REPORT ON SURVEY FINDINGS OF THE CIVIL NETWORK OPORA ON PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE 2020 LOCAL ELECTIONS

Authors:

Maria Tsypyashchuk

Olha Mazayeva

Olena Rohova

Iryna Kukhta

Oleksandr Kliuzhev

Oleksandr Neberykut

Acknowledgements to Olha Aivazovska, Iryna Shvets, Olha Kotsiuruba, Mila Kutsenko

Contents

For Introduction

From October, 2020 to March, 2021, the network of civic ombudsmen for electoral rights of the Civil Network OPORA was running a survey on participation of women in the 2020 local elections, such as about the effects of the mandatory gender quota in the elections on a better access of women to decision-making.

Women represent over a half of the country's population[1]. Thus, it is obvious that they shall have an opportunity to participate in policy-making and decision-making on all levels, on par with men. However, since the time when the independent Ukraine had no mechanisms of engaging women to representative authorities, female representation in the first Ukrainian Parliament has dropped 10-fold, compared to the last Soviet Council of the Ukrainian SSR (36%), and ranged from 2.7% (the 1990 – 1994 convocation) to 11.8% (the 2014 – 2018 convocation). After the 2019 parliamentary elections, the share has grown to 20.5. We can also see a manifest reverse trend in the share of women in local self-government: the higher the council, the fewer women therein[2].

Nevertheless, the gradual increase of female representatives in the authorities stands to reason. It appeared that the general declarative provisions on equality enshrined in the Constitution of Ukraine[3] were not sufficient to ensure the equality in real life. 14 years after the declaration of independence, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine passed the Law "On Ensuring Equal Rights and Opportunities to Women and Men." It included a separate clause to regulate gender balanced participation in public and political domain.[4] In

....

1   See more at: https://cutt.ly/vcByO5K

2   You can read more in the report by Civil Network OPORA "Elections Inside-Out 3. What Defines Women Participation in Politics. Elections Inside-Out on Gender and Quotas, Sexism in Ukrainian Parliament and the Case of Finland." URL: https://cutt.ly/RcDIVIY.

3   Article 21 of the Constitution of Ukraine declares that all people are free and equal in their dignity and rights; Art. 24: equality of rights for women and men shall be provided, inter alia, by empowering women with equal opportunities to men in public, political, and cultural activities.

4   It is about Chapter III of the Law 2866-IV, which Articles 15 and 16 set the legal precepts to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and men in electoral process (at parliamentary elections, in particular) and in the area of public service and local self-government.

2012, the Parliament passed another critical framework Law "On Principles for Prevention and Combat of Discrimination in Ukraine." It provided a more comprehensive approach to the definition of discrimination, and covered public and political activities (Art. 4).

After all, it offered an impetus to more specific steps. Since 2014, political parties have been obliged to statutory set the quota, which will provide for at least 30% of women and men representation in party lists at the parliamentary elections[5]. In 2015, the updated version of the Law of Ukraine "On Local Elections" received the provision under which "the representation of individuals of the same sex in the electoral lists of candidates for local council deputies in multi-member constituencies shall be at least 30 % of the total number of candidates on the electoral list." In other words, the rule for following the gender quota is "brought down" also to the level of representative authorities in hromadas. However, even these provisions could not guarantee thorough compliance on the part of political parties. One such reason was the fact that breaking the quota rules did not entail any legal consequences for the parties, and election commissions registered electoral lists without any troubles, and admitted candidates to participate in elections. The trend was enhanced with the practices of the Central Election Commission and the courts[6].

After all, it was only upon the enforcement of the Electoral Code of Ukraine in the early 2020 that gender quota was set at 40% and made mandatory for political parties (in fact, in case it is not achieved, election commissions shall reject the registration of the entire party list). Moreover, it determined the procedure for including women and men in every five positions of the

....

5   The relevant changes were introduced to the Law of Ukraine "On Political Parties in Ukraine", the Law "On Introducing Changes to Certain Legal Acts of Ukraine to Improve the Election-Related Framework" No 709-VII of 01.02.2014.

6   See more at: https://cutt.ly/8cDPFUU

electoral list[7]. Although the dogmatic and unambiguous innovations failed to provide for the 100% compliance of political parties and election commissions with the gender quota, its impact on women engagement in the election process was apparently groundbreaking.

Civil Network OPORA decided to analyze the matter based on personal experiences of women candidates standing for the 2020 local elections.

The main body of the research is based on the qualitative analysis of replies from **290 respondents** from political parties passing the electoral threshold. OPORA developed two types of in-depth questionnaires for women candidates that had 14 general questions and additional units of questions for women candidates who failed to win the sufficient number of votes, and for women who gained the mandate in the elections. Content-wise, the questions were grouped into three units: 1) personal experience of women participation in elections; 2) internal party policies on engaging women; 3) first experience of working in the local self-government upon being elected.

Before we started the conversation, we promised to our respondents to keep them anonymous that is why we never mention their names or other personal data. At the same time, many women did not object to having their quotes included into the research description. In fact, we accumulated 290 stories of women about their personal experience of political participation. For 75% of them, it was a new stage in life as they stood in elections for the first time.

Find below the summary of key findings illustrated by random quotations of women candidates. In the following chapters of the report, see more detailed findings, including their interpretation, where possible.

·······························.

7   part 7 of Art. 2020 of the Electoral Code sets: "When composing the list of candidates to the respective council, the party organization shall ensure the representation of at least 30 % of same-gender persons in the overall number of candidates to the respective council." Para one of section 9 of Article 219 foresees that during the composition of the combined and territorial electoral lists the party organization shall ensure the presence of men and women (at least two candidates of each gender) in every five positions on the list (positions 1 – 5, 6-10, etc.). Para two says: in case the party organization composes combined and territorial electoral lists with the number of candidates that is not five-fold, the final candidates on the list (from 1 to 4) shall follow the requirement to alternately include candidates of different genders on the list. Under Art. 230 of the code, territorial election commission shall reject registration of candidates for deputies included to electoral lists of local party organizations or to lists of candidates in multi-member constituencies at the relevant local elections, if the established gender quota rules (procedure for candidate nomination) were not followed.

1. Most women said the decision to stand in elections was their personal decision, while a key motivation was the willingness to change something in the community, or in the country in general.

   "In my opinion, young people do not have to stay aloof of the electoral process in Ukraine. Today, regretfully, we are lacking competent people in a city council. I ran for the 2020 elections with specific ideas about improving the community life. I am very much fond of our city, I was raised here, studied here, and now I work here; and in the future, I see myself here, too."

2. Not all women candidates were familiar with the procedures for composition of electoral lists. About 25% of them believe the decision of political parties to include them into the combined and territorial electoral lists under a certain number was fair and proper. It may imply that parties do not have transparent and clear mechanisms to compile the electoral lists. The primaries practice is an exception rather than a rule for political parties.

   "I am not aware of the criteria [to include candidates to the party list]. *I believe, it is a shortcoming of the political force because it was not transparent... I asked why they had not had any primaries but the clear explanations... have been withheld."*

3. Most women covered by the survey said they had not faced any gender induced barriers targeted against them during the election campaign. However, in some cases, their replies show distinct stereotypical attitudes on their part, on the part of their party colleagues, voters, or the immediate circle of women candidates. They also highlighted the existing barriers in access to party resources or in composing the lists, among other things.

   " The gender barrier has been smoothed."

   "Women find it easier to interact with people because they are more sincere."

   "I have not faced any challenges because of being a woman. However, women were included by the residual model. Men were ready to pay. It is obvious

that women would not make it without the quota; notwithstanding, the selection was rigorous. I was asked about how I could help. But generally, we worked on a par."

"The colleagues from the list, whatever warm their smiles might be, do not see you as a full-fledged candidate. "

"Women were restricted in [party] resources. The party is run by men."

"I think men eventually had more access to financial resources. As regards media resources, here, I believe, we had an absolutely equal access, and the party did their best to provide media support for me."

"Probably, there were equal opportunities for men and women to equally use all the resources. "

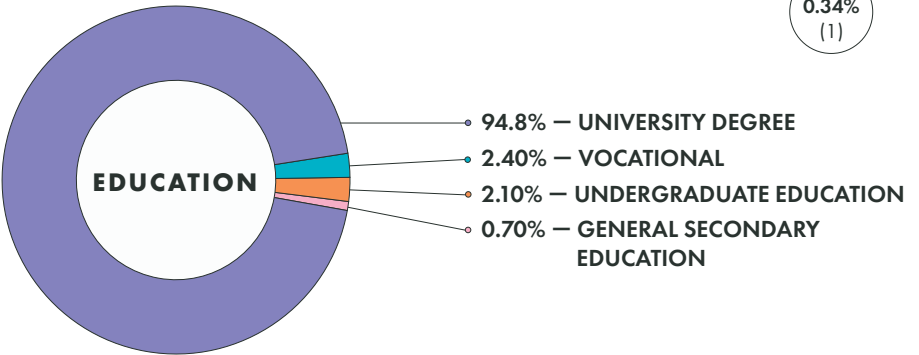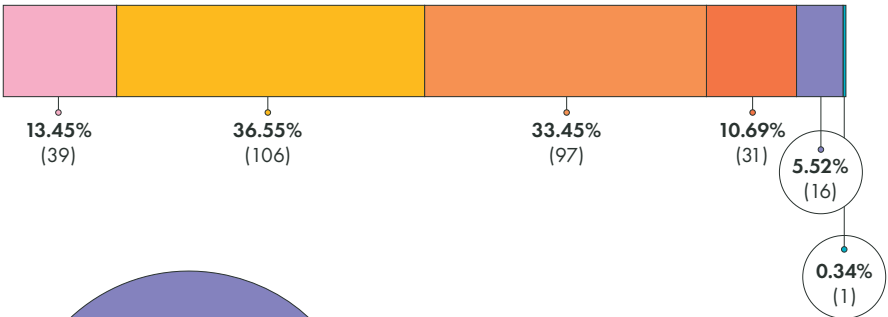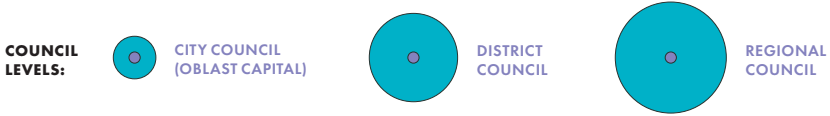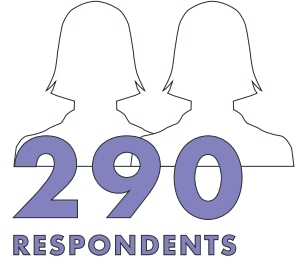# Summary, Key Findings, Recommendations

