality within the Political Parties

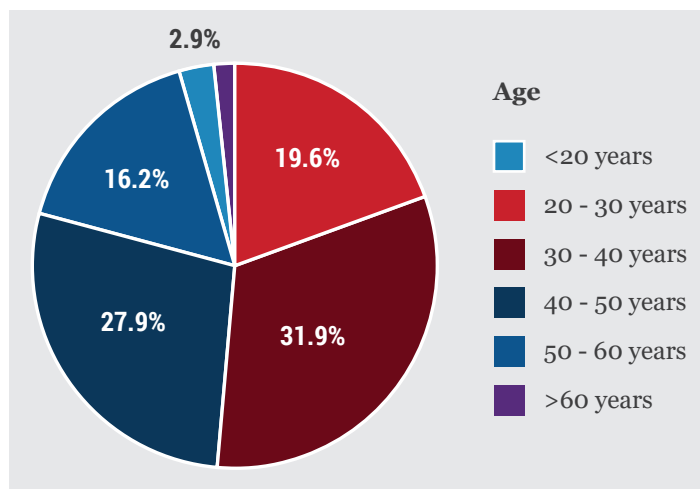
5.1 Findings: Quantitative Component – Survey of Women and Girls who are Members of the Socialist Party, the Democratic Party, and the Freedom Party.

In follow up to the assessment of information obtained from the review of statutes and legislation, in order to avail of a wider gamut of information from a broader base, an online questionnaire was conducted with 204 women and girls who are members of the Socialist Party, the Democratic Party and the Freedom Party – with a view to furthering the understanding of the challenges, opportunities and barriers faced by women within political parties, the dynamics of decision-making processes and of representative structures, their access to finance, etc. The sampling during this phase of the study consisted of a heterogeneous group of members of political parties, encompassing different positions, age groups, backgrounds, political experiences, etc.

One of the predicaments oftentimes encountered in relation to the assessment of documents, policies and information relates to the lack of official and accessible information about political parties at large and women's forums of political parties in particular, as well as the lack of archives and publications with information regarding the history and activities carried out by these forums. Therefore, this online questionnaire was developed with the aim of assessing the barriers faced by women and girls who are members of political parties and gathering their recommendations regarding the improvement of the state of affairs vis-à-vis gender equality within their respective political parties. Through a detailed survey questionnaire, girls and women who are members and leaders in the structures of the 3 political parties under review shared their experiences in the party, their perceptions, as well as recommendations for the further empowerment of girls and women within political parties.

Data on survey participants:

General data on survey participants show that the largest share of questionnaire respondents comprise the 20-40 years old age-group. The research catered to a deliberate distribution of age groups in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of experiences and perceptions of women within political parties beyond their age.



An outstanding characteristic of Albanian political parties and especially women's forums is that girls under the age of 25 do not directly adhere as members of the women's forum, but rather at first become members of the youth forums and in only after reaching the age of 25-30 years old choose to become engaged in the women's forum.

Chart 3 – Age of survey participants

As the survey shows and the fieldwork conducted with political parties confirms, women and girls who are actively engaged in various political party structures have an above-average level of education. This in turn reveals that there exists invaluable potential that can be better exploited by women in political parties, particularly in view of expertise offered in the framework of policy making in various fields.

Based on information gathered from the focus groups and the fieldwork with political parties, one of the outstanding shared experiences is that capacities of girls and women professionals in forums and parties are rarely used to further increase the capacities of other women and girls members.

With regard to the civil status of survey participants, the majority of respondents comprise those who are married.

Data reveal a diverse range of occupations of women and girls participating in the study. The larger share of respondents works in the field of education, drawing attention to the strong presence of women educators in the active membership base of political parties. Next are the fields of economics/finance, healthcare and social sciences, which are equally represented. This in turn suggests that a significant number of participants have professional training in these fields. In addition, the study includes women and girls working in various other fields, including jurisprudence, management, journalism and communication, engineering, tourism and agronomics, as well as women and girls with diverse vocational training qualifications, and civil servants.

The data reflect the multidisciplinary character of the participants' professional training, highlighting the broad representation of women and girls from different sectors in the study.

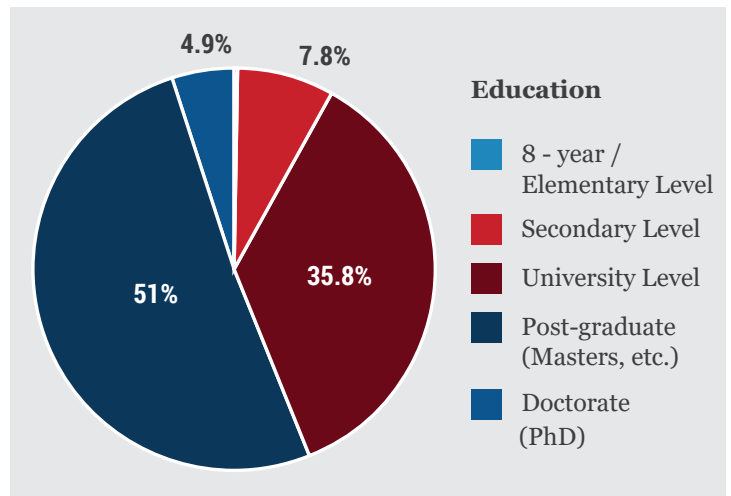


Chart 4 – Education level of survey participants

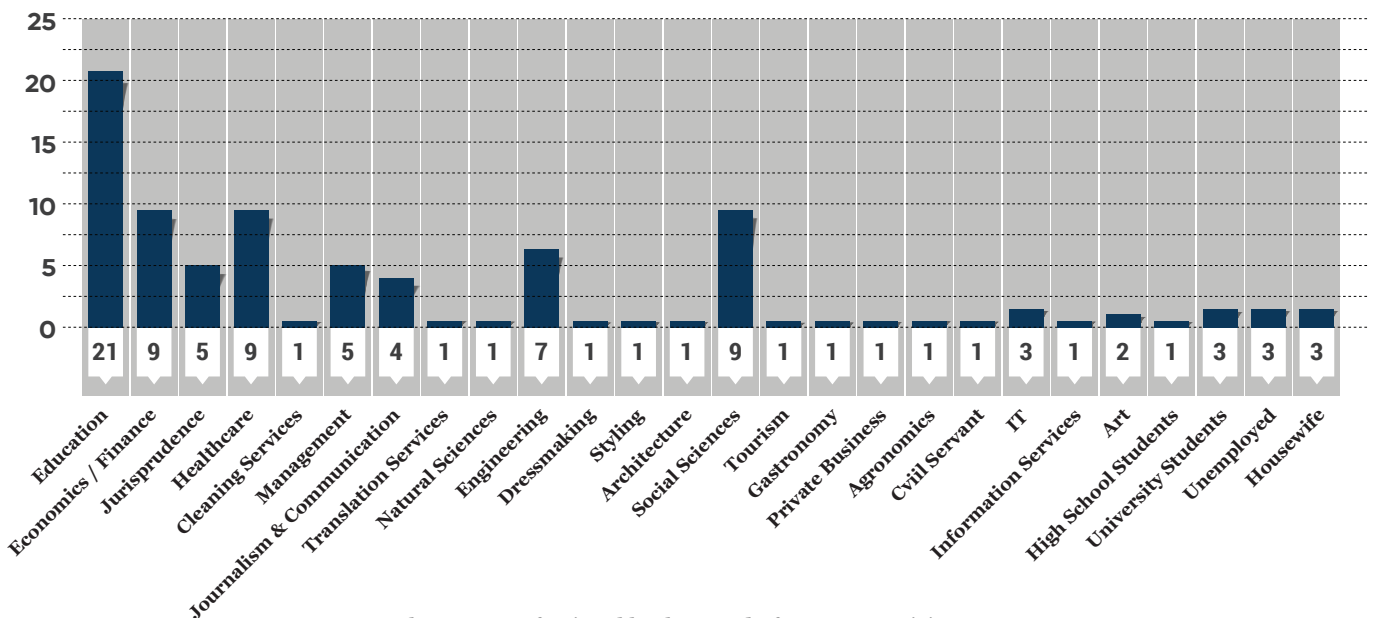


Chart 5 – Professional background of survey participants

Data shows that a significant majority of women and girls who participated in the study, 70.6%, reported that they practiced their profession while being involved in politics. This suggests that a large share of the respondents is able to balance professional responsibilities and political engagement. On the other hand, 29.4% indicated that they do not practice their profession while engaged full-time in politics.

