



## **INCREASING WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN DECISION MAKING THROUGH POLITICAL PARTIES**

Interviews with Political Parties in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan

International Gender Policy Network

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**Project: Political Participation of Women in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan**

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## **ABOUT IGPN**

International Gender Policy Network (IGPN) is a membership-based, non-profit, nongovernmental organization and was established in autumn 2005 in order to strengthen and foster the policy work impact of the women's movement and to ensure the sustainability of women's movements in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia. Formerly affiliated with the Network Women's Program of the Open Society Institute, this network of now independent NGOs has formed a partnership base on a common vision and common goals.

IGPN member countries include:

Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyz Republic, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan

**The interviews summarized in this paper were conducted by these IGPN member organizations:**

### **Feminist League, Kazakhstan**

The main goal of the Feminist League is to promote equality of women and men in all spheres of life: economic, political, social, cultural and within the home. The Feminist League strives to achieve its goals through the following activities and programs: research and publication of reports on women's issues in Kazakhstan, informational support to women's NGOs and mass media, monitoring gender-related legislation of the Republic of Kazakhstan, education on women's issues, informational electronic network FemLine.

### **TASO Foundation, Georgia**

Taso Foundation is national women's fund transformed from Women's Program, which had been operating at the Open Society Georgia Foundation since 1998. Support Achievement of Gender Equality in Georgia, Protecting Women's Rights and Freedoms, Ensuring Women's Participation in the Processes of Peace-building, Democratic and Economic development are the main goals of Taso Foundation. The library and archives of Memory Research Center at TASO Foundation are open for researchers and women's movement activists.

### **Ukrainian Women's Fund, Ukraine**

The Ukrainian Women's Fund (UWF), an international charitable organization founded in 2000. The UWF provides civil society organizations from Ukraine, Moldova, and Belarus with financial, information, and consultation support. UWF represents the Network Women's Program of the Open Society Institute - New York, and is a member of the International Network of Women's Funds and the Ukrainian Donors' Forum.

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## GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

BPfA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEC	Central Election Committee
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECIS/CIS	Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States
EU	European Union
HDI	Human Development Index
ICPS	International Centre for Policy Studies
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IGPN	International Gender Policy Network
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
UN	United Nations

## INTRODUCTION

Women's political participation is an internationally agreed women's human right. The **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women** (CEDAW) stipulates equality between women and men in terms of access to, and opportunities in, political and public life, including the right to vote and stand for election. Women in power and decision-making was also identified as one of the 12 areas of concern in the 1995 **Beijing Platform for Action** (BPfA) with a 30 percent target to be achieved by 2010, and the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) call for representative democracy as the key to good governance. As the Convention celebrates its 30th anniversary and the Beijing Declaration marks its 15th review process this year, the **International Gender Policy Network** (IGPN) realized a project on political participation of women in the three transition countries of **Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan**. "*This region (CIS), where an average of 16.4 percent of women participate in parliament, falls below the global average of 18 percent, and far below the 30 percent target of the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action*".<sup>1</sup> Among these three studied countries, the lowest participation of women in national politics is to be found in **Georgia with 6 percent** of women in the national parliament, followed by **Ukraine with 8,5 percent**, and the highest ratio of women is in **Kazakhstan with 17,8 percent**.<sup>2</sup>

Part of the IGPN's **Project on Political Participation of Women**<sup>3</sup> was to conduct interviews with politicians in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan as political parties are critical for ensuring women's political participation. The interviews were carried out by women's organizations using the same standardized questionnaire prepared by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Gender Links. The questionnaires were translated into the national languages and adjusted to some extent so they could be applied in the different national contexts.<sup>4</sup> All of the interviewers, which came from the **Feminist League** (Kazakhstan), the **TASO Foundation** (Georgia) and the **Ukrainian Women's Fund** (Ukraine), have extensive experience working with women's rights and gender equality in their respective countries. Each country section starts with a short introduction to the country and the level of women's representation in the national and local assemblies and the presentation of the electoral systems. This short document presents the political parties' attitude towards the issue of women's representation, analyzes the current situation in the three countries and prepares recommendations for the political parties and other stakeholders. **The aim of this paper is to make the political parties aware of their role in enhancing women's political participation and to advocate for parity in representation.**

Yet another of IGPN's concrete efforts in promoting women into politics is the creation of a national database of potential female politicians<sup>5</sup> available also to the political parties. The main aim of the database is to show the expertise of women from different sectors and to refute the prevalent myth that there are no women in the ECIS/CIS region able and willing to become part of politics and decision making. The database can also be used to identify female experts in different fields. To date, the database is comprised of 300 women

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<sup>1</sup> Enhancing Women's Political Participation. A Policy Note for Europe and CIS (ECIS).UNDP

<sup>2</sup> The high number of women in Kazakhstan is partly achieved by the indirect appointments of parliament deputies by the Kazakhstan president.

<sup>3</sup> The Project was funded by Oxfam Novib and Open Society Institute (Zug)

<sup>4</sup> It was not always possible for the authors to receive the feedback from the politicians – so in the case of Kazakhstan the report is more based on the analyses of the party programs and other secondary sources.

<sup>5</sup> More to be found at: <http://database.igpn.net/>

experts from the three pilot countries - Georgia, Kazakhstan and Ukraine. All data are in English and in the national languages, which makes it available for national and international users.

Although **Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan** have social, economic and political particularities, all three are post-Soviet republics which found their independence in the beginning of the 1990's and since then have struggled to develop to democracies. The transitions have been turbulent at times, with recent revolutions in Ukraine (the Orange Revolution) and Georgia (The Rose Revolution). Kazakhstan, on the other hand, is the most stable, yet least democratic<sup>6</sup>. Regarding their level of development these countries range from 82nd place for Kazakhstan to 85th for Ukraine and 89th place for Georgia on **the UNDP Human Development Index** which measures the economic output, health and education attainment.<sup>7</sup> **The positions of the presidents are strong in all three countries** - Kazakhstan is a presidential republic and Georgia and Ukraine have a semi-presidential system which grants the president considerable control over the legislature, the judiciary, and local governments. Especially in the case of Kazakhstan we cannot speak of an electoral democracy - since its independence in 1991 there has been only one political party in the Parliament and the president is at the same time the head of the ruling party. Also the development of political parties is different if compared to the western liberal democracies – **political parties often rise and disappear quickly; they are not structured according to traditional left-right ideological platforms but more often around strong personalities** that profile themselves as "patriotic" leaders. Many of the parties must form electoral blocks to be able to exert influence and pass the threshold to get into the Parliament. **But the role of the political parties is not to be underestimated – they can limit and balance the power of the president and provide the check and balances so needed in a democracy.** Furthermore, **the political parties play a crucial role in ensuring women's political participation** – they form the (ideological) platforms for candidates to run in elections; they have organizational and administrative structures in place and most of the times the financial funds to back the nominees. **It is the recruitment process of the political candidates that play a decisive role in determining what level of women's representation there is likely to be in the party and hence in the legislative assemblies.**

As you will see in the interviews with the political parties – they claim that they choose the best candidate for the job – based on his/her ambitions, qualities, influence and so forth and that gender has nothing to do with the selection. On the other hand, the party representatives cannot satisfactorily explain why there have been so few women in the top positions and in the national parliaments. It is not that they are not politically active – **women are involved in the pre-selection work, attending the meetings and the campaigns, organizing protests, and often doing the foot work for the political parties.** Another frequent explanation presented by the interviewed political parties is to blame external factors – **it is society with its traditional values that hinder women from getting involved fully in politics.** Very few of the interviewed politicians recognized that they too constitute and influence society and that the internal processes of political parties, such as the personality of leaders and staff, the ideological foundations, party history, and

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<sup>6</sup> For example, according to the organization the Freedom House which supports democratic change, monitors freedom, and advocates for democracy and human rights **Ukraine** is defined as 'Free' with scores 3 and 2 on the Political Rights and Civil Liberties. **Georgia** is defined as 'Partly Free' with scores 4 and 4 on Political Rights and Civil Liberties. **Kazakhstan** is defined as 'Not Free' with scores 6 and 5 on Political Rights and Civil Liberties. Countries are ranked on a scale of 1-7, with 1 representing the highest level of freedom and 7 representing the lowest level of freedom. More to be found at: [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org).

<sup>7</sup> The HDI, which was introduced in 1990, is a combined measure of economic output, health and education attainment. For the complete data see: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/>

internal political culture can be as traditional and misogynic towards women as the rest of society. If a political party would like the democratic principles of electoral politics and fair representation of women to be applied within their own party, they should reconsider internal practices and internal (formal or informal) rules and decision-making processes so they can act as role models for the rest of society to follow.

Lastly, the interviewed party representatives claim that they only act in order to aggregate the most votes and present candidates that are likable to the voters. So is it the voters that prefer male over female candidates? Available research on voters' behavior demonstrates **there are factors that are more important than a candidate's sex when voters consider who they will vote for.**<sup>8</sup> The most obvious factors being the candidate's party and the policies a candidate promotes. This is even more true in countries where voters vote for party lists and they cannot influence the order of the candidates as is the case in Kazakhstan where political parties use the closed party list (i.e. it is the party leadership that chooses who will receive a mandate according to the election outcome). Georgia uses the mixed electoral system where a majoritarian system in the districts is used and the people vote for the candidate first and for the political party second. Since it is the "winner takes all" rule, the party bets all its resources on one candidate and not surprisingly this is usually a man. Interestingly, an opinion poll in Ukraine also showed that the candidate's sex has limited relevance. This was done in conjunction with the Ukrainian National Elections in 2000 and showed that only 2% of the voters said the candidate's sex was an important factor in evaluating candidates.<sup>9</sup> This leads to the conclusion that it isn't the voters that are leading to the dramatic drop of women among the eligible candidates.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard E. Matland and Denitza A. Bojinova: The Representation of Women in Political Parties in Central and Eastern Europe. 2004

<sup>9</sup> Enhancing Women's Political Participation. A Policy Note for Europe and CIS (ECIS).UNDP

## GEORGIA

During the transition period, the number of women in the Georgian parliament has decreased. Six parliamentary elections and three local elections have been held since 1992, with a very small number of women elected. Even the 'Rose Revolution' of 2003 did not ensure women's active involvement in the political life of the country. The number of women elected to parliament in 2004 reached 9.4 percent. During the struggles for power which have dominated the Georgian political scene, many individuals, especially women, have been discouraged from engaging in politics. In 2008, the overall percentage of women members of parliament declined to 6 percent.

A major challenge for women's participation in the elections of Georgia in 2008 was that the Constitution and the United Election Code changed the election administration, campaign regulations and complaints and appeal procedures. The new Election Code impeded women's chances of being elected to parliament: it decreased the total number of parliamentary members, which gave women less chance to be included at the top of party lists. Also in single-mandated constituencies, women had fewer opportunities to participate in elections. In the Georgian parliamentary election in 2008 all abovementioned aspects, along with resurgent political factors (opposition parties boycotted the new parliament), caused a decrease in the number of women MPs from 10 percent to 6 percent.<sup>10</sup> According to experts, the reasons for women's underrepresentation in the 2008 elections were manifold and mainly linked to the lack of an enabling legal framework as well as to the lack of implementation of gender mainstreaming policies within political parties.

