

Gender balance in politics

November 2022

The composition of political assemblies and executives at all territorial levels too often fails to reflect the gender diversity of the populations they represent, with women significantly

under-represented in many cases. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) regularly monitors this situation in the European Union (EU) and its 27 Member States (EU-27).

Towards closure of the gender gap in EU politics

In November 2022, the Members of the European Parliament included 38.9 % women and 61.1 % men. In 10 Member States, however, at least two thirds of them are men, with highs of 84.8 % in Romania and 100 % in Cyprus. Yet, in January 2022, Roberta Metsola became President of the European Parlia-

ment as the third woman to have been elected leader of this main EU institution.

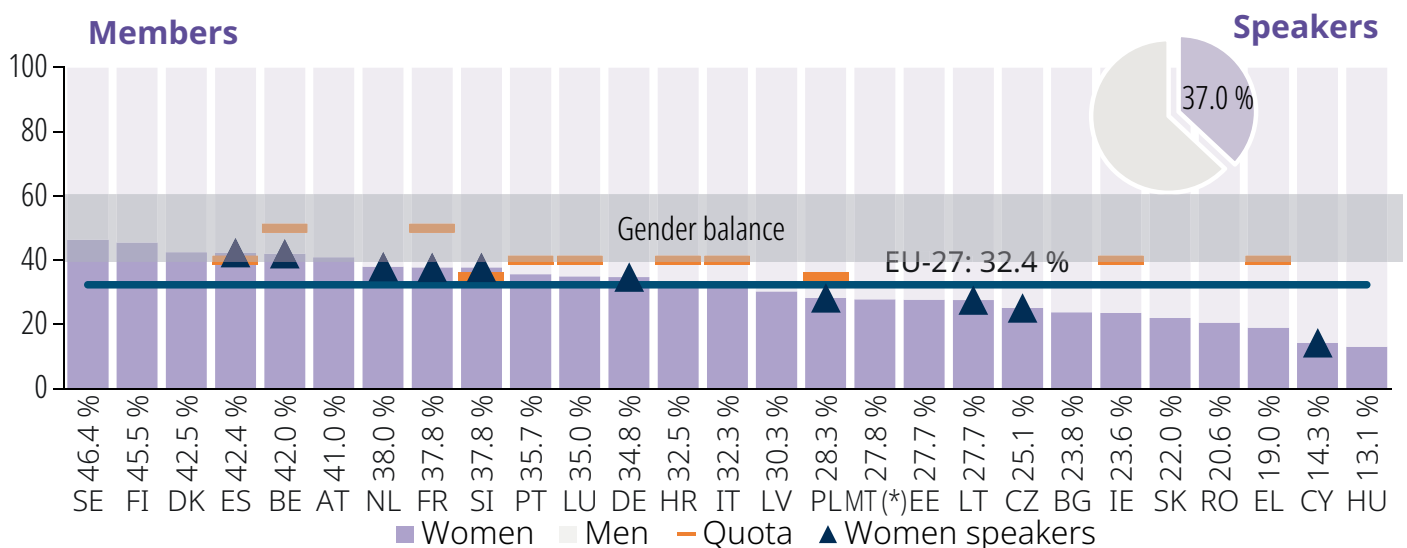
The current European Commission demonstrates full gender parity, allowing for the odd number of members (13 women, 14 men). In December 2019, Ursula Von der Leyen was elected the first woman President of the Commission.

Women amount to a third of speakers and national members of parliament

In November 2022, the combined members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the Member States totalled 67.2 % men and 32.4 % women. Parliaments in Finland, Denmark, Spain, Belgium and Austria have at least 40 % of each gender. In Greece, Cyprus and Hungary, however, women ac-

count for less than a fifth of parliamentarians (Figure 1). Nearly a third (10 of 27) of these parliaments (1) were led by a woman, with the parliaments in France and Slovenia each appointing their first-ever woman speaker during 2022.

