



Gender Balance in Politics 2025

Progress towards equal representation of women and men in politics is stalling

Despite evident progress over the years towards gender balance in political decision-making, women remain under-represented in political and executive instances at all levels of governance. The impact of political commitments and measures to address the imbalances appears to have stalled. Data for 2025 shows almost no improvement towards gender-balanced representation within national parliaments despite several elections during the year, and setbacks are evident in national governments. In 2024, the European elections marked the first-ever decline in the share of women among elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs).

The [Gender Equality Index 2025](#) shows that, the domain of power, despite being the most dynamic since 2010, remains the lowest scoring of all six domains ⁽¹⁾. These findings underline the urgent need to tackle structural, institutional and sociocultural barriers that continue to hinder gender equality in decision-making.

The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) regularly monitors the situation in political decision-making in the European Union. This edition of the brief presents the latest available data and reflects on the gender balance among key decision-makers involved in the ongoing negotiations for the 2028–2034 multiannual financial framework (MFF) – the most important budget planning exercise at the EU level.

Setbacks in gender balance among senior government roles across the EU in 2025

In November 2025, men accounted for around 7 in 10 (69.9 %) of senior government ministers in EU Member States (see [Figure 1](#)). The share of women dropped by 2.7 percentage points (pp) compared with the situation a year earlier (from 32.8 % in November 2024 to 30.1 % in 2025).

Women's representation among senior government ministers fell in 11 Member States in 2025.

- In three cases (France, Lithuania and Portugal), there were only small changes in the gender composition of the cabinet (declines of 1.5 pp or less). All three governments still have at least 38 % women and therefore remain close to being gender balanced (at least 40 % of each gender).
- In four cases, the changes represented a significant setback from previously achieved gender balance. In Belgium, the share of women among senior ministers halved from 53.3 % to 26.7 % (– 26.6 pp), following the general election held in June 2024, and subsequently delayed the formation of a new cabinet in January 2025.

⁽¹⁾ The Gender Equality Index is a tool to measure the progress of gender equality in the EU, developed by EIGE. It tracks the extent to which women and men differ in six key dimensions (domains) defining our everyday lives: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health.

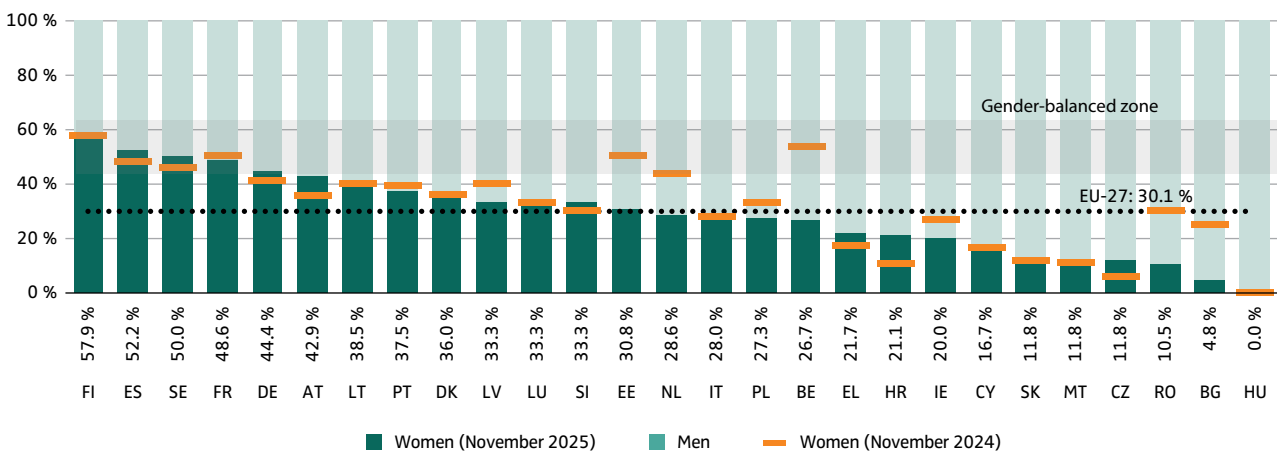
In the Netherlands, the resignation of the previous government saw women’s representation fall from 43.8 % to 28.6 %, – 15.2 pp). There were also notable declines in Estonia (from 50.0 % to 30.8 %, – 19.2 pp) and Latvia (40.0 % to 33.3 %, – 6.7 pp).