The number of women in local self-governance bodies has also decreased with each successive election. In local elections the percentage of women dropped from 14% in 1998 to 12 % in 2002. In May 2006 no cities in Georgia had women mayors, none of the 66 local administration heads (gamgebeli) were women, and only 5.5% of the chairs of local councils (sakrebulo) were women. After the elections of 2006, held under the new election law, only 11.14% of those elected were women.<sup>11</sup>

Three types of elections are practiced in Georgia: parliamentary, presidential and local elections. Presidential and local elections employ the mixed electoral system, i.e. a combination of majoritarian and proportional representation systems. According to the current legislation, the Parliament of Georgia consists of 150 members, 75 out of which are elected on the basis of proportional countrywide elections, while the other 75 are elected in single-seat electoral districts<sup>12</sup>. As of today, out of the 138 members of the Parliament, nine are women, eight of them being representatives of the ruling party and one of the parliamentary minority. Only one of them has received a seat as a result of a victory in majoritarian elections, while the others became members of this body on the basis of party lists.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> This decline occurred despite major campaigns on gender and governance supported by World Vision Georgia and financed by the European Union and the Council of Europe. These campaigns aimed to encourage women to vote in the national elections in 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Enhancing Women's Political Participation. A Policy Note for Europe and CIS (ECIS).UNDP

<sup>12</sup> Cited from L. Khomeriki, Gender and Politics. Social Sciences Series. 2006, and The Election System of Georgia: Main Challenges. International Transparency – Georgia. Tbilisi, 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Cited from [http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang\\_id=GEO&sec\\_id=2](http://www.parliament.ge/index.php?lang_id=GEO&sec_id=2)

Regarding the promotion of equal opportunities in Georgia, many policies that promote gender equality have been implemented during the past years; for example the Law against Domestic Violence, Protection and Support of Victims and Law on Gender Equality and the existence of the Gender Equality Advisory Council under the Chairperson of the Parliament of Georgia. These achievements are primarily ascribed to the United National Movement, but as a governing party it is obligated to fulfill various international obligations. The legislative acts were advocated and lobbied for a long time by many women's organizations in Georgia. The civil society has a huge amount of expertise and pioneering ideas available and it cannot be doubted that without non-government organizations, shifts and changes in the approach to the measures for achieving gender equality would not have occurred.

### Political parties in the survey

Along with **two parliamentary parties**, we selected **five non-parliamentary** parties among the acting political parties of Georgia to participate in our study. We selected such parties that have been characterized by a more or less satisfactory level of stability in recent years, as well as those parties that are actively involved in the on-going political processes. In the selection process the focus was on gender-related issues and mechanisms for enhancing women's political participation. Interviews were conducted with representatives of all selected parties, yet it so happened that we interviewed two respondents from some parties. The total of nine interviews has been conducted, and respondents were all women, but one.

Parties that participated in the survey: ideologies, social groups represented, women's party section, gender-related policies, female leaders, and when established	
<b>The United National Movement</b>	Right-wing, centrist ideology, nationalist, claims to represent the whole population, presently acts as a ruling party with a majority in the Parliament; 2001.
<b>Citizens' Political Union – the Christian Democratic Movement</b>	Right wing, conservative, opposition party in the Parliament, a women's party section; 2007.
<b>Political Union - the New Right</b>	Right wing, conservative, opposition party in the Parliament, middle class, business groups, intelligentsia, articulates to some extent gender-related policies, women's party section, women leaders, targets women during election campaigns; 2001.
<b>Republican Party of Georgia</b>	Right-wing, centrist, neo-conservative, represents all social strata, opposition party in the Parliament, declares to focus on gender-related policies, established to struggle for independence in 1978
<b>Georgian Women's Party for Justice and Equality</b>	Left wing, centrist, women and all social strata, not in the Parliament, pronounced gender equality policy and social justice; 2008
<b>The Party Georgia's Way</b>	Right wing to liberal, not in the Parliament, a female party leader; 2006
<b>The Georgian Labor Party</b>	Left wing, centrist, middle class, established to represent a broader strata of population, opposition party in the Parliament; 1995

Sources: Georgia – Country Report based on Research and Dialogue with Political Parties, IDEA, CSS. 2005; the websites of the political parties

### **Party programs and gender equality**

Women are primarily mentioned in the areas that cover social policy and demographic issues. These are, for example, financial support during pregnancy and delivery, the stipulation of maternity leave in the Labor Code and so on. Both the Christian Democratic Movement, Political Union - the New Right and the Georgian Labor Party mention this. Further on women are mentioned in light of the protection of basic human rights and freedoms, where it is primarily stated that women must exercise the same opportunities as men in the social, business, and political spheres. The programs of Political Union - the New Right and the Party Georgia's Way cover this. Neither of them explains how the political parties intend to implement these policies provided that they come to power.

Among the programs of the parties selected by us are some that do not mention women or gender equality at all, such as the programs of the United National Movement and the Republican Party of Georgia. However, in the former case, the program document "Action instead of Words" represents a very brief and general sketch of the party's view of the future: it primarily consists of slogans and suggestions without an emphasis on any social group, be it women, ethnic minorities or any other. As for the latter, the program document of the Republican Party of Georgia is the most detailed and substantiated party pre-election program among those documents that were studied by us. Although it does not separately mention women as such, the party has planned reforms in many of those spheres that, if implemented accordingly, will have a positive effect on the female part of the population (for example, reforms in the spheres of environmental protection and natural resources, agriculture, healthcare, education policy, changes in the pension system, etc.).

On the whole, reading the programs with a gender-sensitive eye, the program documents of the parties may be divided into two types: the first type of documents take a blind eye to gender on the part of the parties, as their policies do not take into consideration the different needs of women and men and treat "everyone as one". Documents of the other type only appear to be the bearers of gender-aware policy, while in reality they represent gender-neutral documents, since their general attitude does not reach beyond viewing women in the light of their reproductive functions.

### **Responses from the political parties: general answers**

#### *Attitudes towards women in politics and decision-making*

All respondents unanimously agreed that women must be involved in politics; arguments supporting this opinion are generally the following: the majority believes that women are capable of bringing their own "feminine" vision to politics and for this very reason they must be involved therein. According to them women possess specific qualities (for example, a sense of responsibility) and they can bring to heart the needs of others better. Also, women constitute more than a half of the population and they must be represented in the political sector as a requirement of social justice.

Two main standpoints can be traced on how to approach the underrepresentation of women in politics. Those who define this as a problem maintain that certain steps must be taken in order to reach a more balanced representation. According to the other position, the low representation of women does not constitute a democratic problem and, therefore, there is no need for extra measures in this matter.

#### *Current women's representation in your party*

None of the interviewees identified any gender biases during the pre-selection and nomination of candidates. All respondents noted that in the pre-selection phase the party weighs in the image of the candidate, his/her influence in the region and his/her probability to take home victory and this applies to all regardless of their sex. Regarding the question why women enter politics, part of the respondents believe that it is a result of a natural process; while the others think that women end up in politics because of extreme circumstances and it is not a purposeful process.

#### *Obstacles to women's meaningful political participation*

All respondents unanimously agree that it is not the internal party structure that hinders women's political advancement. It is external factors such as the traditional Georgian mentality and the traditional division of home responsibilities which hamper women's access to public positions. Besides this, the respondents from the opposition parties point to the limited economic recourses available to the opposition and that women in general are economically disadvantaged in comparison to men.

#### *Current party strategies for increasing women's participation*

None of the interviewed political parties have specific internal measures for enhancing women's political participation. All respondents unanimously noted that the party doesn't differentiate between male or female party members and that the most important thing for the party's survival is boosting the preferences and increasing the membership base.

The majority of the respondents have a negative attitude toward the quota system. According to them, quotas are insulting to women and considered an "artificial" intervention in the political process. Out of the nine interviewed respondents, only two believe that a quota system together with a legal and institutional framework will increase women's political representation.

#### *Participation of women as candidates*

When it comes to the role of women in the political parties women tend to be responsible for traditionally female duties, such as the charitable activities, public relations and contact with voters. Besides this, women do the footwork for the party in the pre-election period, for example, "personal" visits to voters in order to introduce them to the program of the party and working as observers of the pre-election process. Also, the majority of the respondents point out that women are "good executors", and if the leaders of the party want a mission accomplished well, they must give it to a woman.

#### *Participation of women as voters*

Political parties do not analyze their electorate based on gender specifics. There is no statistical data available on this matter, yet, according to their opinion, women are more active than men in the election process.

## Responses from the political parties: party specific answers

### *The United National Movement*

Two representatives of this party were interviewed: Vice Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia who is also the Chairperson of the Gender Equality Advisory Council, and the Chairman of the Committee on Procedural Issues and Rules of the Parliament

The United National Movement represents the ruling party and the parliamentary majority; it is represented in the Parliament by 109 members, eight of which are women. According to the respondents, six out of sixteen members of the party decision-making body are women and about 90% of the employees of the local governments are members of the United National Movement, out of which approximately 10% are women.

It should be noted that the answers of the respondents reveal a contradictory attitude toward women's political involvement.

### *The Chairman of the Committee on Procedural Issues and Rules of the Parliament*

She doesn't consider women's low representation a problem and believes that women's involvement in politics is a natural process. The number of women in the national and/or local assemblies doesn't have to reflect the number of women in the population. Artificial interventions (for example the quota system) into this "natural" process are not a benefit for women; to the contrary, they are generally insulting to women. *"Only those women who have the desire, skills, experience and relevant education should be involved in politics; we cannot raise the number of women by legislation or some kind of quota."*<sup>14</sup> She believes that the level of women's representation in her party is satisfactory; in her own words, they constitute more than a half of the party members. *"The party is not represented by its top ranking leaders only; it is a pretty well-organized structure, where women are represented in plenty."* To underline her arguments, she states that women constitute more than a half of the Parliamentary staff.<sup>15</sup>

She cannot see any factors that hinder women's advancement in her party or in politics in general. She also believes that if any discriminatory treatment exists in the party, it originates in the Georgian society which holds an overall traditional and stereotypical attitude toward women. The respondent believes that to enhance gender equality legal measures should focus on these social issues – so women can balance their family duties with professional life.

An official women's group does not exist in the party but there is an informal women's group which initiates proposals concerning charity and aid for socially needy groups and these are regularly supported by the male members of the party.

Finally, she does not consider it necessary to implement special policy that would support the advancement of women; she believes that the party should treat every member equally which is also declared by the party's statute. The respondent ascribes the merit of the existence of the Gender Equality Advisory Council under Parliament to her party.

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<sup>14</sup> From now on all the quotation in the texts are in italic.

<sup>15</sup> She doesn't reflect on the fact that the main function of the staff in the Parliament is administrative.  
[www.parliament.ge](http://www.parliament.ge)

*Vice Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, Chairperson of the Gender Equality Advisory Council*

Contrary to the rest of the respondents she demonstrated gender awareness and a clear vision of the issue. She believes that women absolutely have to be involved in politics equally since they constitute more than a half of the population and the principle of social justice demands their proportionate representation in politics as well. She believes that the state must assume certain responsibilities to support women's advancement. She is aware of the glass ceiling in her own party - the higher the position, the fewer women. She is also well aware of the fact that in spite of the proclaimed desire to have a better representation of women, the party does not take any particular measures in order to achieve this goal. She believes that there is a dearth of specially-trained personnel that is necessary to implement a gender aware policy, and this is also one of the hindering factors.

In her opinion, the main obstacle on the path to women's political advancement is women's double burden and the unstable economic situation. *"This is precisely what constitutes women's indirect discrimination."* In order for women to reach the critical mass of 30 percent, a larger number of educated women must be present in parties, and this must be the focus of the strategy of every party.

She believes that only a handful of women endure the selection process and make it to the top. The respondent is well aware of the importance of women's involvement in politics. *"The fact that women have a lesser chance to participate in the building of the country hinders the country's development."*

*The Georgian Labor Party*

The representative of the Party's Public Relations Service, and the Chairperson of the Women's Council of the Party, were the respondents. Since both of the respondents were interviewed at the same time and their answers didn't differ much, we will not discuss them separately.

In the respondents' opinion, women absolutely must be involved in decision-making since they differ from men due to their specific qualities and experiences and these must be reflected in politics. Just like men, women can be good political leaders. They state that no forms of discrimination against women exist in their party and women are treated equally with men. Yet, it becomes evident in the course of the interview that since men constitute the vast majority of the central structures of the party, this might pose a major obstacle to women's advancement.