Figure 1. Share of women members and speakers in single/lower houses of national parliaments, EU-27, November 2022



(*) MT does not have a legislative quota for candidate lists but a 'gender corrective' mechanism by which, if there is less than 40 % of the under-represented gender among elected parliament members, up to 12 additional seats are allocated to members from the under-represented gender.

Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: national parliaments.

NB: Quotas: BE and FR (50 %); IE, EL, ES, HR, IT and PT (40 %); PL and SI (35 %). LU (40 %): to be implemented at the next election (expected in 2023).

(1) BE, CZ, DE, ES, FR, CY, LT, NL, PL and SI.

Moderate progress via national legislative action

Over the last 20 years, several Member States have taken measures to improve the gender balance in their parliaments. The introduction of legislative quotas aims to ensure a minimum proportion of each gender among parliamentary candidates. However, without additional rules, the use of quotas alone may not be enough to translate compliant candidate lists into electoral results, and to ensure equal visibility of women and men candidates within the relevant electoral system (e.g. zippered lists).

In the EU, 11 Member States^(?) have introduced legislative quotas. In addition, Malta has a post-election corrective mechanism to adjust any significant imbalance by adding seats that have to be filled by the under-represented gender. To date, Spain (42.4 %) and Slovenia (37.8 %) are the only Member States in which the proportion of elected women members has matched (or even exceeded) the quota target (40 % and 35 %, respectively).

At the start of the available time series (2004), women accounted for 23.2 % of the combined members of parliaments in Member States without quotas and 17.3 % in the two Member States with active quota legislation (Belgium and France), i.e. the Member States with quotas started from a below-average position. Bearing in mind that the composition of the groups of Member States with/without quotas changes through time as Member States move from the no quota group to the quota group after adopting legislation (see labels in Figure 2), at the end of 2022, the quota group was only in a slightly better position (33.0 % compared to 31.9 %).

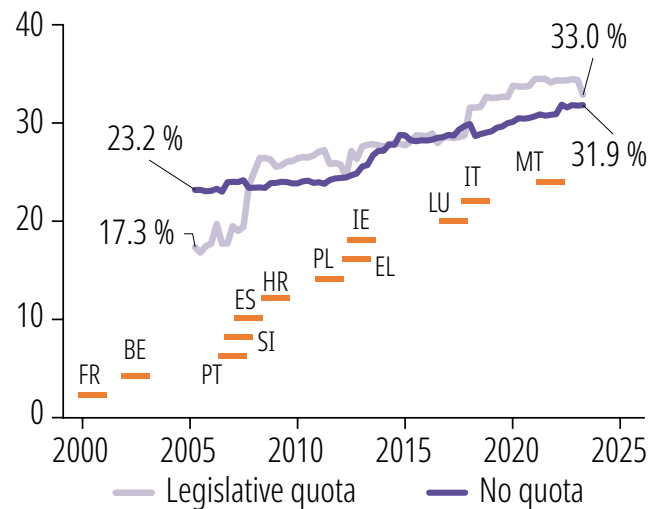
Men hold top positions across major EU political parties

Political parties are the gatekeepers of gender balance in parliaments, setting party policy and selecting candidates for election. Although many political parties have adopted voluntary gender quotas to promote gender equality in candidate selection, their internal power structures often fail to represent women adequately.

Across the EU, in May 2022, women accounted for only one in four (26.0 %) leaders of major political parties⁽³⁾. This figure for party leaders, although still low, is an all-time high and represents an improvement of 10.0 percentage points compared to 2011 (16.0 % women). The share of women in deputy leader positions increased from 33.8 % in 2021 to 37.1 % in 2022 (Figure 3).

Malta remains as the only country where none of the major political parties covered by EIGE's sample has had a woman leader since data was first collected in 2011.