The survey was joined by women candidates from all Oblasts of Ukraine and the city of Kyiv. The party affiliation was out of focus in this research but in each Oblast respondents were sampled according to the following criteria: 4 women candidates from each local council type – city council (in the Oblast capital), regional council, and any of the district councils. Thereat, two of such women candidates failed to pass to the council, and two respondents have been elected. Where possible, within a council on one level, the survey covered women candidates from different political forces.

The survey findings show that despite the notable dynamics *(positive effect of gender quota was confirmed by over 95% of respondents)*, Ukraine still has many barriers for the true equal access and engagement of women to the election process, as well as in their efficient representative activities in local self-government bodies. The barriers include psychological, economic, social factors, low activity levels of the parties, and challenges stemming from legal regulation.

The summary analysis of the accumulated materials was administered in the context of international and national legal standards developed to ensure gender equality in political processes.

The analysis fed the recommendations that accounted for the respondents' suggestions and proposals.

General profile of respondents

24 REGIONS + KYIV

290 RESPONDENTS

COUNCIL LEVELS:

CITY COUNCIL (OBLAST CAPITAL)

DISTRICT COUNCIL

REGIONAL COUNCIL

AGE

20-29   30-39   40-49   50-59   60+   unknown

13.45% (39)

36.55% (106)

33.45% (97)

10.69% (31)

5.52% (16)

0.34% (1)

EDUCATION

- **94.8%** — UNIVERSITY DEGREE
- **2.40%** — VOCATIONAL
- **2.10%** — UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION
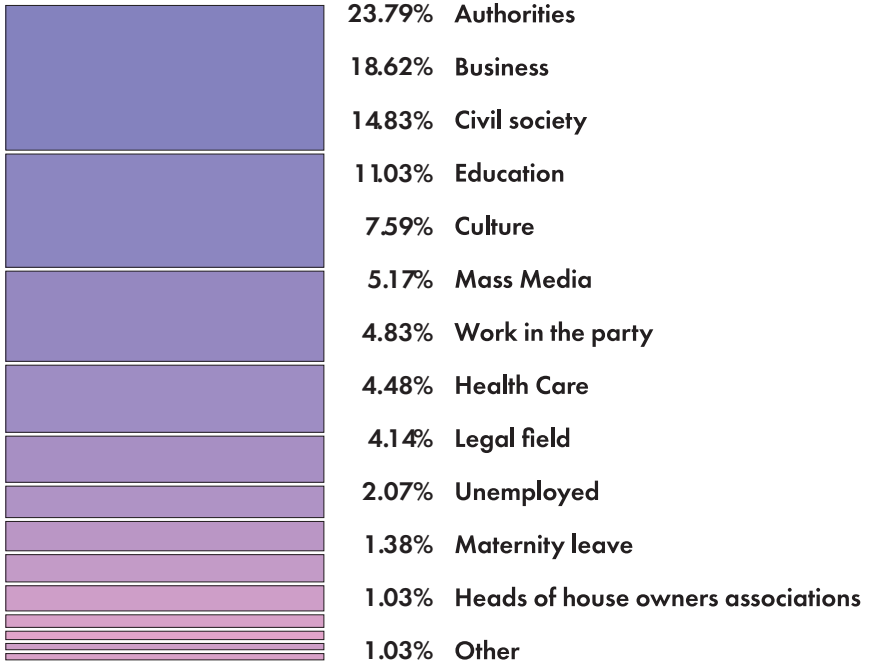- **0.70%** — GENERAL SECONDARY EDUCATION

Age – 20 to 71. Specifically, respondents aged 20-29 – 39 women; 30-39 y.o. – 106; 40-49 y.o. – 97; 50-59 y.o. – 31; 60-69 y.o. – 15; 71 y.o.– 1; 1 – did not indicate the age.

275 women candidates (94.8%) had a university degree, 7 (2.4%) – vocational and technical education or training, 6 (2.1%) – undergraduate degree, 2 (0.7%) – general secondary education.

According to their previous occupation, 69 women candidates (23.8%) have had prior work experience in local self-government or in executive authorities of different levels; 14 (4.8%) respondents have already worked in political parties; 54 women (18.6%) went to politics from business or entrepreneurial activities; 43 (14.2%) women have been engaged in volunteer, public, or charitable activities; 32 women candidates (11%) came from academia (different levels); 15 (5.2%) – from information industry (journalists, managers or employees of television and radio companies, or media resources); 22 (7.6%) – from creative industries or other kinds of activities, including also from blue-collar jobs; 13 (4.5%) women candidates used to work in health care (doctors, managers of health clinics); 12 (4.1%) – represented legal domain (lawyers, the system of free secondary legal aid); 6 (2.1%) – were unemployed at the moment of nomination; 4 (1.3%) – were on the official care leave of absence for children with disabilities, 3 (1%) – were heads of house owners associations; 2 (0.7%) – students; and 1 (0.3%) respondent was a retired citizen.

Previous employment

23.79%	Authorities
18.62%	Business
14.83%	Civil society
11.03%	Education
7.59%	Culture
5.17%	Mass Media
4.83%	Work in the party
4.48%	Health Care
4.14%	Legal field
2.07%	Unemployed
1.38%	Maternity leave
1.03%	Heads of house owners associations
1.03%	Other

Key Findings

1. Introduction of gender quota into the law certainly contributed to higher numbers of women that political parties started engaging and including into electoral lists, under certain procedure. At the same time, the number did not always imply the inclusive approach of parties, and there were cases of «technical» women candidates *(i.e., when women candidates were included on the lists in order to formally comply with the legal rule rather than to be fully engaged into the election campaign).*

2. As little as 5 respondents admitted they had been engaged as "technical women candidates" from the onset, but as many as 120 (over 41%) said they had been aware of such cases by other political forces. The discrepancy may, although not necessarily, indicate that the share of formal inclusion of women to electoral lists could be much higher in reality.

3. Most political parties do not have their internal policies or fixed practices of engaging women, no gender-oriented training programmes or inception courses to prepare women for elections, no mechanisms for systemic cooperation with women winning the representative mandate or for involving them into party-building. As a rule, party activities in the above-mentioned areas are rather sporadic and determined by electoral objectives exclusively.

4. The overwhelming majority (82%) of respondents agreed that during the 2020 local elections they had equal access to resources of the political party, the same as men, although some respondents said that women had lower access to the party financial resources.

5. Not all women candidates were aware of the procedures for the of electoral lists; and about a quarter of them believed the decisions of political parties to include them to the combined and territorial electoral lists under a certain number was fair and proper. It may indicate to the fact that parties do not have the transparent and clear mechanisms for compiling electoral lists.

6. Including women into the top ten on the list, specifically to the territorial list, will not necessarily ensure a positive result but, usually, women from the cohort winning the mandate have been included to the top ten in a combined multi-member electoral list (over 80%) and to the territorial electoral list (over 76%).

7. Over 90% women candidates denied they had been pressurized by the party during the election campaign or that they had received offers to withdraw the mandate following the announcement of election results.

On the other hand, other 10% of respondents said they felt the disrespectful or mansplaining attitudes from the party peers, as well as experienced unequal access to resources, particularly to the financial resources.

8. Most women who decided to stand in the elections were motivated by the willingness to impact critical processes in their communities in various areas; some of them considered it as a logical continuation of their public activism or other efforts, as a prospect for self-growth and new experiences. Over 12% of respondents said they made the decision because they had been suggested to run for candidacy by the political parties, as a high appreciation of their professional achievements and reputations.

9. As little as ab. 10% of women who failed to pass at the recent local elections do not plan to take another chance and stand in the future elections again. On the contrary, most of them have set their minds to continue. It indicates to the increased interest in politics on the part of women and their readiness to actively engage.

10. The absolute majority of women said they were making the decisions independently, or discussed it with their families, in order to reasonably plan child care and distribute other family duties.

11. Almost 96% of women said that access to elections was equal for men and women. Over 90% of respondents denied the facts of sexism against themselves because of participating in elections. 53 women candidates (18.3%) informed that the "black PR" was targeting against them, and 17 women (6%) felt pressure because of their age (agism) – both in cases when women candidates were young (mostly under 30), and in cases when they were over 60. At the same time, the **absolute majority of respondents (over 90%) admitted there were barriers in women' access to political activities.**

12. The illustrations provided by respondents for gender related discrimination show a rather persistent and alarming statistics of the stereotypical and sometimes hostile attitude to female politicians on account of sex or family roles.

