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The issue of the ratio of women and men in central and local government: the European Union and Ukraine

The issue of gender equality has been in the spotlight of the international community for a long time. Equality between men and women is enshrined in important international treaties and international and national law. Equality is recognized as an integral condition of a democratic society and an element of sustainable social development. Achieving gender equality and combating discrimination is one of the tasks of the European Union. Equality between men and women is a fundamental value of the EU and an important factor in economic and social development.

To understand the state of gender equality, it is necessary to analyze the current situation, in particular the representation of women and men in authorities. Governmental and non-governmental institutions regularly prepare reports on gender equality, publish ratings and indices. In our article we will analyze the representation of women and men in elected authorities and governments of the European Union and Ukraine.

In May 2019, regular elections to the European Parliament took place, as a result of which 751 members of parliament were elected. In terms of gender, 59.3 percent of the new parliament consisted of men and 40.7 percent of women (Eige.europa.eu. 2020). Later, in 2020, members of the European Parliament from the United Kingdom withdrew from it, the parliament was replenished with new deputies from different countries. At present, as of September 2020, the European Parliament has 705 members in terms of gender, of which 427 (60.6%) are men and 278 are women (39.4%).

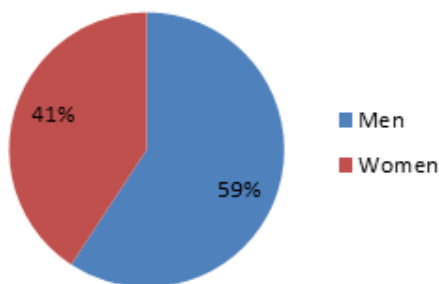


Figure 1. Gender profile of the European Parliament for 2019

Source: own research based on: European parliament: president and members, Eige.europa.eu. 2020.

We can trace the steady increase in the number of women in the European Parliament since the first elections in 1979.

Only 31 women were members of the European Parliament from 1952 until the first elections in 1979. In the first directly elected European Parliament, women's representation was 15.2%. The percentage of women members increased with each election. This is currently the highest level of women's representation in the history of the European Parliament (Europarl.europa.eu. 2020).

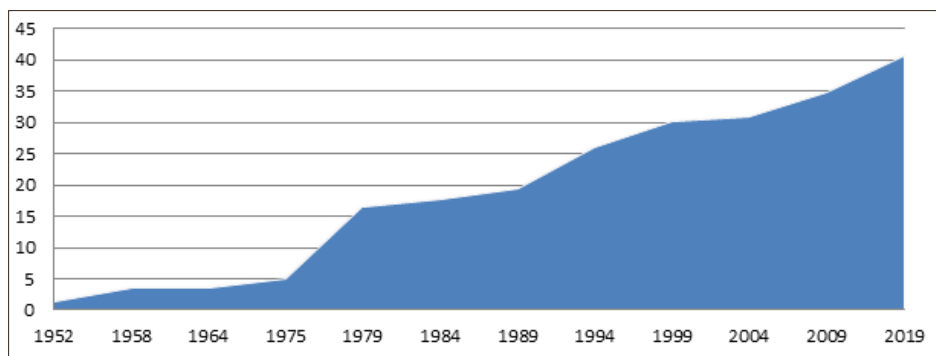


Figure 2. Percentage of women in European Parliaments

Source: own research based on: Women in the European Parliament (infographics), Europarl.europa.eu. 2020.

Representations of women in the European Parliament are above the world average in national parliaments and above the EU average for national parliaments.

The number of women holding senior positions in the European Parliament is also growing. In the current ninth parliamentary term, 8 of the 14 vice presidents are women, as well as 12 of the 22 committee chairs.

It should be noted that in 2019, a woman became the President of the European Commission for the first time. Thus, on July 16, 2019, the European Parliament supported the candidacy of Ursula von der Leyen for President of the European Commission.

At the moment, each country is represented by a different number of deputies, so we note the quantitative ratio between men and women.

