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Women in Leadership: Women's representation in policy- and decision-making

Women's leadership in decision-making in the ECE region

Note prepared by UNDP[1]

Summary

   The Economic and Social Council in its Resolution 2018/8 encouraged the United Nations regional commissions to undertake a regional review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action to assess progress made towards the achievement of the goals of gender equality, and the linkages to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. These reviews will feed into the global review at the sixty-fourth session of the Commission on the Status of Women in 2020. One of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action is women in power and decision-making.

   The focus of the present note is the advancement of women in the ECE region as decision-makers in political and public spheres and in the private sector, which is of critical importance to sustainable development.

   Over the last five years, countries in the ECE region have made strides in increasing women's participation in decision-making in politics, public administration and the private sector. But progress has been modest and varies across countries. Longstanding challenges persist in adopting and implementing quotas in politics and on corporate boards, reducing gender disparities in access to election funding, and addressing unequal distribution of domestic and care responsibilities, and occupational segregation by gender, among others. In recent years, progress towards gender equality has been further hampered by emerging challenges, such as the tightening of the fiscal space following the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of populist and right-wing movements which, combined with women's growing visibility, have brought about a backlash against gender equality and women's rights. These factors underscore the substantial challenges that remain to women's greater participation of women in all spheres of decision-making, which is vital to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

   This note describes the main trends in women's representation in parliamentary and other political positions, in public administration, the security sector, the judicial branch, and

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[1] This note has been prepared by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Istanbul Regional Hub, in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE).

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in the private sector. It discusses the extent to which progress has been in line with the SDGs, highlights the main challenges and concludes with proposals for priority actions.

Contents

I. Introduction

1.   The empowerment of women as decision-makers is of critical importance to sustainable development. Gender-balanced decision-making is a matter of justice, responsive governance and respect for human rights. Moreover, mounting evidence demonstrates that women's participation in leadership positions in politics, as well as public and private sectors benefits economies and contributes to the creation of inclusive societies.

2.   In the countries that have reached a critical mass of women in elected bodies, parliaments have been more likely to adopt inclusive social and economic policies and legislative frameworks.[2] In the private sector and the corporate world, companies with the critical mass of women leaders have performed better than companies led solely by men.[3]

3.   Beyond increasing the size of their ranks, however, critical acts that strengthen women's decision-making capacity and enhance the impact of their presence in decision-making positions have been essential to promoting women's advancement and achieving gender balance not only in the representation but also in the dynamics of social power.[4],[5]

4.   Women's engagement in decision-making thus vitally affects progress towards achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls and the SDGs.

5.   However, women continue to be under-represented in decision-making positions in politics, public administration, private sector and academia and their impact on policymaking has been uneven. Persistent challenges include barriers to the adoption and implementation of quotas in politics and on corporate boards, gender disparities in the access to election funding, unequal distribution of domestic and care responsibilities, and occupational segregation by gender, among others. In recent years, progress has been further hampered by the tightening of the fiscal space following the 2008 financial crisis and the rise of populist and right-wing movements. These, combined with women's growing visibility in decision-making, have brought about a backlash against gender equality and women's rights.

6.   Wide coalitions between civil society, gender equality advocates, political party representatives, government officials at all levels, the private sector, and international organizations are necessary to achieve equality between women and men. They are a healthy sign of political maturity and democratic governance. Experience in the region shows that such coalitions can be especially effective when working through parliaments to adopt gender-responsive legislation, allocate funding for its implementation, monitoring its results, and sending a message to other stakeholders that gender equality needs to be prioritized. Engaging parliaments, their committees and women's caucuses, and the leadership of political parties as critical actors, as well as broad civic coalitions, is key to furthering progress on gender equality and changing cultural norms and attitudes.

7.   This note covers the broad patterns of women's leadership in decision-making in the 56 countries of the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) region[6] and documents key recent developments, focusing mainly on post 2013 developments.

8.   It first identifies the main trends in the ECE region as they pertain to women's participation in decision-making in elected and non-elected positions in political and public sector bodies, and in the private sector. It examines the progress made over the last five years

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[2] Asiedu, E., C. Branstette, N.Gaekwad-Babulal, and N. Malokele (2018), "The Effect of Women's Representation in Parliament and the Passing of Gender-Sensitive Policies," paper presented at the 2018 meetings of the American Economic Association, Philadelphia.

[3] Wiley, C. and M. Monllor-Tormos (2018), "Board Gender Diversity in the STEM&F Sectors: The Critical Mass Required to Drive Firm Performance," Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 25(3), pp. 290–308.

[4] Rauum, N. C. (2005), "Gender Equality and Political Representation: A Nordic Comparison," *West European Politics*, 28:4, pp. 872–897.

[5] Dahlerup, D. (2001), "Women in Political Decision making: From Critical Mass to Critical Acts in Scandinavia" in: *Gender, Peace and Conflict*, eds. Skjelsbæk, I. and D. Smith, Sage Publications.