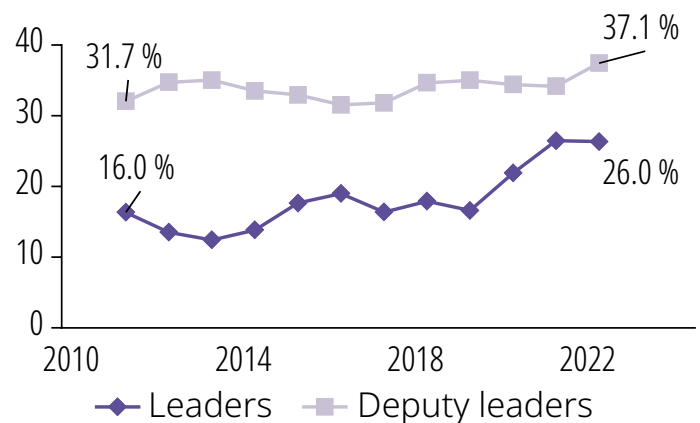
Figure 2. Share of women in single/lower houses of national parliaments, by type of action, EU-27, 2004–2022



Source: Calculations based on data from EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: national parliaments.

NB: Malta is included in the quota group for its 'gender correction mechanism' applied to the overall share of women in parliament, by which up to 12 additional seats from the under-represented gender are to be allocated if they represent less than 40 % after elections.

Figure 3. Share of women leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties, EU-27, 2011–2022



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: major political parties

(?) FR: 50 % (2000); BE: 50 % (2002); PT: 33 % (2006); SI: 35 % (2006); ES: 40 % (2007); EL: 33 % (2012); HR: 40 % (2008); PL: 35 % (2011); IE: 30 % (2012); IT: 40 % (2017). LU: 40 %, introduced in 2016 to be fully implemented at the next election (expected 2023). MT: gender-corrective mechanism triggered to achieve 40 % of each gender.

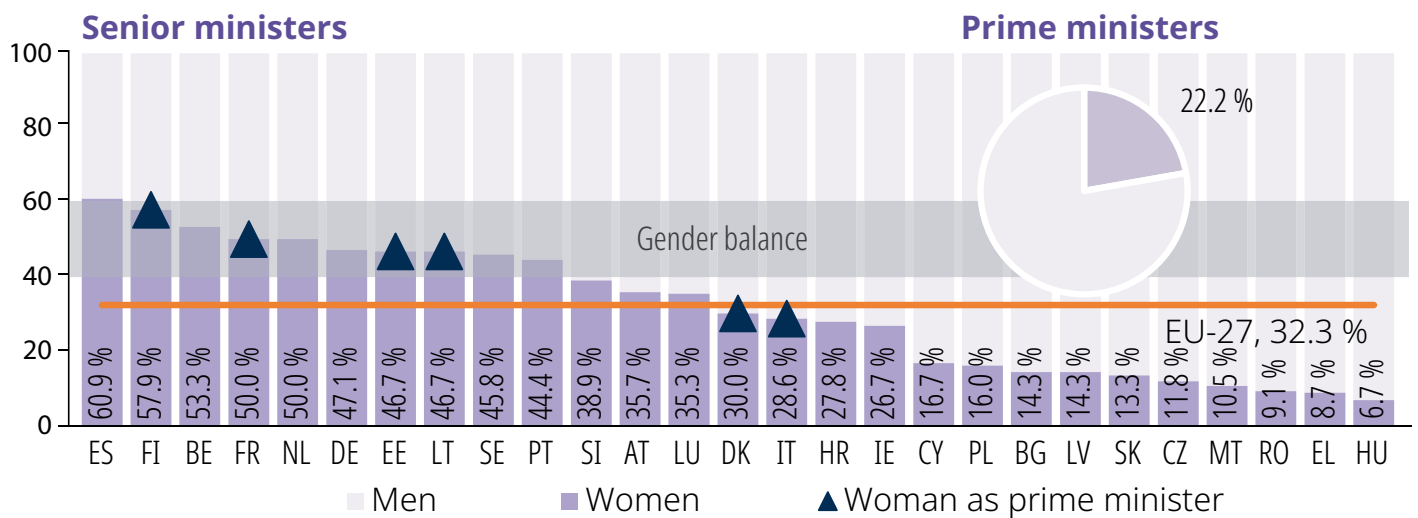
(3) Major political parties are those with at least 5 % of seats in parliament. Data collected in May 2022 covered 152 major political parties across the EU-27.