In particular, a number of countries have parity in the representation of women and men in the European Parliament, for example France is represented by 39 women and 40 men, the Netherlands has 14 women and 15 men, and Denmark is represented by 7 members of each sex. Most countries in the European Parliament have a predominant representation of men, among MEPs from Eastern Europe, where this imbalance is particularly pronounced. For example, Romania is represented by 27 men and 6 women, the Czech Republic has 14 male deputies and 7 women, respectively.

Among all countries, Cyprus stands out, which has 100% male representation in the European Parliament, in particular, there are 6 deputies from Cyprus. The only country with a female majority among its deputies is Sweden.

Consider the situation in the national parliaments of the European Union. For our study, we use statistics from the European Institute for Gender Equality (Eige.europa.eu 2020).

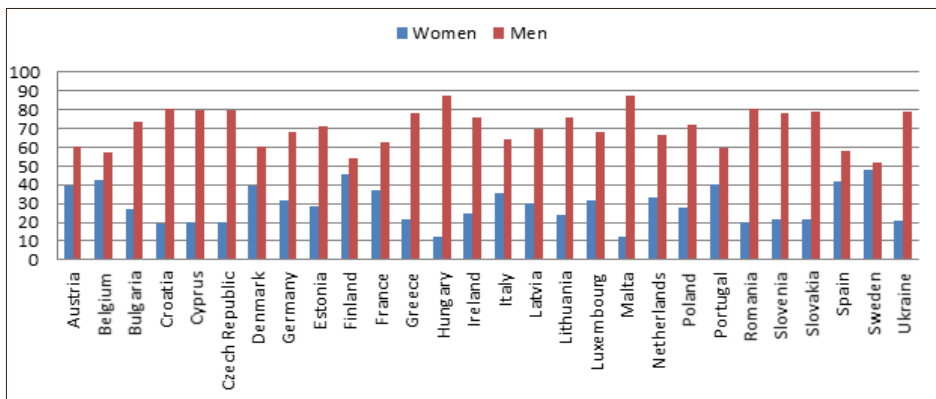


Figure 3. Men and women in the parliaments of the EU and Ukraine

Source: own research based on: National parliaments, Eige.europa.eu. 2020.

In the national parliaments of the EU, the share of women averages 29.5%, the global figure for national parliaments is 24.5% of the total number of women (Archive.ipu.org 2019). For comparison, the Ukrainian parliament after the early elections in 2019 includes 21% of women. Among the countries of the European Union, Belgium (42.4%), Spain (41.8%), Finland (46%) and Sweden (48.3%) have the largest female representation in their legislative bodies.

The lowest female representation (12.1%) in the parliaments of countries such as Hungary and Malta. The number of women deputies in the national parliaments of Eastern European countries is insignificant: Romania (19.8%), Croatia (19.2%), the Czech Republic (20.4%), Slovakia (21.3%), Slovenia (21.4%).

As for the leaders of national parliaments, in most EU countries and Ukraine, the leaders of parliaments, both unicameral and bicameral, are men. As an exception,

women are the leaders of parliaments in Bulgaria and Latvia. However, in several countries that have a bicameral parliament, there is gender parity among the leadership of the parliament, the head of one of the chambers is a woman, the head of the other chamber is a man. A similar balance is present in the legislatures of Spain, Belgium, Italy, Poland and the Netherlands.

In his study Manon Tremblay analyzes the factors that affect the performance of women's representation in parliaments. The researcher identifies socio-economic and political factors. Socio-economic factors include the level of women's education, the number of women with higher education, the level of women's earnings and the level of poverty.

Political factors, in addition to mechanisms of direct influence (quotas) include such factors as the beginning of active political activity of women (the right to participate in elections and the filling of parliament with women), the characteristics of the electoral system, the number of parties represented in parliament (Tremblay 2007).

In the publication "Women in Parliament. Beyond Numbers" the authors explore the difficulties that women face in political activity.

In particular, Nadiya Shvedova singles out factors that can be obstacles to women's participation and politics. These include a lack of coordination and support between women-deputies and other NGOs; lack of large-scale training for women focused on leadership; lack of quota reserves (Shvedova 2005).