Women's share in the party is approximately 20 – 30%, which is considered, by them, to be enough. In spite of the fact that only one woman is represented in the decision-making body, they do not see any hindering factors in women's advancement within their party. In general, they keep this responsibility away from the internal decision-making process and believe that unless the party is forced from outside by, for example, the government, it will not be able to implement quotas on its own. *"Nothing will work unless the issue of quota is implemented in the legislation. Until some kind of mandatory condition is accepted, nothing will help the situation with women's representation on party lists in Georgia."* We should also point out that the respondents believe the quota system is a necessary and positive step toward women's advancement.

The respondents admit that the objective of gender equality, which is mentioned in their party's statute, is a toothless measure. Due to the absence of necessary financial resources, the party is not able to carry out special activities to empower women. The respondents realize that in order to advance the position of

women within the party, women themselves must push for more. *"We never discuss quotas in particular (...) women must become more active and convince political leaders that their place in politics is as natural as men's."*

According to the respondents, about thirty women represented their party as candidates during the latest elections in the majoritarian districts. The sole criterion used in their pre-selection and nomination was how well-known, influential and authoritative the candidate was in her/his district.

The Women's Council existed in the party until 2003; it was dissolved due to the absence of financial support. The members of the council gradually left the party. According to the respondents, the government applied pressure on the Labour Party in order to diminish the competition. *"We had a lot of teachers and doctors in this union. Do you know what the teachers told me? If they (the government) find out that we are connected to the Labor Party in any way, we will be forced to quit our jobs. (...) Many of our (former) members have come to us and we have given them a confirmation to prove that they are not members of the party."*

We asked the respondents to name the most important achievement of the Women's Union in the party. The reply was that women in general do all the "dirty work" in the party. The party does not keep records concerning its voters' gender, but judging from their own experience, they conclude that women prevail among their supporters, especially elderly women. Even though the party addresses social issues that directly influence women's lives, for example reproduction health, self-supporting mothers and immigrant women, the party does not differentiate its electorate based on gender – the most important thing is to collect the most votes.

The overall attitude on the part of the respondents represents a type of mixture of the gender aware and, at the same time, gender blind attitudes. They are aware of the necessity of women's increased participation in politics, yet they do not see the same necessity within their own party.

#### *Christian Democratic Movement*

The respondent was the only female representative of the party in the Parliament and she is also the Deputy Chairperson of the Healthcare Committee and sits on the Party's Main Committee.

In the respondent's opinion, women must be involved in politics just like other social groups (ethnic minorities, etc.) in order for the political spectrum to reflect the complex public attitude. However, she thinks that some ways may not be acceptable to achieve women's equal representation. The reason behind this is that the values of Georgian society differ from the Western ones. *"We cannot apply the Western perspective on women status in the Georgian society or in a political party – just because women have different roles and positions doesn't mean that they are not treated equally."* She explains this by the explaining the "uniqueness" of the Georgian mentality. Surprisingly, she personally doesn't agree with this statement.

In her opinion, women's representation in the party is not on a satisfactory level. Although women constitute almost 40% of the party's membership, they are not equally represented in the party leadership positions nor in the executive positions in the Parliament. The respondent points out that the Organization of Christian Democrat Women strives for women's empowerment. This organization also offers education for women

through collaboration with various international organizations. According to the respondent, the fact that gender equality does not appear in the statute of the party can be explained by the existence of the charter of the Women's Organization, which discusses this very issue. The respondent emphasized two main directions in the work of this organization: charitable work/social aid and the education of women leaders in the rural areas.

The women's role in the party consists doing of the "dirty work". *"Women are the workhorses of the party. To be honest with you, the general situation in Georgia is such that women take care of all the "dirty work" in every sphere, while men hold high offices."* According to the respondent, the lack of activity among women and their fear to exercise influence and power contributes to the picture described above. *"To be honest, women do not participate actively enough; they have their cozy spots in the party, as if being afraid to accept responsibility. Out of the twelve members of the main committee of the party, only two are women."*

The party is represented by seven deputies in the Parliament and the respondent is the only woman among them. The party does not have a single representative in the local government, since the party wasn't established at the time of the last elections to the local government.

According to the respondent, there are no formal nor informal hindrances preventing women from participating in the party work and the party leaders are interested in improving the representation of women. If the party realizes the value of women, no obstacles whatsoever will be created for women to get involved. The respondent finds it hard to formulate what exactly prevents women from reaching high positions in the party. *"I believe that women are important, they do a very important job, yet they cannot exceed a certain level for some reason. There are hindering factors to some extent, for example the attained education level or their mentality. A woman may be satisfied with a certain position, yet when it comes to a promotion, a number of hindering factors appear."*

According to the respondent, the party always tries to promote women and does it through engaging famous and influential women. In addition, a discussion on gender balance always takes place before the elections, and the party leaders always try to include at least one if not two women among the top ten on the list.

According to the respondent, 70% of the supporters of the party are women. She thinks that the party must do its best to address their interests. The respondent thinks that the existence of a woman leader will increase women's support for the party.

In this case, the overall attitude on the part of the respondent is unstable as well; she is partially aware of the problem of women's low participation in politics, yet she is inconsistent in her view of the reasons as well as the solutions.

### *Georgia's Way*

The Chairperson of the Party served as the respondent. In the respondent's opinion, women must be involved in politics, since they bring their own special worldview and a more balanced policy. She believes that voters trust women politicians more since they have had more disappointment with male politicians more often than with women.

She believes that the quota system and other legal measures to promote women to politics are artificial and thinks that such interventions are not necessary in Georgia since women are active. *"Actually, women are so actively involved in the social life of Georgia; they are so advanced that it would be only natural if they were represented fully in politics as well. Therefore, different factors must be taken into consideration here. To me, it is artificial and somewhat degrading."*

The respondent believes that women represent more than a half of her party and they are equally represented in the decision-making positions. Accordingly, she does not think that it is necessary to implement any additional measures in order to advance women. She does not see any factors that would hinder women's advancement in the party, other than the insufficient funds to conduct trainings for party members. For example, when trainings are offered by international organizations, it is primarily the ruling party that grabs the opportunity. Generally, the ruling party does not concern itself with the issue of financing small parties. Unlike the other respondents, she does not believe that society has a different attitude toward women and men. *"I have not noticed that society considers women being someone less than a man. One may notice such an attitude in some European countries but not in Georgia. However, there must be some kind of hindering factors because women are underrepresented in the Parliament."* The respondent believes that the contributions of women and men to the party should not be viewed separately. However, she emphasizes a certain specific ability of women politicians. *"Women are more daring and consistent than men in today's Georgia. They have developed these qualities as a necessity in the past twenty years."*

The party does not have representatives in the local governments anymore. According to the respondent's information, they either resigned office or moved on to the ruling party due to pressure from the local government.

In the respondent's opinion, the main problem of the pre-election nomination of candidates and the increase of their social scope is the attitude of mass media (in this particular case, television), which has difficulty digesting new and unknown faces. They refuse to invite such individuals on their shows; as a result, party leaders are left with fewer means of promotion. *"If we want to change something, there must be some kind of pressure from the mass media, for example, so that it will be possible for the party, and not necessarily its leader, to appear on a show."*

According to the respondent, the second problem concerning the identification of candidates and the creation of the party list is the lack of human resources in general; because of the lack of a proper financing, the party encounters many problems while searching for candidates in rural areas.

The respondent does not have any statistical data on the number of women voters. However, she believes that they must constitute the majority, as she has witnessed more activity on their part during protests. In the respondent's opinion, since the leader of the party is a woman and women are equally represented in the party, the party is acceptable for women as it is.

The respondent does not see and does not recognize at all any kind of gender problem in politics. She views the issue of women's participation within the context of the financial problem of the opposition party. Her attitude is gender blind.

### *The Republican Party*

The Chairperson of the Party (male), and a party member (female) were the respondents.

According to the information provided by the respondents, women make up 44% of the party members in central Georgia and 40% in the rural areas. In the decision-making body – the Committee – there are ten women out of thirty-five individuals in total. Also, women make up 20% of the party representatives in the local governments. The party does not have any representatives in the Parliament. Both respondents believe that women must be involved in politics. The male respondent feels that using the quota system in order to achieve this would appear as “a surgical intervention”; he also believes that it is up to women themselves to become more active. The female respondent considers the quota system acceptable as a temporary measure.

Both respondents believe that no obstacles for women exist in their party and they are treated equally with men. Both respondents believe that a high level of women’s representation is one of the goals of the party. Although the party does not have a specific gender policy, the number of women in the party is constantly growing. In the respondents’ opinion, the mentality that expects a woman to axle a family’s responsibilities stands in the way of the increase of women’s political activity.

When talking about the statutes and program of the party, the Chairperson of the Party once more emphasized that the party expects women to focus on the issues of women and gender. The party practices a “direct democracy” when it comes to the suggestion of issues and proposal: they are prepared by the party members and put on the party website; afterwards it is discussed, amended and corrected; only after this, an official party version of the document is drafted. *“It would be very interesting to us to prepare a document reflecting the party’s position on women’s issues and rights. We believe that such a proposal should come from the female party members.”*

An attitude of this type clearly points out the party’s completely unclear and neutral attitude toward gender balance. Especially since both respondents agree that their party does not differentiate its membership according to their gender. Before elections, the party tries to find good candidates, regardless of their gender, and if such a candidate turns out to be a woman, it is a plus, as the male respondent notes. The main criterion for selection is the candidate’s previous merits and his/her good name in the community where he/she will run. The respondents consider it inappropriate to purposely look for women candidates.

The chairperson of the party blames the absence of a women’s group on the lack of women’s initiative. *“Women members of the party do not consider it necessary. The decision is up to them; they must raise the question and prove its necessity.”* However, according to the woman respondent, an informal initiative group of women exists that occasionally comes up with initiatives to improve the work of the party, such as the establishment of a group of observers during elections. The respondent believes that the party won seats in some districts of Tbilisi thanks to this group. This informal group receives occasional financing. In general, both respondents believe that women are “good accomplisners”, and it is very interesting that the male respondent once more emphasized this quality when talking about women’s leadership. *“It should be noted that women politicians are committed to the cause; they are honest accomplisners, extremely hard-working and well-organized. Needless to say, a woman can be a good political leader. You can be rest assured that the job, which she accepts, will be accomplished in the best possible manner.”*

The party never studied the percentage of women and men among its electorate and it is not reflected in its program either, yet the respondents state that this issue needs elaborate studying in order to identify women voters' interests. However, they note that they have worked on the issues close to women, for example, the Labor Code, and supported the Law against Domestic Violence, and so forth.

The overall attitude on the part of the respondent reveals the signs of the gender aware approach, yet, like the others, she is inconsistent in her view on the ways to solve the problem. For some reason, the Chairperson of the Party believes it is solely up to the women to solve the problems.

#### *The Women's Party for Justice and Equality*

It is evident from its title, the Women's Party for Justice and Equality, that this party places a special emphasis on women's rights and their empowerment. Therefore, we approached its representatives with a slightly different questionnaire than the other parties. The Chairperson of the Party was our respondent.

The membership of the Women's Party is available for both women and men. According to the respondent, one man is even a member of the decision-making body of the party, yet she believes many men, in spite of their sympathies for the party, abstain from joining the party due to their stereotypical worldview.

The respondent believes that women absolutely have to participate in the decision-making process: due to their "experience as women", they are able to formulate policies which meet the needs of women. What makes women politicians different from men politicians, in her opinion, is the ability to see alternatives when solving a problem. Men, according to the respondent, are less flexible. She believes that the state must accept certain responsibilities in order to increase women's participation in politics, including implementation of a quota system and the development of a special educational program.

She considers the family duties to be the main obstacle on the path to women's political advancement. However, certain obstacles concerning women's advancement exist even on the party level. First of all, it is the bad financial situation. Because this party did not exceed the 5% barrier during the previous elections, it is not considered to be a qualified subject and does not have any financial support. Therefore, the chairperson of the party and other members have to allocate money from their own pockets to maintain the office. This is not always easy, especially since the women members of the party come mostly from the middle class. It is difficult to engage members of the party in the rural areas, since the local government applies pressure on those who wish to become a member of the party.