13. Most women relate their success or failure in the electoral race and the readiness to perform the active functions in local self-government with personal factors: experience, knowledge, ability to communicate with voters, proactive performance during the election campaign and in the period between elections, personal motivation, reputation, and visibility. Others spoke of the lack of financial resources, support of the political party, its ranking, or position on the electoral list.

14. A significant majority of women candidates who failed to pass at the elections – 104 women (71.7% of 145) – support the idea of introducing independent (non-partisan) candidates on a par with party lists. However, few women actually consider the option to stand in the next elections.

15. Over a half of women candidates who won the mandate have been offered to chair the factions or commissions in local self-government bodies, although not all of them accepted. Women themselves were not active enough to actively position themselves in local self-government. Notwithstanding, even when women took the initiative they could not find support every time. At the same time, 78.6% of women (114) are satisfied with their position (role) in local self-government upon election; and 88.2% (128) women are satisfied or have the impact on the decision-making in the faction.

On the basis of the research, with account for suggestions and proposals from respondents, we developed comprehensive recommendations targeting different actors: the state actors (Parliament, Government and Ministry of Education and Science, National Council of Television and Radio Broadcasting, National Police of Ukraine) and local authorities, political parties, and the media. The recommendations are oriented towards the change of the law and its practical implementation, as well as the building and transformation of practices and activities of the authorities, mass media, and political parties.

More detailed recommendations are provided in the final chapter of the Report.

Methodology and Overview

The study was undertaken in 2 stages:

1. October – December, 2020: conducting a series of brief interviews with women candidates to city councils in region capitals or to regional councils and leaders in local party offices (16 interviews in total), sampling content analysis from local media in terms of rhetoric about women candidates at local elections (91 media mentions), analysis of party lists composition practices in line with gender quota (75 court decisions analyzed). Processing the primary survey outcomes that offered the general understanding for the scope of problems and the "sore spots".

2. January – March, 2021: upon completion of the first stage, OPORA ran a series of interviews described above. The survey sample was built to obtain qualitative data based on the analysis of respondents's replies. We did not have the objective to build a quantitatively representative sampling.

The applied Methodology is a pilot tool intended to identify general trends in the exercise of passive suffrage by female Ukrainian citizens, i.e. the right to be elected to local self-government of different levels during the 2020 local elections. At the same time, many findings of the survey can be applicable to describe the status of women in electoral process in general, rather than at local elections only.

At the first stage, there was also a random **monitoring of local information resources (per Oblasts)** (online, printed) in terms of covering women participation in the 2020 local elections. In total, electoral ombudsmen analyzed over 90 media mentions by the following parameters: negative, neutral, or positive tone of news.

In addition, electoral ombudsmen actively observed the process of registering the lists from local party offices and analyzed cases of rejected or contested registrations of such lists because of breaking the law on electoral quota. The analysis covered the decisions of territorial election commissions and the judicial practices (over 70 court decisions from different Oblasts in Ukraine were analyzed).

Overview of International Legal Framework and Practices of Political Parties That Enhance Access of Women to Political Participation

In 2002, the European Commission for Democracy Through Law (The Venice Commission) adopted the Code of Good Conduct in Electoral Matters[8]. Para 2.5 of the Code has a title "Equality and Parity of the Sexes." It says that "Legal rules requiring a minimum percentage of persons of each gender among candidates should not be considered as contrary to the principle of equal suffrage if they have a constitutional basis." In 2010, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe adopted the Resolution 1706 (2010)[9] "Increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system." Para 4 of the Resolution says: "Changing the electoral system to one more favourable to women's representation in politics, in particular by adopting gender quotas, can lead to more gender-balanced, and thus more legitimate, political and public decision-making."

In the case Metka ZEVNIK and Others v. Slovenia[10] (2019), the European Court for Human Rights reiterated that "the advancement of the equality of sexes is today a major goal in the member-states of the Council of Europe" and that its [of the Council of Europe] institutions consider the lack of gender balance in politics to be a threat to the legitimacy of democracy and a violation of the right of gender equality" (§34). Therefore, the Court declared legitimate, necessary and proportional the rejection to register candidates from a party failing on gender quotas, and declared the party's claim unanimously unacceptable.

Certainly, gender equality is an element of a broader non-discrimination principle, i.e. of providing equal access to the exercise of rights and freedoms for every individual, regardless of their certain features, including sex and gender identity. Thus, gender equality in a political process is an even more narrow and particular aspect.

That is why there are universal and regional international standards defining the principles of equality for human dignity and rights. The standards are valid for all countries in the world (for instance, the Preamble to the UN Charter (1945), Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Articles 1,2), or for countries in a certain region (e.g., Protocol No 12 (2000) to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) covering the states ratifying the convention and the Protocol).

....

8   https://rm.coe.int/090000168092af01

9   https://cutt.ly/3cBuy8R

10 https://cutt.ly/tcBuwMp

To regulate more specific areas (gender equality in general and gender equality in political processes), special provisions and mechanisms have been developed, such as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (1979) and its Optional Protocol (1999), Article 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), or the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000) "Women, Peace, Security" a.o.

The international standards intended to change the representation and governance internationally, and to incentivize countries to introduce efficient national mechanisms to achieve de facto equality, gender equality including. The implementation is often ensured through legal changes, enhanced awareness and legal education, training of people, adjustment of infrastructure and environment, regulation of media industry (such as bringing to account the media that share sexist content), specific incentives (also encouraging women to engage in political activities and participate in governance on different levels), etc.

The above-listed documents are mandatory for Ukraine either through ratification (i.e., when the government accepted the mandatory legal effect within their territory) or through the powers of the adopting authority (such as the Resolution of the UN Security Council 1325 [2000]). It implies that Ukraine has specific legal commitments to create the mechanisms and conditions whereas men and women would have equal access to participate in political life at all levels. It is important to note that the access shall not be illusory (declarative) but real. For example, it is illusory to ensure equal rights of women and men in electoral process when political parties formally enroll the required number of women in order to have their list registered, and later they make or incline them to withdraw the candidacies, either at the stage of final composition of lists, or even at the stage of oath taking to serve in a local self-government body, in case a woman is elected.

In addition to the general state mechanisms (legal regulation, including the mandatory gender quotas, control and sanctions, etc.), we must mention some opportune practices that may be used by political parties. They include, inter alia, the creation of "women's wing" and committees within parties, reservation of special funds to train and prepare women to participate in elections and act as political leaders, granting financial incentives and assistance to women candidates, establishing platforms for dialogue on lobbying women's leadership and political participation, introduction of the parity based participation of women and men in all processes of political parties,

including the establishment of bodies, structures, decision-making, etc.[11] It is of interest to see Poland's experience in **encouraging political parties to conduct, inter alia, the internal audits for the gender equality principle**[12].

Survey Findings

1. Personal experience of women's participation in election process

In the first content analysis, OPORA was focusing on identifying the personal experience of women candidates in local elections, such as whether it was their own conscious choice and what motivated them to run for elections, whether they felt the support, or whether they experienced any discrimination or other negative attitude during the election campaign, what their thoughts were about the relevance of electoral quota and other changes in the law, their visions for causes and factors that helped them pass the electoral barrier, or impede them to. We also asked the non-winning women about their plans for political participation in the future.

Women who ran for the local elections in October 2020 were very different, in their opinions, areas of activity, or career paths. Furthermore, they had different opinions even in attitudes to gender quota introduced in the Electoral Code.

It is natural that the introduction of quota was a challenge for the political parties, too, especially in small regions. It can partially explain the facts of engaging "technical women candidates" or random women the party engaged exclusively for formal compliance with the law.

We also noticed that women would often feel lack of self-confidence and uncertainty about their skills when they were making the decision to stand in elections, they were worried lest their political journey had any negative effects for their families and children.

As a motivation to go for elections, women candidates said they personally wanted to bring changes to their community.

In general, women candidates saw being deputies as the continuation of their public activism and said that their decision to stand for elections was well-weighted as they had had enough knowledge and experience in their respective areas, and their work for the good of the community would be more efficient and productive once they become deputies. **Most often, women explained their intentions to go for elections as the wish to have more impact on making decisions critical for the community.** Specifically, they tended to matters of education, children, social sphere, culture, support to the needy, improvement of housing and utilities management, etc. Furthermore, other reasons included an opportunity **to gain new experi-**

ence for themselves, to have personal and career growth, or even having the old dream come true. Several respondents coming from business said they wanted to improve settings for small businesses through possible impact on regulation in the context of bureaucratic load on business.

> *"I want to run for elections to be able to change things, to showcase that young politicians and women in politics are able to change something, and that they can influence decision-making, their voices will be heard, and their positions will be taken into account,"* —
> **a woman candidate said.**

35 respondents (12.1%) said that parties suggested they should run for elections because they had had prior political experience, achievements, and good reputation. Therefore, the offer appeared attractive. Similarly, some of them made their decisions after their colleagues, friends, or voters expressed the proposal to them, and encouraged to go for politics.

In other words, some women found external support and encouragement as an important factor to motivate their political participation, also combined with their personal interest and prior experience and activism.

Equal access to elections and manifestation of gender discrimination on account of family status and age

> *"The colleagues from the list, whatever warm their smiles might be, do not see you as a full-fledged candidate"*

Since women are generally associated with typical gender roles related to child care and other family duties, and because of perception of women in general, we decided to research how the factor impacted the decision to stand in elections.