[6] UNECE geographical scope, Member States and Member States Representatives. www.unece.org/oes/nutshell/region.html.

and highlights areas where key challenges lie. It then identifies priority actions that need to be taken to sustain and accelerate progress towards achieving gender equality in decision-making.

II. Main trends and progress in the ECE region

A. Women in political/public positions

9.   Women's representation in elected public office positions is a strategically important entry point that can help to shape gender-responsive social and economic policy agendas across a range of development priorities. The key argument is that governments are more responsive and effective when the composition of the institutions of government reflects the composition of the society.

10.   Several countries in the ECE region have taken notable steps aimed at raising women's numbers and developing their capacity as elected representatives. They have done this through the introduction of gender-aware rules and procedures in parliaments, temporary special measures, including gender quotas and parity measures, intensive capacity development models for women, women's networks, and legislative frameworks for gender equality.[7]

11.   As of August 2019, 14 countries of the 56 ECE countries had a woman head of state or head of government. These include: Austria (Head of Government), Canada (Head of State), Croatia (Head of State), Denmark (Head of State and Head of Government), Estonia (Head of State), Georgia (Head of State), Germany (Head of Government), Iceland (Head of Government), Norway (Head of Government), Republic of Moldova (Head of Government), Romania (Head of Government), Serbia (Head of Government), Slovakia (Head of State) and United Kingdom (Head of State).

12.   In 2019, women made up more than 30 per cent of ministers in only 14 ECE countries and more than 50 per cent in only five, ranging from only zero per cent in Lithuania and Azerbaijan to 64.7 per cent in Spain.[8] The proportion of women ministers was the lowest in the countries of South Caucasus, Central Asia and Western CIS and the highest in the Nordic countries. Between 2013 and 2018, the number of women ministers in ECE countries increased on average only by five percentage points, from 21 to 26 per cent.[9]

13.   Some countries, especially those in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, made considerable gains. In Albania, the share of women in the cabinet surpassed parity in 2019 reaching 53.3. per cent, up from only 7 per cent in 2013. In Estonia it increased from eight to 35.7 per cent. However, in other countries progress has stalled or was reversed. For example, in Kazakhstan, women's share of cabinet seats fell from 16 per cent to 5.6 per cent during this period and in Belgium it dropped by 17 percentage points from 42 to 25 per cent.

14.   There are significant gender differences in the portfolios held by ministers, with women more likely given portfolios in health, education or social affairs, and men in foreign and internal affairs, defence and justice.[10] For example, as of July 2019, women headed ministries of defence in only eight countries: Albania, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and North Macedonia.

15.   When it comes to the proportion of women in national parliaments, as of 2019, this number varied from 12 per cent in Liechtenstein and Malta to 50 per cent in Andorra. Between 2013 and 2019, it increased in at least 42 countries of the ECE region although the

[7] UNDP (2016), "Strengthening Women's Political Participation: An Analysis of the Impact of Women's Parliamentary Networks in Europe and Central Asia."

[8] World Economic Forum (2018), The Global Gender Report; IPU/UN (2019).

[9] IPU (2019), IPU/UN Women Map on Women in Politics 2019.

[10] European Parliament Research Service (EPRS) (2019), "Women in Politics in the EU: State of Play."

overall average rose only by four percentage points, from 24 to 28 per cent.[11] Only 20 countries have reached or surpassed the 30 per cent share of women, the internationally agreed minimum target set in 1990 and emphasized in the Beijing Platform for Action in 1995 and later in the SDGs.[12]

16. Temporary special measures have had a notably positive effect in some countries. For example, in Serbia, 38 per cent of parliamentarians were women in 2019, compared with 22 per cent a decade earlier. This was a result of a combination of legislated candidate quotas introduced in 2004 and a ranking rule of 2011 that required at least every third candidate to be from the less represented sex.[13] Similar reforms in Armenia contributed to a three-fold rise in women's representation from eight to 24 per cent during the last decade.[14] In Ukraine, recent parliamentary elections resulted in the election of the largest number of women MPs in the country's history – a rise from 12 to 20 per cent from 2014 to 2019. The new Electoral Code of 2019 that introduced a proportional system with open lists with a 40 per cent gender quota can be expected to build on this trend.

17. However, some countries that have been undertaking substantial reforms in governance nevertheless have had persistently low numbers of women in parliament, such as Georgia with women's representation at 15 per cent. Notably, among the European Union countries, in addition to Malta and Liechtenstein, women hold less than 20 per cent of seats in parliament in three other countries: Cyprus, Greece and Hungary. Such low numbers of women's representation observed among EU countries underscore that quota systems in themselves may not be sufficient in raising women's representation in parliaments.[15]

18. Furthermore, several other countries experienced reversals. These include Uzbekistan, where between 2013 and 2019, the percentage of women MPs fell from 22 to 16 per cent and Kyrgyzstan where it decreased from 23 to 19 per cent. In the EU, this percentage fell in nine countries, with the biggest drops in Slovenia, where it decreased from 32 to 24 per cent, and in the Netherlands, where it fell from 39 to 31 per cent.

