

Gender-sensitive Parliaments

Domain 1 – Electoral system

This domain assesses how gender-sensitive the electoral system is in the country and explores whether and how gender quotas are applied.

The preliminary condition to the establishment of gender-sensitive public institutions, like parliaments, is the existence of a legal framework that supports an equal representation of women and men, and an electoral system that facilitates their equal access. A gender-sensitive electoral system can act as a pathway towards a more balanced representation in parliament.

Specific permanent or temporary gender equality measures in electoral rules have proved to facilitate women's access to political decision-making positions. The most widespread and studied supporting measure is gender quotas, a form of affirmative action supporting women overcoming obstacles to their entry into parliamentary assemblies. Different types of quotas (i.e. voluntary or legislated) and different application methods (i.e. fixed share of women in lists, zipping) exist. The combination of the application of gender quotas with the electoral system has a different impact on the success of women's representation, and there are a number of variations in quota application methods that have an impact on the quotas' effectiveness. A crucial issue is whether women candidates are placed in winnable positions in lists or in districts.

Importantly, political parties can actively support women's participation by promoting women's candidacies, supporting their electoral campaign, and reinforcing their capacity once elected. During the pre-electoral period, a party may implement specific measures to assure the presence of women, such as establishing candidate quotas, ensuring placement in winnable positions, and allocating funds for targeted training. During the electoral campaign, the party may provide training and mentorship to women candidates; assure their visibility; include women's priorities on its platform, and provide funding support, such as women funding networks, internal party funds for women candidates and targeted subsidies.

Data sources: National constitutional charts and constitutional laws, national electoral laws, rules and procedures

Further information on electoral gender quota systems and their implementation in Europe can be found on [IDEAS' website](#)