Trainings arranged by international organizations are primarily attended by members of the ruling party, and small parties like the Women's Party are having a hard time attending these trainings. The respondent raised another problem obstructing the political advancement of women. This is the lack of means to supply the voter with information. Parties do not have the channels to mass media through which they can freely inform their electorate about their program and policies; this type of information is considered to be an advertisement. The economic security of women politicians is yet another issue. Because women are slow to become involved in all kinds of deals, they have a hard time soliciting money that is necessary for their election campaigns, as opposed to male politicians who receive financing from large businessmen in exchange for lobbying in the future.

But this concern women voters as well. Because of their stereotypical worldview, even women voters themselves choose to vote for a man as their leader. Nevertheless, she believes that this issue in general is subject to research because, in her opinion, the political sympathies of voters and their actual behavior at the elections often differ, and it would be interesting to study what motivates them to make decision or another when voting.

The attitude of the respondent is gender sensitive.

### *The New Right*

Our respondent was the Co-Chairperson of the Women's Club of the Political Union – the New Right. The respondent agrees with the others and believes that women must be involved in politics, since they introduce an outlook that differs from that of men and their role in peace building is huge. Their presence in politics is also necessary to protect women's rights. However, she rejects the quota system as it would hurt qualified women who would be will be left outside the quota level. This argument against the quota system has been used many times in Georgia, yet none of the persons who use it can explain the low level of women's political participation in Georgia.

The respondent pointed out that women are represented well enough in her party and they form a considerable power, yet all of this is a result of a natural process, as opposed to the artificial intervention of quotas. According to information provided by the respondent, women constitute 55% of the lower level of the party. Yet, the balance is maintained at the other levels as well. The percentage of women is higher in the regional organizations. As for the leadership, the respondent believes women constitute about 30 percent. The heads of the program group, the PR service and the internal service are women. Also, a woman represents the party in the Central Election Commission. The party has no representatives in the local governments. According to the respondent, women are not discriminated in the party based on their gender. She believes that family duties are the main hindering factor of women's political advancement.

However, she thinks that women representatives of the party in the regions are under certain pressure precisely because of their gender. She recalled one specific example: *"It is very degrading when someone yells at you unjustly and belittles you. This happened to one female member in the region. If she were a man, they would never dare doing something like this."*

The protection of women's rights is always taken into consideration by the program documents of the party. A woman's club functions within the party. The party maintains a database of women leaders, which is constantly updated. Every member of the party receives the same amount of financial support before elections and the party does not differentiate its members on the basis of gender. Discussions on gender balance never take place within the party before elections, since everything "falls into place" anyway.

When asked about how the candidates are selected in each polling district – for example are women represented in the district where the party exercises significant support or are they selected to win those seats that the party will not be able to win – she said that she had never thought about this kind of strategy to empower women. *"We select candidates in accordance with their strength in her/his region, it depends on the candidate's good reputation and influence, his/her ability to manage and not on the candidate's gender."*

*As for a situation with a guaranteed majority of votes... No, we have never had such a situation. Yet, if there were a situation like this, one would consider nominating a woman there.”*

A woman's club has existed in the party since the day it was established. The chairperson of the club is also a member of the main committee of the party. The initial functions of the club consisted of the implementation of social programs and charitable activities only. However, in recent years, due to the absence of financing and donations from businessmen, the club does not carry out such activities anymore. Presently, in the respondent's opinion, the main purpose of the club is to support women's political empowerment and its main achievement is the fact that an increasing number of women occupy leading positions in the regional structures of the party.

The respondent has never calculated the number of women voters and their percentage, yet she believes that women voters are generally more active than men voters. At the same time, she thinks that even these active women vote for men to be their leader.

The overall attitude on the part of the respondent represents a kind of transition stage between the gender neutral attitude and the gender aware approach.

## **Summary**

The interviews with the representatives of the seven political parties, The United National Movement, The Georgian Labor Party, Christian Democratic Movement, Georgia's Way, The Republican Party, The Women's Party for Justice and Equality, The New Right show that there is a limited understanding of the concepts of formal and substantive equality and of the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination against women. The Georgian political establishment view the issues of gender equality and the advancement of women as something unnatural and artificial for the Georgian society and they argue that the country faces more urgent and pressing matters which must be dealt with first.

Furthermore, the interviews revealed a peculiarity about the Georgian political environment which is based upon and develops around individuals. The Georgian politicians presented their function as a group that consolidates around one or several political leaders, who very often do not have any clearly distinguished ideological directions. The vast majority of the respondents pointed out that the main criterion in the pre-election nomination of a candidate is a high socio-economic standing, often with prominent position in society and the backing of powerful interest groups. Traditionally men fit these requirements better than women. On the other hand, many of the party representatives admit that women are active in elections and excellent promoters of party politics at the local level. The emphasis on the individualistic approach, which is partly an outcome of the majoritarian electoral system, together with the traditional Georgian society, has lead to a skewed pool of eligible candidates.

Another observation from the interviews is that the Georgian political parties do not realize their potential role in socializing and educating voters and citizens of the importance of women's equal representation and instead point at external hindering factors. Of course, the traditional view of the women's role in society may be in some cases a cherished value. This is the case for the ruling party, the United National Movement, which holds the traditional Georgian values and the Christian Democratic Movement and the New Right as

well. The non-parliamentary opposition parties, on top of this, struggle with the negative pressure exercised by the ruling party and the lack of resources. In some of the parties (for example, the United National Movement and the Georgian Labour Party) gender awareness is represented by lonely voices without the support of the party leadership.

The parties on the whole do not realize how to apply a gender sensitive approach to their own internal processes. The majority of the respondents believe that an equal approach to women and men within a party means equal opportunities for all. But, as the interviewees have said themselves - the traditional stereotypes place women in the domestic rather than the public space. It is important for the political parties to realize that a gender neutral process is likely to lead to a slate of candidates that is predominately male.

The traditional expectations on women duties transcend also their roles within the parties. Women's groups and women members are often associated with charity, social aid and organizational tasks. But a new trend is emerging – during the pre-election process women party members are now interested in finding women leaders in the rural areas of the country and providing special education for them. This concerns the New Right and the Christian Democratic Movement. An exception on the Georgian political scene is the Women's Party which was created with the aim to articulate and push for women's rights and gender equality. In some parties, for example in the Republican Party, there was also the opinion that if the women's party section or the women members raise their voices for the women's cause, the party is willing to listen. This shows the importance of creating a women's group or even alliances across party lines to push for the issues. At the same time, the responsibility for equal representation and gender policies shouldn't be loaded solely upon women.

## UKRAINE

The Parliament of Ukraine (*Verkhovna Rada*) consists of 450 members elected in a nationwide multi-member constituency for a five-year term. Mandates are distributed proportionally among lists of political parties and blocs receiving more than three per cent of votes cast. The Parliamentary Election Law (PEL) was adopted on 25 March 2004, but underwent major changes in 2005 when the electoral system became proportional only<sup>16</sup>. The switch to the proportional electoral system is evaluated as a positive change by most experts and politicians.<sup>17</sup> The new system made the Parliament more structured and political parties more stable. The introduction of a single national constituency was intended to protect politics against "regionalization" of the Ukrainian political scene which has led to large number of political parties, many of which have a small membership. Political parties in Ukraine evolve around personalities and national (Ukrainian or Russian) identity rather than ideological platforms.

During the last two decades Ukraine made important steps to mainstream the principle of gender equality into its core legal frameworks and policies. Equal rights for women and men are declared in the Constitution and legislation and strategic programs are in place: the Equal Rights and Opportunities Act with the purpose of achieving equality between women and men in all areas of society (adopted in 2005) and the State Program on the Ensuring of Gender Equality in the Ukrainian Society for 2006 – 2010 (adopted in 2006). But there is an obvious lack of implementation of these laws and discrimination against women is not liable under the current rules. On the governmental level, there is no complex gender approach to the development of the gender policy and no effective mechanisms for the elimination of discrimination against women in Ukraine.<sup>18</sup> The unequal status of women in Ukraine is also demonstrated in their underrepresentation in national politics. Ukraine is ranked at 110 out of 188 countries in terms of the number of women in parliament.<sup>19</sup> The proportion of women in Parliament rose from 4.0% in 1994 to 8.4% in 1998. However, after the 2002 elections, women's representation dropped back to 5.1%. Certain changes took place after the Orange Revolution (November 2004 to January 2005), when, for the first time, women were appointed to the positions of the heads of three regional administrations. In the government formed by Viktor Yanukovich in the summer 2006, as well as in the previous government, chaired by the Yuriy Yehanurov, there were no women-ministers.

The last elections held in Ukraine took place in September 2007 as pre-term parliamentary elections and they were the fifth held since their independence in 1991. These elections followed a political crisis which developed in spring 2007 between the President and the ruling coalition. The ratio of women after these elections slightly rose again to 8.5% of female Members of Parliament (37 women out of 450 deputies). Most political parties did not address gender-equality topics within their electoral platforms, and issues affecting women have not featured prominently as part of the campaign discourse. The 2007 elections returned only

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<sup>16</sup> Before the 2005 amendment, part of the deputies were elected with the majoritarian system and the term was equal to 4 years.

<sup>17</sup> For example, this is the conclusion of the project by the International Centre for Policy Studies: "The Options for the Electoral System", during which roundtables with Ukrainian politicians and experts were conducted. More at [www.icps.com](http://www.icps.com)

<sup>18</sup> An Alternative Report on the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in Ukraine. Ukraine 2008. Ed. Oksana Yarosh

<sup>19</sup> Inter-parliamentary Union, IPU, [www.ipu.org](http://www.ipu.org), Situation as of 31 May 2010

37 female deputies: 12 for the Party of Regions, 12 for the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, 7 for the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc, 5 for the Communist Party of Ukraine, and 1 for the Lytvyn Bloc.<sup>20</sup>

In 2009, two women held posts in the Cabinet of Ministers (including the Prime Minister). The gender difference between women and men among people's representatives varies according to the responsibility and power of the positions, with women more represented at lower levels. For example, in 2006, 8.5% of representatives in the national parliament were women, while they made up 12% of regional councils, 21% of district councils, 24% of city councils and 40% of village councils.

In the 2007 elections the Central Election Committee (CEC) registered 20 candidate lists submitted by political parties and electoral blocs. These parties and blocs nominated a total of 4,864 candidates, with individual lists containing between 41 and 450 candidates. Parties generally did not put forward gender-balanced lists. Of the 20 political parties registered for these elections, five were led by women, and five candidate lists were headed by women; however, only some 17.8% of all candidates were women.<sup>21</sup> Some civil society organisations have been critical of the nomination process of parties and blocs. Although political parties become stronger and more structured, they still continue to be closed and undemocratic. The way the lists of candidates were formed at party conventions was a mere formality, while real lists were formed in back room deals.<sup>22</sup>

Last but not least, Ukraine has been represented by a strong female leader Yulia Tymoshenko – the first woman in the position of the Vice-Prime–Minister and the Prime Minister in the Ukrainian government. Yulia Tymoshenko currently chairs one of the biggest parliamentary factions – The Block of Yulia Tymoshenko. This can be considered as the achievement of the women's political leadership.<sup>23</sup> However, this hasn't affected the representation of women on the candidate lists nor has it contributed to more programs related to women's issues and/or equal opportunities of women and men. One of the explanations is that women party leaders in Ukraine are not considered to be part of the women's movement and even in the parties headed by women, very few women make it to the list of candidates.<sup>24</sup> A number of women's organizations are active in promoting gender equality and women's involvement in politics; however, there were no coordinated efforts prior to the 2007 pre-term parliamentary elections.

### **Political parties in the survey**

Eight parties participated in the interviews – all of which are in the Parliament and form different political factions. As mentioned before, Ukraine has a large number of parties; for 2007 elections up to 120 political entities were registered, and many of these are small and unknown to the general public. Small parties often join in multi-party coalitions (electoral blocs) for the purpose of participating in parliamentary elections.