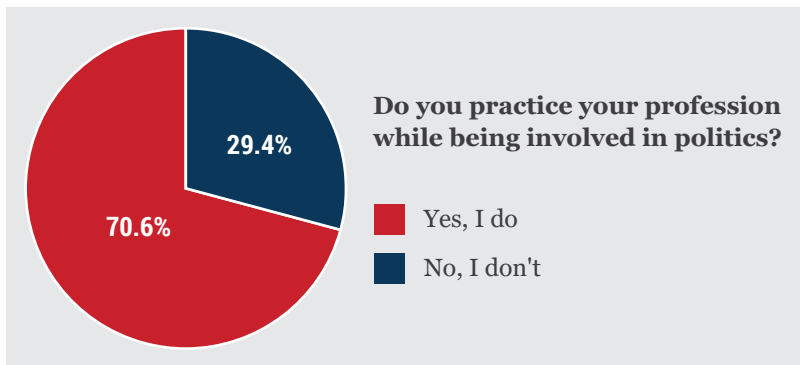


Chart 6 – Do women and girls exercise their profession while involved in the field of politics

This finding suggests that a notable minority of women and girls may make the decision to temporarily defer professional work in order to focus on their political engagements. In addition, the data brings to the fore the diversity of experiences of women and girls exercising their professions while being involved in politics, highlighting the need for supportive structures and policies that enable their active participation in politics while pursuing professional careers.

Main channel of entry in the party for women and girls:

Survey participants declare that their engagement within political parties is largely by way of participation in various party activities and prior engagement in the women's forum. It is also noted that a high percentage of respondents have opted to joining political parties that relate to their family tradition – thereby underscoring the role of family tradition as a channel guiding girls and women in becoming active members of one particular party out of the range of choices available.

Answers to the survey question regarding the main channel of entry into the party reveal that a significant majority, 60.8% , reported that they became part of the party through involvement in party forums, such as the youth forum or the women's forum. In addition, 51.5% of respondents stated that entered into the party through participation in various activities organized by the mother party. Family ties and tradition were identified as the main channel by 44.6% of respondents.

Meanwhile, 35.8% mentioned that they were invited by the political party, while 9.3% stated that their entry was through participation in trainings or political academies organized by NGOs. These findings provide an insight into the different routes through which women and girls enter political parties, including the forums as the main and most effective channel, general party activities, family ties, invitations for membership and NGO-led trainings. The need for inclusive pathways that are conducive to girls and women's participation is essential to their inclusion in political parties, as also the need for sustainable recruitment programs by political parties.

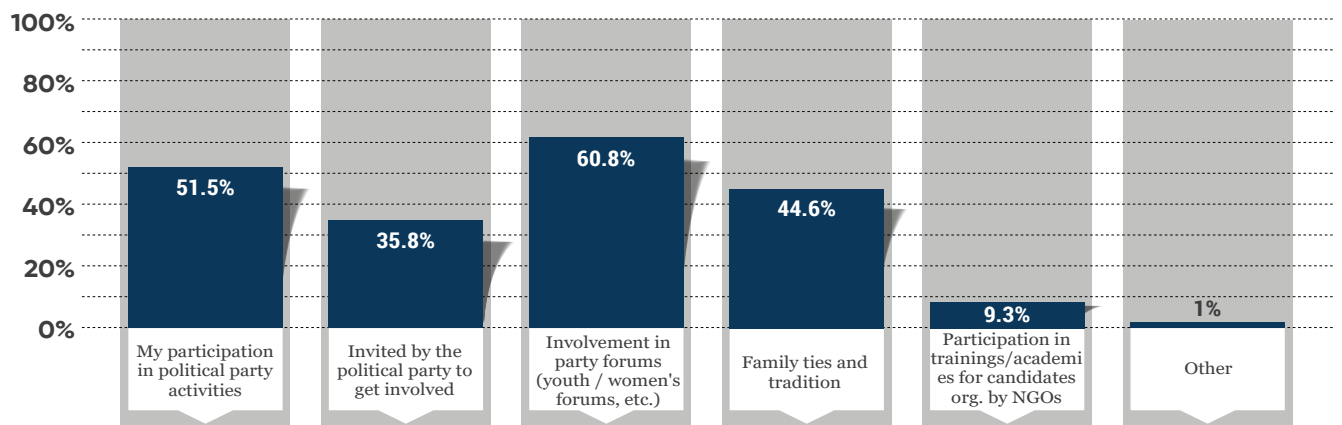


Chart 7 – Main channel of entry in the party for women and girls

Nominated and elected positions within political parties:

Data shows that from the girls and women participating in the survey 17.8% of them were elected or currently hold the position of Local Councillor. This suggests that a considerable number of the participants have gained experience and are engaged at local government level. While a small percentage of the participants, 4%, have held positions such as Members of Parliament, which indicates their involvement in higher levels of political representation.

Moreover, the data reveals that a large number of the participants are actively engaged in the structures of their respective political parties, holding positions such as members of the presidency, members of the local branch or part of the women's forum, hence their in-depth knowledge of party dynamics and internal party processes.

Channels for nomination to candidacy processes:

Various ways towards securing the candidacy were identified amongst the women and girls participating in the study and that have been elected in the past or currently hold elected positions such as Members of Parliament, Local Councillor or Mayor. The majority of the participants, 55.6%, reported that they became candidates through a process of nomination and selection within the political party, emphasising the importance of internal party mechanisms in selecting the candidates.

A small percent, 13.3%, mentioned that they were selected and nominated by the women's forum, the youth forum, or similar party forums, emphasising the importance of the role of dedicated internal structures in promoting candidates.

Others, 38%, were engaged through direct invitation of the Party Chairman/woman. Some participants were nominated as candidates through proposals of CSOs (an example mentioned by several of the participants was the recommendations from the "Equality in Decision-Making" Women's Network in the framework of initiatives and several Academies organized to prepare potential candidates for the Local Elections, as part of the continuous work of the organization in supporting women and girls).

Experiences of women and girls within political parties

With regard to the **main obstacles vis-à-vis engagement in politics at large and within political parties in particular**, survey participants state that major predicaments include access to party finances, followed by the lack of support and capacity building to start and pursue a career in politics. Based on questionnaire answers, several influential factors preventing women from becoming part of active politics were identified.

Lack of financial support from the political party and limited access to resources emerged as the most important barriers, with 91 respondents deeming them as influential and 76 respondents stating that "they do have an influence". In addition, the lack of opportunities and commitment to identify, train and mentor women candidates for public office was recognized as a hindering factor, with 69 respondents stating that this has a lot of influence and 106 respondents indicating that this does have an impact. Lack of support from men within the political party, the patriarchal mentality, the lack of internal party democracy and the sexist culture in political parties were also identified as influential barriers with a bearing on women's political activism and engagement.

