



Statistical note on gender balance in politics: current situation and trends

November 2018

Executive Summary

The persistent under-representation of women in politics remains a cause for concern. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) monitors the latest situation and trends in political institutions at all territorial levels. Data for key decision-making bodies at European and national level are updated quarterly, while other data are mostly updated annually (local level only biennially). The latest quarterly update and the annual update of regional data were completed in November 2018. Key findings are:

➤ European level

- Women account for 36.4% of members in the European Parliament (EP). In 20 of the 28 Member States, more than 60% of MEPs are men. The EP works extensively to promote gender equality and the upcoming 2019 elections represent an opportunity to demonstrate that commitment, particularly for countries that currently have few women MEPs.
- The current European Commission comprises 19 men (67.9%) and 9 women (32.1%). Improving the gender balance further relies on Member States nominating more female candidates in the 2019 renewal.

➤ National level

- The proportion of women in national parliaments (single/lower house) across the 28 EU Member States has reached an all-time high of 30.2% but that still means that seven in ten MPs are men. Parliaments in Sweden, Finland and Spain are gender balanced (i.e. at least 40% of each gender) but women account for less than 20% of members in Greece, Cyprus, Malta, and Hungary.
- Two recent elections (both in October) have resulted in significant changes in the representation of women in parliament. The proportion of women members jumped from 18.0% to 31.0% in Latvia but declined from 31.7% to 21.7% in Luxembourg. September elections in Sweden saw the gender balance maintained (46.7%).
- Less than one in five major political parties in the EU (18.4%) has a woman leader, though there is better representation amongst deputy leaders (33.8% women).
- In national governments, women account for just three in ten (30.5%) senior ministers (members of the cabinet or equivalent) and are twice as likely to be given less conspicuous socio-cultural portfolios (i.e. health, education, and social affairs) as men.

➤ Regional level:

- Latest data show that women hold just over a third (33.3%) of the seats in regional assemblies but are slightly better represented as members of regional executives (35.6%).

➤ Local level:

- Data on local politics are collected every other year. In 2017, women accounted for 14.9% of mayors and held just under a third of the seats in local/municipal assemblies (32.1%).



Introduction

The composition of political assemblies and executives at all territorial levels too often fails to reflect the gender diversity of the population they represent, with women significantly under-represented in many cases. Moreover, progress towards a better gender balance in political decision-making is extremely slow.

Monitoring progress towards gender equality in politics, as well as in other life domains, is key to support better informed policy-making and ensure its effectiveness and accountability. In January 2017, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), took over the database on women and men in decision-making (WMID), previously managed by the European Commission. The data are made available through the Power and decision-making entry point of EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#) (GSD) and include information on the numbers of women and men in key decision-making positions across a number of different life domains¹. The database represents an invaluable source of reliable and regularly updated statistics that can be used to monitor the current situation and trends through time.

In relation to politics, EIGE monitors the situation in political institutions at European, national, regional, and local levels. Data are updated quarterly for the European Parliament, European Commission, European Committees² and the national parliaments and governments. Data on major political parties (last updated in June 2018) and regional³ level politics are updated annually whilst local data are updated every other year (last updated in 2017).

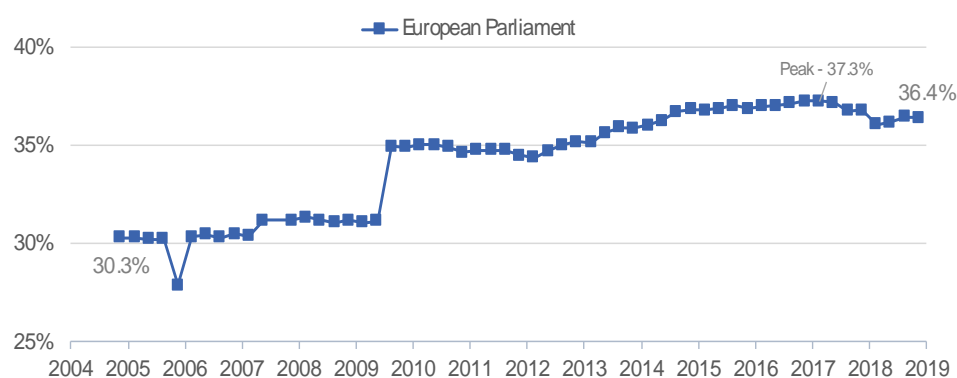
This note summarises the latest available data on the representation of women in politics at EU, national, regional and local levels following the update completed in November 2018.