The questionnaire included several questions on combining women's political activity with family life, on possible gender related and other discrimination or inequality: whether a woman needed approval from her family or close ones to stand in elections; how equal the access to elections was for women and men; whether women candidates faced any challenges during the election campaign related to their gender; whether respondents see

their family duties as a barrier for successful prospects of women in election process; and an open question about what made them decide to go for elections.

We noticed that answering the direct questions that personally concerned the respondents (the need to approve the decision to stand in elections with the family, personal experience of sexist attitudes from others during the election campaign, the goal-orientation for elections) women usually did not notice or did not recognize the signs. Instead, in the analysis of information about others, or other known cases of engaging "technical women candidates," or the barriers for political participation of women, or other aspects, an opposite trend can be observed.

For example, the absolute majority of women said they were making the decisions independently or discussed them with their families, in order to reasonable plan their child care and distribute other family duties. As little as 5 women (under 2% of respondents) admitted they had not had any true intention to gain the mandate but rather "helped their friends."

Furthermore, on a scale from 0 to 5 for equal access of women and men to participate in elections, 129 respondents (44.5%) ranked the access with the maximum score, i.e. 5 points; 92 (31.7%) – ranked 4 points; 57 (19.7%) – 3, and 12 respondents (3.1%) ranked it from 0 to 2. In other words, almost 96% of women said that access to elections was equal to men and women. At the same time, almost 95% of respondents mentioned pending barriers for political participation for women in Ukraine, although they did not admit any such barriers affecting them.

As to the question of whether women experienced any signs of sexism related to their participation in elections, over 90% of respondents denied any such negative experience against them. Only some of them said they felt some indulgent or distrustful attitude from voters, and sometimes from colleagues[13]. Somewhat more women candidates, 53 (18.3%), said the "black PR" was applied against them, and 17 women (6%) experienced pressure on account of age (agism), both in cases when women candidates were young (usually under 30 y.o.), and when their age was over 60.

....

13   There is a highly illustrative phrase of a woman candidate to the question "Have you felt any pressure or negative attitude / ignoring (disengagement) on the part of peers from the political party, family, relatives, or voters on account of gender? If "yes", how did it manifest?" – "The colleagues from the list, whatever warm their smiles might be, do not see you as a full-fledged candidate."

Discrimination of Women Candidates

9.3%

Open biased attitude (sexism)

6%

By age (agism)

18.3%

Experienced black PR

40 respondents (13.8%) stated that before making a decision to run for candidacy, they had to either discuss or seek for support with their families (husband, parents). Besides, 19 (6.6%) women replied they did not need to do it. One candidate said that if the family did not support her intention, she would abandon it. Four candidates also stated that their family (i.e. parents, children) did not support, but it did not have any effect on their final decision. The experience of several respondents indicated the stereotypical perception of women in politics by their family members. For example, some replies stated about their family: *"they did not readily jump in to support me [political rally] for real"* or *"my mother was concerned because she had a certain stereotypical attitude to women in politics "*. In general, women candidates explained that they had been aware of the scope of engagement into the process, of the investment of efforts and resources, before they made their decisions to run for elections. Therefore, they realized they would not be able to spend so much time with their families and had to thoroughly plan and coordinate the participation with their family members.

Decision to Stand in Elections

Helped fill the election quota
1.72%

Personal decision
98.28%

On the other hand, as to the question *"tick the key barriers, in your view, restricting the access of women to being included into candidate lists / being elected as local deputies: 1 – financial; 2 – family-related; 3 – personal (psychological); 4 – low trust levels to female leaders or choose your version"*, **over 50% of women surveyed said that household, family, and house chores were the most frequent barriers.** 145 women (50%) selected item 2 "family-related;" of them — 39 (13.5%) stated the item exclusively. Furthermore, in "Other" they also mentioned the *"patriarchal society,"* the stereotypical perception (*"a woman is a home guardian;" "women undertake too many commitments related to home-care;" "a woman is more busy with her home and family business that is why she cannot pay as much attention to political activity as men. Women are seen rather as housewives, when politics is not seen as a woman's business;" "In order to get on the list, a woman must be beautiful. No one is going to choose a woman looking like Merkel. A man may look whatever, while a woman is about a nice picture,"* etc. One respondent said: *"there were cases when women candidates refused from the candidacies because their families did not approve."*

We also noticed that women raising small kids would more often mention the critical attitude or perception of their political careers, or women in politics in general, by the society[14]. One respondent shared she did not feel any discrimination from her party peers or colleagues, and the family supported her, too, because she had been proactive for a long time before. As to voters,

14   After the survey but during the process of writing this report, a rather resonant case took place in the city of Rivne related to the participation of a local woman deputy in public events where she brought along her baby. Many users of social media Facebook expressed harsh criticism against her. Others said a woman should either stay at home tending to her kids or leave them in a kindergarten. Civil Network OPORA published a statement where we qualified the expressions as discrimination, such as the discrimination and sexism on account of gender roles of women in the context of their political activities.

though, she had to face some negative expressions such as: *"You know, there is a stereotype that a woman is weaker, that a man could be a better defender. I had meetings with voters and when I explained my agenda to them some of them asked questions such as: "Aren't you afraid to come to the late-night meetings with us?" Not really; specifically middle age men, or rather senior people, would say: "back in our time (Soviet Union or when they were young), girls used to take care of children. Elections was not an issue at all! Fat chance! And now…" That is how rough it sounded, the words like that, and then, in a blink of an eye, they would go: "Have you got children?" Are you married? Have you decided to pursue the career instead of spending time with the family?!".*

As to other barriers for political participation, women respondents mentioned personal (psychological) – 113 (89%), financial – 86 (29.7%), low trust levels to leadership among women – 51 (15.7%). The same reasons were also mentioned in open fields among the answer options.

15 (5.2%) of candidates said that they did not notice any barriers to participation of women in elections, or the barriers were the same for men and women.

There is a **notable dissonance** in the fact that as little as **5 respondents (1.7%) admitted** they ran for elections in order to "help fill the gender quota" but **120 (41.4%) respondents said** they were aware of engaging "technical women candidates" by other parties. For example, one woman said: *"No, I did not seek for approval [the decision to stand in elections] with anyone, it was a gesture of friendly help to my friends who were also going for the elections. The gender quotas were introduced and then not all parties could enroll the necessary number of women to participate."* At the same time, the decision was well-considered. But there were other cases, too: *"First, I did not feel like doing it. To be true, I was simply invited to fill the gender quota. Then, in the process, I thought "why not," if not me, then who. Because I work with young people and children, and I wanted to bring some change to our city because there is hardly anyone addressing the youth needs. The decision was well-considered."*

Engaging "Technical Women Candidates"

Unknown	Known	Hard to answer
54.1%	**41.4%**	**4%**
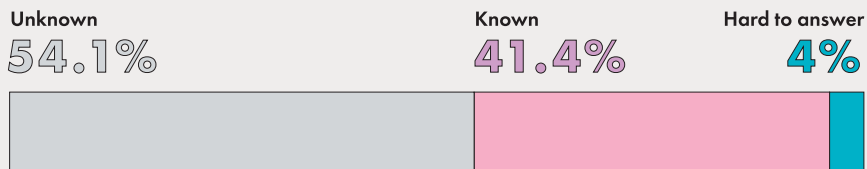
At the same time, women who had not originally had any internal motivation to stand in elections failed to get the required number of votes.

The discrepancy may, though not necessarily, indicate that the share of formal inclusion of women to electoral lists could be rather high in reality.

There is a trend when a woman must meet a series of criteria to "deserve" her place in politics: middle age, mother (but not with multiple children!) and a wife, with high achievements in public and professional life, she must invest much effort to be heard. It seems like women politicians have to prove to voters and to colleagues that they "self-actualized" as women in their ste-reotypical gender roles, and have all the necessary skills, abilities, and time to work for the good of the community and for the change. As was aptly summarized by one of the women candidates: *"The requirements set for us as women are twice as high as for men, might be even threefold. For a man, in order to gain acknowledgement, it would be enough to come out nicely, to welcome women, to tell how well you treat them – and you get the female fans on your side. As to me, I need to come out and have a speech, to make sure they can eventually hear me, then I need to win their interest, and most importantly, I need to have them believe in me, that I am the one who will tackle their issues. That is why it is so much harder for a woman to get into politics."*

The stereotypical division into "male" and "female" roles in society, charac-ters, areas of activities, or conduct can be found in some answers of women candidates. Thus, a respondent said she had the "masculine traits." It is sup-posed to legitimize her right as a woman to be in politics. Another respon-dent said that *"Everything was quite equal. Even better. Men would treat us to tea and coffee. And they loved us. And they still love us."*

Another highly illustrative example was mentioned by a female respondent about the bullying of a woman candidate for the position of hromada leader (her acquaintance): *"She suffered the horrible gender-based discriminatory black PR because she was called names, such as a kitchen cook, or the queen; many things revolved around her being a woman, that she did not deserve to represent the community and be the head, and suchlike, which was very unpleasant. I felt embarrassed for the people doing such things."*

As mentioned above, at the first stage of the research – in September – October, 2020 – civic ombudsmen of the Civil Network OPORA ran a random screening of messages in local media and on social media pages concerning women candidates at the 2020 local elections.

Of the 91 media mentions, 17 (18.7%) posts had a negative connotation about certain women candidates. However, in an absolute majority of cases, the negative rhetoric did not concern the gender aspect, but rather the women's activities or facts of life, prior experience or conduct of women candidates; or they were common "paid-for" pieces or "black PR." Few cases referred to gender or anything related to it. For example, there was a post on Facebook with the expressed negative focus on the fact that a woman candidate standing for the mayoral position was lesbian. Another case includes a post that described a woman candidate as a "typical vulgarian from a cheap pub."

