

# Gender Equality Index 2020: Digitalisation and the future of work

## Legislative action advances gender equality in politics

The presence of women in EU national parliaments (both houses) has increased by 10 p.p., from 24 % in 2010 to 32 % in 2020<sup>[1]</sup>. Parliaments in Sweden, Finland, Belgium, Spain, Portugal and Austria have reached gender balance; that is, they comprise at least 40 % of each gender. The parliaments of Croatia, Malta and Hungary have less than 20 % women members.

Several parliamentary elections took place in 2019, with two big improvements in gender balance: in Finland, from 40 % in 2010 to 46 % in 2020, and in Portugal, from 30 % in 2010 to 40 % in 2020. Luxembourg improved dramatically recently, gaining almost 7 p.p., while progress has also been made in Belgium, Greece and Spain (+ 3 p.p. each) since the beginning of 2019.

There has been little change in Poland (28 %), while in Spain, the share of women dropped by 4 p.p., but the parliament nevertheless remains well balanced (42 % women). No progress has been made in Estonia.

A number of countries have undertaken initiatives to improve the gender balance in their parliaments and speed up the rate of change. Legislative candidate quotas are currently in place in 10 Member States: Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Poland, Portugal and Slovenia<sup>[2]</sup>. Typically, the quota applies to the list of candidates submitted for election to the national assembly, with sanctions for non-compliance.

With the exception of in Croatia, the representation of women improved following the application of a quota. To date, however, the proportion of elected members surpasses the quota target only in Spain and Portugal. In Portugal, the quota introduced in 2006 requires one third (33 %) of each gender on candidate lists and was first surpassed in parliament following the 2015 elections. The latest elections in October 2019 resulted in 40 % women members.

Spain has had a 40 % candidate quota since 2007, which was translated into actual members of parliament in 2013 (mid-term) and, more recently, resulted in 42 % women members following the October 2019 elections.

All other countries with legislative candidate quotas still need substantial improvements: the proportion of women among elected members remains below the candidate quota level by 4 p.p. in Italy, 6 p.p. in Poland, 8 p.p. in Belgium and Ireland, 11 p.p. in France, Slovenia and Greece, and 19 p.p. in Croatia.

Gender balance has improved among cabinet ministers in national governments, from 26 % in 2010 to 32 % in 2020. However, there are significant differences between Member States. Three Member States have reached gender parity: in Finland, Austria and Sweden, women hold over 50 % of ministerial positions in government.

Spain, France, Germany and Portugal have gender-balanced cabinets (with at least 40 % of senior ministers of each gender). In 2020, Malta, Lithuania and Cyprus each had only one woman among their ministers, with men holding over 90 % of ministerial positions.

Estonia has seen a dramatic drop (– 20 p.p.) in women's representation, from 33 % to 13 %. In 2020, there were significant increases in Finland (35 % to 59 %), Austria (36 % to 53 %), Portugal (28 % to 37 %) and Italy (26 % to 34 %).

Although addressing the unequal participation of women in government is a priority, the sidelining of women when allocating portfolios is also concerning. Portfolios with a high profile (so-called basic or economic functions) were assigned to almost two in three men cabinet ministers (64 %), compared with only one in two women ministers (50 %) in 2020. This is more evident in sociocultural portfolios, or 'soft' portfolios, which were assigned to 40 % of women ministers but only 21 % of men cabinet ministers.

At regional and local levels, the rate of change continues to be extremely slow (29% in 2019), with an improvement of less than 1 p.p. since 2018. In 2019, women held only one third (33 %) of the seats in regional assemblies in 20 Member States in 2019.

Gender balance – at least 40 % of each gender – was reached in five Member States (Belgium, Spain, France, Finland and Sweden) in 2019 and has not changed since. By contrast, Hungary, Slovakia and Romania continued to have more than 80 % male representation in regional assemblies, while Italy surpassed the 20 % threshold only in 2019.

An improvement of 0.5 p.p. indicates that there has been no significant change in women's representation at local/municipal council level between 2017 and 2019. France and Sweden were the only two Member States with gender-balanced councils in 2019, while those in Romania, Cyprus and Greece have continued to have over 80 % men on councils since 2017.

Across the EU, leadership in local government continues to elude women, stagnating at 15 % in 2019, with the same improvement rate as council representation (+ 0.5 p.p.).

## Footnotes

[1] In the domain of power, the most recent data for Women and men in decision-making is used (WMID). 2020 data refers to 1st quarter of 2020. For comparability, 2010 data also refers to 1st quarter (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs>)

[2] Luxembourg introduced a 40 % quota in 2016, but the quota was not fully applied in the 2018 election (it will be applied during the next election). Therefore, Luxembourg has not been included in the 'legislative quota' group.