European parliament

In November 2018, women accounted for 36.4% of the 749 members of the European Parliament (EP), slightly down from the peak of 37.3% reached at the end of 2016 (Figure 1). The representatives of seven Member States include at least 40% of each gender (Ireland, Spain, France, Croatia, Latvia,

Malta, and Sweden). In all other countries except Finland (76.9% women), the majority of members (more than 60%) are men; most notably men outnumber women by more than 4 to 1 (i.e. >80% men) amongst the

Figure 1 Women Members of the European Parliament, 2004Q4-2018Q4 (%)



¹ Including politics, public administration, judiciary, business and finance, social partners and NGOs, environment and climate change, media, and education, science and research.

² The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) represents civil society, employers and employees. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) represents regional and local authorities.

³ In case of regional elections, data for the affected regions are updated in the next quarterly collection.



MEPs of Bulgaria, Estonia, Cyprus, Lithuania, and Hungary. Strikingly, also, the parliament has not had a female speaker since Nicole Fontaine was replaced by Pat Cox in 2002⁴.

The current situation (36.4% women and 63.6% men) means that the gender balance in the European Parliament – an institution that expends considerable efforts in promoting gender equality – has hardly changed since 2009 (35% women). The upcoming 2019 elections therefore represent a key opportunity to increase the share of female members and take the institution a step closer to parity. The chances of this happening depend to a large extent on whether Member States that currently have few MEPs take steps to ensure a good gender balance amongst the candidates for election.

Parliamentary Committees

The European Parliament has 24 committees that prepare proposals for legislation. In January 2018, 12 of the 24 parliamentary committees had a female chair and women accounted for at least 40% of members in half of the committees⁵. There are, however, significant differences between committees: women accounted for the majority of members of the committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) (78.4%) but were noticeably under-represented in the committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) (16.7%).

European Commission

Women currently account for 32.1% of Commissioners (9 of 28) in the Juncker Commission. The chances of the gender balance being improved further in the 2019 renewal depend on Member States nominating more female candidates.

National parliaments

In November 2018, only six of the twenty-eight national parliaments across the EU⁶ were led by a woman (21.4%) and their combined members comprised 69.8% men and 30.2% women. Although the proportion of women members is an all-time high, still seven in ten members of EU national parliaments are men.

There is however, considerable variation between countries. Parliaments in Sweden, Finland and Spain have at least 40% of each gender while, at the other end of the spectrum, women account for less than 1 in 5 members (<20%) in the parliaments of Greece, Cyprus, Malta and Hungary (Figure 2).

In the IPA countries⁷, women account for more than a third of members of parliament in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and in Serbia (38.3% and 37.6% respectively, well above the EU average), but are noticeably outnumbered in Turkey (82.6% men, 17.4% women).

Recent parliamentary elections show mixed results. In Latvia, the proportion of women members of the Saeima jumped from 18.0% to 31.0% following the October elections, whilst in Luxembourg it fell from 31.7% to 21.7% following elections in the same month. In Sweden, elections in September saw the excellent gender balance maintained (46.7% compared to 46.1% previously).

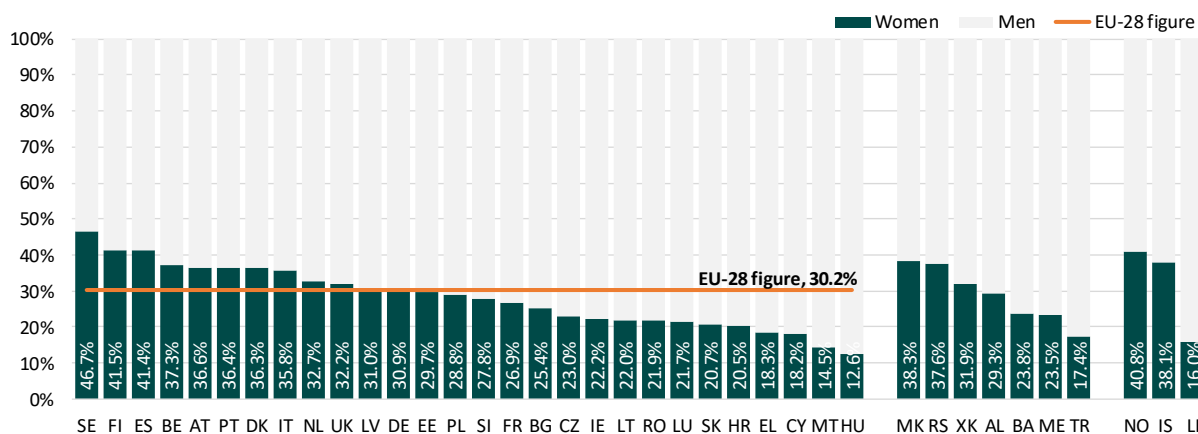
⁴ <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/the-president/en/former-ep-presidents>

⁵ Women in the European Parliament: International Women's Day, 8 March 2018, European Parliament (2018) http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/2018/0001/P8_PUB%282018%290001_EN.pdf

⁶ BG, DK, ES, LV, NL, FI

⁷ "IPA countries" refers to the beneficiaries of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance including the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the (MK), Serbia (RS), Albania (AL), Montenegro (ME) and Turkey (TR).