Therefore, the described cases of gender discrimination and other related features because of women participation in elections and the fact that a vast majority of respondents (over 90%) recognized the barriers in the access of women to political activities, show a rather persistent and alarming statistics of the stereotypical and sometimes hostile attitudes to female politicians. It certainly is a standing issue and requires consistent steps from the government, from political parties, and from civil society. They need to create efficient mechanisms to overcome gender inequality and enable access of women to decision-making at all levels.

During interviews, we asked women candidates **what helped them, in their view, or what impeded them to win at the elections.** Furthermore, we asked whether **women candidates supported the idea of introducing the lists of independent (non-partisan) candidates, on equal terms with party lists, and whether they planned to repeatedly run for elections in the future.**

Some of the most widespread reasons that impeded women from winning the elections mentioned by respondents included the following: low activ-

ity of the women candidates during the election campaign, lack of time and resources, also financial (22 women, 15.2% of the non-winning category of respondents); low popularity and visibility, and insufficient media campaign (20 women, 13.8%); low party popularity, lack of experience, voting system (15 women, 10.3%); competition (9 women, 6.2%); "stolen votes" / fraud and position on the list (8 women, 5.5%); insufficient support from the party (7 women, 4.8%), and young age (4 women, 2.8%).

In other words, in their own perceptions, women mentioned personal factors (lack of experience, knowledge, activity levels and visibility during the election campaign, traction, age, etc.), economic factors (insufficient resources, also financial), factors related to a political party (low party traction, lack of support from the party, position on the party list) and objective factors (competition, falsifications, voting system). However, the subjective factors appear to be distinctly dominant.

Consequently, 61 women candidates (42%) believe that to increase their chances for victory in the next elections, they need to have more of personal motivation, political experience, to enhance their popularity on social media, to interact more with voters and to increase the recognizability among voters, also in the period between elections, and to deepen their own knowledge.

"In the first place, I need to deepen my knowledge, it's never useless; secondly, I need to work on better visibility and recognizability. And there is a personal issue – I need to stop being too modest, and I need to learn to tell more about myself. Because if no one knows you, that you are good, fair, honest, highly qualified, smart, etc. – no one is going to learn about it. Our voters want to see and read that you are being praised."

"In this election campaign, I lacked experience, or some advanced training courses."

42 women candidates (29%) believe that in order to have success at elections they need to be more active during the election campaign, and in the period between elections. For instance, one candidate said: *"I need to work more. I mean, in this case, I really should have worked more with voters, to have more meetings. I was probably not ready to interact with so many voters, and I needed to communicate with them to get the required votes."*

25 women candidates (17.2%) said that better results required more funding.

About a quarter of respondents (24%) from this category (35) listed the objective factors they believed could help them win: independent media, changes to the Electoral Code cutting the deposit amount, longer duration of election campaign and enhanced control over the voting process, as well as the restoring of self-nomination.

> *"The Electoral Code requires adjustment. Candidates winning fewer votes managed to become deputies, while others, with more votes, failed to become deputies — it's not the general tendency but refers to some cases."*

> *"If we have non-partisan lists I will stand on my own behalf, and then I will definitely win."*

14 women candidates (9.7%) said that in order to win at elections one needs to choose the party right, and receive more support from the party, to develop party structure, and to have a strong team.

The above listed factors are generally in line with the opinions of women winning the elections, although there are more references to the role of a political party. Thus, 51 women (35.2%) believe that the major effect on the personal results came from their skills and abilities, the professionalism, experience, ideas, public activism, and recognizability; 6 women (4%) said that gender (sex) helped them to win: *"A nice photo played a role, it's the image,"* one of respondents said; 3 women (2%) mentioned such factors as being part of an ethnic minority and disability.

26 women candidates (18%) believe their victory came due to the active election campaign; 28 (19.3%) women said the key role belonged to the party they represented as candidates; 18 (12.4%) women mentioned the high position on the electoral list.

As to the **option to self-nominate for candidacy, we found that a high majority of women candidates failing the elections**, 104 women (71.7%), **supported the idea of introducing independent (non-partisan) candidates on a par with party lists.** 22 (15.2%) women candidates spoke against the option. 18 (12.4%) other candidates were not able to finalize the position, listing both pros and cons about party lists. 1 (0.7%) woman candidate was not able to answer.

"I believe that when people come in a team they have many more supporters, and then it is more inter-related and better, when a candidate has a political force behind, so that people understand where the team plan to work."

"It's hard to say. If we did not have voter bribery, and all voters and candidates were conscious, then yes. Party lists have a shortcoming — party leaders may build the sequence in the way to have the desirable persons pass. In that case, the self-nomination option would be good."

Do you support the idea of introducing independent (non-partisan) candidates on par with party lists?

YES
71.7%

NO
15.2%

UNDECIDED
12.4%
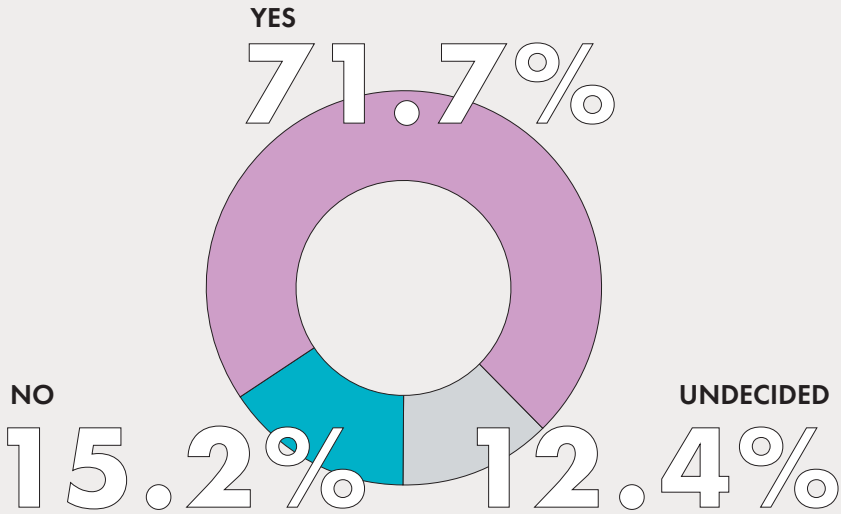
After all, of the women (145) who failed to win at this election, over a half of them (74 women, or 51%) **plan to stand again next time**. Of them, 11 women candidates (7.6%) plan to decide about the party closer to the elections, and 8 (5.5%) respondents will be searching for an alternative; 1 (0.7%) candidate plans to run for the next elections with the same team, regardless of the party. 54 women (37.3% of respondents from this category) have not decided yet whether they would be running for the next elections. 3 (2.1%) women candidates informed about their intention to go for the next elections but they would like to run self-nominated. 14 women candidates (9.6%) do not plan to stand in the next elections.

Do you plan to take another attempt to participate in election campaign as a candidate?

37.2%
Plan to run again
from the same party

7.6%
Plan to run
for elections again

5.5%
Plan to run for elections again
but certainly on behalf
from a different party

2.1%
Plan to run for elections
again – as self-nominated
candidates

9.7%
Do not plan to run
for elections again

18.7%
Undecided

As we can see, despite the broad support of the idea of reclaiming the opportunity for self-nomination of candidates, there is only a small cohort of women candidates who consider the option to participate in the future election processes.

On the other hand, the fact that over 50% of women plan to stand for elections again, many of them also still consider the option, and that under 10% firmly decided to discontinue their political activities, shows, in our opinion, a rather upward trend. Despite the defeat and other factors, women feel increasingly more capacity and willingness to impact the processes in their communities, and exercise political activity.

2. Effects of the mandatory gender quota on increased political participation of women

We have mentioned before that the introduction of mandatory gender quota into electoral framework certainly contributed to the fact that political parties started engaging more women and including them to the lists under certain procedure. At the same time, the quantity did not always equal quality. There occurred cases of engaging "technical women candidates." Nevertheless, the positive effect of gender quotas is obvious, although not unanimously approved by all.

At the first stage of research (during the election process), when we were doing the survey interviews with women candidates and leaders of local party offices, all 16 respondents agreed that gender quota was certainly a positive innovation. However, of the 290 respondents taking the survey at the second stage, 11 (3.8%) believed the quota irrelevant. They claimed the measures enhanced discrimination against women and downgraded their capacity for professional and motivated participation in election process. For example, several women candidates were highly critical about the gender quotas:

"The law on elections, in part of gender quota, is discriminatory because I am not seen as a professional but as a woman wanted to fill the quota. In other words, I am accounted for being a woman rather than a professional. Before the campaign, any party counts on a certain number of people to be elected, thus composing the list. Under the current law, the party needs to "squeeze" two women into the five on the list. It is not about any professional qualities but about the actual "technical women candidates." It is very annoying to be treated like that. I find it hard to say how the law should be written to treat women as equals."

"This is why I do not favour the new law – an intense dislike! In fact, women are degraded by this quota – in my humble opinion. Why do we need to "under the quota" as if we were inferior? Why do we need the quota? We knew that our party was oppositional and that is why we were not going to win many seats but we have been told that we needed to fill the list (to the regional council, for instance), and they demanded: submit this and that share of women."