19. In a number of countries, the changes in women's representation in legislative bodies have been accompanied by the adoption of innovative approaches for advancing gender-aware initiatives. The establishment of women's parliamentary networks has been one such approach. These networks have made tangible contributions by advocating for equal representation of women and men in elected office through temporary special measures, engaging in public awareness-raising on policy-related issues, facilitating cross-party cooperation and agreement on legislative priorities, and promoting gender-sensitive legislative reforms.

20. For example, in Finland, a network of women members of Parliament acts as a forum in which they can discuss political issues that affect women, in particular irrespective of party lines. The network is coordinated by the Employment and Equality Committee and works to realize equality between men and women, promote women's rights and introduces a gender perspective to legislative work. In addition, it cooperates with women MPs from other countries.[16]

21. An extensive advocacy campaign conducted by an informal parliamentary caucus of women deputies in Kyrgyzstan resulted in the adoption of a bill on reproductive rights in 2015, introduction of penalties in 2016 for religious marriage of minors, and the adoption of a bill on preventing family violence. In Serbia, the Women Parliamentary Network succeeded in getting several pieces of legislation for gender equality enacted. These include the adoption of amendments to the Law on Police combating violence against women and domestic

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[11] IPU (2019a), "Women in Parliament in 2018, the year in review."

[12] IPU (2019), "Percentage of Women in National Parliaments," 1 June 2019 ranking.

[13] Nacevska, E. and S. Lokar (2017), "The Effectiveness of Gender Quotas in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia" Teorija in Praksa, January, pp. 394–412.

[14] Gender Quotas Database (2019).

[15] Nacevska and Lokar (2017).

[16] Parliament of Finland (2019), "Networks, friendship groups and cooperation groups."

violence and the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting into the 2016 Budget Law.[17] Similarly, the Women's Political Network in Montenegro established in November 2017 has been instrumental in promoting parliamentary measures to advance gender equality (see Box 1).

Box 1. Women's Political Network in Montenegro

The Women's Political Network (WPN) in Montenegro was established in November 2017 as a result of a long-term process of women's political empowerment, financed by the European Union, with support from UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights.[*] The network represents a coalition of women from 16 political parties who have joined forces to improve the status of women in society, increase their number in decision-making and work towards full equality between women and men.

The WPN is more than just a network advocating and striving for women's rights. In a fragile democratic context of political upheavals and frequent changes in the terms of office of politicians, having women from all political parties act in unison towards shared goals has set a new trend in political culture and dialogue in the country. Since it was set up two years ago, members of the network have come to be seen as role models of political leadership, with frequent appearances on television and outreach on social media.

Part of its success lies in the fact that the network set up a core team of trainers and gender experts on specific issues. The issues identified are of common interest, on which network members have come to a minimum agreement that a) topic/initiative is a priority and b) there is consensus on the desired outcome. Strategies on how to reach objectives are discussed and agreed within the network.

Some examples of recent achievements of the WPN in Montenegro include the following:

- Adoption of the amendment of the Criminal Code to ensure that the definition of rape complies with that in the Istanbul Convention (i.e., what is considered to be rape is extended to any sexual intercourse without consent, thus including marital rape).

- Initiating changes to the Law on Protection from Violence in the Family to provide survivors with better protection and strengthen the institutional response to gender-based violence.

- Amendment of the electoral legislation to increase quotas and improve the political participation of women and allocating financial resources for political parties with more elected women.

- Advocating with 16 municipalities for the allocation of grants for women entrepreneurship in budgets for 2019, totalling 176,000 eur.

- Initiating strategic dialogues with political leaders and civil society activists in the Western Balkans to join forces in responding to ongoing backlash trends against women's rights.

[*] "Support to Anti-discrimination and Gender Equality", programme implemented by UNDP in Montenegro in partnership with the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of the Government of Montenegro and with financial support from the EU Delegation to Montenegro

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22. In cases where women's parliamentary networks do not have the power to initiate or draft legislation, they can influence legislation through other actions, such as the creation of legislative voting blocs. For example, a voting bloc comprised of 40 members of Women's

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[17] UNDP (2016), "Strengthening Women's Political Participation: An Analysis of the Impact of Women's Parliamentary Networks in Europe and Central Asia."