Figure 2 Share of women and men in single/lower houses of parliament, November 2018



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national parliaments](#)

Data for Bosnia and Herzegovina refer to 2018Q3, the composition of the new parliament following recent elections was not available at the time of the 2018Q4 update.

Legislative action derives progress at the country level

The proportion of women members in the single/lower houses of EU national parliaments increased by 8.1 percentage points (pp) between 2004 and 2018 at an average rate of just 0.58 pp/year (Figure 4). At this rate of change it will take another 17 years (until 2035) to achieve gender balance (at least 40% of each gender).

A number of countries have taken initiatives to improve the gender balance in their parliaments. Legislative candidate quotas are currently in place in nine Member States: Belgium, Ireland, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Poland, Portugal, and Slovenia. Typically, the quota applies to the list of candidates submitted for election to the national assemblies and has sanctions in case of non-compliance (see Annex

Table 1 in Annex). With the exception of Croatia, the representation of women has improved when comparing the situation before and after application of the quota⁸ (Figure 3). However, only Portugal and Spain have seen the quota target translated into an equivalent (or almost) proportion of elected members: in Portugal the quota requires one third of each gender in candidate lists and the 2015 elections produced 34.3% women members (currently 36.4%); Spain has a 40% quota and achieved 39.1% women members after the 2016 elections (currently 41.4%). In all other cases, substantial improvements are still needed: the proportion of women amongst elected members is still 8 pp below the candidate quota level in Poland and Ireland, 11 pp in Belgium and Slovenia, 13 pp in Greece, and over 20 pp in Croatia and France.

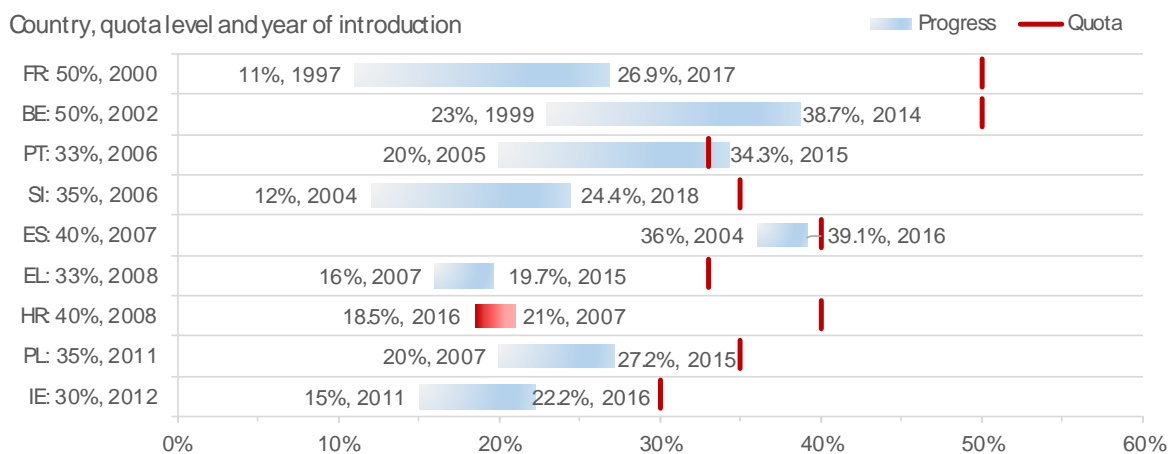
Exceptionally, in Croatia, the proportion of women members in parliament has not improved since the 2008 Gender Equality Act introduced a 40% candidate quota. At the end of 2007, women accounted for 20.9% of members of the Sabor, but after the last elections in 2016 this fell to 18.5%. Although there has been some subsequent improvement (20.5% in November 2018) this only brings the share back up to the pre-quota level. Although the law seemingly allows the State Electoral Commission to reject lists that do not fulfil the

⁸ Refers to WMID data from the first quarterly update following the election date.

quota, this has been ineffective and attempts to apply sanctions on parties that produced non-compliant candidate lists were overturned by the Constitutional Court in September 2015⁹.

In other words, the application of a quota amongst candidates is only the first step. Further action is also necessary to translate candidate quotas into election outcomes. For example, to ensure that sanctions are strong enough and enforceable, and to ensure that women are placed fairly in lists (e.g. zipper system) and represented equally in winnable seats. Moreover, short-term success is not always sustained. In Slovenia, where there is a requirement to have at least 35% of each gender amongst candidates, the proportion of women members of parliament jumped from 16.7% to 35.6% following the elections in 2011. This level was more or less sustained through elections in 2014 but fell dramatically to 24.4% following the latest elections in June 2018 (latest figure from November 2018 is 27.8%). The scale of the fluctuation is perhaps exaggerated by the relatively small size of the assembly (90 members so that the difference in the number of women is only 10) but serves to demonstrate that continued success cannot be taken for granted.