At the same time, the **absolute majority of respondents (over 95%)** supported gender quota, and 12 (4.1%) even suggested raising it up to 50%. Women candidates said that sometimes the gender quota helped certain women get on the list and hit the number on the electoral lists.

However, from the answers of some quota supporters we can deduce that the requirements could also cause higher number of "technical women candidates." They explained that for many political parties, the engagement of so many women was often a forced measure because failing on the gender quota resulted in rejected electoral lists from parties.

Support of the mandatory gender quota:

95.3%
In favour

3.8%
Against

0.9%
Found it hard to answer

At the 2020 local elections, OPORA analyzed judicial practices of contesting registration or rejection to register political party lists because of violating gender quota during the composition of electoral lists[15].

15 https://cutt.ly/mcKVMBP

3. Gender and party policies, composition of electoral lists and work with women candidates

A separate unit of questions in the questionnaire was about activities and internal party policies as to engaging women, and as to the composition and approval of the respective internal policies, programmes, or fixed practices ensuring equal access of women and men to party resources, for support of women deputies gaining the mandate, etc. Within this unit, we also studied the positions of women on party lists (the combined and territorial lists), the trend for replacement of candidates on the list upon their registration by election commissions, and whether women experienced any pressure to withdraw their mandates upon being elected, also in men's favour.

Engagement of women by political parties and work with the female members

The answers of most respondents imply that political parties mostly facilitated women to participate in election process during the 2020 local elections through their selection and resource support. The introduction of gender quota as a mandatory legal requirement certainly contributed to a broader engagement of women, the point to be covered in the sections below.

100 women of the 290 respondents (34.5%) replied that their political parties had the gender policies or fixed practices for engaging women and for working with female members, and 72 women candidates (25%) said that the party had the programme to prepare a candidate for elections. **However, even such programs are not usually gender oriented but developed generally for men and women standing for elections**. **Therefore, mots political parties did not develop or introduce any internal policies or programmes to engage and prepare women for elections.**

The absolute majority of respondents, 237 respondents (82%), said that access to party resources was totally equal.

> *"The girls in our party are so proactive that we have always been on the central roles. As to the "woman-man" criteria, there has never been anything like that! We have always gone to TV appearances on an equal basis, to the street rallies, or had the equal access to resources."*

The inequality of access for women (compared to men) or lack of financial resources from the party was mentioned by 36 women (12.4%), although 15 of them (5.2%) emphasized they had not had any financial support from the party but they had access to campaigning and information materials, and to media resources.
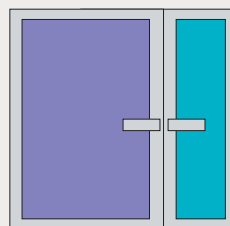
> *"I think, men actually had more access to the party financial resources. As to the media resources, I believe, here we had a totally equal access to them, and the party did their best personally for me, in terms of media support."*

Other respondents could not clearly answer that question.

Access to party resources

82%
EQUAL
ACCESS

12.4%
UNEQUAL
ACCESS

Composition of Electoral Lists

It is illustrative to see the **results of composing electoral lists of parties, their modification after the registration and women's attitude to the numbers on the lists assigned to them or altered later**.

We noticed that some women candidates **(13.4% for the combined list, and 10.3% for the territorial list) did not remember their numbers on electoral lists or did not have any idea of the question content, or confused the combined and the territorial electoral lists.** Occasionally, we received the answers such as: *"I wasn't on a general list, I wasn't on other lists. Actually, you can check it. I was the number one on a territorial constituency No 5, but I wasn't on the general list."* **Furthermore, a fair number of women candidates did not**

know why they had been included to electoral lists under a certain number **(37% – about the combined list, 23.5% – about the territorial list). It may imply that the candidates did not have enough knowledge of the election process, or that they had not planned to gain the mandate from the onset, or that they had a passive position on that matter. While the second option could be the result of parties' efforts to formally "fill the gender quota" or stemming from women's lacking motivation, then the first option may speak of the fact that political parties did not put enough focus to education and explanations about the structure and peculiarities of election process for the enrolled women candidates.**

OPORA also focused on the issue of composing a combined multi-member and territorial electoral lists, and on the order of sequence of women therein. Besides, we analyzed the correlation between the placements of women candidates on electoral lists and their election results.

The top ten in a combined multi-member electoral list generally included **169 (58.2%)** women candidates covered in the survey. At the same time, 117 women (40.3% of the total number) were women candidates who received the representative mandate at the elections.

The second dozen on the combined multi-member list included 11 women winning the mandate (7.6% of everyone elected); the third dozen included another 3 (2.1%) respondents; one (0.7%) respondent was included under No 46. **Furthermore, 13 respondents (9% of elected candidates) were not able to clearly say their number.**

As to **women running for candidacy but not passing to the top ten of the combined list,** there were **52 persons (twice as little than among the winning women),** that amounts to **35.9% of this category of women respondents,** or **18% of the total number of respondents**. A fair number of women candidates failed to get on the top ten list, i.e. 67 respondents (of those who gave their number on the list), which makes 46.2% of the total number of failing respondents. **Moreover, 26 respondents (17.9 % of the total number) were not able to clearly say their number — 9 women candidates could say it approximately, 13 — said they did not remember it, 4 respondents did not know it.**

The table includes the data on the number of respondents among women candidates in the top ten of the combined electoral list, as contrasted to the elected and the non-elected women.

Position of women in the top ten of the combined party list

Combined multi-member election list

№ on the list	Elected (145)		Did not pass (145)	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**
1	14	9.7%	2	1.4%
2	15	10.3%	4	2.8%
3	16	11%	1	0.7%
4	30	20.7%	3	2.1%
5	20	13.8%	11	7.6%
6	6	4.1%	4	2.8%
7	4	2.8%	5	3.4%
8	2	1.4%	3	2.1%
9	5	3.4%	9	6.2%
10	5	3.4%	10	6.9%
	Total: 117		**Total: 52**	

The above data may lead to a conclusion that position of women in the upper part of the election list does not always help them get the mandate (one third of women who did not pass were in the top ten), but the sufficient number of votes mostly went to those from the top tens. There was only one woman candidate who was in the fifth dozen of the combined list but passed to the local self-government based on election results.

In addition, we asked women candidates about their opinion on **why they have been included into the combined list under the specific number. 89 respondents (30.7%) of all respondents (47 and 42 of the passing and failing candidates) clearly stated they did not know the reasons for the number on the list or the criteria the party used.** 17 women (5.9%) said it was the party decision. 5 respondents told that the lists have been voted before approval (primaries).

Women listed the criteria at their own discretion, assuming what could be taken into account when composing the list. The options included, inter alia: trust levels of the party to the candidate, work experience in prior areas, also in political, the ranking, civic or public activities, visibility in the region, reputation, professional experience, prior party activities and personal contribution to the party development, etc.

18 women said that gender quota impacted their position on the list, although one respondent shared that her colleagues and herself did not support having women "entered" on the lists because of the gender quotas.

2 respondents said they were asked about the number they wanted, one responded insisted on getting a higher position on the list. **9 respondents said they were little concerned of their number on the list, and 5 (of the non-winning candidates) said they either did not think about it (as they knew their number was not passing) or they realized they had been engaged as "technical women candidates" from the onset.**

82 (28.3%) respondents (48, or one third of the elected candidates, 34 (25%) of the non-passing) believe the final decision on their inclusion on the combined list under a certain number was fair / relevant.

As to the **formation of territorial electoral lists,** 16 women who were the number ones on the combined list were not included to the territorial lists. Of the women passing at the elections, the territorial lists included **111 women candidates (76.5%), and 129 (89%) of the non-passing candidates. 17 respondents (11.7%) of the passing candidates were not able to define their number, the same as 13 (9%) persons of the non-passing candidates. Find below a detailed distribution of women candidates in the top ten of the territorial electoral lists, per two groups of respondents.**

Territorial electoral lists

№ on the list	Elected (145)		Did not pass (145)	
	Number	%	Number	%
1	40	27.6%	22	15.2%
2	22	15.2%	17	11.7%

3	19	13.1%	18	12.4%
4	11	7.6%	25	17.2%
5	7	4.8%	16	11%
6	2	1.4%	8	5.5%
7	6	4.1%	11	7.6%
8	1	0.7%	4	2.8%
9	2	1.4%	5	3.4%
10	1	0.7%	3	2.1%
	Total: 111		**Total: 129**	

In general, the positions of women candidates on the territorial lists among those who passed and failed are crucially different only for No 1 (40 vs 22). At the same time, unlike the combined list where the number of failing women candidates was three times lower than in the top ten, the territorial lists had even more non-passing women candidates (129 vs 111). **Therefore, the positions on territorial lists did not have much impact on the results for the non-passing candidates, but we can see that 76% of those who won the sufficient number of votes got to the top ten of the territorial list, and over 80% got to the top ten of the combined list. In other words, for most women who passed, the top tens turned out to be "passing" both in the combined list, and in the territorial list.**

When analyzing the formation of territorial electoral lists, we asked the respondents again about their opinions on why they had been included on the list under a certain number. **68 (23.5%)** of all respondents said they were not aware of the reasons or criteria. 18 (6.2%) respondents mentioned the same reasons for their positions on a territorial list as for the combined list. One respondent said the list was formed alphabetically, another respondent said the reason was her nonpartisanship. Some women said their positions on territorial lists did not matter much.

"Territorial number did not matter much to me as I knew I would get the necessary number of votes under the territorial list, regardless of the number. So it worked. I passed under the territorial list, not under the combined list," one of the passing women candidates said.