Caucus in the Assembly of Kosovo[18] has used its size to influence the adoption of legislation.[19]

23. Women's representation at the national level can be crucial for shaping national policies. But it is their participation in local decision-making that enables the formulation of solutions tailored to the problems specific to particular communities, providing social protection for vulnerable groups, delivering basic social services and addressing marginalization and exclusion. Importantly, promoting women's leadership at the local level can strengthen the capacity of women as leaders and serve as a pipeline for women's representation and effective engagement at the national level. In South-East Europe, the Stability Pact Gender Task Force initiated the Women Mayors Link (WML) across 12 countries. It aims at developing the capacity of women in local decision-making structures by strengthening leadership skills, promoting cooperation between women mayors and local women's networks to design projects to improve women's quality of life and facilitating the exchange of best practices.[20]

24. Evidence indicates that progress on the representation of women in municipal councils and other local area governing bodies has been modest in the ECE region overall. For example, the average proportion of women in municipal councils in 14 countries with available data grew from 26 to only 28 per cent between 2011–2015 (or latest available).[21] Of these countries, only in five did the share of women exceed 30 per cent and was as low as two per cent in Israel. Among the EU countries and Turkey, as of 2019 women's share of seats in local governing bodies ranged from only 10.7 per cent in Turkey to 46.5 per cent in Iceland, with Sweden and France being the only other countries with at least 40 per cent representation of women among municipal council members.[22]

B. Public administration, security sector, and judicial branch

25. The implementation of policies at the national and local levels lies under the purview of civil servants in public administration.[23] Women are by and large well-represented in the public sector, exceeding 50 per cent of employees in at least 22 countries of the region in 2017.[24]

26. However, their presence decreases in the upper levels of decision-making. In 2017, among the 11 countries with available data, the proportion of women exceeded 30 per cent in 10 and 50 per cent in only four countries.

27. In addition to the glass ceiling, the evidence of "glass walls" reflecting broader patterns of sectoral segregation by gender is visible in public administration as well. These patterns are in part a reflection of gender-based specialization in tertiary education. They are also an outcome of women being the primary providers of domestic and care responsibilities, which pushes women into lower remunerated sectors that offer greater flexibility and results in the predominance of women in the leadership in "soft" departments, such as health, education and culture. Even so, women have been under-represented as university heads, in 2017 averaging approximately 17 per cent among ECE countries. Women's average share remained unchanged between 2013 and 2017 with wide-ranging variation across countries. In 2017 it varied from zero per cent in Estonia to 33 per cent in Switzerland.

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[18] S/RES/1244 (1999)
[19] OSCE (2013), "A Comparative Study of Structures for Women MPs in the OSCE Region."
[20] Council of Europe (2014), "Women & Political Representation: Handbook on Increasing Women's Political Participation in Georgia".
[21] UNECE Gender Statistics (2019).
[22] EPRS (2019).
[23] UNDP (2014) Gender Equality in Public Administration: Snapshot of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.
[24] Unless noted, the data in this section comes from UNECE Gender Statistics (2019).

28.   In the typically male-dominated security and defence sectors and in peace-building, women's presence has been limited although some countries have made significant inroads in these areas. As of 2017, women in ECE countries comprised on average 18.8 per cent of the police force, with the proportion ranging from 6.2 per cent in Turkey to 38.6 per cent in Lithuania. Of the 18 countries with available data, between 2013 and 2017, 14 observed increases. In some of them, this proportion increased considerably. For example, in Israel, between 2013 and 2017 the share of women in the police force went up from 21.5 to 32 per cent, while in Lithuania, it increased from 32.5 to 38.6 per cent.

29.   Among the NATO armed forces, in 2017 women made up only 10.9 per cent of the total, despite the fact that since 2016 almost all NATO states have opened all positions in armed forces to women.[25] Moreover, little progress has been made on addressing gender-related issues while conducting military operations.[26]

30.   Women in uniform continue to face discrimination and harassment, masculine institutional cultures, lack of access to promotion and officer training, as well as to facilities, uniforms and equipment suitable for women and men. But significant progress has been achieved by the Ministries of Defence in the Western Balkans through a strong regional platform of gender equality mechanisms in the military that have worked to advance gender awareness, change policies and create a more conducive working environment for professional development of women in the military. The Regional Network of Gender Trainers has trained over 4,700 personnel in the armed forces and Ministry of Defence in the Western Balkans.[27] Another example of progress is the work of women police officers in South-East Europe to advance gender equality in policing (see Box 2).

Box 2. The Women Police Officers Network in South-East Europe

The Women Police Officers Network (WPON)[*] in South-East Europe was set up in 2012 to promote gender equality in police services in this sub-region. The network was established under the umbrella of the Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association. Two women police associations in Bosnia and Herzegovina are actively working to advance gender equality in policing.

The networks serve as platforms for networking, the exchange of experience and knowledge as well as implementation of the Guidelines for Gender Sensitive Policing with Particular Focus on Recruitment, Selection and Professional Development of Women in Police Services. The guidelines propose simple and low-cost measures to help police services to attract and retain more qualified women and advance gender equality.

The networks in Bosnia and Herzegovina have successfully advocated for the integration of women in special police force units, incorporated the curriculum on gender-based violence in the curriculum of the police academy, worked to promote policing as a profession among young women and helped to raise gender awareness among police officers.