Figure 3 Legislative gender quotas applicable to national parliaments in EU Member States and progress since their introduction



Note: Latest election results refer to WMID data of the first quarterly update following the elections.

No major difference between action and inaction at EU level

Although legislative quotas can clearly be seen to have a positive impact in some individual countries, the evidence is clear that they are no guarantee of success. Consequently, when data are aggregated, there is surprisingly little difference in the rate of progress between countries with and without legislative action (Figure 4):

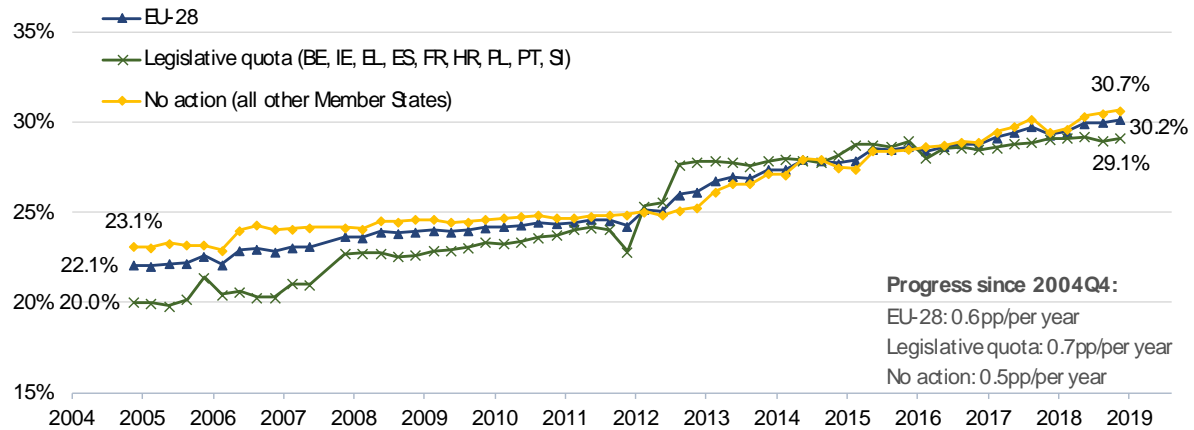
- The nine countries with legislative candidate quotas (BE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, PL, PT, SI) started with 20.0% women members in 2004 and achieved 29.1% at the end of 2018 (based on the aggregate of all members covered in those countries). This represents an increase of 9.1 pp at an average rate of 0.65 pp/year.
- The remaining EU Member States that do not have a legislated quota (19 of 28) started at a slightly higher level (23.1%) in 2004 and achieved 30.7% by end 2018 at an average increase of 0.54 pp/year.

⁹ Nacevska, Elena & Lokar, S. (2017). The effectiveness of gender quotas in Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia. *Teorija in Praksa*. 54. 394-412.

<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/317224845> The effectiveness of gender quotas in Macedonia Serbia and Croatia

- If both groups continue at the same rate of change, both will achieve gender balance (at least 40% of each gender) in 17 years (2035).

Figure 4 Changes in the share of women in single/lower houses of parliament in EU-28 and by action (2004-2018)



Source: EIGE

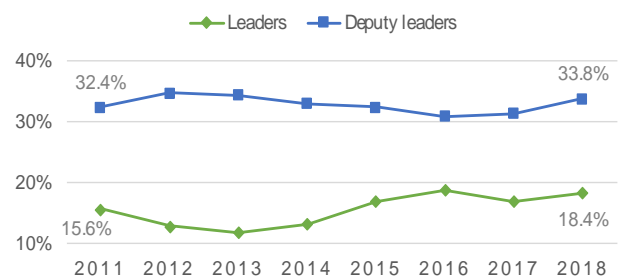
Major political parties

Political parties are seen as the gatekeepers of gender equality since they set party policy and select the candidates for election. In 2018, women accounted for less than one in five (18.4%) leaders of major political parties (those with at least 5% of seats in parliament) across the EU and one in three deputy leaders (33.8%)¹⁰ (Figure 5). In the Czech Republic, Hungary, Malta and Slovakia none of the major parties has had a woman leader since data were first collected in 2011 (Table 2).

At EU level, the share of women in leadership positions within major political parties has

fluctuated since 2011, with little sign of substantial progress.