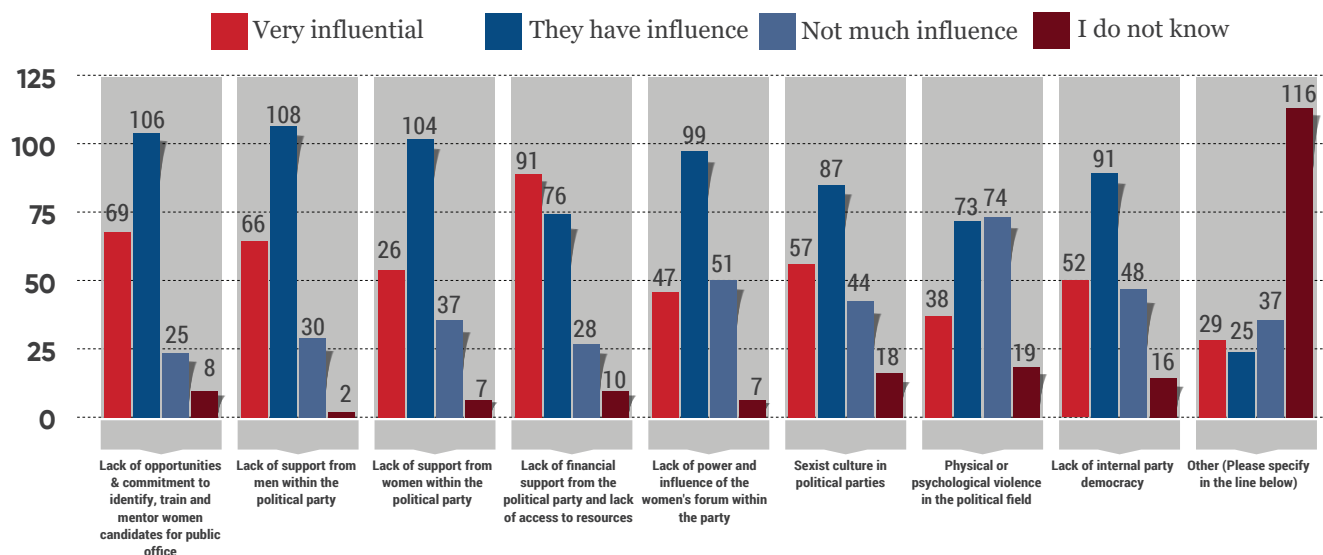


Chart 8 – Impact of select indicators inhibiting/obstructing women from becoming part of political parties

Two of interviewees expressed the following:

“If women are given quotas, but no equal access to party resources and finances, then this equality is to remain only on paper!”

“If we do not react to violence against women in politics, what reaction are we to expect from other women and girls affected by violence?”

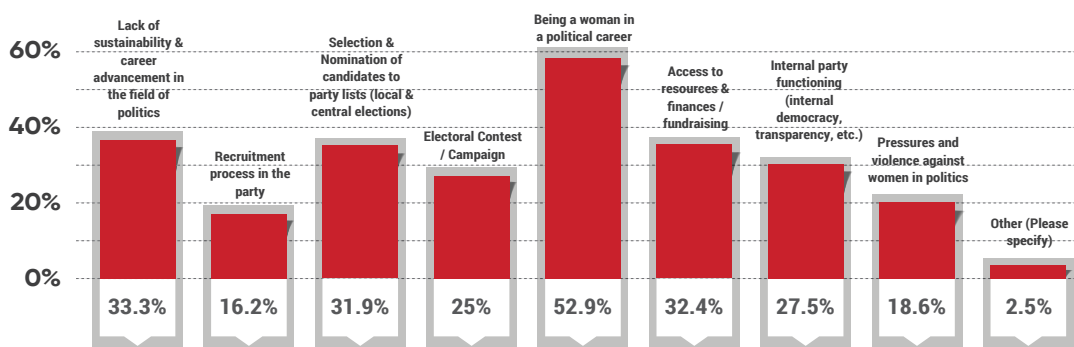


Chart 9 – Issues that women and girls consider the most challenging in politics

After listing the main identified barriers, survey participants were asked to choose the 3 obstacles that they deem most impactful on the engagement of women in politics and their active involvement in political parties. One of the main obstacles identified by respondents is precisely Gender, with 52.9% stating that the fact of being a woman represents the most challenging predicament for the pursuit of a political career).

Quote: "It is difficult to be a woman in Albania and even more so to be a woman in politics! We have taken it upon ourselves, however the more obstacles there are, the smaller the number of women engaged in politics will be!"

Furthermore, similar to the above, the lack of access to finances and the lack of support and sustainability of the political career emerged among the main barriers. Other challenges identified by the survey include the **limited access to resources and finances**, with 32.4% share of the respondents citing “financial constraints”. One participant shared that: "The difficulty relates to financial resources, for a woman who has a mountain of bills to pay at the end of the month, with men being either unemployed or else not bringing most of the salary at home... how can you fully dedicate yourself to a political career if you have no income to support your family?"

Lack of stability and career advancement in the field of politics was also underscored as a major concern by 33.3% of participants. **Internal party democracy** is deemed as one of the main predicaments. Internal party functioning, including internal democracy and transparency, were considered as problematic by 27.5% of survey participants. The selection and appointment of women and girls candidates in party lists was identified as a challenge by 31.9% of the respondents, who emphasized the lack of meritocracy within the parties.

18.6% of respondents indicated the presence of **pressure and violence against women in politics**. Participants highlighted the hostile environment, pressures, prejudices and presence of a sexist/judgemental mentality prevalent within politics. Though featured with lesser percentages, election contests/campaigns (25%) and the party recruitment processes (16.2%) were identified as additional challenges. These findings bring to the fore the barriers and discrimination faced by women in political settings, highlighting the need for gender equality and inclusive practices for the promotion of women's empowerment and full participation in decision-making processes.

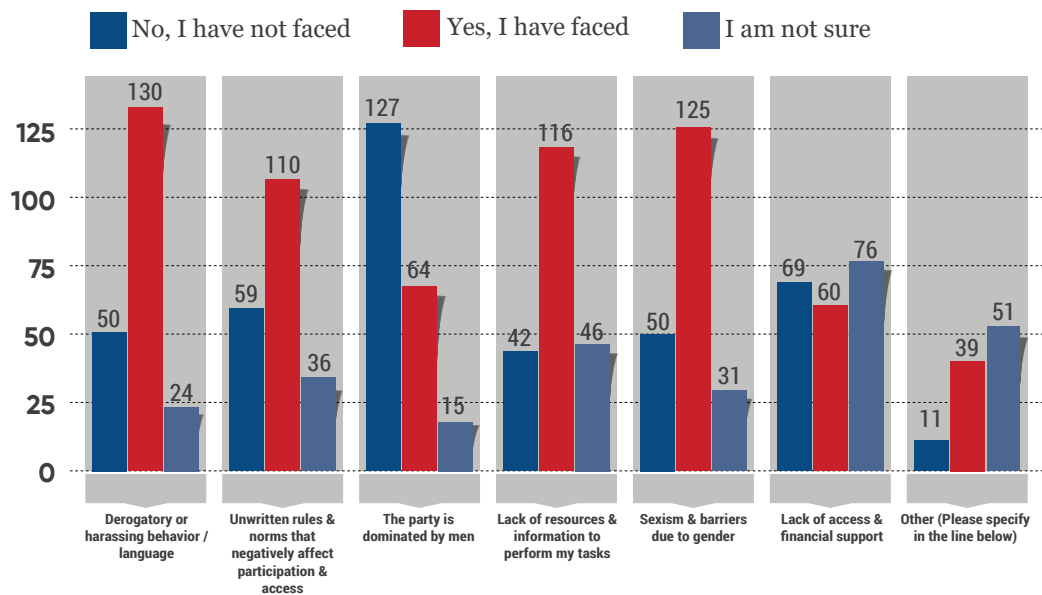


Chart 10 – Have you personally faced any of these challenges?

The analysis of questionnaire data reveals the various difficulties that women and girls personally face in political parties. It becomes clear that, even when no longer addressed in principle but rather brought down to the individual level, the lack of internal democracy, meritocracy, access to finances and resources, sexism, gender-based violence and hate speech represent some of the main concrete challenges faced by girls and women who are party members and active in politics, with a significant bearing on their election and performance.

Findings show that derogatory or harassing behavior/language has had an impact on the political engagement for 130 respondents that have faced that in person. This in turns brings to the fore the considerable number of women and girls who have experienced such behavior, impinging on their level of engagement. 50 of the respondents state that they have not experienced violence, while 24 of them are not sure about it, as there is a lack of knowledge of the different types of violence.