[*]Set up with the support of UNDP / SEESAC (South-East and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons). SEESAC works to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in South-East and Eastern Europe. SEESAC functions under the mandate given to it by UNDP and the Regional Cooperation Council. http://www.seesac.org/Gender-in-Security-Sector-Reform/

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[25] NATO (2016), "Summary of the National Reports of NATO Member and Partner Nations to the NATO Committee on Gender Perspectives."

[26] OSCE (2018), "Gender in Military Operations: Guidance for Military Personnel Working at the Tactical Level in Peace Support Operations."

[27] UNDP SEESAC, in cooperation with the Ministries of Defence and the Armed Forces in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia, implemented the regional project Strengthening of Regional Cooperation on Gender Mainstreaming in Security Sector Reform in the Western Balkans (Gender Equality in the Military) from 2012–2016.

31.   Another pocket of progress has been in the area of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) control in the Western Balkans.[28] Women comprise between 14 and 29 per cent of commission members and chair one out of six commissions. As a result of women's participation and the implementation of the Gender Coach programme for SALW commissions chairs, a roadmap on SALW control for the Western Balkans developed in 2018[29] has been gender mainstreamed, envisaging measures for greater participation of women in SALW control and combatting misuse of firearms in domestic violence.

32.   The number of women mediators in ECE countries has also remained low, although several networks of women mediators have spread across the region and more women have engaged in peace processes over the past five years.[30] For example, in 2015, Sweden established the Swedish Women's Mediation Network, which became a part of a Nordic Mediation Network, consisting of women in senior positions with experience in peace buiding, diplomacy and political processes.[31] In recent years, some 35 countries in the region have developed National Action Plans (NAPs) to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325, with several now working on their second or third NAP. Albania and Armenia are two countries that most recently adopted their first NAPs to implement UNSCR 1325.

33.   On the other hand, women's representation in the judicial branch in ECE countries is on par with that of men.[32] Out of 39 countries with most recent available data (2016–2018), the proportion of women among judges was above 30 per cent in all but five and above 50 per cent in 23 countries. This proportion varied from 12 per cent in Azerbaijan to 79 per cent in Latvia. Importantly, countries with relatively low women shares made strides. For example, in Ireland, the proportion of women judges increased from 28 to 36 per cent between 2013 and 2018.

34.   Yet, once again reflecting the glass ceiling effect, the representation of women in constitutional courts tends to be much lower. Among the 30 countries with available data, as of 2017, the proportion of women exceeded 30 per cent in 17 and in no country had it reached the 50 per cent mark. The average increase from about 26 to 31 per cent between 2011–2013 and 2015–2017 conceals considerable variation.

35.   In Bulgaria, out of 12 constitutional court judges, the number of women increased from three to five between 2013 and 2017. In Italy, out of 15 constitutional court judges, the number of women rose from just one to three. On the other hand, in the Czechia, the number of women went from five to two in the 15-member constitutional court.

C.   Private sector

36.   To shift the tide, women's stronger participation in shaping and implementing public policy and legislation has to work in tandem with their engagement in decision-making in the corporate world and more generally in the private sector.

37.   In a recent study of 44 countries, 36 were found to have improved gender diversity on corporate boards since 2012. The study puts the global average of board seats held by women at 18.5 per cent, and the average for Eastern Europe at 8.5 per cent in 2016, up from 7.9 per cent in 2012.[33]

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[28] UNDP/SEESAC (2016), "Gender and SALW in South East Europe." The South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) works to strengthen the capacities of national and regional stakeholders to reduce the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons in South Eastern and Eastern Europe.

[29] See www.seesac.org/News_1/A-plan-for-a-safer-future/.

[30] UN Women (2015), "Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace."

[31] Government Offices of Sweden (2019), "Sweden's Report on Beijing +25."

[32] UNECE Gender Statistics (2019).

[33] EgonZehnder (2016), "Global Board Diversity Analysis."

38.   Another study of over 60 countries found the global average of board seats held by women in 2016 to be 15 per cent, representing a modest three per cent increase on its 2014 level. The corresponding number among Eastern European countries was 13.5 per cent. Among EU countries in the study, this number had reached 23 per cent, with France and Sweden (at 37 and 36 per cent respectively) being the closest to the 40 per cent target set for 2020 by the European Commission's Directive on promoting equality on corporate boards.[34] As of 2017, all companies in France, Italy and Norway had a minimum of three women directors on their corporate boards.[35] The three-women mark represents a critical mass after which a positive effect on a firm's financial performance is observed.[36]

39.   Women's share of top management positions has also modestly increased across the ECE region. Countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia have led the way globally in terms of women's representation in top management positions. Across this sub-region, as of 2016, 19.9 per cent of enterprises had women as top managers, with this proportion being as high as 32 per cent in Belarus and Georgia. Among EU countries in 2016, 5.6 per cent of CEO-level managers were women, up from 3.3 per cent in 2012. In comparison, the global average was 18.6 per cent.[37]

40.   Nevertheless, general patterns of occupational segregation by gender are evident in women's over-representation in support management functions, such as directors of human resources, communication, and public relations. With less exposure to core business, women's path to senior executive roles is hence more difficult.[38]