Figure 5 - Share of women leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties, EU-28, 2011-2018



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [major political parties](#)

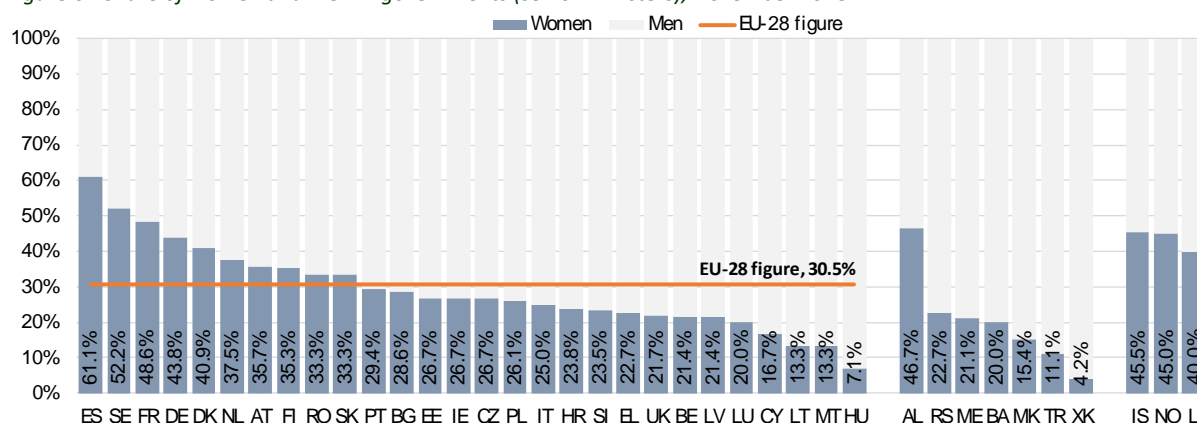
Governments (senior ministers)

In November 2018, 25 of the 28 EU Member States had a male prime minister, the exceptions being Germany, Romania and the UK. Moreover, men accounted for the large majority (69.5%) of senior ministers (i.e. those with a seat in the cabinet), with women holding only 30.5% of positions (a figure that remains unchanged since August 2018). There are, however, considerable variations between countries. Governments were gender balanced (at least 40% of each gender) in Sweden, France, Germany, and Denmark but in all other countries except Spain (61.1% women), the majority of senior ministers (more than 60%) are men. Most strikingly, women account for just 7.1% of cabinet members in Hungary where, in May 2018, Andrea Bártfai-Mager became the first woman minister since 2014 (Figure 6).

¹⁰ Data collection in May-June 2018 identified 152 parties across the 28 EU Member States.

Across the IPA countries, the government in Albania is well gender balanced (comprised of 46.7% women and 53.3% men) but in all other cases, women account for less than 1 in 4 cabinet members (<25%). There is only one woman in the 24-member cabinet of the government in Kosovo (4.2%).

Figure 6 - Share of women and men in governments (senior ministers), November 2018



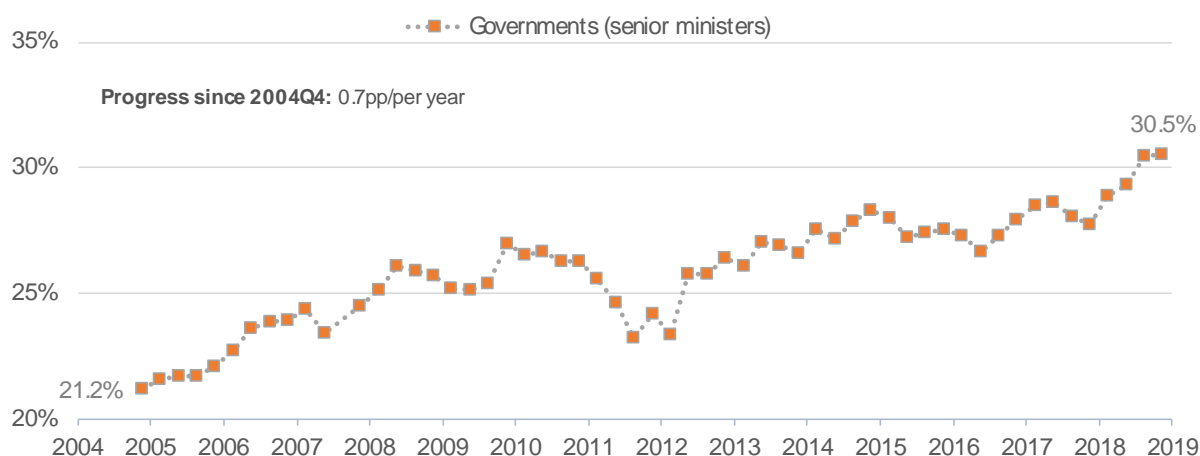
Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national governments](#)

Data for Latvia refers to 2018Q3, the new cabinet was not yet appointed during the 2018Q4 update.