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<sup>20</sup> Ukraine: Pre-term Parliamentary Elections 30 September 2007. OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report. 2007

<sup>21</sup> The number of women candidates ranged from 39 percent (the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine) to 9 percent (the Peasants' Bloc Agrarian Ukraine).

<sup>22</sup> ICPS Newsletter # 6 (398), 25 February 2008: The electoral system: Progress or stagnation?

<sup>23</sup> To be fair, there are more female leaders in Ukrainian politics: Natalya Vitrenko who chairs the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine and Kateryna Vashchuk who heads the Agrarian Party of Ukraine. In 2007, the Peasants' Bloc Agrarian Ukraine under the leadership of Lidiya Porechkina and Party Viche headed by Inna Bogoslovska were established.

<sup>24</sup> Enhancing Women's Political Participation. A Policy Note for Europe and CIS (ECIS). UNDP

The biggest political party in the Parliament (with 175 mandates) is the Party of Regions (which did not provide answers due to lack of time); next in size is the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc (with 156 mandates) which consists of the All-Ukrainian Union Fatherland, the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party and the Reforms and Order Party (which refused to participate in the survey). The next electoral bloc is the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc which includes the following parties: People's Union Our Ukraine; Forward, Ukraine!; the People's Movement of Ukraine; the Ukrainian People's Party; the Ukrainian Republican Party Assembly; the Christian Democratic Union; the European Party of Ukraine; PORA; Motherland Defenders Party. Out of these, five participated in the survey (see the table below); the other three did not find time to participate. The fourth biggest political party in the Parliament is the Communist Party of Ukraine (with 27 mandates) which refused to participate in the survey. The last political faction which made it into Parliament is the Lytvyn Bloc (with 20 mandates) which consists of the People's Party and the Labour Party of Ukraine, of which the former participated in the survey.

Parties that participated in the survey: ideologies, social groups represented, women's party section, gender-related policies, female leaders, when established, electoral bloc	
<b>All-Ukrainian Union Fatherland</b> (Batkivshchyna)	Conservatism, social liberalism, pro-European, Ukrainians, women's party section, promotion of female leaders; 1999 Electoral bloc: The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc
<b>European Party of Ukraine</b>	Centre-right, liberal, pro-European, middle class, urban citizens; 2006 Electoral bloc: The Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc
<b>People's Party</b> (the former Agrarian Party of Ukraine)	Centrism, agrarianism farmers, promotion of women leaders; 2002 Electoral bloc: The Lytvyn Bloc
<b>People's Movement of Ukraine</b> (Rukh)	Center-right, liberal, social security, for national revival, pro-European and pro-NATO, middle class, Ukrainians; 1989 Electoral bloc: The Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc
<b>People's Self-Defense</b> (the former Forward, Ukraine!)	Conservative, nationalistic; started as a civic protest party; 1999 Electoral bloc: The Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc
<b>Ukrainian People's Party</b>	Right-wing, conservative, nationalistic, Ukrainians; 2002 Electoral bloc: The Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc
<b>The Ukrainian Republican Party Assembly</b> (Sobor)	Centre-right, nationalistic, promote women leaders; registered as the first political party of Ukraine in 1990 Electoral bloc: The Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defense Bloc
<b>Ukrainian Social Democratic Party</b>	Left-wing, liberal, social democracy; 1998 Electoral bloc: The Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc

Source: Websites of the political parties

## **Responses from the political parties: general answers and party specific answers**

### *Attitudes towards women in politics and decision-making*

Representatives of all the parties that participated in the survey expressed their positive attitude to the representation of women in politics. Also, nearly all respondents believe that there are no major differences or preferences between men and women politicians. The role and importance of political leaders in Ukraine depends not on their sex, age or nationality, but on their experience, principles and political will. The Constitution of Ukraine guarantees every citizen, irrespective of sex, the right to participate in the political process. Thus, women as well as men, if they want to fully realize their civil rights, should engage in politics.

In general, professionalism, including professionalism in politics, does not have any gender distinctions. Divisions should be made according to the depth of expertise, experience, professional achievements, and breadth of mind.

As for particular qualities, the characteristics of women in politics, respondents indicated that women are more successful in making tactical steps; they can easily concentrate on details, are better aware of social and humanitarian issues, more flexible and thus can skillfully mediate a conflict. Due to the positions of women, society is getting more humane and fair; the political ideology is getting more systemic, integrated; and the ways of achieving goals are getting more realistic. The advantages of women are consistency, resistance to stress, and positive thinking. Men respondents also pointed out that the presence of women in Parliament, political debates or meetings has its charm; women in politics inspire men to more efficient work; in the presence of a woman, men politicians become more attentive and restrained.

Representatives of the parliamentary parties also pointed out the progressive influence of gender policy of the social welfare of the northern European countries. Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, as well as Canada and New Zealand achieved the highest level of welfare in the world due to the fact that the issue of equal rights and opportunities became a governmental and party policy. Nonetheless, some respondents expressed a position that sex has no impact on the efficiency of political activity. In some European countries, for example, there are many women both in the national governments and in the EU leadership, but they hardly differ much from men politicians.

### *Current women's representation in your party*

Party representatives say that in Ukraine there are many women success stories in politics, and there is a tendency for the number of women in leading positions to increase, but looking closely at the gender stratification of the different party levels one can hardly talk about a trend or tendency. It is true that in some political parties women are represented practically equally among rank-and-file members, and in some parties women even predominate. Nevertheless, the higher up in the hierarchy we go, the fewer women we found. Consequently, the ratio of men and women in the Parliament is unequal, i.e. only 8% of MPs are women.

### *All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (Batkivshchyna)*

Out of 11 leadership positions in the executive committee of the party, only one position is taken by a woman. Out of 155 MPs' representatives of the election bloc, women have only 10 deputy mandates.

Currently, there is no statistical data as to the number of women local councilors. In the opinion of party representatives, such representation of women in the party leadership structures is not sufficient.

#### *European Party of Ukraine*

Women take about 50% of the central executive leadership positions and nearly 25% of the regional executive positions within the European Party of Ukraine. Half of the members of the executive committee of the party are women. The party has only one, male, representative in the parliament, Party representatives express confidence that in the successive legislature there will be more party members, including women, in the Parliament. Currently, the party is getting prepared for the local elections and has no representatives in town or village councils.

#### *People's Party*

Out of the total number of party members, men make up 184,213 (56%) and women make 144,399 (44%). The party aims at achieving gender balance within the party, so the disparity in the number of men and women party members is gradually decreasing. The principle of gender balance was quite successfully achieved in regional party organizations such as Volyn (51,6% men, 44,4% women), Zakarpattia (55,2% men, 44,8% women), Kyiv (54,3% men, 45,7% women), Chernivtsi (56,8% men, 43,2% women), as well as the Odesa and Sevastopol city organizations (52% men, 48% women). In the Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, Mykolaiv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Kherson, Cherkassy, and Chernihiv regional party organizations, the number of women party members predominates respectively by 5,8%, 12,5%, 9,4%, 3,9%, 13,1%, 10,1% and 3,6%.

Two out of 18 members of the party executive committee are women, and two out of 20 MPs of the parliament faction "Lytvyn Bloc" are women (10%). About 46% of the local councilors from the party are women (about 12,000 out of 26,000).

Every tenth leadership position on the political board of the People's Party is taken by a woman, and 10% of women is to be found on the executive committee of the party. About 8% of the heads of regional party organizations are women and about a quarter of all positions in the regional leadership structures are held by women. Women hold three-quarters of the leadership positions in the Central Party Office.

#### *People's Movement of Ukraine ("Rukh")*

In Rukh women hold a number of leadership positions at various party levels: heads of regional party organizations in Zaporizhzhia and Luhansk regions, deputy heads of regional party organizations in Donetsk, Kyiv, Odesa, Khmelnytsky regions, heads of departments in Volyn, Donetsk, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Mykolaiv, Poltava, Ternopil, Cherkasy, Chernivtsi, and Khmelnytsky regional party organizations.

#### *Political Party "Forward, Ukraine!" ("People's Self-Defense")*

The party has no statistics on the number of men and women among the party members. In the opinion of the party representatives, this fact confirms the absence of an artificial gender division of the party members. The representation of women and men on leadership positions at various levels depends only on their professionalism. Among the delegates that were elected to the party congress 40% were women. Out of 5 deputy heads of the party one is a woman. Out of 4 MPs one is a woman.

“People’s Self-Defense” was founded after the elections to local councils had been held, so the party representatives in town councils are people who joined the party after already being deputies. There are party representatives who are heads of village councils, but there are no precise statistics. Approximately, 15-16 out of 100 heads of village councils are women.

#### *Ukrainian People's Party*

Thirty percent of the total number of party members are women. The highest decision-making organ of the party is the party congress. Operational decisions are taken by the Central Committee or the Board. In each of these bodies both women and men are represented. All decisions are taken by the majority vote, so, in the opinion of the party representatives, each party decision is a result of an inter-gender consensus.

In the executive body of the Ukrainian People’s Party, the Secretariat, the women-men ratio is 1 to 3. Nevertheless, women take important leadership positions and have a certain impact on the work of the Secretariat. The party has 6 MPs, all of them are men. The criteria for delegating a person for a certain position should be the person’s authority in the party and professionalism, and not a vague “required percentage of women”.

The party has about 9.000 deputies at local levels. Women comprise about 25% of these. The reason for this may be a greater interest of women in solving practical issues, which is done by local councils.

#### *Ukrainian Republican Party “Sobor”*

Twenty-eight out of 62 members of the Central Council of the party are women. In the history of the party 32 party representatives have been MPs, and only two of them have been women. In the opinion of the party representatives, this ratio can be related with a lower level of enthusiasm of women in the inner-party primaries. Currently, the party has no statistics about the number of women local councilors. Nevertheless, there are no artificial obstacles to the political activity of women within the party.

#### *Ukrainian Social Democratic Party*

Women to men ratio in the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party is 40 to 60%, i.e. nearly equal. The first deputy head of the party, Ms. Olena Shustik, is also the deputy head of the ByUT Faction in the parliament. Three regional party organizations (Cherkassy, Chernihiv, Sumy) are headed by women.

#### *Obstacles to women’s meaningful political participation*

Representatives of all the parties participating in the survey indicated that women do not face any form of discrimination as party members. Respondents also did not indicate any specific obstacles for women running for office. In their opinion, women candidates face the same obstacles as men candidates, i.e. competition within the party and with other parties.

Among the reasons that restrain a greater participation of women in political life, the following were mentioned most frequently: a traditional perception of the role of woman in society as mother and wife, a low level of political activity and political awareness of women, a lack of organization of the women’s movement in Ukraine, the opposition of men politicians, the reluctance of women to play a more active role in the party leadership structures.

Women are represented in most party leadership structures, but men predominate. Women take party leadership positions on the regional, city, and district level. As members of these party leadership structures women have the same authority as men. A greater number of women is represented in the leadership structures on the local level.

#### *Current party strategies for increasing women's participation*

Most parties did not indicate that they have a strategy aimed at increasing the number of women party members.

The most well-defined position as regards this question was expressed by the All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" ("Batkivshchyna"), which has a women's wing of the party named "Women of Fatherland", and the People's Party. Representatives of both parties consider that the main method of increasing the number of women in leadership structures is enhancing women's awareness and strengthening the women's movement, as well as enlisting women with leadership potential to the party personnel.

The constitution of the Ukrainian Republican Party "Sobor" foresees a parity participation of men and women in the activities of the party. This principle is also present in the constitution of the People's Party. The People's Party also confirmed that they have a database of women with leadership potential and actively invite women to participate in political campaigns and branding projects of the party.

Most parties do not actively seek to identify or invite women to their political party. Most parties point out the importance of leadership and public speaking skills of party members and consider that women should have more initiative and be active in political life. There is also an opinion that Ukrainian women are usually burdened with housework and family responsibilities and usually do not want to develop themselves professionally within the party. Very often after achieving a certain level women refuse to further develop their career within the party.