Disproportional representation of women in government ministries

In November 2022, six Member States had a woman prime minister: Denmark, Estonia, France (after 30 years of male prime ministers, the second-ever woman prime minister was appointed in May 2022) ⁽⁴⁾, Italy (the first-ever woman prime minister), Lithuania and Finland. Sweden had elected its first-ever woman prime minister in November 2021, but after the general election in September 2022, a man was nominated in her place.

Men accounted for more than two thirds of senior ministers (i.e. those with a seat in the cabinet) (67.7 % men, 32.3 % women) in November 2022, unchanged from November 2021. Governments were gender-balanced (at least 40 % of each gender) in 10 Member States (Spain, Finland, Belgium, France, the Netherlands, Germany, Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden and Portugal), but remained predominantly male in Romania, Greece and Hungary (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Share of women in national governments (senior ministers and prime ministers), EU-27, November 2022



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: national governments: ministers and prime ministers.

Gender inequalities persist at lower levels of political decision-making

Across the EU, women account for just over a third of the members of both regional ⁽⁵⁾ and local/municipal assemblies, at 35.1 % and 34.5 %, respectively (Figure 5). The situation at the local level is heavily influenced by France, which accounts for over 40 % of the councillors recorded, with women accounting for only 28.3 % of councillors across the other 26 Member States.

Only four Member States (Spain, France, Finland and Sweden) have gender-balanced representation in both regional assemblies and local/municipal councils, with Belgium close behind

(43.1 % women at the regional level, 38.9 % at local level). In contrast, women account for 25 % or fewer members at both the regional and local levels in Greece and Romania.