41.   Business ownership composition is another important indicator of gender balance in decision-making. According to the World Bank Enterprise Surveys that cover 27 countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the proportion of women as (co-)owners ranges from five per cent in Azerbaijan to 98 per cent in Kyrgyzstan. Over the last five years, these countries have made some progress in raising women's representation in ownership. The number of countries in which the proportion of firms with women (co-) owners reached 30 per cent went up from 20 to 25 between 2013–15 and 2017–18. But the number of countries in which women's (co-) ownership had reached 50 per cent increased from only two to 12.[39]

III.   Progress and challenges

A.   Progress in line with the SDGs

42.   The equal participation of women and men, especially at decision-making levels, is a necessary condition for inclusive and gender-responsive governance. Closing gender gaps in politics and in public and private sectors is crucial for reducing inequalities, building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels, restoring confidence in public institutions, and enhancing the sustainability and responsiveness of public policies. Increasing women's participation in decision-making can move countries closer towards achieving the vision of Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

43.   Fundamental to realizing the 2030 Agenda, including the goals for gender equality and women's participation in decision-making are SDG 5.1 to end discrimination against

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[34] Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance (2017), "Women in the Boardroom: A Global Perspective, Fifth Edition," Deloitte Global Center for Corporate Governance, December.

[35] Eastman, M. T. (2017), "Women on Boards: Progress Report 2017" MSCI, December.

[36] Wiley, C. and M. Monllor-Tormos (2018) "Board Gender Diversity in the STEM&F Sectors: The Critical Mass Required to Drive Firm Performance," *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 25(3), pp. 290–308.

[37] International Labour Organization (2018). "Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum in Eastern Europe and Central Asia." Regional Report, Bureau for Employers' Activities, Geneva, Switzerland, p.19.

[38] Grant Thornton (2016). "Women in Business: Turning Promise Into Practice". Grant Thornton International Business Report. London, United Kingdom.

[39] World Bank Gender Database (2019).

women and girls, SDG 5.2 to end all violence against and exploitation of women and girls and SDG 5.C to adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality.

44.   Target 5.5 calls specifically for ensuring women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life. Its corresponding indicators are the proportions of seats held by women in (5.5.1a) national parliaments and (5.5.1b) local governments and the proportion of women in managerial positions (5.5.2).

45.   In comparison with the rest of the world, Western European countries (including Nordic countries, Southern Europe, as well as e.g., Germany, France, Belgium) tend to score well in meeting the three indicators of SDG 5.5. Eastern European and Balkan countries have not done as well.[40]

46.   Also aligned with raising women's participation in decision-making are the goals to develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels (SDG 16.6) and to ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels (SDG 16.7). The indicators corresponding to these goals are proportions of positions in public institutions (national and local legislatures, public service, and judiciary) compared to national distributions (16.7.1) and the proportion of population who believe decision making is inclusive and responsive (16.7.2).

47.   Although some progress has been made, most ECE countries lag well behind having a gender-balanced representation of women in politics, public administration and the private sector. In instances where gender balance has been reached, such as public administration and judicial branch, women are concentrated in "soft" sectors or lower levels of decision-making.

48.   Levelling the field for women in decision-making helps countries progress towards SDG 10.3, which calls for ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard. Its corresponding indicator is the proportion of population reporting having personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the previous 12 months on the basis of a ground of discrimination prohibited under international human rights law (10.3.1).

49.   Most ECE countries have adopted anti-discriminatory legislative and policy frameworks. However, substantial work remains to ensure their practical implementation.

B.   Challenges

50.   The relatively slow and uneven progress among the countries of the ECE region underscores the presence of a complex set of persistent and emerging challenges.

51.   In the political arena, many factors constrain women's political participation and influence. Quotas' effectiveness can be limited due to the type of electoral system, the laxness of provisions, and the ideology and norms of political parties. Political parties tend to resist the significant organizational changes needed to advance gender equality within their structures. Candidate selection procedures within parties remain largely informal and opaque, often to the detriment of aspiring women candidates. Women's lower access to party resources, such as campaign funding or media time, is another obstacle to their success. Inter-party competition and ideological differences also make it difficult for women politicians to come together to propose and adopt joint legislation or policies that advance gender equality in elected office and more broadly.[41]

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[40] Ritchie, R. and M. Ortiz-Ospina (2018). "Measuring Progress Towards the Sustainable Development Goals"; https://sdg-tracker.org/.

[41] UNDP, UN Women, OSCE/ODIHR, 2017. Parliamentarians for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: report of a regional conference for Eastern Europe and Central Asia, Chisinau, October 3–4, 2017.