All the parties that participated in the survey do not support the idea of establishing any quotas for women and do not see this method as an effective instrument for increasing the number of women candidates. In the opinion of the European Party team, Ukraine is a post-feministic country where sex is of no decisive importance for a politician, a civil servant or a professional of any other field. That is why establishing quotas and/or positive discrimination is not relevant for Ukraine, unlike the USA or Europe where stereotypes about women in politics still exist.

#### *Participation of women as candidates*

The majority of parties do not integrate a gender sensitive approach into their recruitment process. Party representatives see a number of reasons for this situation, still almost all of them emphasize that when recruiting candidates they take into account professional qualities, their experience, public support, ability to defend interests of the party. In "Batkivshchyna" this situation is explained by the absence of corresponding provisions in the party constitution, even though such a discussion is considered important. The representatives of the URP "Sobor" claim that the party constitution already foresees a parity participation of both men and women, and does not require a special discussion. Representatives of the People's Movement of Ukraine stated that there is unfortunately no discussion about gender balance because of the insufficient number of competitive women candidates, but noteworthy suggestions from women are always welcome.

The People's Party mentioned that gender discussion arises but it cannot be the main factor in selecting candidates. The party representatives emphasize that the main goal of the party is not only the search for women, but uniting citizens that have similar ideological principles and aspire to develop Ukraine.

All parties without any exceptions emphasized that they provide their candidates with political, organizational, methodological, and agitational assistance regardless of their sex. The level of the funding which the candidates receive for their campaigns does not depend on their sex.

Representatives of both "Batkivshchyna" and the Peoples's Party mentioned that their parties actively seek to identify women with leadership potential who might serve as candidates at both the national and local levels. The former organizes trainings on campaigning for heads of regional party organizations and suggests development and support of the women's movement and the introduction of political education programs for women. The latter also provides trainings on agrarian questions and information campaigning, in which both women and men participate.

Representatives of the party "Forward, Ukraine!" ("People's Self-Defense") say that they do not conduct any trainings for women only. The trainings they organize are usually targeted at certain professional groups which consist of both women and men. Dividing party members into men and women is considered to lead to a dead end in party development; any artificial division within the party is a negative phenomenon.

#### *The participation of women within the women's wing*

Only one party that participated in the survey stated that it has a women's wing. The All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" has a women's wing in the form of a NGO "Women of Batkivshchyna", registered in 2009. This organization has a multi-branched structure, but it has certain difficulties operating because of insufficient financing. The women's wing does not have its representation in the executive committee of the party and practically has no influence on the decision-making process within the party. Currently, the women's wing does not have sufficient financial support, but party representatives think it is a good idea to implement mentoring opportunities for younger or inexperienced women party members to receive support and advice from established party leaders, as well as to provide an experience exchange between women's organizations and to establish a school of political leadership for women.

The People's Party does not have a formally organized women's wing. Nevertheless, the absence of such a "women's lobby" within the party is explained by the fact that women party members have a wide range of opportunities and support within the party to realize their initiatives through the main party leadership channels. Further, women prevail in the youth's wing of the People's Party, where they receive all necessary organizational, financial and public marketing support in realizing their civic and political projects. Women are also represented in the party leadership structures. There are some mentoring programs in the People's Party that provide experience sharing between party leaders and regional leaders, but most of these programs are aimed at the youth's wing.

The URP "Sobor" does not have a women's wing; the party representatives consider structures based on one gender discriminative. The People's Movement of Ukraine emphasizes the necessity to overcome any divisions within the party and consolidate efforts and resources of the party to solve acute problems in the country.

### *Participation of women as voters*

All parties recognize that women voters are a potentially strong source of support for a party, because they comprise about 63% of voters in Ukraine. Some parties emphasized that the number of women voters is always higher because the number of women prevails.

The positions of parties on attracting more women voters differ to a certain extent. Representatives of "Batkivshchyna" think that women prevail among their party's electorate and there is indeed a need to actively develop and structure the women's movement in Ukraine, make visible the problems of women voters, develop political awareness of women and enable an efficient cooperation with women's NGOs. The URP "Sobor" considers that the support from men and women is practically equal, so generally the party targets the electoral group only on ideological grounds. The People's Party indicates that women voters are one of the priority sources of the party support; according to generalized results of some public opinion polls, the segment of women's support for the party comprises 48%.

The question "Would increasing the number of women spokespeople help attract women voters?" turned out to be quite controversial. Most parties do not see any direct correlation between a larger number of women spokesmen in the party and the level of support of women voters. Representatives of the party "Forward, Ukraine!" ("People's Self-Defense") think that increasing the number of women spokespeople may also have a reverse reaction and the party may lose the support of its women voters because of some typical psychological bias. So the party representatives consider that the electorate does not really pay attention to the fact whether women are represented in the party leadership or not.

Practically all parties while forming their election party candidates list try to keep to the principle "one woman in the leading five members", but it does not mean that women candidates really comprise one fifth of the list of party candidates who are likely to be elected.

Most parties think that they work effectively to address questions important to women, react to problems acute to them, and in their election programs support the legislation that meets the needs and concerns of women.

### **Summary**

Eight out of 16 political parties represented in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine participated in the survey. They are the All-Ukrainian Union "Fatherland" (Batkivshchyna), the European Party of Ukraine, the People's Party, the People's Movement of Ukraine (Rukh), the Political Party "Forward, Ukraine!" (People's Self-Defense), the Ukrainian People's Party, the Ukrainian Republican Party "Sobor", and the Ukrainian Social Democratic Party.

The main difficulties that the researchers faced while organizing the survey were the insufficient or completely missing information about the secretariats of the parties in open sources; incorrect or outdated contact information on the website of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine; absence of information about public offices of parties, etc. The reaction of parties to the invitation to participate in the survey was also rather reluctant, and some parties could not provide answers or did not find time for the interview within a month after the date of the interview request. In our opinion, such a situation testifies to a lack of interest in the topic

of the survey among half of the parliamentary parties or the weak publicity and organizational structure of the parties.

Representatives of all the parties that participated in the survey expressed their positive attitude to women's political participation. Also, nearly all respondents believe that there are no major differences or preferences between men and women politicians. The role and importance of political leaders in Ukraine depends not on their sex, age or nationality, but on their experience, principles and political will.

Party representatives say there are many women success stories in Ukrainian politics and there is a tendency for the number of women in leading positions to increase, but looking closely at the gender stratification of the different party levels one can hardly talk about a trend or tendency. It is true that in some political parties women are represented practically equally among rank-and-file members, and in some parties women even predominate. Nevertheless, the higher up in the hierarchy we go, the fewer women we found. Consequently, the ratio of women to men in the Parliament is unequal, i.e. only 8% of MPs are women.

All of the interviewed party representatives participating in the survey indicated that women do not face any form of discrimination as party members and/or candidates. All parties provide their candidates with political, organizational, methodological, and agitational support regardless of their sex. Among the reasons that restrain the greater participation of women in political life, the following were mentioned most frequently: a traditional perception of the role of woman in the society as mother and wife, a low level of political activity of women, the low political awareness of women, the weak women's movement in Ukraine, the reluctance of women to play a more active role in the party leadership structures, and sometimes the opposition of men politicians.

None of the parties that participated in the survey support the idea of establishing quotas for women and do not see this as an effective instrument for increasing the number of women candidates. On the whole parties do not actively seek to identify or invite women to their political party. Most parties point out the importance of the professional, leadership and public speaking skills of party members, and consider that women should be more active in political life. Only representatives of "Batkivshchyna" and the Peoples's Party mentioned that their parties actively seek to identify women with leadership potential who might serve as candidates at both the national and local levels, and they support the idea of implementing training programs for women for their further political activity.

Most parties do not see any direct correlation between a larger number of female spokespersons and the level of support of women voters. Practically all parties, while forming their party lists, try to keep to the principle "one woman in the five leading candidates", but in reality women candidates never comprise one fifth of the top five candidates or of the party list. The survey revealed one more contradiction. On the one hand, political parties declare equal conditions and absence of any discriminatory treatment towards women. On the other hand, the absence of women in the leadership positions is explained by the fact that the preference is given to a more professional and competitive candidates (de facto men). At the same time the majority of the interviewed political parties did not show any interest in attracting, training and strengthening the role of women in their political forces.

Last, we can conclude that the main reason behind the absence of women parliamentarians is the high level of bias in the selection of candidates – a process where women are unable to compete with men on equal terms, due to stereotypes, less access to money, and less effective social networks, which are traditionally dominated by men. It is obvious that without using quotas as a temporary measure it is impossible to achieve changes in this area. As the population of the country consists of 50% men and women, parity representation should be observed everywhere.

## KAZAKHSTAN

According to the 1995 Constitution, the Republic of Kazakhstan has “a presidential form of government” with a bicameral parliament, consisting of the Mazhilis (lower house) and the indirectly elected Senate (upper house). In June 2007 the Election Law was amended, primarily to reflect the relevant changes to the Constitution and to define a new electoral system. Under the amended law, 98 of the 107 deputies of the Mazhilis are elected by direct suffrage, and nine are chosen by the Assembly of Peoples of Kazakhstan, which represents the country’s various ethnic groups (in 2004, 67 deputies were elected in single-mandate constituencies, and 10 were elected by proportional representation from party lists).<sup>25</sup> The election of 98 deputies takes place on the basis of party lists and according to a proportional representation system, with the territory of Kazakhstan representing a single national electoral district. Under this system, voters vote for the party, and the parties receive mandates (seats) according to their share of the vote. Members of the Mazhilis serve five-year terms. Parties must clear a 7 percent vote threshold to enter the Mazhilis, and once elected, deputies must vote with their party. During the last elections both the national media and the international organizations speculated whether the opposition parties would gain any seats under the new electoral system. Despite some progress in the pre-election period and certain aspects of voting, the election did not meet a number of OSCE commitments.<sup>26</sup>

The political parties use a “closed” party list system, i.e. the voters vote for a political party and its leadership then chooses who will receive a mandate. The voters are presented only with candidate lists where candidates are listed in alphabetical order. This has been criticised by the OSCE as most countries require that the candidates are listed in the order in which they will receive mandates. This allows voters to have a reasonable expectation as to which candidates will receive mandates. The information about the listed candidate is also very limited - they are for example published by the Central Election Commission (CEC) on its website and in newspapers. The Election Law does not require that candidate lists be displayed at polling stations. These factors significantly lessen voters’ knowledge of whom they are electing.

The upper house of the bicameral Parliament is the 47-member Senate, with 32 members chosen by directly elected regional councils and 15 appointed by the president.<sup>27</sup> The senators serve six-year terms, with half of the 32 elected members up for election every three years. However the Senate doesn’t counterbalance the lower house. In the last elections in 2008 no opposition candidates participated in the indirect elections for the upper house of Parliament.

Local elections for maslikhats (local representative bodies) are held every five years. Although the constitutional amendments in 2007 granted a greater voice to local legislators in the appointment and removal of akims (an akim is the head of an akimat which is a municipal district or provincial government and

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<sup>25</sup> The feature of appointment of nine deputies by the specile body is criticised by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) as this runs contrary the OSCE Copenhagen Document.

<sup>26</sup> In particular with regard to elements of the legal framework and to the vote count and tabulation. There is more to be found in the 2007 OSCE Report, [http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/10/27638\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2007/10/27638_en.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> The members of Senate are elected at a joint session of the deputies of all representative bodies of the respective regions, major cities and the capital of the Republic.

serves as the Presidential representative), the dominance of the Nur Otan party at all levels of governance effectively nullifies the formal powers granted to local bodies.