Similar to the previous question, the factor of "technical women candidates" was mentioned again. One of the non-passing respondents said: *"Let's be realistic – there was not a single chance. I know perfectly well that I was a technical candidate. It had been discussed. It was the party's decision, they were lacking people, so they included me."*

12 women mentioned gender quota as the reason for being included on the electoral list under a certain number.

69 women (23.8%) believe the party's decision to include them to the territorial list under a certain number was fair.

Therefore, we can see that far from all women candidates were interested in their positions on electoral lists, while the procedure was determined by different criteria. About 25% of respondents believe the decision on setting their number on the list was fair. The data shows that parties should pay more attention to working with women about the procedure of including them on party lists; they should introduce the procedures for fair and transparent composition of electoral lists.

As to **whether electoral lists had been changing upon the registration in the TEC**, **65 women (22.4%) answered positively.** The listed reasons included the need to balance the gender quota or withdrawal of male and female candidates from candidacy.

As to the question *"In your local party organization or any other local party organization known to you, have you had any proposals / pressure on women candidates during election campaign to submit withdrawal claims to the TEC? If yes, how did it manifest, who did it come from, and who did it target?"* — the absolute majority of respondents, **262 (90.3%), answered "No".**

11 respondents (3.8%) answered that they have known / heard of such cases. However, no one was able to provide any evidence. It was rather the assumptions, rumours, or the generally known information, such as from social media. In most cases, it was about refusing from the mandate after the announcement of results. For example, one respondent said: *"I received the*

proposal on the finish line of the election campaign, so that other people could pass to the council. But I flatly refused and managed to defend my position. I had the capacity to do so." On the other hand, another candidate said: *"There have been some cases, I am aware of them. I cannot say anything more because I represent my political force. The facts did take place but it would be wrong to talk about it."* Another candidate: *"We have not had them but I know of the cases in other parties. To the best of my knowledge, there, they called and suggested choosing to withdraw, or offered the remuneration. I cannot say for sure, 100%, but I know the people did not just withdraw their applications for no reason."*

Lists changed after registration

Changed
22.4%

Did not change
78.6%
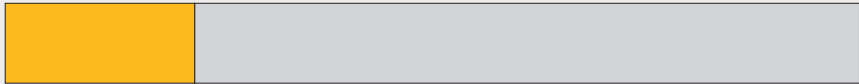
There are similar answers to another question — *"Have you received any proposals / experienced any pressure **after announcing the results** to refuse from your mandate or "give up' the place to another candidate?"*. Absolute majority, **131 women (90.3% of the 145 elected women covered by the survey),** answered "No", and 7 respondents (4.8%) answered "Yes". Others were not able to give any clear answers.

Do you know of any cases in your party organization or any organization known to you when women candidates received proposals / experienced any pressure during election campaign to ask from TECs to withdraw their candidacy?

Yes, I know of such cases	No, I do not	Unable to answer
3.79%	**90.3%**	**5.86%**

Have you received any proposals / experienced any pressure after the announcement of results to reject your mandate or "make way" for another candidate?

Never received	Received
90.3%	**4.8%**
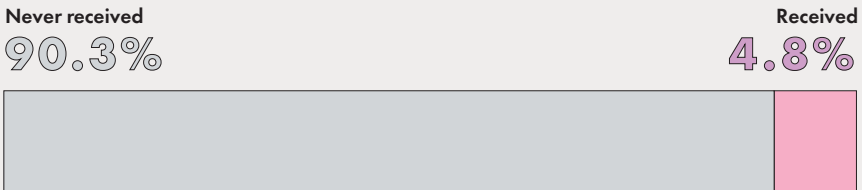
Participation in party-building

Women candidates who gained the mandate (145 women) were also asked whether they participated in the party-building and whether they received any support from the party after elections.

99 deputies (68% of those elected) said they were actively participating in the party-building. Usually, these are female party members with the long-

term work experience of party activities and with the understanding of party and political processes.

> *"Of course, we do. We are currently running through the re-registration of party offices according to the new administrative territorial division, the party district organizations are running the elections, we have started creating and registering our party organizations in all amalgamated hromadas. Furthermore, the work is undergoing in the women's wing, party women's wings are being established in every amalgamated hromada. And there is other work related to the organization of mass events, to celebrate memorable dates, to respond to current developments in the country."*

Some faction members who were non-partisan and passed under the party electoral lists believe they also have been contributing to party-building and reputation. One of the respondents said: *"Yes, I am non-partisan but the faction is built on account of party affiliation; there is no majoritarian system that is why I work as a faction member; it must also be some part of a party-building system. I do not attend party conventions, and I do not pay party membership fees but I participate in the faction's work."*

However, not all non-partisan faction members believe the work in the faction to be part of party-building. One of the reasons, among others, is that they are non-partisan or believe that the "real party life" can be possible only in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine.

For 4 respondents (3%), the aspect of party-building was not clear. Thus, one woman candidate answered the question in the following way: *"What do you mean by this question? If you understand party-building as something related to the fact that we continue working in our constituencies that elected us, then party-building is probably taking place. Within our constituencies, we are working full-fledged. We meet voters, we try to deliver on our promises."* Another respondent said: *"I am member of faction, I do not miss any commission meetings, I am an active deputy."*

9 women (6 %) participate in the party-building but not very actively, according to them: *"Well, I do participate but not so actively as other people, I have more of other tasks."*

32 women deputies (22%) do not participate in the party-building, also because they believe the party does not focus on that aspect.
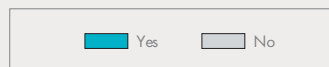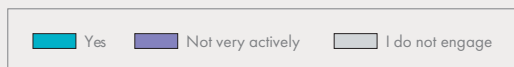
2 women deputies (1%) did not answer this question.

Do you engage in party-building after elections and do you receive party support after elections?
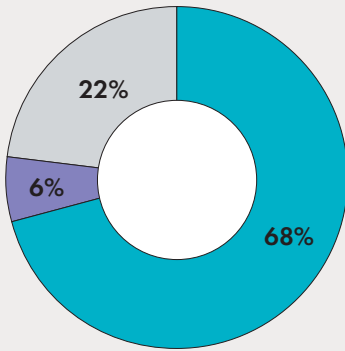
Participation in party-building

22%

6%

68%

Support from the party after elections

7%

92%

Yes · Not very actively · I do not engage

Yes · No
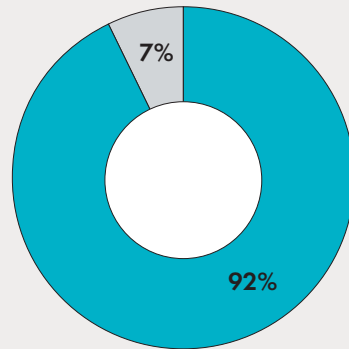
As to the question "***Do you receive any support from your party after elections? If "yes" then what kind of?***" — 133 deputies (92%) answered they would get the support in different forms. Sometimes, it is a mere moral support or assistance in implementing the ideas.

One woman deputy said:

> *"What kind of support, you ask? — Moral support. We do have the support: we have the secretariate and whenever we need to write some requests or submit ideas… For example, I brought forward the idea to place memorial plaques to the soldiers perished in the Ukrainian-Russian war. However, it turned out the plaques were implemented by the benefactors, and the RSA was not willing to undertake it. The party supported it: we came together, 2*

In general, women deputies receive informational, advisory, and training support: parties organize training workshops and sessions, set up channels for fast communication, they draft the templates of documents on a centralized level and share them, the draft initiatives, they offer advice from the central party office, etc.

Party Support to Women Candidates

Received
92%

Did not receive
8%
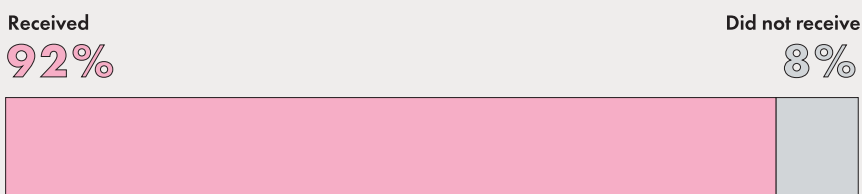
In summary to this section, the following conclusions may be drawn.

Political parties engaged women more actively as they needed to comply with the law. At the same time, most parties do not have any internal policies or fixed practices to engage women; nor do they have any gender-oriented training programmes to prepare for elections. Furthermore, political parties do not generally have any mechanisms for systemic engagement of women to party-building or their comprehensive support in the role of deputies.

As a rule, party activities in these areas are rather sporadic.

The overwhelming majority (82%) of female respondents admitted that during the 2020 local elections their access to political party resources was the same as that of men.

Not all women candidates were aware of the principles of composing elec-

toral lists. About a quarter of respondents (between 23.8% of the non-passing candidates and 28.3% of the passing candidates) believe that decisions of political parties to include them to a combined and a territorial list under a certain number was fair and adequate. It may imply that parties do not have any transparent and clear mechanisms to compose electoral lists.

The absolute majority of women among those who received the mandate were included to the top ten in a combined multi-member electoral list (over 80%) and to the territorial electoral list (over 76%). Additionally, 14 of them were No 1 on the combined list. As to women who did not pass at the elections, the top ten on the combined list included three times fewer women than from the first category, although more women who eventually failed to get the mandate were included to the top ten in the territorial list (129 vs 111).

Over 90% women candidates denied they had experienced any pressure from the party during the election campaign or any request to withdraw from the mandate after the announcement of election results.