Richard E. Matland emphasizes the importance of political parties, according to the researcher, parties in most European countries are the key to the political advancement of women (Matland 2005).

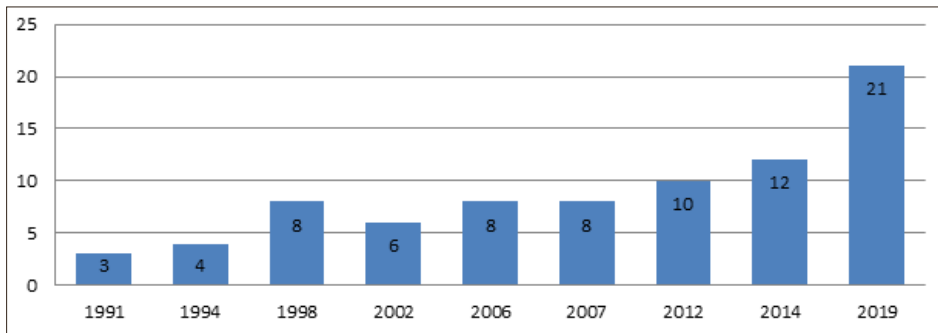


Figure 4. Percentage of women in the Parliament of Ukraine by years

Source: Women's participation in Ukrainian politics, Zakharova Olena, Anatoliy Oktyusyuk, Svitlana Radchenko. 2017

As for the Ukrainian parliament, the number of women deputies in the Verkhovna Rada has been steadily increasing since the beginning of Ukrainian parliamentarism. It is also worth noting that the electoral system underwent changes: first there was a majority system, then a mixed system, then a proportional system, and finally in 2012 the elections were held again under a mixed proportional-majority system (Zakharova, Oktyusyuk and Radchenko 2017).

The system of proportional representation proved to be more effective for gender parity. For example, during the 2014 elections, 51 women deputies were elected in the national constituency (20%), and 2 women were elected in the majority constituencies, i.e. 1% of the total number of elected deputies in the majority constituencies.

As for the leadership of the Ukrainian parliament, it should be noted that until 2014, no woman held the position of Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada or his Deputy. After the early parliamentary elections in 2014, women became deputy chairmen of parliament three times.

In European governments, the ratio of women to men is, on average, similar to that in parliaments. Thus, the average percentage of women in governments is 28.8. However, the countries of Central and Western Europe do not have the same gender parity as expressed in the legislature. In Sweden and Finland, women make up the majority in governments, the Finnish government consists of 12 women and 7 men, and the Swedish government consists of 12 women and 11 men, respectively (Eige.europa.eu 2020).

At the same time, women are in the minority in the governments of Greece, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Croatia, Romania, Malta and Cyprus. That is, there is a relationship between the representation of women in parliament and their number in government. This is especially true in the Scandinavian and Eastern European countries.

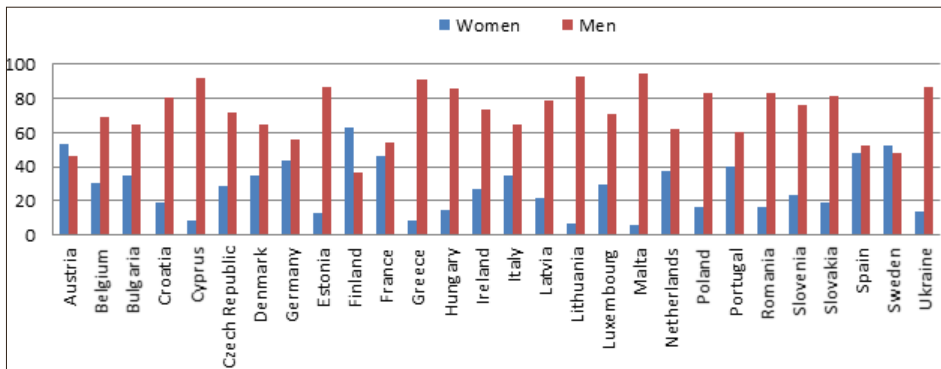


Figure 5. Men and women in the governments of the EU and Ukraine

Source: own research based on: National parliaments, Eige.europa.eu. 2020

Regarding the representation of women and men in local authorities, the gender composition of local councils together with local mayors is considered. There is a similar situation as in national parliaments, the share of women in the European Union on average at the level of local councils is 28.7% of the total number of deputies and mayors (Eige.europa.eu 2020).