- What is more, women’s representation also fell in four Member States with cabinets that were already predominantly male: Bulgaria (from 25.0 % to 4.8 %), Ireland (from 26.7 % to 20.0 %), Poland (from 33.3 % to 27.3 %) and Romania (from 30.0 % to 10.5 %).

These changes resulted in the number of Member States with a gender-balanced cabinet (i.e. at least 40 % of each gender) falling from 10 in 2024 to 6 in 2025 (²).

The 15-member Hungarian cabinet continues to have no women.

Figure 1 | Share of women and men in national governments (senior ministers), November 2025 compared with November 2024



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: [‘National governments: ministers by seniority and function of government’](#).

Progress in women’s representation in national parliaments slows down after reaching 30 % milestone

In November 2025, the combined members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the Member States comprised 66.8 % men and 33.2 % women. In other words, two out of every three members are men. The share of women represents an increase of just 0.1 pp from 33.1 % a year earlier (November 2024).

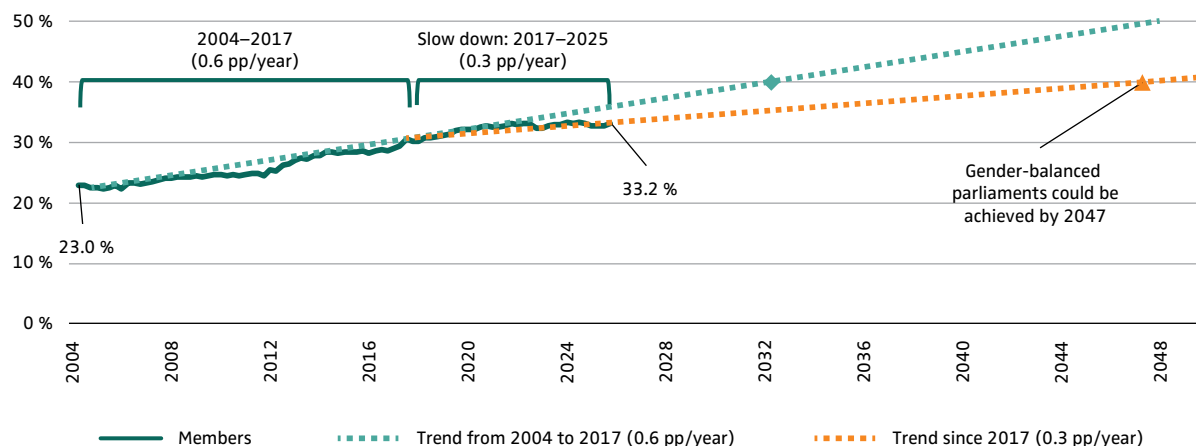
The share of women members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the Member States has progressed through two distinct phases. Between 2004 and 2017, the share of women members increased at a rate of 0.6 pp/year, breaking through the 30 % barrier in 2017 (³) (see [Figure 2](#)). From 2017 onwards, however, the average rate of change has halved to just 0.3 pp/year, pushing the projected time to gender balance back by 15 years. At the current pace of change, gender balance will not be achieved in EU national parliaments before 2047. These findings regarding EU parliaments align with a global trend reported by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which notes that progress towards gender diversity in parliaments worldwide has slowed in recent years (⁴).

(²) BE, DE, EE, ES, FR, LV, LT, NL, FI and SE in November 2024; DE, ES, FR, AT, FI and SE in November 2025.