Unwritten rules and norms were identified as significant difficulties to their participation by 110 respondents. While 59 respondents had not faced such challenges and 36 were not sure. These findings indicate that many women and girls perceive unwritten rules and norms as barriers to their participation and access in political parties.

Dominance of men within political parties was underscored by 127 respondents as a widespread obstacle that they are faced with. This large share reveals the significance of male dominance as an obstacle impinging upon the full participation of women and girls in decision-making within political parties.

While the lack of resources and information can affect women's and girls' political engagement, 116 respondents stated that they have faced this obstacle. Sexism and gender-related barriers were not personally faced by 50 respondents, while 125 respondents stated that they had faced such challenges and it has had an impact on their political career. These data show that a significant proportion of participants consider sexism and gender-related challenges among the difficulties women and girls face within political parties.

Opinions were divided with regard to the lack of access to finances and financial support, with 60 respondents facing it as a personal challenge. While 76 of them were not sure whether this was considered a personal challenge or a matter for the political party and 69 of them did not face this challenge (in the major part explaining that the main reason is the fact they had not run in the elections). This in turn brings to the fore the differences in perspectives concerning the importance of the lack of access to finances and financial support for women's and girls' political participation. Showing that there is awareness on the need for access to finances while running in a campaign, but a lack of comprehension of its importance even during the engagement of women in the political parties outside election periods.

On completing the "Other" questionnaire entry, respondents remarked difficulties such as: "Lack of support from other women within the political party structures" and "The substantial dominance of men within the party, accompanied by a lack of esteem for women and girls". These additional challenges underscore the need to address the internal dynamics within political parties, the need to encourage the support of women by women and to foster greater appreciation of women's contributions.

Do you think that the number of women in the various structures of your party is sufficient?

Participants' perspectives regarding the representation of women in different party structures were varied. The majority of respondents (58.3%) stated that the current number of women in party structures is insufficient, thus indicating the existence of a perceived gender imbalance. On the other hand, 31.9% consider the existing number of women as adequate. A small percentage (9.8%) remained unsure regarding their stance on the issue. Comments given in relation to this questionnaire question shed light on the reasons underlying these views. Some participants mentioned the predominance of men in party structures as a factor contributing to the perception of inadequacy. Others emphasized the need for stepping up recruitment of women and highlighted barriers such as societal gender norms, economic dependency and family commitments. The setting of quotas was also acknowledged as a factor contributing to the increase in the number of women in party structures, however respondents emphasized the importance of genuine political will in fostering meaningful and inclusive participation of women.

Based on your information, what are the main tasks of the women's forum in your party?

Women responses to the question were nigh-on accurate, showing that they have a clear understanding of the role and competences of the women's forum.

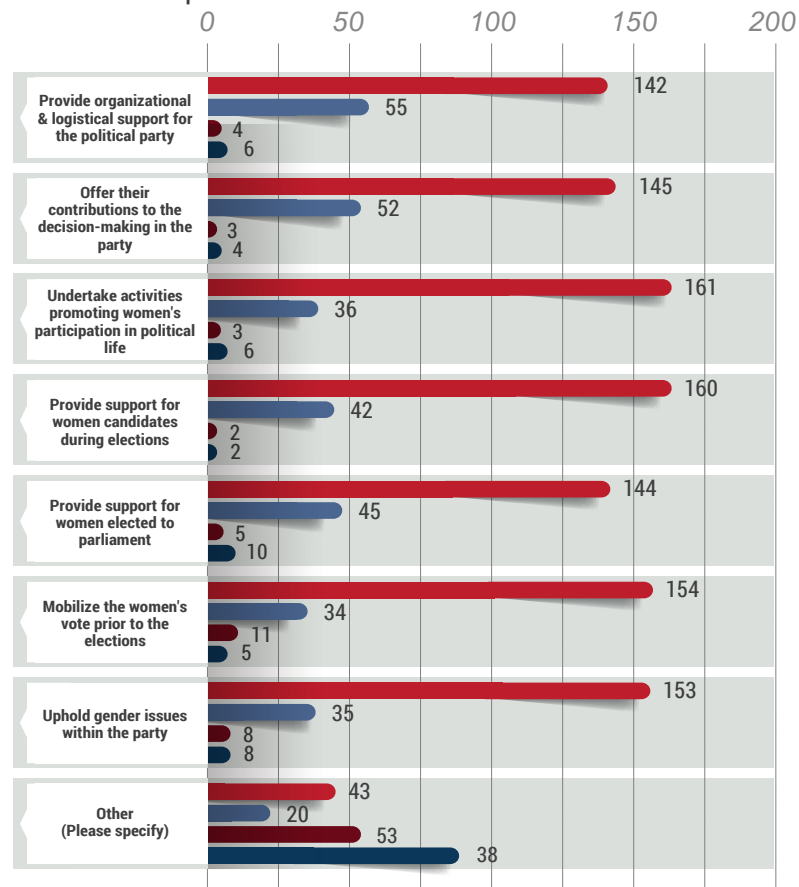


Chart 11 – What are the main tasks of the women's forum in their party according to information they avail of?

Women and girls participating in the survey declared that the forums are very important and have had an impact both with regard to their entry into the party and the development of their political career. The effectiveness of the women's forum in supporting the participation of women in political parties was positively evaluated by participants in the study. The findings show that 49% of the respondents consider the women's forum to be "very effective", while 36.8% deem it as "sufficiently effective". However, there were also respondents expressing their concern that the forum lacked effectiveness. Some of the identified shortcomings include:

- Limited decision-making power of the forum;
- Lack of funds;
- Insufficient spaces and support.

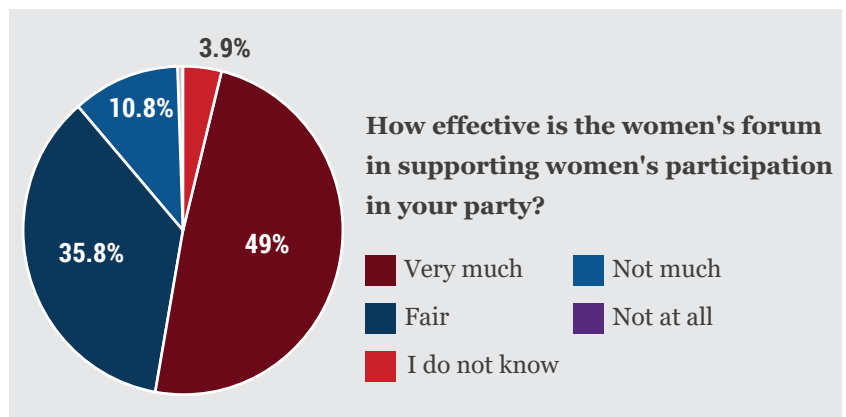


Chart 12 – Girls' and women's opinion on the effectiveness of the women's forum in supporting their participation in the political party

Recommendations from survey participants:

Participants proposed several measures for the strengthening of the women's forum standing within the party. Their recommendations included increasing the transparency of decision-making processes, providing greater financial support for the women's forum and its activities through the creation of a dedicated fund, defining a clear structure with specific objectives and tasks, and providing full information for forum members about their roles and responsibilities. In addition, the participants emphasized that forum's focus on lobbying for issues affecting women and girls, creating a stimulating and democratic environment within the party, establishing concrete and clear standards for the representation of women and promoting a system based on meritocracy. They also suggested investing in the promotion of positive and inspiring role models of women in politics.

“

Quote: "I wanted remark how important the support of women by women really is. Women's forums must function and be empowered – and this shall have a bearing on the empowerment of women in politics at large."

”

Asked for recommendations regarding further steps that need to be taken for the strengthening and backing of the role of women in political parties and womens' forums, survey participants answered as detailed in the following:



Nominating more women to important positions

Participants emphasized the importance of nominating and actively promoting women to key positions within the party. By conscientiously increasing the representation of women in leadership roles, parties can effectively increase their influence and decision-making power.

Challenging the sexist mentality

Changing the prevailing mentality within political parties was identified as crucial by respondents. By challenging and transforming traditional gender norms and attitudes, parties can create a more inclusive and gender balanced environment.