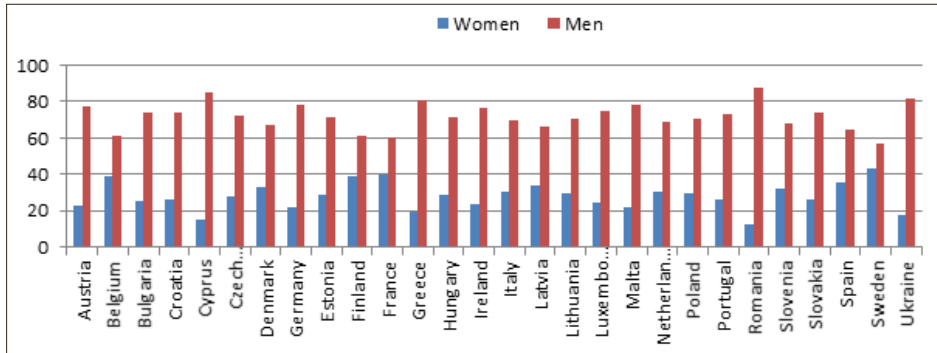


Figure 6. Men and women in local councils of the EU and Ukraine

Source: own research based on: National parliaments, Eige.europa.eu. 2020

Women’s representation is traditionally high in Finland and Sweden, as well as in France and Belgium. Men are most prevalent in Greece, Romania, Cyprus and Germany.

Regarding Ukraine, we can use the data of the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, which analyzed the results of the 2015 local elections in the cities-regional centers and the city of Kyiv (Committee of Voters of Ukraine 2015). Thus, 969 male deputies and 214 female deputies were elected to 22 city councils, thus, the average level of female representation in local councils was 18.1%.

The percentage of women elected to local councils of Ukraine does not correspond to the representation of women as candidates, because 32.1% of women took part in the elections.

As for the regional councils, the available information allows to single out 19 member states of the European Union that have regional councils similar to regional councils in Ukraine. The level of representation of women and men in the regional councils of European countries as of 2020 is correlated as 30.7% of women to 69.3% of men (Eige.europa.eu 2020).

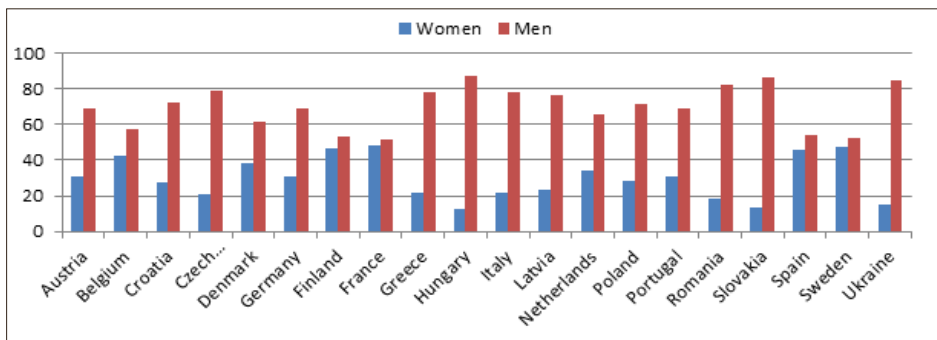


Figure 7. Men and women in EU regional councils

Source: own research based on: National parliaments, Eige.europa.eu. 2020

True gender parity can be seen in the regional parliaments of countries such as Sweden (47.6% of women and 52.4% of men, respectively), Finland (46.5% and 53.5%), France (48.1% and 51.9%). The least represented women are in the regional assemblies of Romania (18% and 82% of men), Slovakia (13.7% of women) and Hungary (12.5% of women).