(³) 30.6 % in the third quarter of 2017.

(⁴) Inter-Parliamentary Union, ‘IPU report: Parliamentary gender gap narrowed over the past 30 years but progress stalled in 2024’, press release, 6 March 2025, <https://www.ipu.org/news/press-releases/2025-03/ipu-report-parliamentary-gender-gap-narrowed-over-past-30-years-progress-stalled-in-2024>.

Figure 2 | Share of women among members of single/lower houses of parliaments in the Member States, by trend, from 2004 to 2048 (projected)



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: '[National parliaments: president and members](#)'.

Quotas are not fully translating into gender-balanced representation

Following the lead of France (2000) and Belgium (2002), several Member States have introduced legislation to boost the presence of women in parliaments. Most commonly (in 11 Member States) ⁽⁵⁾, the legislation establishes a minimum quota for each gender (ranging from 35 % to 50 %) in the lists of candidates put forward by political parties for election to national parliaments. Some countries also apply additional rules designed to ensure equal visibility of women on these lists, for example 'zipped lists' where men and women must be alternated, or rules requiring a certain ranking of candidates every few positions.

Exceptionally (in the EU at the current time), Malta has a 'gender corrective' mechanism, which automatically allocates up to 12 additional seats to the under-represented gender if less than 40 % of each gender is elected. Romania has a vague legal provision aiming to ensure gender-balanced representation among candidates for elections, but without a specific target ⁽⁶⁾, while Austria has funding incentives for political groups with gender-balanced representation in parliament.

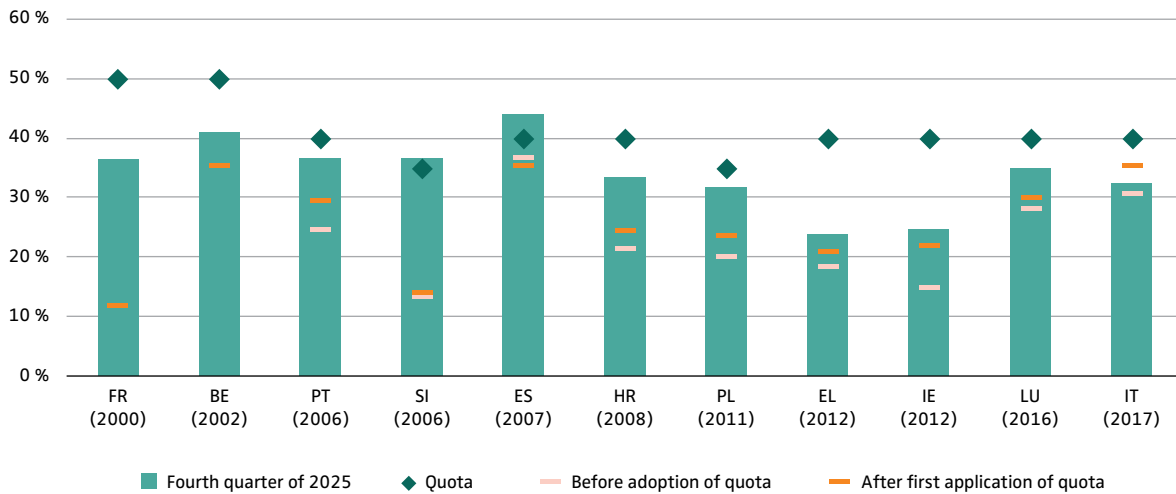
In most cases, the first election to which the quota applied saw the proportion of women members of parliament (MPs) increase compared with the situation prior to the adoption of the quota legislation ⁽⁷⁾ (see [Figure 3](#)). The exception is Spain, where the proportion of women members was already quite close to the quota level when it was adopted (36.9 % members in the second quarter of 2007 versus 40 % quota), and the proportion of women hardly changed after the next election (to 35.7 % in the second quarter of 2008). All countries with a quota, apart from Italy, have seen the share of women members rise further at subsequent elections. Strikingly, these improvements exceed 20 pp in France and Slovenia. To date, Spain (44.0 % women) and Slovenia (36.7 % women) are the only countries in which the share of women in parliament has matched or exceeded their respective legislative quota targets. In all other cases, there remains a representation gap. Notably, in Ireland, Greece and France, the representation gap still exceeds 10 pp, though the issue is more critical for the former two countries where the quota threshold is lower (40 % in Ireland and Greece versus 50 % in France).