During Kazakhstan's independence women's representation in the national Parliament has significantly decreased. Since the independence, the rate of female candidates in the national Parliament has oscillated between 10 to just under 18% in the last elections in 2007. To date, Kazakhstan ranks 70<sup>th</sup> on the Inter-Parliamentary Union's index of women's representation in national parliaments with 17,8%<sup>28</sup> in the lower house (Mazhilis) of the Parliament and 4,3% in the upper house (Senate) of the Parliament. In the 2007 election 377 candidates were nominated including 56 women from seven political parties. This is progress from the 1999 elections when the several parties fielded men-only candidates lists.

If the number of women in the Mazhilis (the lower house after national Parliament) at least slowly moved up, the number of women-senators during the last several years has decreased more than twice. This can be explained mainly by two reasons: 32 of the 47 members of the Senate are elected indirectly at a joint session of the deputies of all representative bodies of the respective regions, major cities and the capital of the Republic. The majority of electors are men who vote for men. The other reason is that 15 members of the Senate are appointed by the President. The majority of women in the Senate are nominated by the President and when the president nominates less women, consequently the number of women in the Senate decreases. When it comes to the numbers at the ministerial high level appointments and state agencies, out of 23 positions we found one female minister<sup>29</sup>, six vice ministers and four state secretaries.

Despite the growing women's activism on the local level – at 2003 elections the percentage of female candidates was higher than in 1999 – women's participation in the local representative bodies has been decreasing: In 1999 there was 19,2 % of women (639 women) in the Maslihats , and 17,1% (568 women) in 2003. In 1999 1393 women ran as candidates to the Maslihats (18,7%), in 2003 it was 1619 women (19,8%). During the last elections to the Maslihats in 2007, out of 3335 elected deputies 568 (17%) were women. Since 2003 the total number of deputies has increased by 13 persons, hence the rate of female candidates remains just about the same level as at the previous elections. Out of 14 Kazakhstan territorial areas (akims) four are headed by a women and three have female deputy akims.

### Political parties in the survey

Analyzed political parties in Kazakhstan, ideologies, social groups represented, women's party section, gender-related policies, female leaders, and when established	
<b>The People's Democratic Party Nur OTAN</b>	The only parliamantarian party since 1991. Kazakhstan's president is currently the leader of the party. The main goals of the Party are active assistance in implementing economic and political reforms. Established in 1991.

<sup>28</sup> The outcome of the 2007 elections was 19 women in the lower house, i.e. 15,89 % women. This number has increased to 19 women (17,8 %) since the ruling party Nur Otan has appointed 2 more women since then.

<sup>29</sup> Ms Gulshada Abykalikova, the Ministry of Social protection

<b>The Rukhaniyat Party</b>	Solutions to social problems, the development of a society with high moral standards and spiritual wealth. Established in 2003
<b>Citizens party of Kazakhstan</b>	Citizens party of Kazakhstan was formed in autumn of 1998 On November, 10 2006 Citizens party of Kazakhstan has declared to join the Republican Party OTAN.
<b>Republican peoples' party of Kazakhstan</b>	The oppositional democratic political party functioning in Kazakhstan in 1998-2002. RPPK was established in 1998, with the aim of building the democratic state with socially focused market economy.
<b>Liberal movement of Kazakhstan</b>	In 1997 was the republican public association "Liberal Movement of Kazakhstan" founded. The Liberal movement of Kazakhstan merges, as several other parties, with the Republican Party Otan.
<b>The Communist Party of Kazakhstan</b>	The Communist Party of Kazakhstan was founded in 1936 when Kazakhstan was granted a Union Republic status. The Communist Party of Kazakhstan had been a branch of CPSU until the dissolution of the Soviet Union.
<b>Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Bright Path (Ak Jol)</b>	The fundamental values are democracy, independence, freedom and justice. Opposition party to Nor OTAN party and the president. Founded in 2002

Source: The Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Kazakhstan

### **Responses from the political parties: general answers and party specific answers**

#### *Attitudes towards women in politics and decision-making*

The People's Democratic Party Nur OTAN is seemingly taking some steps to advance women into power positions. At the 5<sup>th</sup> Forum of Kazakhstan women in March 2009, Nursultan Nazarbayev – the president of Kazakhstan and also the head of the leading political party Nur OTAN – spoke about gender equality and the role of women in business, politics and public life:

*"We need to foster women's business activity...Kazakhstan women should participate in the political and public life of the country. In Kazakhstan over the last five years the number of women among Parliament and Maslikhat deputies has not changed. Today they make up only 17%. The number of women who hold executive positions in central authorities has not increased. Our country has plenty of leaders among women and they succeed. Employers must encourage women in building up their career."* At the same time he said that: *"...women should take care of the well-being of the family and have many children."* This contradicting attitude demonstrates the persistence of patriarchal attitudes and deep-rooted stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Kazakhstan and are reflected in women's educational choices, their situation in the labour market and consequently their low level of participation in political and public life.

But even the normative legal texts reflect the gender stereotyping: Certain legal texts, including the Constitution and electoral laws, show a high incidence of linguistic sexism. Specifically, the grammar forms

used in some documents of electoral constituencies refer only to men.<sup>30</sup> All of the political parties refused to introduce party quotas for women and other measures to advance women. A proposal aimed at having at least 30 per cent of women in political institutions which was included in the 2007 draft law on equal rights and equal opportunities was omitted from the final proposition finally adopted on December, 8, 2009.

#### *Current women's representation in your party*

During the 2007 elections women made up between 6 to 33% of the candidates on the party lists. The highest female representation of 33% was found on the party list belonging to the Rukhaniyat Party which was also headed by a woman. Attempts to increase women's representation have been made during the past decade. For example in autumn 1998, the Coalition "Women's electoral initiatives" was established and includes the 20 most well known women's organisations. In August 1999, the Coalition sent a memorandum to all registered parties calling for them to include at least 5% of women candidates in their party lists for the parliamentary elections. In June 1999, a public foundation "Women's Electoral Block" was set up to support women candidates. The women's non-governmental organisations strive to influence the party leaders on the issue of representation parity. To date over 150 women's non-governmental organisations in Kazakhstan are capable of rendering considerable assistance in the protection of the political rights of women. A network of women's leaders<sup>31</sup> held an extensive campaign during the elections to the Mazhilis and Maslikhats in 2007.

Yet another obstacle to compete in party politics is the 2002 amendment of the law on political parties – to compete in elections, political parties must have previously registered with the Ministry of Justice and must also submit signatures of 50,000 party members (before 2002 it was 3000 party members). Below are represented the available data on the party members and their female members:

	The registered parties	Number of members	Number of women
1	Democratic party " ADILET "	70 000	no information
2	Democratic party of Kazakhstan « AK ZHOL »	175 862	56 122
3	Democratic party of Kazakhstan "AZAT"	97 157	no information
4	Kazakhstan social-democratic party " AUYL "	61 043	24 705
5	Communist People's Party of Kazakhstan	90 000	no information
6	Communist Party of Kazakhstan	54 246	24 615
7	People's Democratic Party « NUR OTAN»	607 557	144 300
8	National Social-Democratic party	140 000	no information
9	Party of Patriots of Kazakhstan	172 000	63 220
10	Party "RUHANIYAT"	72 000	no information

<sup>30</sup> An analysis by the Feminist League of certain legal texts, including the Constitution and electoral laws,

<sup>31</sup> The network consisted of the independent organizations and people.

### *Obstacles to women's meaningful political participation*

The direct and indirect discrimination of women in political life must be prohibited by some legislative means. For example, the requirements for the registration of political parties should include minimum quotas for female representatives. Furthermore, the Kazakhstan law on political parties prohibits parties based on ethnic origin, religion, or gender, thus a women's party is not allowed. The law explicitly forbids the political party to mention "gender features" and this is also the only time the gender aspect is mentioned in the Kazakh legislation without any further explanation and/or references.

Despite the demands from national women's NGOs and international organizations, the Kazakh government and public authorities only make empty declarations about the improvement of women's status. For example, the National Commission on Women's Affairs and Family, which was earlier led by a strong woman-politician, Aitkul Samakova, was in 2006 renamed the National Commission on Family Affairs and Gender Policy (National Commission), with its Chairperson reporting directly to the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In 2008 the National Commission was chaired by an advisor to the president, Gulshara Abdykalykova. It was almost immediately renamed the National Commission for Women Affairs and Family-Demographic Policy. The renaming confirmed the change of policy, as the National Commission, according to many women's organisations, oriented the gender equality policies towards the traditional view of women's place in society—it is also known as the "K and K policy" – Kitchen and Kinder.

### *Current party strategies for increasing women's participation*

One may ironically say that the issue of women's participation and the advancement of their status makes it into the political agenda once a year - on the International Women's Day when the politicians commemorate the women's movement.

Based on the last parliamentary elections, only one political party is represented in the National Parliament of Kazakhstan – the party Nur OTAN. All of the women who became members of the Parliament were elected from the political party lists which is compiled by the leadership of this political party. It is no understatement that these women, although few in numbers, are needed as the most progressive proposal and initiatives are laid forward by the female MPs. One concrete step towards the advancement of women into decision-making positions is the creation of the so called recruiting list of professional women. This list serves as a pool of capable women for public service. When it comes to the elected and appointed positions the political will is best illustrated by the inability to meet one of the requirements during the OSCE presidency: During the presidency of Kazakhstan in OSCE, the Nur Otan party has initiated along with its European colleagues in March 2010 an interparty forum Europe-Kazakhstan. One of the conditions of the European partners was a representation of a woman in the party. This requirement, however, was not met.

Other political parties in Kazakhstan formulate quite different approaches towards women's political advancement. For example, the political program of the Citizens' Party of Kazakhstan emphasises women's empowerment, commits to a gender equality principle, and expresses an intention to require women candidates on the party list.

### *The Citizens' Party*

The Citizens' Party demands from the government the upholding of a strong demographic policy: to stimulate birth rate growth, effective support to large families with many children; to solve problems with maternal and child mortality. When planning for urbanisation and social and economic modernisation, it is suggested to review approaches to families with many children and the form of support to them. In present conditions families with three children should be considered a family with many children because they contribute to a positive demographic balance.

### *Republican Peoples' Party of Kazakhstan*

Nothing was stated on gender equality in the program of the former Republican Peoples' Party of Kazakhstan. In the chapter "Social politics" it was declared that all measures will be taken to restore a positive population growth. Women will be liberated from heavy physical labour and returned to their traditional sphere of household so they can care for their children. The division of household labour will be restored accordingly to the historic traditions.

### *People's Unity of Kazakhstan*

The electoral platform of the former union People's Unity of Kazakhstan acknowledges that women, the elderly and youth face double and triple burdens of economic and social problems. The reason behind this is the persistence of deep-rooted stereotypes and social injustices regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family and in society in Kazakhstan. To make a difference which will impact politics on these issues is to provide women with a full and equal participation in decision-making and power positions.

### *The Liberal Movement*

It is important to understand the historical background of these slogans as they may appear to be empty promises, such as those made by the former Soviet regime. Women have the capability not only to deal with family issues, but also with issues concerning their position in society. Today, women in Kazakhstan, do not participate fully in the decision-making process, and it is therefore necessary to adopt a plan of action for combating the challenges facing women. It is also important to provide good models which other women would aspire to - female leading politicians. The former Liberal Movement of Kazakhstan declared the need to open up for women political life and top positions at all levels both in public and private sectors. The Liberal Movement took a firm stand against the discrimination of women in the areas of education and the labour market and declared support for their professional advancement with the possibility of a work-life balance.

### *The Communist Party of Kazakhstan*

Significant attention is paid to the improvement of women's status in the program of the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, where in the chapter "Forms and methods of the Kazakhstan communist party's activities" contains a promise "to actively support women's organizations and utilize their know-how in the struggle for social justice".

### *The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Ak Jol*

The Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Ak Jol only mentions the importance of the development of cooperation with other public association and charity activities.

### *Participation of women as candidates*

Due to the deep-rooted stereotypes, such as politics is a sphere exclusively for men, the participation of women in the political process in Kazakhstan has been futile. This view is also reflected in the use of language. The objectives of equal opportunities and the emancipation of women are often assessed by some groups as a threat and unsettling to the "natural" hierarchy. Women's passive behavior is instead seen as a dignity because they should not interfere with politics and leave the public affairs to men.