As for Ukraine, in the 2015 local elections, 1,422 male deputies and 252 female deputies were elected to regional councils. The ratio of men to women was 85% and 15%, respectively. Thus, in comparison with the countries of the European Union, Ukraine has one of the lowest representation of women in regional councils.

In general, as a result of the 2015 local elections, gender equality rates in Ukraine's regional councils improved compared to previous elections, when women received 12% of the vote. However, as in the situation with city councils, this result does not coincide with the number of women candidates in the elections to regional councils, as 29.8% of women and 70.2% of men took part.

The level of gender representation in the elected authorities of European countries influences the place of these countries in specialized rankings, such as the Gender Development Index and the Gender Gap Index. Thus, in the Gender Development Index, the last places among the EU countries are occupied by Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania.

Consider the reasons for gender parity in the Scandinavian countries. Norway is not a member of the European Union, but the study of gender equality in the Nordic countries usually focuses on three countries: Sweden, Finland and Norway. Although Denmark is represented in our study as a member state of the European Union, it has indicators in all parameters above the average European level, but lower than in Finland and Sweden.

Scandinavian countries traditionally have a high level of the Human Development Index (HDI). Thus, in the HDI ranking published in 2019, Norway has the best indicator in the world, Sweden ranks 8th, Denmark and Finland are in 11th and 12th place, respectively (United Nations Development Programme 2019).

Scandinavian countries are also in the lead in the rankings, where the gender component is used as the main one. Thus, in the index of the gender gap (Global Gender Gap Report), published in 2019, the first place is occupied by Iceland, followed by Norway, Finland, the fourth place is occupied by Sweden. For comparison, Ukraine ranks 59th. The index itself includes indicators such as economic participation and opportunities, educational attainment, health, and political opportunities. A separate rating is also formed for each indicator. In the ranking of countries by political empowerment (Political Empowerment), Iceland leads, followed by Norway, Finland in fourth place, Sweden in ninth place (World Economic Forum 2020).

Thus, the gender composition of the parliaments and governments of the Scandinavian countries correlates with the high performance of these countries in world rankings.

The reason for gender equality in the Scandinavian countries is the emancipation of women, the active phase of which began in the early twentieth century. Active expansion of women's rights was achieved during the twentieth century in the socio-economic and private spheres. For example, Sweden and Finland were the

first in Europe to expand women's rights in family planning, including the liberalization of abortion legislation. In the Scandinavian countries, the pay of men and women has been equalized at the legislative level.

Researchers identify factors that have contributed to the involvement of women in the political process. Thus, in 1907, Finnish women were the first in Europe and the third in the world to receive passive and active suffrage to participate in the first parliamentary elections. This was preceded by the acquisition by Finland of broad autonomy within the Russian Empire and the formation of a unicameral parliament in 1906. However, women were given the right to run in local elections in 1917, after Finland declared independence. In Norway, women received the right to vote in 1913, Swedish women received this right in 1919. Danish women were given the right to vote in the 1908 municipal elections, and they were eligible to vote in the 1915 parliamentary elections.

Researcher Carrie Melby emphasizes that the reforms of marriage legislation, which were carried out in the Scandinavian countries in the 1920s, contributed to the establishment of equality. As a result of the reforms, the institution of marriage was modernized towards equality between husband and wife, which in turn strengthened women's rights (Melby 2008).

According to N. Stepanova, the successful promotion of gender equality in the Scandinavian countries is due to the fact that the above states do not regard the emancipation of women as a marginal movement, but the issue of emancipation of women has long been considered a problem of society (Stepanova 2003).

Ensuring equal rights and opportunities for women and men is one of the priorities. The combination of a dynamic market economy and state regulation of the social sphere has allowed the Scandinavian countries to make the greatest progress in solving this problem more than anywhere else in the world. According to the researcher, it is due to the high standard of living that a good material base has been created to improve the socio-economic situation of women, which in turn has simplified the integration of women into socio-political life.