⁽⁵⁾ BE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LU, PL, PT and SI. Note that in Romania, since 2022, the political parties are obliged to ensure their lists of candidates for elections are gender balanced. However, the law does not set a minimum requirement, nor are there enforcement procedures or sanctions, and thus it cannot be considered a legally binding quota.

⁽⁶⁾ Article 22 refers to 'balanced representation'; see <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliuDocument/35778>.

⁽⁷⁾ Information on the situation before the quota adoption is not available for BE and FR, as the quota was adopted before routine data collection started.

Figure 3 | Share of women in the single/lower houses of national parliaments in Member States with a legislative candidate quota, before and after application of quota and in November 2025



NB: Data sorted by year of quota. 'Before quota adopted' refers to last available data before the quota was introduced. This information is not available for BE and FR as routine data collection began in 2003 – i.e. after they adopted the legislation. 'After first application of quota' refers to the next quarterly data after the election in which the quota was first applied. For LU, the quota was not fully applied to the 2018 elections; hence, the 2023 election results are presented here instead.

Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database, '[National parliaments: president and members](#)'.

Men are setting the future of the EU

The MFF is the EU's most important budget planning exercise, effectively setting policy priorities for the next decade. The MFF aims to ensure the consistent application of horizontal priorities such as biodiversity and climate, social justice and gender equality across all areas of EU spending.

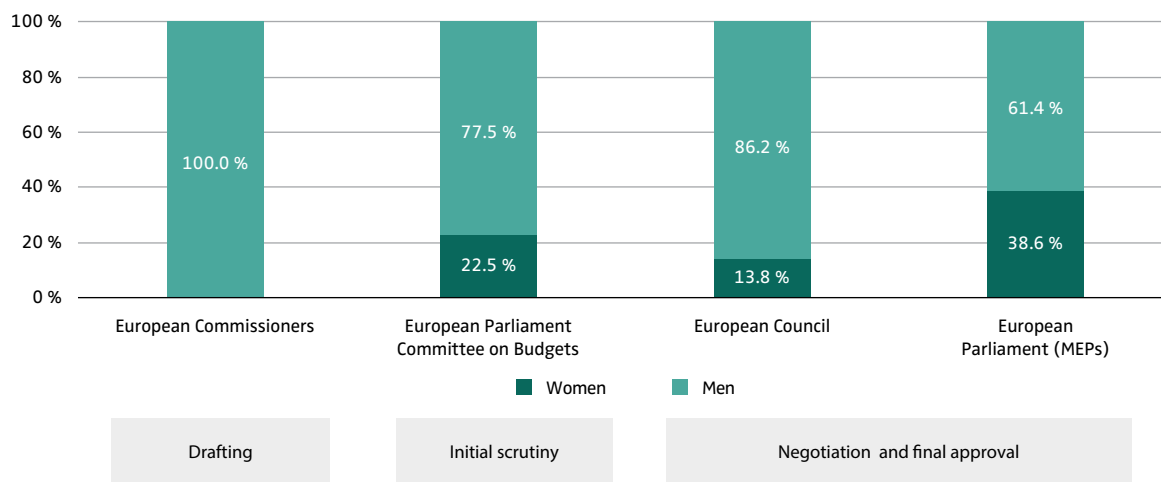
The draft 2028–2034 MFF was presented by the European Commission to the European Parliament and the Member States in July 2025, and is currently under review before negotiations, which can only end with unanimous agreement of the Member States and the European Parliament ⁽⁸⁾. The people responsible for drawing up the budget therefore play a key role in setting the future of the EU and its citizens.