52.   Although many countries have adopted enabling gender-aware legal and policy frameworks, their lagging implementation has been a persistent challenge.[42] For example, in the Republic of Moldova despite the adoption of the 40 per cent quota, issues with quota implementation and the lack of an effective monitoring mechanism have been a barrier to raising women's representation. In Ukraine, despite the introduction of a 30 per cent quota, during 2015 elections, the Central Election Committee did not introduce any legal consequences on the parties that failed to comply with the quota.[43] In Armenia, despite the adoption of a quota after the 2012 parliamentary elections, MPs who used the right to withdraw were primarily women.[44]

53.   Women have also faced tighter constraints in financing their election campaigns. A 2016 analysis of women's political representation among the countries of the Eastern Partnership (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine) underscores the disadvantages that women in these countries face in funding their campaigns.[45]

54.   Existing gender patterns of specialization in tertiary education contribute to the occupational and industrial segregation that limit women's upward mobility along the decision-making ladder. Women tend to be under-represented in engineering, manufacturing and construction, and over-represented in education and health.[46]

55.   In recent years, women's increased visibility in public positions has coincided with the rise in populism and right-wing movements, contributing to a backlash in gender equality and women's rights. The backlash has amplified anti-gender rhetoric in the media and parts of public discourse and in some countries has affected policy fields, such as education, social sector support and sexual and reproductive health and rights.[47]

56.   These developments have also put the spotlight on gender-based violence as a crucial impediment to women's engagement in political and business decision-making in the ECE countries. Although both men and women can experience violence or threat of violence in politics, when targeted against women, these acts often take gender-based forms, such as sexual harassment and violence and sexist threats, exacerbated in recent years by the use of online media.[48]

57.   Recent analyses[49] based on a survey of women parliament members from Council of Europe Member States show that daily sexism and gender-based violence are systemic and widespread, hindering women's access to leadership positions and preventing them from fully engaging in political processes. As many as 85.2 per cent of surveyed women members of parliament said they experienced psychological violence in the course of their term of office, 46.9 per cent had received death threats or threats of rape or beating and 58.2 per cent stated that they had been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks. In 2016, 17 former government ministers in France issued an open statement condemning sexual harassment in French politics.[50]

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[42] Whitefield and Shabani (2017), "Obstacles to Women's Participation in Elections in Albania" UN Women.; CEDAW (2018) "Sixth Periodic Report Submitted by the Republic of Moldova under article 18 of the Convention."

[43] UNDP (2019), "Integrity and Inclusiveness of the Democratic Process in Ukraine - Analysis of Interim Research Findings in the Regions" UNDP Ukraine, February.

[44] Hovnatanyan, T. (2017), "Application of Special Temporary Measures (Quotas) in Armenia in Support of Women in Armenia: Prehistory and Assessment of Effectiveness."

[45] Council of Europe (2016), "Women's Political Representation in the Eastern Partnership Countries."

[46] Khitarishvili (2016), "Gender Dimensions of Inequality in the Countries of Central Asia, South Caucasus, and Western CIS" Background paper prepared for UNDP 2016 Regional Human Development Report for Europe and Central Asia.

[47] European Parliament (2018), "Backlash in Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights."

[48]   UNGA (2018), "A/73/301: Report of the Special Rapporteur on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: Note by the Secretary-General."

[49]   IPU (2016), "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women Parliamentarians."; IPU (2018), "Sexism, Harassment and Violence against Women in Parliaments in Europe."

[50]   UNDP and UN Women (2017), "Preventing Violence against Women in Elections: A Programming Guide."

58.   The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) contains no specific provision on violence against women in politics. However, the preamble and several articles in the Convention (articles 3, 17, 33, 34 and 40) provide sufficient scope within international normative frameworks to cover violence against women in politics as a form of gender-based violence.[51]

59.   In its 2013 General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations, the CEDAW Committee stated that "substantive progress towards the equal participation of women as candidates and voters as well as the holding of free and fair elections will not be possible unless a number of appropriate measures are taken," including ensuring that women voters and female political candidates are not subject to violence either by State or private actors (paragraph 72). The Committee has also recommended that State parties "adopt a policy of zero tolerance towards all forms of violence that undermine women's participation, including targeted violence by State and non-State groups against women campaigning for public office or women exercising their right to vote (para 73-f) (p. 13).

60.   Nevertheless, more concrete steps must be taken in order to encourage countries to formally address violence against women in politics. To date, only Finland has taken concrete measures and has prioritized this issue. In 2018, the Finnish Parliament conducted a review of gender equality in its work and issued new guidelines for preventing and addressing sexual harassment in the Parliament.[52]

61.   Despite the relaxation of the austerity measures following the 2008 financial crisis, the levels of social spending, such as dependent care spending, have remained low, contributing to women's time deficits and preventing them from advancing their professional or political careers.

62.   Women's unpaid care and domestic responsibilities are a fundamental barrier to their professional advancement. On average, women in Eastern Europe and Central Asia spend 1.6 to 6.2 more hour per day on unpaid work than men. In part as a result, women are more likely than men to withdraw from paid work or to choose lower-remunerated jobs with greater flexibility, effectively giving up career paths to senior and top managerial positions.