Mary Taigen and Hege Skjeie emphasize that gender parity in the Nordic countries is determined not so much by institutional regulation and the application of quotas as by the policy of equal rights and opportunities pursued in those countries. As a result, women were given the opportunity to engage in social and political activities, which led to high rates of women's involvement in the political sphere (Teigen and Skjeie 2017).

Later, the process of women's political emancipation was rather slow, but intensified in the 1960s due to the intensification of the feminist movement and women's participation in political parties.

As for gender quotas, in Norway they are used by political parties, both in internal party elections and in parliamentary elections. In particular, in Sweden, the Socialist Party has been using quotas since the 1970s, the Labor Party since the mid-1980s, and other parties began using quotas in the 1990s or later. In Sweden and Finland, quotas have been supported by most parties since the 1990s.

In the 1970s, equality councils were set up in Norway, and later in Finland and Sweden, to act as advisory bodies to governments and parliaments. Special

institutions of control were established to oversee the implementation of gender equality policy. Such institutions include the creation of a Gender Equality Ombudsman, the introduction of a ministerial position on gender equality, and the establishment of special departments or divisions within ministries.

In addition to the institutional regulation of equality, legislative regulation was involved, and relevant anti-discrimination legislation was adopted in the Scandinavian countries during the 1970s and 1980s.

For example, the Norwegian Equal Status Act, adopted in 1978, allows the application of positive actions (quotas). Finnish legislation on gender equality, adopted in the 1980s and 1990s, introduced quotas that provided for at least 40% representation of each gender. The quota applied to employees of state departments, members of state and municipal committees of commissions and working groups. In Sweden, a phased action plan was adopted in 1988, according to which the share of women in committees and commissions was to increase first to 30%, then to 50%.

Means of improving the representation of women in the Nordic countries include statistical reports, procedural and incentive measures. During the 1980s and 1990s, gender equality measures were taken in the Nordic countries, including legislation and an action plan to achieve gender equality, and institutional mechanisms were in place to ensure gender equality.

Thus, the liberalization of legislation, the formation of civil society together with the development of the women's movement in the Scandinavian countries contributed to women's participation in political life, and as a result contributed to a significant representation of women in the legislature and executive, and thus gender parity.

In contrast to the countries of Northern Europe with a significant representation of women in politics, the states of Eastern and Central Europe stand out, where in general, women are less represented in elected authorities.

If we compare the gender composition of different authorities: national parliaments, governments, regional councils, and local councils, countries usually, with some exceptions, do not have an absolute gender disparity. For example, among the national parliaments of the European Union, women are underrepresented in the legislatures of Croatia, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. But in the local councils of these countries the level of women's representation is close to the European average.

The exceptions are European Union countries such as Greece, Cyprus and Malta, where women's participation in politics is low at all levels.

However, if for each body of power to allocate a group of countries with the smallest female representation, then in this group will be the states of the Eastern European region.

Thus, if in the countries of Northern Europe there is equal representation of women and men, ie there is gender parity, then in the political sphere, in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe of Europe women are less represented at all levels of political life.

Despite the differences, the countries of the Eastern European region have a number of common features.

In Eastern European countries, women have a fairly high level of education, the rate of education of women at the level of men, the life expectancy of women is even ahead of men. The constitutions of these states prohibit gender discrimination, and there are no formal barriers to women's participation in political life. However, the representation of women in the socio-political sphere remains generally lower than the European average.

Eastern European countries have made international commitments to gender equality, including ratifying the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

According to the analytical publication *Gender-Based Legislation in Central and Eastern Europe*, the declarative nature of the legislation does not automatically provide for appropriate mechanisms to enable women to participate equally in political life and to hold political leadership positions at all levels. Traditional views on the distribution of roles on the basis of gender remain widespread in society (Nowakowska et al. 2003).

One can compare the state of gender equality in the political sphere of Ukraine and Poland. In the national parliaments of Ukraine and Poland, the balance between men and women is smaller than the average in the European Union. The percentage of women is 27.8% in Poland and 21% in Ukraine, respectively.