# 4. Actualization of women deputies in local self-government after the elections

The final set of questions we asked the respondents granted with the representative mandate concerned their engagement in the faction's activity and other active positions in executive bodies of local self-government, the satisfaction levels about their functions and roles in local self-government, etc.

Of the 145 women candidates within this category, 6 (4%) were elected secretaries of commissions / factions; 75 women deputies (52%) were offered leadership positions in commissions or factions; 62 women (43%) have not received any such proposals. In this regard, it is interesting to compare the proactivity level of women themselves. As few as 43 women deputies (30%) shared they took the initiative to take a leadership role or position in local self-governments.
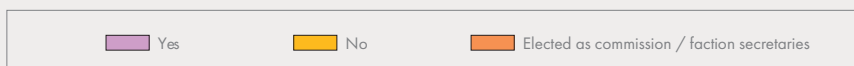
Have women candidates been offered / did they show the initiative to chair the faction / council commission / executive positions in LSG?
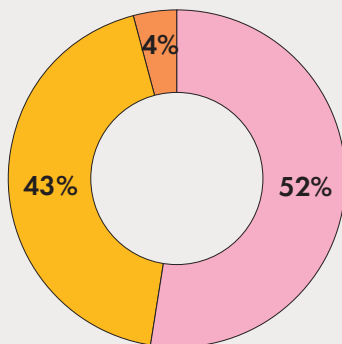

Have they received an offer?

4%

43%

52%
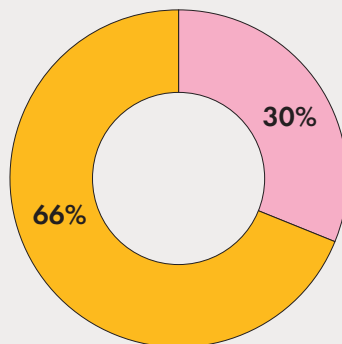
Have they shown an initiative?

30%

66%

Yes   No   Elected as commission / faction secretaries

At the same time, **78.6% of women (114) were satisfied with their positions (roles) in local self-government upon their election; 88.2% (128) were satisfied or have the influence on decision-making in the faction.** Most respondents were talking about the application of democratic mechanisms in the faction's decision-making when all faction members were empowered to express their opinions on each issue, every comment is taken into account, and decisions are made in consensus. As little as 14 (9.7 %) respondents said they were not happy about their position upon election. They are mostly the women deputies who aspired for certain positions but failed to have been assigned to them.

Are you happy about the position in LSG upon election / about the decision-making process in the faction?

YES
78.6%

9%
NOT REALLY

9.7%
NOT HAPPY
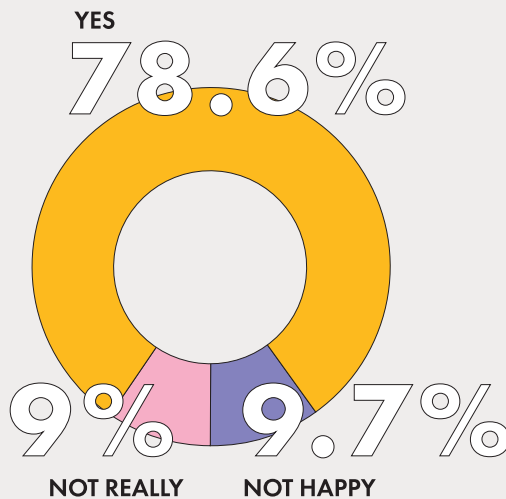
It shall be mentioned that by far not all women accepted the offers to be heads of factions or commissions. The refusals are related to the personal fears and self-doubt, lack of political experience and professional knowledge, busy schedule, and age. Some cases were shared about the facts when certain positions in a faction or a commission were offered "in exchange" of voting. These are certainly corruption-related issues, rather than gender-induced.

Female deputies who did not receive any offers or did not show the initiative to be heads of factions explained it with the same reasons, and also with the fact that the party could be in a political minority in local self-government, with lack of personal ambition to have the active role. However, there was a case when a woman deputy did not show any initiative or intention to chair the faction but other colleagues insisted otherwise.

> *"I am the head of faction but it was not my initiative. The deputies passing along with me were unanimous about me becoming the faction head."*

On the other hand, not all proactive women that offered their candidacies for leadership positions found the support.

Therefore, the survey showed that in most cases gender did not matter in the faction's decision-making. Women have been engaged to decision-making on a par with men, and their opinions are taken into account. On the other hand, low proactivity levels on the part of women deputies may imply the low psychological readiness and other objective barriers preventing women from more active exercise of their representative functions.

Recommendations

Ensuring equal access of women and men to political processes is a complicated and a many-component process that calls for a comprehensive solution and coordinated interaction between various actors. On the one hand, the adaptation of national legal framework to the international standards shall continue. On the other hand, it is important to have the political parties implement the adopted guarantees in the form of fixed practices. Another important aspect is the actions taken by mass media and local authorities. In their activities, they must prevent and avoid any forms of sexism or discrimination on other accounts. The controlling and law-enforcement authorities should have the efficient response mechanisms for such cases.

At the same time, it is important to implement changes before the next national vote, specifically by the parliamentary elections.

To the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine (by the parliamentary elections)

To consider the possibility to introduce amendments to regulatory acts:

Electoral Code of Ukraine, as regards:

- Acknowledging the following same-gender candidate as a deputy in case a combined electoral list is used during the replacement (when a deputy mandate has been withdrawn, or when deputies terminate their powers); thus, in case when the replacement is not impacted by the number of votes gained by the candidate, or by their affiliation to the respective territorial list, it would be possible to replace positions vacated by women also by women candidates.
- Including to the list of campaigning restrictions set in Art. 57 of the Electoral Code a ban to use the campaigning materials with any forms of sexist expressions, images, or other signs of sexism in campaigning activities of electoral actors.
- Enabling candidates in hromadas with the number of voters over 10,000 to stand in elections through self-nomination, in addition to the option representing a party.

Code of Ukraine on Administrative Offence, as regards:

● Ensuring accountability for taking discriminating actions, also for sharing in mass media, on social media a.o. any expressions with signs of discrimination, instigation, or complicity in discrimination.

Law of Ukraine "On Political Parties in Ukraine," as regards:

● The new draft of the Law of Ukraine "On Political Parties in Ukraine" must account for the fact that party executive bodies shall be set up in compliance with the representation based on gender quota.

To the Government of Ukraine

● To initiate the discussion and approval of the national programme supporting women leadership and awareness-raising on gender equality, specifically in electoral processes.

● To engage the Ombudsman of Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine in the development of clear mechanisms (methodology) to run the expert evaluation to identify and assess the signs of hate speech, sexism, and other derogation, instigation, or complicity in discrimination on account of family status, age, or political activities of women.

● To enhance social protection of women and facilitate the building of a women-friendly and children-friendly environment, also within the authorities and in other infrastructure facilities.

To the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, to local units of education and research, to schools of all levels

● To introduce a high-quality cross-cutting education for learners on gender non-discrimination and women in leadership.

To the Human Rights Ombudsman in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine

- In partnership with the Government of Ukraine, to initiate and join the development of clear mechanisms (methodology) to run the expert evaluation to identify and assess the signs of hate speech, sexism, and other derogation, instigation, or complicity in discrimination on account of family status, age, or political activities of women.

- To take efficient measures to identify and respond to cases of hate speech, sexism, or other forms of discrimination on account of gender, family status, age, political activities of women, also in traditional media and on social media.

To political parties (by the parliamentary elections)

- To pay more attention to engaging women into party activities, to improve their psychological readiness, competence and support in political activities, also through the following measures:

- To conduct an internal party audit for compliance with gender equality.

- To consider an option to introduce changes to the statute and adjustment/development of internal party documents (programmes, framework recommendations, standards, provisions, etc.) that enshrine the principles and mechanisms of equal participation of women and men in all process of the party activity: establishment of executive and other structural bodies, life-long-learning, training and support to candidates, cross-cutting learning of party members on non-discrimination, also gender-based, ensuring equal access to resources (financial, media, informational, etc.), transparent formation of party lists, etc.

- Establishment of internal party bodies that would provide for unbiased and efficient consideration of complaints from party members against signs of discrimination and other derogations related to political activities of party members.

To the National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting

- To develop and approve standards and mechanisms to identify sexist and other discriminatory signs (expressions, images, videos, posts, ads, campaigning materials), including also in social media, during the election process.
- To develop and approve legal mechanisms to respond and bring accountable persons for the described actions, or instigation, or complicity thereto.

To the National Police of Ukraine

- To respond in a fast and efficient way to cases of cyberbullying against women candidates and political leaders, and to take measures to search for the perpetrators.

To local authorities

- On the local level, to support the building of the women-friendly and children-friendly environment, also in local authorities and in other infrastructure facilities, to improve the opportunity to more efficiently combine political activities and child care through the following:
- Formation of executive authorities with the ensured balanced participation of women and men in all areas and domains of governance.
- Development and approval of gender sensitive local budget programmes.
- Introduction of large-scale human rights programmes intended to raise awareness of citizens about non-discrimination, women participation in political life, women in leadership, etc.
- Conducting the anti-discrimination expert evaluation of legal framework.
- Enhanced cooperation with local human rights and civic initiatives specializing in the area of ensuring women access to elections, political participation, and overcoming gender discrimination, as well as with election commissions.

To mass media

- Not to allow for cases of sharing, reposting or intensifying hate speech, including but not limited about women in election process.
- To introduce control mechanisms over the statements and signs of hate speech on the resources created or moderated by the mass media.

Notes