Electing more women to leadership positions

Survey participants emphasized the need to elect more women to leadership positions within political parties. By ensuring that women have access to decision-making roles, parties can empower them to shape policies and agendas.

Trust-building, support mechanisms and transparent competition

Participants recommended the creation of mechanisms for building trust and supporting democratic competition and transparency within the parties including: stepping up standards beyond gender quotas, designing accessible databases, encouraging high-quality debates regardless of gender, and dispelling the notion that leadership positions are a male monopoly.

Providing training and financial support

Respondents emphasized the importance of providing training and financial support that is specifically tailored for women candidates. These resources can help women build confidence and develop their skills in campaigning strategies, ultimately increasing their chances of success.

Mentoring and promotion

Providing mentoring programs and actively promoting the rise of women to leadership positions can significantly support their role within political parties. Mentoring relationships and targeted promotions can help overcome barriers and biases that women may face.

Ensuring democratic elections and engagements

Creating more democratic and inclusive processes for election and engagements within political parties is deemed essential. Women should be esteemed for their contributions instead of being treated as mere "decorations" during campaigns, especially in contexts where a sexist culture prevails.

According to participants' suggestions, various new structures, services and initiatives could make political parties more responsive to the needs of women in their ranks:



Allocation of adequate funds

Participants emphasized the importance of access to adequate financial resources to support the development of varied activities and programs, especially those with a focus on trainings for women. Increased funding can empower party branches to provide more opportunities for the advancement and empowerment of women.

Increasing the participation of women

Respondents urged the undertaking of initiatives aimed at increasing the number of women engaged in their respective political parties. By actively working to attract and engage more women, parties can promote greater diversity and gender representation within their ranks.

Increasing effectiveness

The effectiveness of existing structures can be improved by conducting surveys and organizing focus groups specifically designed for women and girls within the party. These efforts would help assess their needs, gather valuable data, and tailor party initiatives accordingly.

Strengthening gender quotas and democratizing women's structures

Participants suggested increasing gender quotas in order to ensure a fair representation of women within the party. They also emphasized the importance of democratizing the structuring of women's participation, expectedly referring to the promotion of equal decision-making power and opportunities for women and men.

Creation of a commission on gender-based violence in politics

With a view to addressing gender-based violence in politics, participants proposed the creation of a commission on discipline. Such a commission could help ensure accountability and provide support to women who are faced with violence or discrimination within the

5.2 Findings: Qualitative Component – Focus Group and Interviews with Women and Girls who are Members of the Socialist Party of Albania, the Democratic Party of Albania and the Freedom Party.

INTERVIEWS WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY, THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, THE FREEDOM PARTY.

The aim of the study's second phase is the investigation of women's and girls' experiences within political parties, by way of conducting interviews, organizing a focus group and a wide survey concerning the perceptions and experiences of women and girls within political parties and the practical implementation of party policies, statutory provisions or programs.

30 individual interviews were conducted with women and girls from the 3 political parties under the purview, focusing on the discussion of personal experiences and perspectives, as well as gathering various recommendations and information, including the sharing of "untold stories". Interviewees were selected based on their positions, as leaders of women's structures, leaders at high level bodies of the party, and representatives in parliament and in municipal councils.

A focus group with women and girls from political parties was organized with the aim of furthering the study's inquiry and providing for a group discussion focused on issues and experiences of women within political parties, their access to party structures, decision-making processes, finances, as also the drafting of policies, addressing of gender-based violence against women in political parties, etc.

Data obtained from the interviews and focus group discussions were in concordance with those obtained on a larger scale through the survey conducted with political party members – whilst being discussed in greater depth so as to gain a better understanding of the issues and the steps recommended interviewees in addressing such issues.

Most of the participants in the focus group and interviews, when asked if the representation of women in the leadership structures of their respective parties is adequate, stated that though numerically the representation is apparently adequate insofar as established quotas are respected, **women's decision-making power** is oftentimes not at the level that it should be.

Meritocracy is among the main causes of the current state of affairs, as stated by the majority of participants; thus whilst women's forums are integral part of political party structures, they do not enjoy direct support from the party. Thus, notwithstanding the fact that there are women yielding individual decision-making power in party structures (due to the position they hold and their performance in the terrain and within the party), women's structures themselves enjoy less decision-making power and have less influence in party policies, not only with regard to gender issues but also other issues as well.

As noted in the beginning of the study and as interviews revealed, political parties under purview display different specificities regarding the internal organization devoted to guaranteeing and strengthening gender equality.

The **Socialist Party** has dedicated more attention to the party's organizational structures, providing for the duplication of the party chair positions at the municipal level and electing a man and a woman as co-chairs. Interviews reveal that this measure has helped increase gender equality within the party, whilst investment in the women's forum as a party structure is deemed very important and not be left behind.

In the case of the **Democratic Party**, interviewees stated that the women's forum has a structure that is active but that it is in need of greater support from the Party, so that this structure can be closer to its members, different communities, as well as larger political developments.

In the case of the **Freedom Party**, interviewees stated that due to it being a smaller party, the leadership structures are closer to each other and that women within the party have a significant voice in decision-making. The Freedom Party (formerly the Socialist Movement for Integration Party) was the first to establish statutory provisions for the representation of both sexes at a 50% rate in decision-making structures; however the importance of the increase in party support is underlined, so as to enable the functioning of the women's forum as a structure that is active and as close to the community as possible.

Interviewees emphasized the need for cooperation with structures and women outside political parties, with a view to bringing to the party personalities from academia and the civil society and representatives of different communities, thus promoting a further opening of the field of cooperation and the exchanging of valuable information regarding engagement in politics.

Common to all parties under purview is the identification of the need for women's structures to be active not only in the ambit of election campaigns, but also for opportunities allowing them to be more active in the community and to address and monitor gender-sensitive party policies, at the local and central levels, through expertise offered by the forum or the creation of commissions with experts from the relevant fields.

From discussions and interviews there emerges an evident divide into two prevalent opinions concerning the activism of women within the parties. On the one hand there is the category (representing the smaller share of respondents) deeming that women avail of an adequate space for activism within political parties and that women should “self activate”, nonetheless acknowledging that oftentimes parties need mechanism to address various barriers (such as access to political funds, violence against women in politics, etc). The other category deems that, in order to increase both the commitment and effectiveness of contributions within the political party, the latter should provide the conditions for the mobilization, access and support mechanisms for women and girls.

As mentioned in the above, research work on the statutes and regulations of political parties, as well as information garnered during the interviews and discussions, show that most of the respondents are relatively well-informed about their party’s official stance and documents on gender equality. On the other hand, respondents’ perceptions reveal a persuasion that political parties, in the example of other sister parties in different countries around the world, can bring about improvements to various regulations, stances or policies regarding gender equality, so as to rise above guarantees providing only for formal observance of gender equality.

More specifically, when asked about some of the main issues to be addressed within parties so that they not longer represent barriers to girls and women in the respective parties, respondents presented various opinions:

1. Meritocracy and internal party democracy

These statements include the way in which candidates are determined, as also leadership positions within and outside the party.

Focus group participants and interviewed women concur in identifying **meritocracy and mechanisms for the nomination of candidates and designation to leadership positions** within and outside the party represent key factors for the empowerment of the deserving party members and the boosting of effectiveness of all party structures. In this connection, among the main solutions identified by them is the opening of competition and the change of the selection system, either through the holding of elections within the party or through an electoral system such as one based on open lists (in reference to parliamentary or local elections), which give all candidates the chance to be elected by the voting public, in contrast to the system of closed lists which confers to the party the prerogative to somehow predetermine men/women who can run for and win elections.

One of the most frequently raised concerns is the **lack of transparency in the selection processes of candidates and leaders to various positions**. In this connection, suggested measures include the assuring of transparency vis-à-vis recruitments, selection and appointment processes, as well as through the periodic promotion of women and their contributions within political parties.