Progress is slow and uneven

At EU-level, the gender balance in national governments (senior ministers) has been improving progressively since 2004 but with considerable variation along the way (which is to be expected given the more frequent changes and smaller numbers concerned compared to national parliaments) (Figure 7). The share of women amongst senior ministers has risen from 21.2% at the end of 2004 to 30.5% at an average rate of 0.7 pp/year. At this rate, it will take until 2032 to achieve at least 40% of each gender in the national governments of the 28 EU Member States.

Figure 7 - Share of women in governments (senior ministers), EU-28, December 2004- November 2018



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national governments](#)

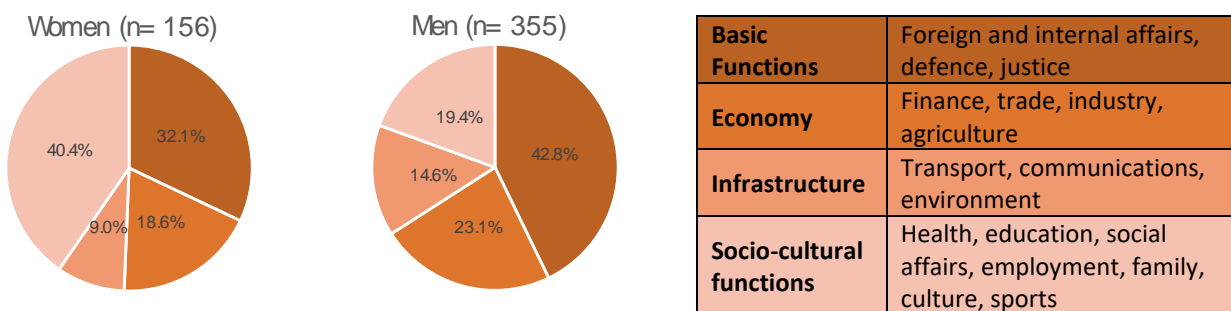
The current level of 30.5% women is the highest since data were first available for all 28 EU Member States in 2004 and there has been a noticeable improvement over the past year (+2.8 pp since Q4 2017). Over the

last year there have been significant increases in the share of women amongst senior ministers following the formation of new governments or cabinet reshuffles in the Czech Republic (11.8% to 26.7%), Spain (35.7% to 61.1%), Cyprus (8.3% to 16.7%), Hungary (0% to 7.1%), Austria (21.4% to 35.7%), Portugal (16.7% to 29.4%), Romania (21.4% to 33.3%) and Slovakia (20.0% to 33.3%). At the same time, the proportion of women in government declined substantially in Slovenia (47.1% to 23.5%) and to a lesser extent in Lithuania (20.0% to 13.3%).

Gender segregation in ministerial portfolios

Whilst the continued under-representation of women in government is a fundamental concern, there is also evidence to suggest that women reaching cabinet level tend to be allocated to portfolios considered to have lower political priority. In November 2018, two thirds (65.9%) of all male senior ministers held a portfolio with high profile basic or economic functions compared to half (50.6%) of female ministers (Figure 8). Moreover, 40.4% of all women ministers had a socio-cultural portfolio compared to just 19.4% men. A more gender-neutral allocation of portfolios could help governments to pass a stronger message about their commitment to gender equality.

Figure 8 – Distribution of senior ministers by gender and type of portfolio, EU-28, November 2018

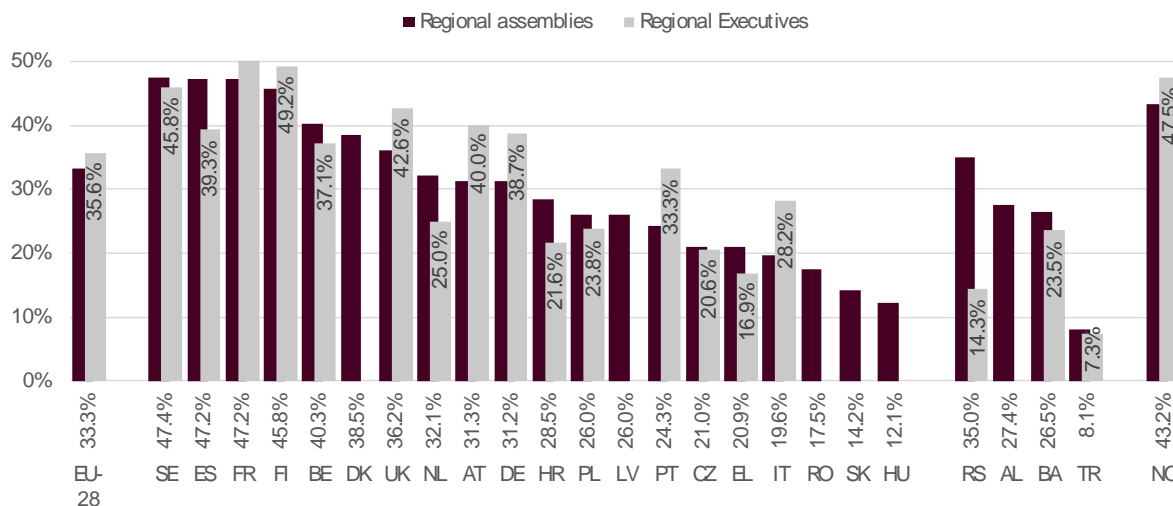


Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national governments](#)