To date, the Kazakhstan electoral system doesn't include incentives that encourage political parties to attract women to elected and appointed bodies, including at the international level.

### *The participation of women within the women's wing*

We cannot assess the impact of female politicians and the status of Kazakhstan women as there have been too few women in politics. In spite of the tireless efforts of the women's non-governmental organizations during the past decade, the issue of gender equality has not reached the political agenda.

In Kazakhstan there is no systematic education in the area of women's rights and equal opportunities, including the concepts of formal and substantive equality and of the prohibition of direct and indirect discrimination against women as defined in the major human rights legally binding documents (for example the CEDAW). The ruling elite is not interested in such educational campaigns. A few optional short courses are offered at universities but obviously they have a limited impact on the broader population. A lack of gender-sensitive education, deep-rooted patriarchal stereotypes and a belittling of the achievements in women's fields during the Soviet period has determined the position of the women's movement, in particular, and the civil society in general.

The majority of women's organisations in Kazakhstan are focused on solving specific social problems and are distancing themselves from active participation in any political activities or programs. The most active political period for women's NGOs took place between 1998 and 2000 during which the rapid growth of women's organisations kept up the illusion of a vibrant civil society and maintained hopes of reaching a full democracy in Kazakhstan.

### *Participation of women as voters*

According to a sociological survey<sup>32</sup> by the International Institute for Modern Policy, the electoral behaviour of women in Kazakhstan may be divided in the following way:

The first group occupies an apolitical-conformist position. These voters have little interest in the political profile of the candidate. The most important things for them are the personal qualities of a candidate. The second group is well oriented in politics and for them the decisive aspect is the ideological orientation of the candidate. The third group is indifferent to a candidate's positions. Their choice is determined by chance. The fourth group does not participate in elections as they consider elections' outcomes predetermined.

In addition, the Center of Support for Women sampled 1500 people out of 78 thousands of voters in a town of Taldykurgan to participate in a sociological survey called "My electoral right". The survey results demonstrated that 28% of voters don't know specifics about the electoral system in Kazakhstan; 35% are not

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<sup>32</sup> The attitude of the population in the past elections to Mazhilis - the lower house of Parliament

familiar with the procedures of filling in the voting cards; 46% do not have an interest in elections due to the lack of information about candidates; and 34% of respondents don't believe in free and fair elections. In a 2001 survey done by the Center of Support for Women in which 142 women were interviewed in the Almaty province, 62% of the respondents stated there had been violations of their political rights, including a right to fair elections. The violations led many women to political apathy which can be demonstrated by a low participation of women in the local elections of September 2003.

## **Summary**

Unfortunately the weak point of the Kazakhstan case was the unwillingness of the approached political parties to participate in the survey. That alone demonstrates their attitudes towards the issue of women's political participation and gender equality. The authors therefore analyzed the party programs and used secondary sources and other available material for the report. The reviewed political parties are the People's Democratic Party Nur OTAN, the Rukhaniyat Party, Citizens party of Kazakhstan, Republican peoples' party of Kazakhstan, Liberal movement of Kazakhstan, the Communist Party of Kazakhstan, Democratic Party of Kazakhstan Bright Path (Ak Jol).

Almost none of the active political parties have set gender equality and/or equal opportunities of women and men as one of their political objectives, nor do they have strategies for increasing women's representation – be it on the party list and/or in the national or local assemblies. The Citizens' Party of Kazakhstan emphasizes gender equality but only in the context of demographic growth. The political parties ignore female voters, viewing them as being uninterested in public affairs. But as the numbers for local elections show - more and more women are running for political candidates. Unfortunately, none of the political parties seem interested in this fact. Since the "closed party list" (i.e. it is the party leadership that chooses who will receive a mandate according to the election outcome) is used, it is entirely up to the political parties to decide the level of women's representation on the candidate lists.

It is obvious that the women's role in politics depends on the dominating ideology in society, as well as on social and economic and political particularities of the contemporary development of the country. Kazakhstan is a relatively stable country where women have substantial assets in education and work experience but low representation in the power and decision-making positions: Kazakhstan ranks 47th on the Global Gender Gap Index in 2009 and among the sub-indexes, Kazakhstan ranks lowest (102nd rank) on the political empowerment of women measured by the ratio of men and women in political decision-making and power structures. In the other categories, Kazakhstan scores best in the economic participation (12th rank), followed by health and survival (41st rank) and education attainment (42nd rank).

The government of Kazakhstan and the ruling political party Nur OTAN react insufficiently to the obligations of advancing women's participation in political and public life. Examples of this are the scratching of the proposal on quotas for women in political institutions or the policy shift of the National Commission for Women Affairs and Family-Demographic Policy. The state representatives consider Kazakhstan to have fully met the conditions on equitable access for women to political and public life as well women's full and equal participation in public referendums. But the exclusive use of the term "*citizen man*" in official documents assumes that only men have the right to run for elections and to be elected. To ignore the implications and power of language will result in the perpetuation of the gender stereotypes in Kazakhstan. The female

representation in power and decision-making structures is purely symbolic as most of the decisions affecting the whole population of Kazakhstan are made by men. Without special temporary legislative and institutional measures the situation will most likely remain the same in the near future.

The attempts of women's NGOs' to become a real and quite influential force in the political life of Kazakhstan are more or less ignored by the ruling party and political stakeholders. This also puts pressure on the women's NGOs and other civil society actors to advocate for systematic changes. The demand on women's full and equal participation in elected and appointed bodies is not just for their own realization, but most importantly, to voice women's concerns and interests when national policies are designed. It is a well known fact that if the decision-making process isn't representative then the political outcomes do not meet everybody's needs. A consistent implementation of equal opportunities must be implemented on the political, legislative, administrative, economic, and organizational levels so there can be equality of rights for women and men.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The aim of this document was to investigate the attitudes of political parties towards women's candidacies in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan and to formulate a set of recommendations in order to increase women's political representation. In other words, we focused on the demand for women candidates: Are the political parties in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan recruiting, nominating, and supporting women candidates?

As the interviews showed, almost none of the active political parties in these three countries, have set gender equality and/or equal opportunities for women and men as one of their political objectives, nor do they have strategies for increasing women's representation – be it on the party list and/or in the national or local assemblies. The women's wings, which are essential in terms of agenda setting and pushing for parity representation, are often dismantled or marginalized in the current party structures. Few politicians – male or female – are gender aware and/or make the issue of women's representation a political objective. It is to some extent understandable. These countries are undergoing major socio-cultural transitions and policy makers deal with "more" urgent matters, but they should bear in mind that women's right to participate in power structure, their civil rights and their equal opportunities are linked to the consolidation of democracy, to social development and to equitable economic growth. Or as one of the interviewed Georgian female politicians so aptly said: *"The fact that women have a lesser chance to participate in the building of the country hinders the country's development."*

In all fairness, the level of female representation depends on more aspects than just the political parties. The role of the electoral system, the organizational structure of the political parties, the quality of the political culture and the socio-economical context, all this play a very specific role. This short study couldn't address all of these dimensions, but that is why our recommendations are directed towards a wider public and concerns other policy areas. If women are to be able to run for political offices on an equal basis with men, society must, for example, support work/life balance and design and provide appropriate care facilities and services. Furthermore, politicians cannot send double messages, as in the case of Nursultan Nazarbayev – the president of Kazakhstan and also the head of the leading political party Nur OTAN – when he calls for more women in business and politics and then at the same time states that women should take care of the well-being of the family and have many children.

And then there is the tainted question of temporary special measures or quotas within political parties. None, but two interviewed politicians (both female and both from Georgia), considered quotas as a reasonable solution to women's underrepresentation. They often argued that quotas are unnatural and an imported concept from the West. Interestingly enough, the most successful story regarding quotas for women in recent years doesn't come from the West but from Latin America: Since 1991, 11 Latin American countries have adopted quota laws establishing minimum levels for women's participation as candidates in national elections. As a result of quotas, women's presence in power in Latin America has grown. But the effectiveness of quotas depends largely on the nature of a country's electoral system. The details of the quota law are thus very important. The law must be written in such a way as to avoid loopholes that permit parties to avoid nominating women or to comply with quotas merely by placing women in supplementary or

"decorative" positions on the candidate lists. In addition, activists need to be willing and able to mobilize to monitor implementation of the quota.

Based on the abovementioned arguments, we can conclude that political parties can consciously decide the level of women's representation on their candidate lists but for this to happen the party leadership must be gender sensitive. Some parties are run largely by men who are interested in maintaining male dominance and hold very traditional and sexist views concerning women. In many situations parties will be gender neutral in their selection process, that is, the procedures by which they select candidates are likely to neither advantage, nor disadvantage women. However, if the political parties truly want to increase the number of women, they need to implement some kind of temporary special measures, such as quotas for their candidate lists and for the governing bodies within party structures. This together with the inclusion of a gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in party platforms and an active women's wing should ensure more women in politics.

### **Mechanism and Strategies to Promote Women's Political Participation<sup>33</sup>**

<b>Promote National Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on the Issue of Gender Equality</b>
Public discussions and debates over the issue of women's representation in politics must become more active. These discussions should take place primarily between various groups, for example, representatives of political parties, mass media and civil/women's organizations. This must be done so that it will become evident that the given issue indeed is a problem in the Georgian context, that political parties and the government bear certain responsibilities to address it and that the support from the mass media plays a key role in this process.
<b>Build on Capacities &amp; Knowledge Available Within the Political Parties</b>
Members of political parties, both women and men, must receive education/training that would be focused on the role that political parties have in the strengthening of women's political participation. Its purpose being a) to introduce the realization that a party's internal democracy, its detailed and clear provisions in its statutes, are a step toward the strengthening of women's representation in politics; b) to show that the gender neutral approach towards women and men within a party does not mean gender equality.
<b>Promotion &amp; Strengthening of Temporary Special Measures within Political Parties &amp; Parliament</b>
Advocate for the enactment of quotas in political parties and Parliament, building on the good practices from different electoral systems. Encourage political parties to introduce voluntary quotas on their candidate lists to increase the number of women in Parliament. Advocate for the inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in party platforms and structures (e.g. by sharing experiences when parties have introduced gender equality strategies or established women's party sections). Encourage political parties to promote women to governing bodies within party structures.
<b>Promotion &amp; Strengthening of Political Culture within the Political Parties</b>

<sup>33</sup> Some of the recommendation come from the "Policy Note: Enhancing Women's Political Participation. A Policy Note for Europe and CIS (ECIS)". UNDP

Care must be exercised toward the polishing of political culture so that political processes will no longer depend on individuals and the significance of the political platform will become visible and evident. In order to achieve this, parties must perfect their election programs, so as not to be limited to general instructions and hopes for the future only, but will argumentatively formulate the details of the party's future policy. Also political parties must be advised to polish their statutes, clearly formulate their election procedures in order to make it easier for every average member to follow and for every interested person to monitor their procedures.

#### **Support Work/Life Balance of Men and Women in Political and Public Offices**

Review existing laws, policy measures and practices to identify their impact on the division of responsibilities in family life. Implement laws and policies that promote equal sharing of family responsibilities of men and women in all sectors (including financial incentives for men to take greater responsibility in family life). Design and provide appropriate care facilities and services to support men and women in political and public offices to fulfill their family responsibilities. Promote working hours that are conducive to a work/life balance which allows women and men to contribute equally to the decision-making processes.

#### **Capacity Development for Women's Political Participation**

Develop the capacities of women to be effective in their political roles and to overcome gender-based barriers and obstacles in taking up political leadership. Empower women to bring their voices and concerns to political decision-making processes. Ensure that women in political roles mentor newly elected and appointed women. Build the leadership skills of a new generation of women aspiring to enter politics and public offices and provide them with networking opportunities. Reach out to marginalized women by including rural women, minorities and refugees in leadership skills development initiatives.

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