Select quotations from the interviewees:

“ *"I think that transparency is a main problem in our party given that even the selection of women candidates is not transparent. Oftentimes we simply see nominees only upon the announcement of candidate lists or leadership positions of newcomers or individuals with no previous contribution to the party."*

"I would suggest promoting as many positive examples of women and girls who are successful in their careers, but that also have a track-record of advancement and engagement in politics over time. The application of the principle of meritocracy and the support for professional figures within the party are of outmost importance."

"Transparency in the allocation of financial resources and transparency in the selection of candidates is of great importance, for it either strengthens or diminishes trust in the party!" ”

2. Access to political finances and transparency

One of the main issues that women and girls raised is access to finance, with regard to both those standing as candidates and by the women's structures at large within political parties. The lack of access to finance and financial support for women's forums by political parties represents one of the reasons underlying the wanting level of effective activity of women's forums and investments aimed at increasing the number of women and their contribution within political parties.

Access to finance emerges as one of the main problems faced by both the forums and women candidates, who are thus confronted with unequal terms of competition in elections.

Select quotations from the interviewees:

“ *"I think that the main problem faced by women's forum and structures within the parties is the lack of financial resources for the organization of events and activities outside of the campaign context, that is resources making possible more frequent trainings and meetings."*

"Quotas can be set and they can be observed, but even if we make it to the lists but avail of no support, then individual wealth becomes a selection criterion, thereby undermining the so-much needed meritocracy."

"Women candidates also incur additional expenses that no one takes into account. They have to cover household and childcare expenditures during the campaign in contrast to men candidates who do not face such expenditures." ”

3. Violence against women in politics

When talking about gender-based violence, one is prompted to thinking about marginalized groups or violence within the family. As a matter of fact, gender-based violence represents a phenomenon that is central to the barriers impinging upon girls' and women's engagement in politics. Whilst quotas and joint activities have helped narrow the gender gap in politics, parties do not address violence against women within the very political party setting or the political system at large. In part, this failure stems from a lack of understanding of what constitutes violence. Even many politically active women consider bullying, harassment and slander as the price of the "rough" nature of politics, without really acknowledging it is gender-based violence on account of political commitment.

Notwithstanding the diversity of cases and experiences of violence, there is in fact one thing common: the paucity of reactions from the party or colleagues to counter this gender-based violence when it occurs – perhaps deeming the latter as a normal and irremediable phenomenon within politics.

According to the interviewees, the various manifestations of violence related to political engagement are divided into three categories:

Psychological violence

"I suffered various threats for issues I raised in the Municipal Council."

"I was coerced by way of threats from the party to vote in favor of a decision that did not seem fair to me and that went against the citizens' interests!"

"This has not happened to me personally, but I know of several cases of female colleagues who were forced to resign from the candidate lists so as to make room for men! That is just not right!"

Verbal violence

"In the parliament, I was labeled with some insulting words by one of the male deputies. The sexism was clear and the language was very offensive! My party colleagues did not react..."

"Recently, my private photos were manipulated and diffused on social networks without my consent, featuring sexist and offensive texts! There was no reaction by my party and colleagues."

"Insults and hate speech in the comments to an article published about me were excruciating, with swearing and slighting in the main motivated by gender and lacking any argument in reference to what the article stated. I don't know whether I would have chosen having a strong voice in society had I known about all the attacks that I have had to endure. There are people who are silent and no one attacks them!"

Physical violence

"Yes, I have faced physical threats during the process of counting votes in my unit. I was not running as a candidate, but was part of the counting commission."

"During the first years of democracy, while running as a candidate my car was shot at. My husband was with me when the incident happened! I didn't back down. I continued the campaign and did win the elections, but no doubt this counts as one of the worst experiences of my life! Politics today has changed somewhat, but violence has taken yet other forms obstructing women!"

4. Organization and operation of women's forums and structures within political parties

The financial support and sustainability of the forums count amongst the main issues put forward in relation to women's forums within the parties. According to interviewees' statements, often the women's forums do not have adequate funds neither to maintain a stable staff nor to organize activities. Even transport costs and various other costs that may be incurred during the political activity are not covered, so engagement is at large voluntary. While positive in view of the members' commitment, this does lead to a lack of stability in terms of the structure. During election campaigns, the party covers some of the expenses for various activities, but even in those periods the support is not sufficient. On the other hand, problems raised also include the forums' functioning, meritocracy and transparency, which, according to the majority of interviewees, are not yet at adequate levels.

Select quotes from the interviewees:

“

"It is important to establish accurate criteria regarding meritocracy and promotion within the party and forum structures. Instituting the "one-member one-vote" principle into practice at each level of the forum's organization would be very effective"

"I think that the party's most important structure is the women's forum. My suggestion would be to organize meetings more frequently, enabling the discussion of women's daily problems, but why not also allowing for socializing exchanges!"

"The effectiveness of the forum would be fostered also by way of increasing the representation of women and girls who are not engaged in politics, including through the organization of meetings and invitation of as many women as possible from civil society, the business sector and other fields who are committed to strengthening the role of women in society."

"More social activities organized by the forums would bring the latter closer to the communities."

"Forums must have qualified staff and cannot rely solely on the members' voluntary contributions."

”

5. Lack of sustainable capacity-building programs

As shown by most needs-assessment surveys and the present study, one of the main demands of girls and women relates to the enhancement of capacities. At present, none of the parties has a sustained program for capacity building, whence the persisting demand from women and girls engaged in parties. During the interviews and focus groups, women remark that they have been part of several trainings organized by international and local organizations (such as OSCE, NDI, WFD, UN, RSI, the "Equality in Decision Making" Network, the Academy of Political Studies, etc.) but not special trainings organized by the parties and the respective women's forums.

Select quotes on this issue:

“*There is a need for a lot of work and concrete initiatives in support of women, especially on financial matters, and also continued training from pertinent organizations, so as to develop competencies for their representation in both local and central government.*”

There should be more trainings, as well as increased financial and professional support within the party.”

The effectiveness of work focusing on women would be enhanced through the organization of more frequent meetings with women in the community, roundtables on violence against women, and trainings to support of women candidates. Women should be promoted in the media and social networks, as well as trained for public communication skills and campaigning.”

Training provided at all levels of administrative units, as well as discussions with women who are household heads so that their voice and concerns are heard.””

6. Mentality

The patriarchal culture and sexism also count among the issues raised by interviewed women and girls. Some select quotations are given in the following:

“*One of the main problems faced by women and girls is the lack of opportunities for them to go out or appear to be involved in politics, due to long-standing taboos and the prejudices they are subjected to by their community.*”

I think that the obstinate mentality, internal democracy and the recruitment process are among the obstacles that women and girls are faced with.”

In follow up to the publication of the results of local elections, I have been pressured to relinquish from taking office and be replaced by a man! I did not give in, yet the pressure was very strong!””

6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the study's findings highlight the fact that important steps have been taken vis-à-vis gender equality in politics and decision-making in Albania – ranging from pertinent legislation to the statutes of political parties.

The principle of gender equality is ascribed in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, whereby, with reference to the principle of non-discrimination, in Article 18 (point 2) it is underscored that: "No one may be unjustly discriminated against for reasons such as gender, race, religion, ethnicity, language, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic condition, education, social status, or parentage."

Subsequently, important steps have been taken with a view to achieving gender equality through the adoption of the pertinent legal framework and the strengthening of punitive measures for non-compliance with its provisos. Summarily, with reference to the main legislation on gender equality the following can be highlighted:

Legislation

- The framework law guaranteeing gender equality is **Law no. 9970/2008 "On Gender Equality in Society"**⁵¹, which stipulates the strengthening of measures protecting citizens against any type of discrimination on account of gender, as well as guarantees for the creation of equal opportunities for both men and women, with a view to achieving to the greatest extent highest standards in the field of gender equality.
- Gender equality and equal participation in decision-making are provided for in **Law no. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government"**⁵², which regulates the organization and operation of local self-government units in the Republic of Albania, defining their functions, powers, rights and duties, as well as those of other relevant bodies. This law provides that the gender perspective be integrated at all levels of decision-making, from the drafting of local policies and budgets to implementation and performance evaluation.
- With reference to guaranteeing the equal participation of men and women in decision-making processes, the **Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania**⁵³ (**Law No. 10 019/2008**) forsee a gender quota and various complementary and sanctioning mechanisms geared towards the promotion and achievement gender equality. The Electoral Code stipulates that multi-name lists of candidates for Municipal Councils are to comply with the 50% gender quota for each electoral unit, as well as the 30% quota for the general elections for the Assembly of Albania.
- The legal framework has been further improved through the approval of **Law no. 10221/2010 "On Protection from Discrimination"**⁵⁴ which regulates the implementation and respect of the principle of equality in relation to gender, race, color, ethnicity, language, etc. In alignment with the above, **Law no. 9669/2006 "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations"**⁵⁵ aims at preventing and reducing domestic violence and gender-based violence in all its forms.