63.   A 2013 ILO survey explored the barriers to the advancement of women's career to senior management positions in Albania, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova and Montenegro. Unequal burden of unpaid work and family responsibilities at home ranked as the number one reason, followed by men not encouraged to take leave for family responsibilities. Other notable reasons related to unpaid work burden were the lack of flexible work solutions and the failure to implement existing gender equality policies.[53] The findings underscore the importance of introducing policy changes in public and private sectors to involve men and change the entrenched gender norms around sharing unpaid work responsibilities at home.

64.   Engaging men and changing gender stereotypes will be a necessary step for raising women's participation in decision-making. Evidence from the 2010–2014 wave of the World Values Survey conducted in 20 ECE countries reveals that on average, 44 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the view that men make better political leaders than women do.[54] This share ranged from 11 per cent in the Netherlands to 75 per cent in Uzbekistan. In eight out 20 surveyed countries, the share of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed with this view exceeded half of the respondents. Similarly, 40 per cent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the view that men make better business

[51]   UNGA (2018).

[52]   Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland (2019), "Twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995): Comprehensive national-level review."

[53]   ILO (2018).

[54]   Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. World Values Survey: Round Six – Country-Pooled Datafile Version: www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp. Madrid: JD Systems Institute.

executives than women do, this share varying from eight per cent in the Netherlands to 75 per cent in Azerbaijan. It was above 50 per cent in 10 out of 20 surveyed countries.

65.   Gaps in data and specifically in sex-disaggregated data present a challenge for tracking the progress and addressing the erosion of women's representation in decision-making. Unlike in electoral politics, the progress of women is less systematically tracked in public administration systems, with quality sex-disaggregated data not collected or published in many countries.

66.   Lack of practices, tools and monitoring mechanisms to assess the impact of women's leadership in decision-making – be it in politics or economics – is another long-term challenge for all countries.

C.   Priority actions

67.   Prioritize actions that increase women's representation in decision-making, strengthen women's capacity and enhance the impact of women's presence in decision-making positions.[55]

68.   To that end, strengthen constitutional, legislative and political frameworks that enable women's increased participation in decision-making. These include working with political leaders on institutional change towards gender-responsive parliaments and political parties and promoting gender-responsive governance.

69.   Adopt and implement temporary special measures, such as gender quotas, in elected bodies and industry boards by mandating the representation of each gender in leadership positions, greater transparency on candidate selection, and the adoption of "zipper" systems (where men and women appear alternately on candidate lists), combined with clear enforcement mechanisms (e.g., penalties for noncompliance with quota).

70.   Adopt political finance reforms to level the playing field for women and men in political processes.

71.   Work with parliaments to ensure new legislation responds to the needs and experiences of women and men and that parliamentary procedures are gender-responsive.

72.   Improve the capacities of parliaments, governments, and civil society organizations to mainstream gender equality in laws, policies, plans, and budgets.

73.   Propose gender audits of political parties across the political spectrum, to ensure that parties formulate and implement gender action plans which promote gender equality within party structures, activities and beyond.

74.   Multiply opportunities for collaboration with parliamentary women's caucuses, women leaders and champions of gender equality, and the broader women's movement, in regional or sub-regional groups, as initiated in the Western Balkans by the Women's Political Network in Montenegro.

75.   Adopt other measures, such as voluntary targets for the expected representation of each gender, reporting requirements for disclosing the gender composition of leadership in state-owned companies and political parties, and providing incentives for the disclosure of this information in the private firms, all of which have been shown to contribute to women's greater representation in decision-making positions.[56]

76.   Support women in non-traditional occupations and leadership positions through capacity development, mentoring, network-building and promoting women's right to organize, as being done by the Women Police Officers Network in South East Europe.

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[55] The priority actions have been in part drawn from UNDP (2016), OSCE (2013), ILO (2018).

[56] Sojo, V. E., R.E. Wood, S.A. Wood, and M.A.Wheeler, (2016), "Reporting requirements, targets, and quotas for women in leadership," The Leadership Quarterly, 27(3), pp. 519–536.

77.   Continue fostering the participation of women in the security sector, raising capacities among security sector personnel for mainstreaming gender perspectives and supporting measures on combatting gender-based violence.

78.   Promote work-life balance for women and men through gender-responsive policies, such as paternal leave policies in public and private sectors.

79.   Support women's engagement in tertiary education in male-dominated subjects, their entry into male-dominated sectors and their preparedness for civil service careers, such as in the areas of economics, finance and defence.

80.   Strengthen the collection and publication of sex-disaggregated data in different branches of public administration to inform programming, policy and advocacy.

81.   Address gender-based violence, especially violence against women in politics, through law enforcement and public and media campaigns. Recruit more women security personnel and establish gender desks to encourage more women to report incidents of violence against women during elections.

82.   Engage men in efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women, including in politics and during elections, as advocates and agents of change for gender equality and women's rights.

83.   Promote gender equality and women's representation in traditional and social media and engage men in combating gender-based stereotypes.

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