Preparation of the 2028–2034 MFF was led by four men: the Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms; the Commissioner for Trade and Economic Security and Interinstitutional Relations and Transparency; the Commissioner for Economy and Productivity, Implementation and Simplification; and the Commissioner for Budget, Anti-Fraud and Public Administration ⁽⁹⁾. The drafting process was scrutinised by the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets, which, in July 2025, was led by a man and included only nine women among its 40 members (22.5 %) (see [Figure 4](#)). The MFF will now be discussed, negotiated and subsequently adopted by Member States in the European Council and the European Parliament. As from November 2025, the two institutions have 13.8 % and 38.6 % women members, respectively. In other words, women are under-represented throughout the EU budgetary decision-making process, resulting in men having a disproportionate influence over decisions affecting the future of the EU.

⁽⁸⁾ For further information, see <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/29/multiannual-financial-framework> and https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/long-term-eu-budget/eu-budget-2028-2034_en.

⁽⁹⁾ See https://commission.europa.eu/priorities-2024-2029/eu-budget-and-reform_en.

Figure 4 | Proportion of women and men involved in the 2028–2034 multiannual financial framework, 2025



Sources: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: ‘[European Parliament: president and members](#)’ (fourth quarter of 2025), European Parliament Committee on Budgets (unpublished micro-data, July 2025). One-off direct data collection on [European Commissioners responsible for drafting the MFF](#), and on the [European Council](#) (November 2025).

Horizontal segregation is evident in parliamentary committees

Parliamentary committees scrutinise proposed legislation before it is presented to the house. Since their members are drawn from the pool of current MPs, the overall gender balance among committee members tends to mirror the gender balance in the associated house of parliament, though there can be differences (usually small) when some MPs participate in multiple committees.

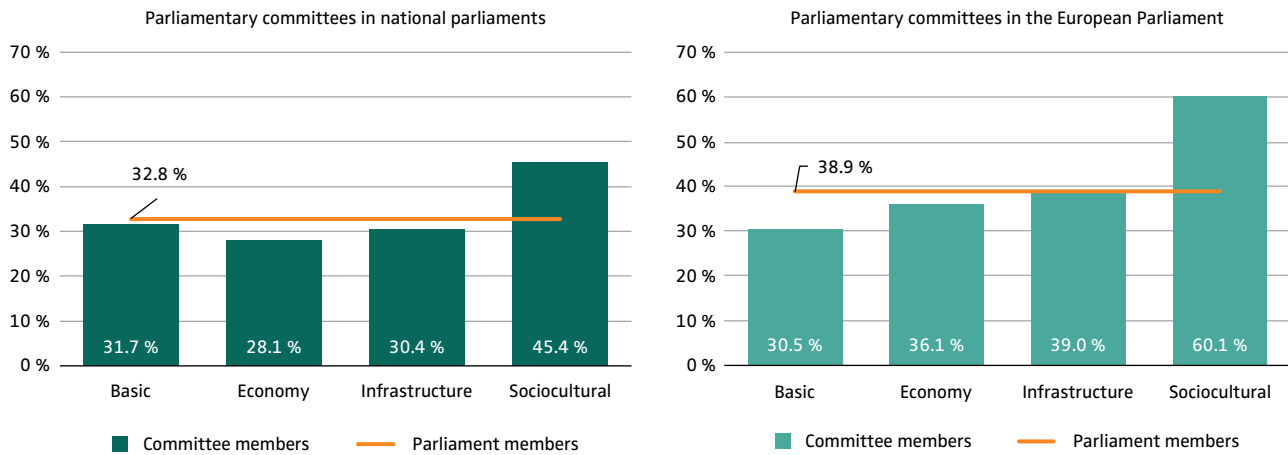
In August 2025, the combined members of the parliamentary committees in the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the 27 Member States comprised 34.8 % women and 65.2 % men. The share of women committee members was 2 pp higher than the share of women MPs (32.8 % in August 2025), implying that women MPs are slightly more likely than their male counterparts to participate in multiple committees (see [Figure 5](#)). This is not the case in the European Parliament, where women accounted for 38.9 % of members of the 22 permanent/standing committees ⁽¹⁰⁾, matching exactly the share of women among MEPs (38.9 % in August 2025).