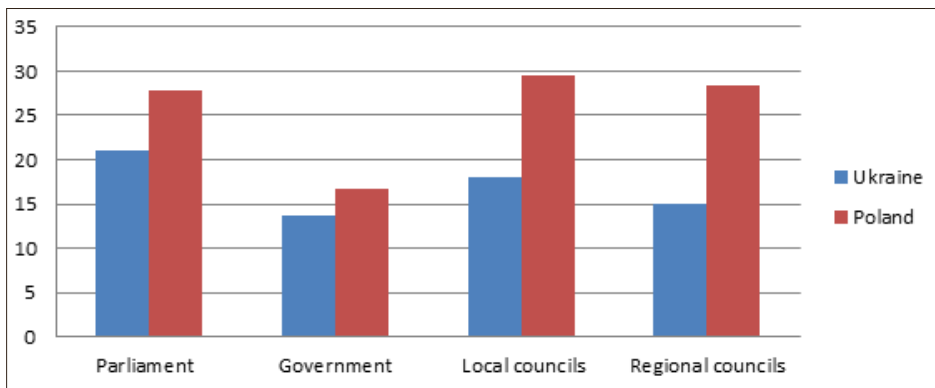


Figure 8. Percentage of women in the authorities of Ukraine and Poland

Source: own research based on: National parliaments, Eige.europa.eu. 2020

Women are better represented in the Polish government and local councils. For example, in the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine there are 3 women out of 22 members of the Cabinet, in the Government of Poland there are 4 women out of 24 government officials. Despite the fact that a year ago, in 2019, women made up a third of the Ukrainian Cabinet of Ministers.

Thus, in the future it may be interesting to study the common experience of both countries, in particular the experience of applying mechanisms for gender equality and legislation.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn. The situation in the European Parliament is gradually approaching gender parity. Accordingly, the number of women in the European Parliament has been increasing regularly since the first elections to the European Parliament. The largest percentage of women in the European Parliament of the current composition, elected in 2019.

There are several trends in the elected authorities and governments of the European Union. First, in Northern Europe, the level of women's representation is high, i.e. there is gender parity. The reason for this is the early emancipation of women in the early twentieth century; application of legislative regulation, institutional mechanisms and positive measures during the 70-80s of the XX century; achieving a high standard of living and the formation of civil society, which led to increased political participation of women.

Second, the representation of women in government in Central and Eastern Europe is slightly lower than in Central Europe. The reason for this is the traditional view of the distribution of roles on the basis of gender, when politics is a purely male affair. The lower standard of living in the countries of the former socialist camp is also important, which in turn does not contribute to the development of the middle class and civil society.

Thirdly, the legislation of all European Union countries does not discriminate or prevent women from participating in political life. Given the absence of formal barriers, it can be concluded that mechanisms to ensure gender equality should be used to increase women's political presence and proximity to gender parity.

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The Issue of the Ratio of Women and Men in Central and Local Government: the European Union and Ukraine

Abstract

Gender mainstreaming is an integral part of the process of building a democratic society, including in the political sphere. In order to draw conclusions about gender equality in the political sphere, it is necessary to constantly investigate the current situation. An indicator of gender equality in the political sphere is the representation of women and men in the governmental institutions. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the gender structure of central and local authorities in the European Union.

The aim of the paper is to analyse the representation of women and men in elected authorities and governments of the European Union and Ukraine. The author explored the participation of men and women in the European Parliament, national parliaments of European countries, national governmental authorities, regional and local parliaments of the EU and Ukraine.

The gender structures of different authorities were compared. The countries with gender equality in the political sphere and the countries with the largest imbalances were identified.

The author analysed the factors that contributed to the establishment of equality in countries with indicators as close as possible to gender balance (Scandinavian countries). Among such factors the most interesting are: emancipation of women; high level of social development; institutional factors and legislation as incentives. A comparison of the gender structures of the central executive and legislative bodies and local councils of Ukraine and Poland was made.

Key words: political sphere, central and local authorities, gender balance, gender equality, gender democracy, European Union, Ukraine