Regional assemblies and executives

The latest data from November 2018 show that the representation of women in regional assemblies across the EU remains unchanged since 2017 (33.3%). There has, however, been a small increase in the proportion of women leading these assemblies, which has reached a new high of 22.2% (from 21.5% in 2017). Regional assemblies include at least 40% of each gender in 5 (Belgium, Spain, France, Finland and Sweden) of the 20 Member States in which there is a regional level endowed with powers of self-government, but in Italy, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, men occupy more than 4 out of every 5 seats (Figure 9). The representation of women regional executives has dropped from an all-time high share of 36.0%, reached in November 2017, to the current level of 35.6%, whilst the proportion of female leaders of regional executives has increased from 14.4% (2017) to 14.8%.

Figure 9 - Share of women and men in regional executives and assemblies, 2018

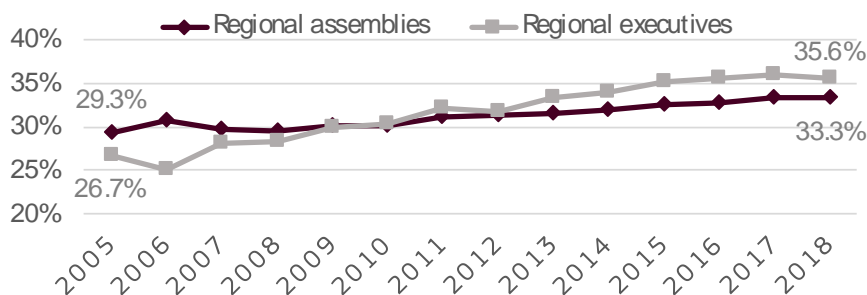


Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [regional executives and assemblies](#)

Note: members of regional executives not applicable in DK, LV, RO, SK, HU and AL. Data for regional assembly members in two of the twelve regions in AL were not available.

The rate of change at regional level is extremely slow. The share of women in regional assemblies has improved by just 4 pp since 2005 at an average rate of 0.3 pp/year (Figure 10). The rate of change in regional executives is slightly faster (+8.9 pp at an average rate of 0.7 pp/year), but still too slow.

Figure 10 Share of women in regional assemblies and executives, 2005-2018



Source: EIGE

Gender Statistics Database: [regions](#)

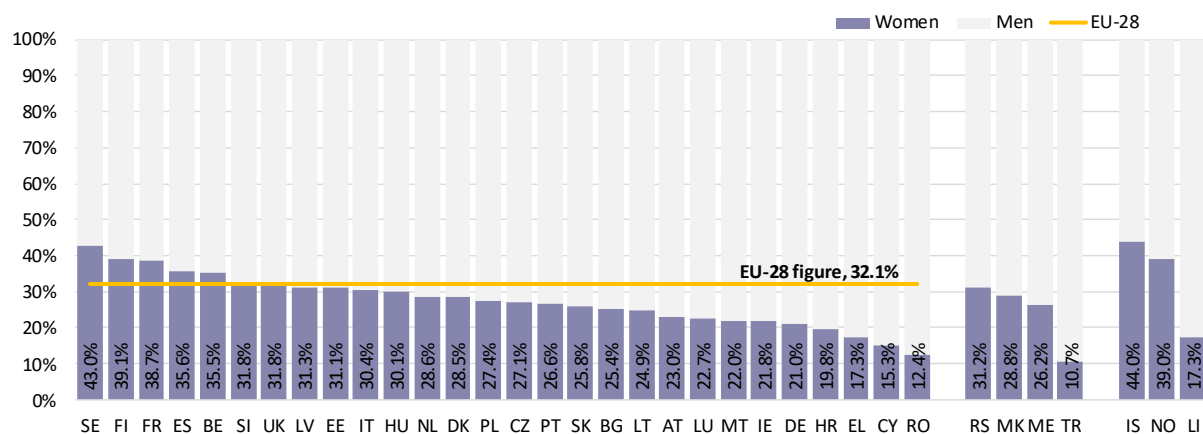
Local assemblies

Data for the local level are updated every other year. The latest data from June 2017 show that women accounted for 32.1% of members of local assemblies across the EU (Figure 11). Only assemblies in Sweden included at least 40% of each gender (43.0% women, 57.0% men) while those in Greece, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania comprised more than 80% men and less than 20% women.

Note that the EU level figure is heavily influenced by France, which contributes over 40% of the councillors recorded. If France is excluded, the share of women councillors across the EU falls to 26.4%.