So, while the gender balance among committee members overall tends to reflect the gender balance among MPs, analysis of how women and men are distributed across committees dealing with different policy areas (BEIS categories) ⁽¹¹⁾ reveals a clear horizontal segregation. In both the European Parliament and national parliaments (single/lower house), in committees with sociocultural functions, the share of women exceeds the upper threshold of gender balance, reaching 60.1 % and 45.4 % of members, respectively (see [Figure 5](#)). In contrast, women tend to be under-represented in committees dealing with other functional areas. In national parliaments, women are least represented in committees with economic functions (28.1 %), while in the European Parliament, women are under-represented in committees dealing with basic functions (30.5 %).

⁽¹⁰⁾ See <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/about/list-of-committees>.

⁽¹¹⁾ Committees are categorised according to the first listed policy area in the committee’s name. Examples of policy areas allocated to each category are: **basic functions (B)**: foreign and internal affairs, defence, justice; **economy (E)**: finance, trade, industry, agriculture; **infrastructure (I)**: traffic, communication, environment; and **sociocultural functions (SC)**: social affairs, health, children, family, youth, elderly people, education, science, culture, labour, sports.

Figure 5 | Representation of women in standing/permanent parliamentary committees in the European Parliament and in the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the EU-27, by BEIS category, 2025



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: '[Committees of national parliaments: president and members](#)', '[Committees of the European Parliament: president and members](#)'.

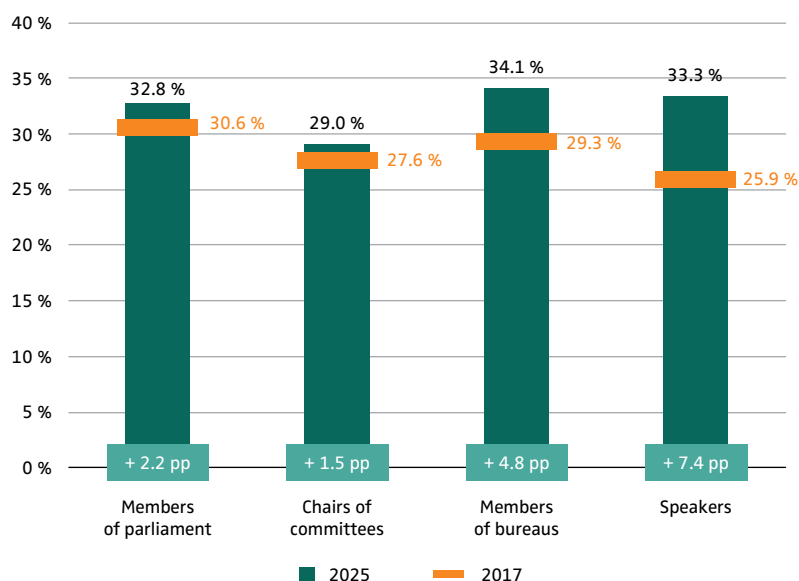
The gender imbalance in the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality – where men make up only 10.0 % of members – drives the over-representation of women in sociocultural committees in the European Parliament, highlighting the need for more balanced participation of both women and men in shaping gender equality and related policies.

In the European Parliament, 9 of the 22 committees (40.9 %) are chaired by women, broadly in line with the share of women among MEPs. In national parliaments, however, women are less likely to be selected/elected to chair parliamentary committees, accounting for 29.0 % of all such positions across the EU despite accounting for 32.8 % of MPs.