⁵¹Law no. 9970/2008 http://www.mod.gov.al/images/PDF/barazia_gjinore_shoqeri.pdf

⁵²Law no. 139/2015 <http://dap.gov.al/legjislacioni/per-administraten-publike/40-ligj-nr-1392015-date-17-12-2015-per-veteqeverisjen-vendore?fbclid=IëAR0PdS2KXbbYieixeTYk5ifPtxX8eOqkNcNtLois2hËBqC56ty5o9GXKksë>

⁵³Electoral Code of the Republic of Albania <https://www.parlament.al/Informacion/AkteNormative/13>

⁵⁴Law no. 10221/2010 <https://kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1308053956-Ligji-per-mbrojtjen-nga-diskriminimi.pdf>

⁵⁵Law no. 9699/2006 <http://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/ligj%20nr.%2047,%20dt.%2023.7.2018.pdf>

Despite the important steps that have been taken in terms of both legislation and increase in the number of women represented in leadership positions at the central and local levels, women engaged in politics and decision-making still encounter impediments trying to break through the "glass ceiling". This is a result of the overall climate of gender inequality lurking behind the formal steps towards equality, for in reality there still persist many obstacles, including social and cultural roles and stereotypes, lack of information and wanting visibility for their role and skills, low confidence, access to political funds, gender-based violence due to political engagement, etc.

Supporting women in political parties serves not only the strengthening of their voice and ability to serve community needs in their capacity as politicians, but also the promotion of models of active public engagement by women and girls pursuing higher levels of representation, not only within politics. From this perspective, supporting models of engaged women and those with political leadership roles offer advantages that parties can create for their electorate. The engagement and promotion of women within political parties brings countless benefits for the parties themselves, ranging from the expansion of support from the membership base to the integration of expertise and of the gender perspective in policies undertaken, thereby coming closer to the needs of the communities.

As noted at the onset and as confirmed by the interviews conducted in the study's framework, the political parties under review display various differences specific to their internal organization and the guaranteeing and strengthening of gender equality.

The Socialist Party has devoted more attention to the party's organizational structures, providing for the duplication of party chair positions at the municipal level and the election of a man and a woman as co-chairs. According to girls and women interviewed, while this measure has helped increase gender equality within the party, investment in the women's forum as an integral party structure is very important and should not be left behind. In terms of representation within the various party structures, the 40%-50% quotient has been observed.

In light of the research carried out and interviewees' answers, the Democratic Party seems to have in place a women's forum with an active structure, yet in need of greater support by the party (in terms of access to resources and finances), enabling the forum's increased engagement with its members, various communities, as also larger political developments. Meanwhile, in terms of representation in party structures, the Democratic Party has implemented the 30% quota.

In the case of the Freedom Party, as the research results and the interviews reveal, on account of being a smaller party, the leadership structures are closer to each other. It appears that women within the party have a considerable voice in decision-making and that the Freedom Party (previously the Socialist Movement for Integration Party) was the first to establish statutory provisions for the 50% representation quotient for both sexes in party decision-making structures and for the allocation of a budget for women's and youth forums; however, increasing the level of party support for the women's forum remains important in view of enabling its functioning as an active structure and bringing it as close to the community as possible.

The research carried out reveals that the parties under purview do not avail of programs or public strategies for gender equality and indeed one of the difficulties encountered during the study is precisely the difficulty in accessing supporting documents other than the parties' statutes.

Based on the interviews and political experience, it can be observed that despite the recent statutory improvements and changes, work must still be carried out in view of strengthening cohesion within the party, increasing transparency and clearly defining meritocracy criteria, as well as improving the career development system within party structures.

According to the interviewees, the improvement of cooperation and interaction between the party structures and the women's forum is essential. The representation of women at all levels of political representation is deemed good and this has also enabled a higher level of representation in decision-making. Therefore the setting of quotas in party statutes has promoted the increase of women's representation; however, based on the interviews conducted, there still remains room for improvement in terms of meritocracy, internal democracy and respect for the experiences and expertise of women who have a long-standing engagement in the party and its forums.

In this connection, the research makes clear that while political parties have integrated principles and mechanisms for gender equality in their basic documents, they lag behind in addressing some barriers that are crucial for the real empowerment of women and girls within the parties. Some of the main problems and barriers highlighted by women and girls participating in the study comprise the lack of meritocracy, the lack of access to finances, the lack of support from the party, sexism and gender-based violence, etc.

In light of the key role that political parties play in policy-making, it is especially important that they be first to set models of equal opportunities and to support of meritocracy, with a view to then translating such models into broader governing alternatives.

These findings highlight the enduring challenges and the need for proactive measures to address gender inequalities and promote greater gender diversity within political party structures, whence the importance of taking stock of the following recommendations.

7. Recommendations

In view of the recommendations presented by women and girls participating in interviews, surveys and meetings within the study's framework, the following select recommendations for political parties would represent important steps towards the real empowerment of forums and women within the parties:

FOR POLITICAL PARTIES:

1. Creation of programs to support and increase the capacities of women and girls within the political party. An approach of combined interventions is needed, encompassing: networking, capacity building and strengthening women's power in decision-making within the party, as well as supporting women legislators with continuous capacity building and sustained mentoring for their development within the political party, in particular during election campaigns. Based on practices of political parties in different countries of the world, these programs are to be established as permanent periodical party programs and/or in cooperation with partner organizations.

2. Creation of mechanisms guaranteeing meritocracy and internal democracy within political parties, both with reference to elections within party structures (for example through the application of the "one-member one-vote" principle) and to the transparency of the process of candidates' nominations, including with regard to leadership positions within and outside the party.

Meritocracy and mechanisms for the election of candidates and leaders to various positions within and outside the party represent key factors for the empowerment of the deserving party members and for providing the necessary impetus for effectiveness of all structures. In view of the experiences of parties in different countries of the world, one of the ways in which the system of meritocracy can be strengthened is the organization of preliminary elections in party structures for candidacies to various decision-making positions, such as primaries, or the garnering of proposals within structures. On the other hand, the types of electoral systems which advance party meritocracy comprise electoral systems based on majoritarian model or open lists, so that candidates who manage to get most votes are the ones who are effectively elected to office (deputies, municipal councilors, etc.).

3. Improving women's access to resources and financing. Application of various mechanisms ensuring that women and men candidates enjoy equal access to both political funding and fundraising opportunities, such as public funding quotas. Creation of financial support mechanisms enabling candidates' full participation in the election campaign: covering operational costs, childcare support, etc.

Given that women's forums in political parties currently have almost no access to party finances, this can be achieved in several ways, including the following two approaches:

- a. Establishing by law a percentage quota of finances that parties are allotted by the state budget, which is earmarked for and directly accessed by the women's forum or women's structures within the party.
- b. Introducing in the party statutes a proviso determining a quota from the party's total funds, which women's structures or women candidates can periodically access and benefit from.

4. Strengthening cooperation with CSOs and international and local organizations with regard to research, policy implementation and capacity building.

5. Increasing transparency and communication within the party, in order to enable an improved and more effective engagement of women in decision-making processes and political party activities, including through:

- ✓ promoting the participation of all party members in the party's internal affairs,
- ✓ creating opportunities for members to express their dissatisfaction within the party,
- ✓ improving communication within the party and transparency regarding career opportunities.