Across the EU, women hold only 14.9% of local leadership positions (mayor or other leader of the municipal council).

Figure 11 - Share of women and men in local assemblies, June 2017



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [local/municipal councils](#)

Annex

Table 1 Member States with legislated candidate quotas

MS	Year	Provisions	Required % of under-represented sex	Sanctions
BE	2002	On electoral lists, the difference between the number of candidates of each sex should not be more than one. This also applies to the list of alternates. The 2 top candidates on candidate lists and on the lists of alternates cannot be of the same sex (Electoral Code, Article 117bis).	50%	Yes - Candidates list will not be admitted by the electoral authorities if does not meet the requirement.
IE	2012	At least 30% of women candidates should be nominated by parties. The required gender quota of candidates is to rise to at least 40% women and at least 40% men within 7 years from the date of the first election held in line with this new rule, and the penalty will apply during those 7 years.	30% (rising to 40% in the next election)	Yes - the political parties, in the coming after the implementation of the law national elections, will lose 50 per cent (50%) of their state funding, unless at least 30 per cent (30%) of their candidates are women and at least 30 per cent (30%) are men. After a period of 7 years the political parties should have a forty per cent (40%) gender quota in their candidate lists in order receive a full state funding.
EL	2008	At least one-third (1/3) of political parties' candidate lists, both for national and constituency lists, must be filled with candidates of each sex.	33%	Yes - the party list is not accepted by the Supreme Court if it does not meet the requirement.
ES	2007	List of candidates put forward should have at least 40% of either sex.	40%	Yes - political parties are given a short period to adjust lists that do not meet the quota requirement. But if they fail to do so, the lists will not be approved by the Electoral Commission.

MS	Year	Provisions	Required % of under-represented sex	Sanctions
FR	2000	The difference between the number of candidates of each sex that a party or group of parties present for single-member constituency elections can not be greater than 2%.	50%	Yes - non-compliance with 50% parity rule (only 2% difference allowed between the number of female and male candidates) will result in a financial penalty: the public funding provided to parties based on the number of votes they receive in the first round of elections will be decreased 'by a percentage equivalent to three quarters of the difference between the total number of candidates of each sex, out of the total number of candidates'.
HR	2008	A sex is seen as substantially under-represented if it accounts for less than 40% of representatives in political and public decision-making bodies. When drawing up and proposing lists of candidates for election of representatives to the Croatian Parliament, political parties and other authorised entities submitting such lists shall observe the principle of gender equality and seek to achieve the balance in terms of the representation of women and men on such election lists to the provisions of Article 12 of the Act.	40%	Yes - Political parties and other entities authorised to propose lists of candidates who do not comply and do not seek to achieve a gender balance shall be punished for a violation with a fine of HRK 50,000.00 in case of elections of members to the Croatian Parliament.
PL	2011	The number of women and men candidates cannot be less than 35% of all candidates on the list.	35%	Yes - In case the list does not meet the requirement, the Electoral Commission shall request the list to be adjusted within 3 days. In the case of defects not removed within the specified time, the commission decides to refuse to register the list in its entirety.

MS	Year	Provisions	Required % of under-represented sex	Sanctions
PT	2006	Candidate lists for the elections to the National Assembly shall be composed in a way such as to promote a minimum representation of 33% of each sex.	33%	Yes - if a list does not comply with the quota requirement, the error is to be made public and there will be financial sanctions in the form of reduction of the public funding provided for the conduct of the electoral campaign, in relation to the level of inequality on lists. The financial sanction does not apply to lists with less than 3 names.
SI	2006	No gender shall be represented by less than 35% of the actual total number of female and male candidates on the list. This shall not apply to a list of candidates containing three male or three female candidates, since a list of candidates containing three candidates must contain at least one representative of the opposite sex.	35%	Yes - If the lists do not comply with the law, the electoral commission shall reject the list.

Table 2 Number of female leaders of major political parties, by country, 2011-2018

Party Leader	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Grand Total
Belgium	3	1	2	2	2	3	3	3	19
Bulgaria	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	5
Czech Republic	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Denmark	2	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	13
Germany	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	4	24
Estonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Ireland	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
Greece	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	5
Spain	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	3
France	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	3
Croatia	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	5
Italy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Cyprus	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Latvia	1	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	10
Lithuania	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Luxembourg	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	11
Hungary	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Malta	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Netherlands	3	3	1	2	2	3	2	2	18
Austria	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	7
Poland	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
Portugal	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	2	6
Romania	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	5
Slovenia	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	6
Slovakia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Finland	3	2	1	1	0	0	1	1	9
Sweden	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	19
United Kingdom	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	2	5
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0
former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0
Iceland	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	3	10
Liechtenstein	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Norway	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	24

“-“ Not applicable (country not covered by database in that year)