Women make advances in parliamentary leadership as speakers and members of bureaus, but barriers remain in committee leadership

Parliamentary bureaus play a crucial role in running the day-to-day business of parliament. They are responsible for laying out the rules of parliament, drawing up the draft budget and making decisions on administrative, staffing and organisational matters. In August 2025, there was a slightly higher share of women in the parliamentary bureaus of the single/lower houses of national parliaments compared with the overall composition of national parliaments (34.1 % versus 32.8 %; see [Figure 6](#)). Since 2017, there has been a bigger increase in the share of women in parliamentary bureaus (+ 4.8 pp) than in parliaments as a whole (+ 2.2 pp). The share of women speakers has also increased more significantly, from 25.9 % in 2017 to 33.3 % today – very similar to the overall composition of parliaments. However, the change has been even smaller for chairs of committees (+ 1.5 pp since 2017) – positions in which women continue to be comparatively under-represented (29.0 % women).

Figure 6 | Representation of women among members of parliament, chairs of standing/permanent parliamentary committees, members of parliamentary bureaus and speakers of the single/lower houses of national parliaments in the EU-27, 2025



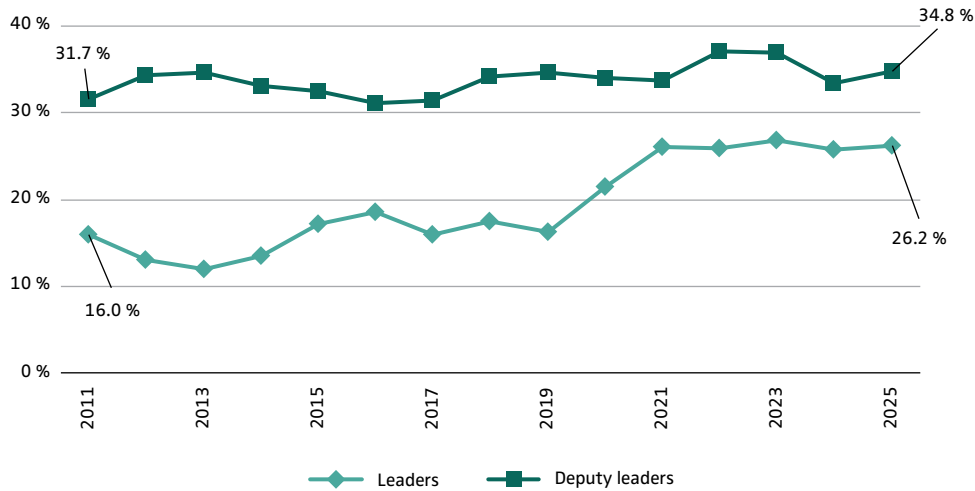
Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: '[Committees of national parliaments: president and members](#)', '[National parliaments: president and members](#)'.

Just over a quarter of major political parties are led by women

Political parties have primary responsibility for the selection of candidates and how they are presented to voters, including how they are distributed on candidate lists or around winnable constituencies. In this sense, political parties are the gatekeepers of gender equality in parliament. Yet this basic principle is often not reflected in their leadership.

Across Member States, the proportion of women leading major political parties has improved from 16.0 % in 2011 to 26.2 % in 2025, but men still hold three in four leadership positions. There are more women among deputy leaders (34.8 % in 2025, up from 31.7 % in 2011), but the power imbalance remains clear (see [Figure 7](#)).

Figure 7 | Share of women leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties in the EU-27, from 2011 to 2025



Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: '[Major political parties: leader and deputy leaders](#)'.