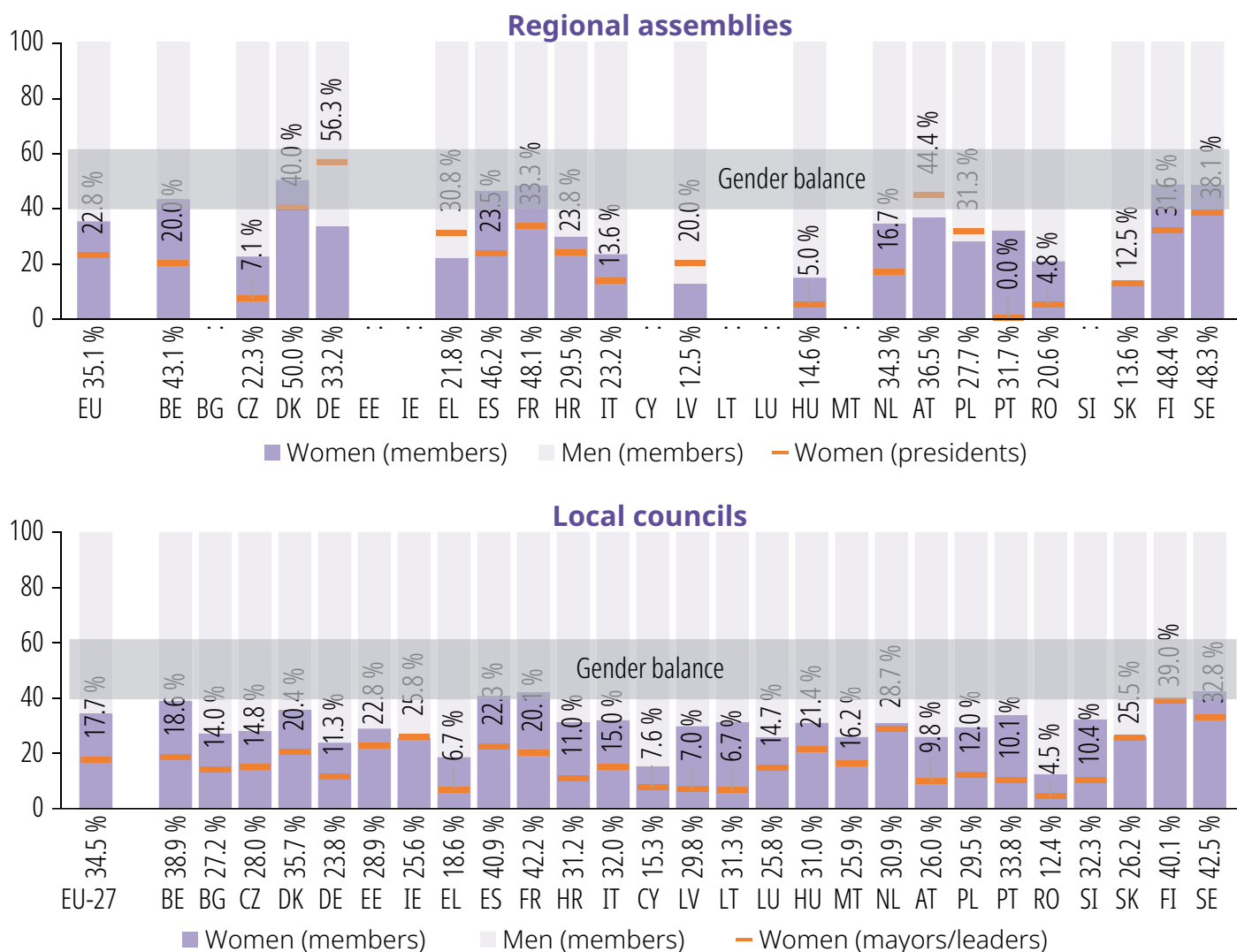
Across the EU, women lead around one in five assemblies at the regional (22.8 %) and local/municipal (17.7 %) levels. In many cases, however, the number of women leaders is 1 in 10 or fewer: Romania (both regional and local); Greece, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania and Austria (local); and Hungary and Portugal (regional) ⁽⁶⁾.

⁽⁴⁾ Élisabeth Borne was appointed as prime minister by the president after the former prime minister (a man) resigned on 16 May 2022. (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/16/elisabeth-borne-becomes-frances-first-female-prime-minister-in-30-years>).

⁽⁵⁾ EIGE data covers the elected assemblies of regions endowed with powers of self-government and acting between the central government and local authorities (although not necessarily within any formal hierarchy). The following Member States do not have any regions conforming to this definition: BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT and SI.

⁽⁶⁾ Data for regional assemblies in Portugal cover only Azores and Madeira.

Figure 5. Share of women in regional assemblies and local/municipal councils, EU-27, 2022



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: regional assemblies and local/municipal councils.

All data are based on data by country published in EIGE's Gender Statistics Database and can be accessed [here](#). Comprehensive information about the basis for the sample and data specifications can be found on the 'Metadata' tab of each indicator (e.g. [here](#)).

European Institute for Gender Equality

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is the EU knowledge centre on gender equality. EIGE supports policymakers and all relevant institutions in their efforts to make equality between women and men a reality for all Europeans by providing them with specific expertise and comparable and reliable data on gender equality in Europe.

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European Institute for Gender Equality
Gedimino pr. 16
LT-01103 Vilnius
LITHUANIA

Contact details

<http://eige.europa.eu/>
facebook.com/eige.europa.eu
twitter.com/eige_eu
youtube.com/user/eurogender
<https://www.linkedin.com/company/eige>
eige.sec@eige.europa.eu
 +370 52157444



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