One of the main practices regarding transparency applied from various political parties at the global level is the publication and sharing with party members and larger public of the financial reports on income and expenses, as well as the monitoring or auditing of funds spent on a regular basis and during electoral campaigns.

6. Creation of protocols and mechanisms to address gender-based violence within political parties through:

- ✓ endorsement of the code of ethics within the political party;
- ✓ creation of protocols for reporting and addressing gender-based violence related to engagement in politics.

7. Conducting a periodic "gender audit" within the political party, with a view to assessing the fulfillment of all necessary provisos guaranteeing gender equality, gender budgeting, gender-sensitive policies within the party, etc.

8. Implementation of gender budgeting within the political party.

FOR LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE INSTITUTIONS

1. Revision and integration of gender-sensitive elements in the law on political parties in Albania.
2. Revision of the legislation on the financing of political parties with a view to the establishment of gender-based financing mechanisms.
3. Revision of institutional codes of ethics and protocols addressing gender-based violence in politics and decision-making.

FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS & INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

1. Creating opportunities that support women's forums within political parties, women candidates and women in decision-making positions, through capacity-building programs, technical support and empowerment.
2. Supporting increased opportunities for cooperation among women and girls from different political parties, allowing for the sharing of experiences and best practices, but also advocating issues of common interest.
3. Conducting periodic monitoring and evaluation of the observance of gender equality within political parties.
4. Engaging actively in the promotion of awareness-raising and the addressing of gender-based violence against girls and women in politics.
5. Advocating and lobbying for the improvement and implementation of gender-sensitive legislation with reference to the functioning and financing of political parties.

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9. Annex - Questionnaire

Gender Equality Barometer for Political Parties in Albania

This survey is carried out within the framework of the study "Gender Equality Barometer for Political Parties in Albania" developed by the "Equality in Decision-Making" Network with the support of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) in Albania and the British Embassy in Tirana, in the framework of the implementation of the initiative "Strengthening electoral integrity and sustainability of political parties", which focuses on strengthening democracy and supporting political parties and increasing integrity in politics in Albania.

This study aims at investigating the standing and problems faced by women and girls who are members of political parties in Albania and several countries of the world, as well as further promoting gender equality within political parties and strengthening of their structures.

Personal data of the participants completing the study questionnaire are confidential and SHALL NOT BE PUBLISHED. Information obtained from this questionnaire shall be used solely for the purpose of the study.

Thank you in advance for your time!

PERSONAL DATA:

Name & Surname

Contact (E-mail address)

Contact (Telephone number)

Age*

- <20 years old
- 20-30 years old
- 30-40 years old
- 40-50 years old
- 50-60 years old
- >60 years old

Civil Status

- Married
- Single
- Other
- Other?

Education*

- High School Diploma
- University Degree
- Post-University Studies (Master's, Specialization, etc.)
- Doctorate (PhD)
- Other:

Profession*

Do you exercise your profession while engaged in politics?*

- Yes, I do exercise it
- No, I don not exercise it

ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICS

Which political party do you adhere to?*

- Socialist Party of Albania
- Democratic Party of Albania
- Freedom Party

What was your main channel of entry in the party? * (You can select more than 1 option)

- Participation in activities of the Political Party
- Invitation by the political party to get engaged in the party
- Involvement in the party's forums (youth forum, women's forum, etc.)
- Family ties and tradition
- Participation in trainings/academies for potential candidates organized by non-governmental organizations (Please specify)
- Other (please specify)
- Other:

Have you ever been elected to any of the following positions?

- Member of Parliament
- Mayor
- Member of the Municipal Council
- Minister
- I have not been elected to any of the positions listed in the above
- Other (Please specify):
- Other:

If yes, how many times have you run for elections or been elected to the positions in the above (please specify)?

If so, how did you manage to become a candidate for election to public offices (deputy, member of the municipal council, mayor)?

- I was nominated and selected through a process within the party
- I was selected and nominated by the women's forum / youth forum, etc.
- By invitation from the Party Chair
- Other (please specify)
- Other:

If so, in which constituency did you run for election?

- Rural Area
- Urban Area (Town)
- I ran for elections several times in both rural and urban areas
- Other:

Have you held any official office within your political party? *

- Yes
- No

If yes, please specify:

EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN IN POLITICAL PARTIES:

What do you consider to be the most difficult issue faced by women in politics? (choose the 3 of options that you deem most problematic) *

- The lack of stability and career advancement in the field of politics
- The recruitment process in the party
- The selection and nomination of women candidates in the party lists (for local and parliamentary elections)
- The election race / campaign
- Being a woman pursuing a political career
- Access to resources and finances / fundraising
- Internal party functioning (internal democracy, transparency, etc.)
- Pressures and violence against women in politics
- Other (Please specify)

Comment - Specification regarding the above

In your opinion, how influential are the following indicators in inhibiting / hindering women from becoming part of political parties?

	Very influential	Influential	Not very influential	I don't know
Lack of opportunities and commitment for the identification, training and mentoring of women candidates for public offices.				
Lack of support from men within the political party.				
Lack of support from women within the political party.				
Lack of financial support from the political party and lack of access to resources.				
Lack of power and influence of the women's forum within the party.				
Sexist culture in political parties.				
Physical or psychological violence in politics.				
Lack of internal party democracy.				
Other (Please specify in the line below)				

Other (Please specify)

Have you personally ever faced these difficulties in your party?

	Yes	No	Not sure / Maybe
Disrespectful or harassing behavior / language			
Unwritten rules and norms that negatively affect participation and access.			
The party is dominated by men.			
Lack of resources and information to perform my tasks			
Sexism and barriers due to gender			
Lack of access & financial support			
Other (Please specify in the line below).			

Other (Please specify)

Does your party have an official position, regulation or written policy on the following points?

	Yes	No	I don't Know
Values and principles of gender equality			
Special measures (quotas or reserved seats) to ensure a balanced representation of women and men in the Executive Commission, Committees and Commissions within the party			
Projects/special measures to increase the recruitment of women and girls in your party			
Gender Equality Committee within the party			
Protocol for the prevention and intervention against harassment and sexual violence within your political party			
Measures or programs endorsed for awareness-raising among party members regarding gender equality issues			
Special resources allocated for women candidates in elections			

Other (Please specify)

Do you think that the number of women in the various structures of your party is adequate?

- Po
- Jo
- I don't know

Please explain your answer

Can we quote your answer in the study?

- Yes
- No

According to the information you have, what are the main tasks of the women's forum in your party?

	Yes	Partly	No	I don't Know
Provide organizational and logistical support for the political party				
Contribute to the party's decision-making				
Undertake activities promoting women's participation in political life				
Provide support for women candidates during the elections				
Offer support for women elected to Parliament.				
Mobilize the vote of women prior to elections				
Protect gender issues within the party.				

Other (Please specify)

How effective is the women's forum in supporting women's participation in your political party?

- Very much
- Sufficiently
- Not very much
- Not at all
- I don't know

Please explain your answer.

How do you think the women's forum could be strengthened within the party?

Can we cite your answer in the study?

- Yes
- No

Have you attended specialized training/s in the following fields?

	Yes	No
Budgeting		
Gender Equality and Gender Integration		
Legislative institutions and procedures		
Communication and public speaking		
Functioning of political parties		
Media		
Election Campaigns		
Leadership		

Specialized trainings - Other (Please specify)

With regard to trainings you attended, on the basis of information you have, please specify who organized the trainings (e.g. the political party, non-governmental organizations, regional and international organizations, etc.).

RECOMMENDATIONS

In your opinion, what new structures, services or initiatives would you suggest in order to make your political party more sensitive to the needs of women within the party? Please explain your answer.

Can we cite your answer in the study?*

- Yes
- No

In your opinion, what more can be done to strengthen and support the role of women in political parties?*

Can we cite your answer in the study?*

- Yes
- No

The Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK's public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties and civil society groups, as well as on elections, to help countries have fairer, more inclusive and more accountable political systems.



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