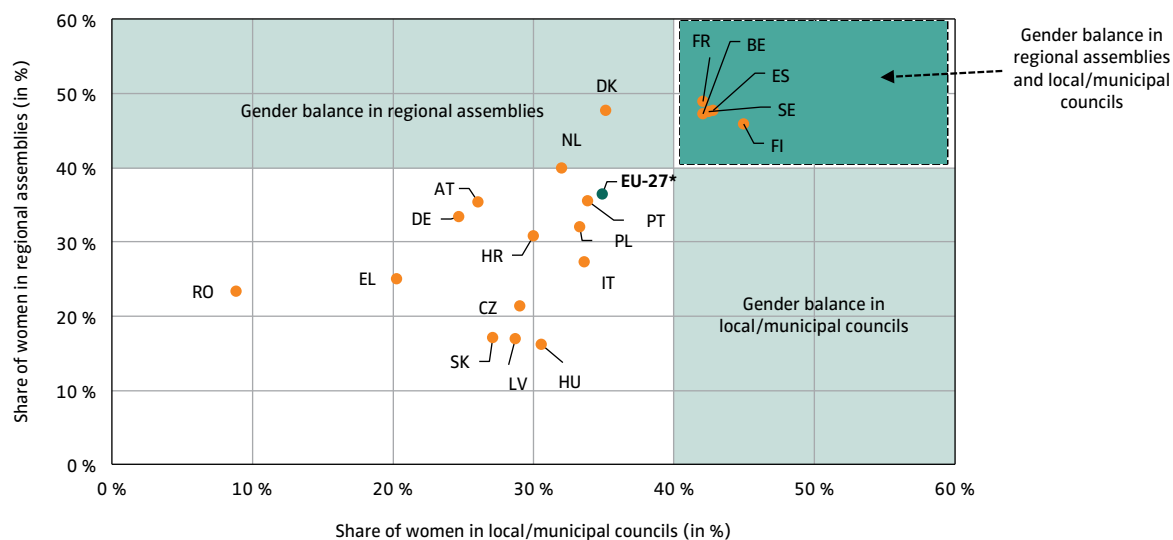
Gender balance among members of regional assemblies and local/municipal councils in five Member States

The latest data from 2025 shows that women accounted for 36.4 % of members of regional assemblies across the EU, and for 34.9 % of members of local/municipal councils (see [Figure 8](#)). The figure for local/municipal councils is, however, heavily influenced by France, which contributes more than two fifths of the councillors recorded (44 %). Without France, the share of women councillors in the EU drops to 29.2 %, making it the level with the lowest proportion of women in political assemblies (in comparison to 38.6 % in the European Parliament, 33.2 % in national assemblies and 36.4 % in regional assemblies).

Among the 19 Member States with regional authorities endowed with powers of self-government, there were at least 40 % of members of each gender in assemblies/councils at both the regional and the local level in Belgium, Spain, France, Finland and Sweden. Denmark and the Netherlands meet this threshold at the regional level (47.8 % and 40.0 % women, respectively) but have lower shares of women in local/municipal councils (35.1 % and 32.0 %, respectively).

The remaining 12 Member States do not have gender balance at either level of governance. Notably, in Romania, women account for less than a quarter of members of the regional assembly (23.4 %) and less than 1 in 10 (8.2 %) members of local/municipal councils.

Figure 8 | Share of women among members of regional assemblies and local/municipal councils in Member States, 2025



NB: There are no regions endowed with powers of self-government in BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT or SI. Data for regional assemblies in Portugal covers only the autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira. * - Regional self-government is organised differently across the EU-27, therefore, regions are not applicable in all Member States.

Source: EIGE, Gender Statistics Database: '[Regional assemblies: president and members](#)', '[Local/municipal councils: mayors or other leaders and members](#)'.

Statistics are based on data by country published in EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#). Comprehensive information about data specifications can be found on the metadata tab of each indicator (e.g. [European Parliament: president and members \(metadata\)](#)).

Member State country codes

BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CZ	Czechia
DK	Denmark
DE	Germany
EE	Estonia
IE	Ireland
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FR	France
HR	Croatia
IT	Italy
CY	Cyprus
LV	Latvia

LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
HU	Hungary
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
AT	Austria
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
FI	Finland
SE	Sweden



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