



# “A critical analysis of the level of substantive representation of women achieved with quotas”

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## CONTENTS

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION – WHERE ARE WOMEN IN POLITICS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1. POLITICAL VARIABLES	<b>3</b>
2.1.1. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA - NON-FAVOURABLE TO WOMEN, MEDIUM OR BEST FIT?	<b>3</b>
2.1.2. IS THERE A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN IN BiH LEGISLATURES?	<b>6</b>
2.1.3. POLITICAL PARTIES – GATEKEEPERS FOR PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS?	<b>8</b>
2.1.4. WHO SUPPORTS FEMALE CANDIDATES?	<b>9</b>
2.2. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS A MEDIUM FIT SYSTEM	<b>9</b>
2.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES AND CULTURAL VARIABLES	<b>9</b>
2.3.1. Education	<b>10</b>
2.3.2. Economic-development	<b>10</b>
2.3.3. Traditional attitudes	<b>10</b>
2.3.4. Media	<b>11</b>
2.4. DO WE FIND OBSTACLES IN TERMS OF POLITICAL OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES THAT HINDER THE SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?	<b>11</b>
<b>3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION ACHIEVED?</b>	<b>11</b>
3.1. POLICY OUTCOME PERSPECTIVE	<b>12</b>
3.1.1. GENDER BIASED VOTING? A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GENDER PREFERENCES OF THE ELECTORATE	<b>12</b>
3.1. POLITICS AS A WORKPLACE PERSPECTIVE - DO FEMALE MPs REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA?	<b>14</b>
3.1.4. Can we find evidence of substantive representation of women by female MPs?	<b>16</b>
<b>4. HOW TO IMPROVE SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?</b>	<b>17</b>
4.1. Changes to the Election law	<b>19</b>
4.2. Efforts to continue to sensitise political parties	<b>20</b>
4.3. Efforts to support women in politics	<b>20</b>
4.3.1. The current political culture discourages women from actively engaging in a political career	<b>20</b>
4.3.2. The electorate is largely gender-biased	<b>21</b>
4.3.3. The expectation for female MPs to act in the interests of all women puts an additional burden on women in politics	<b>21</b>
<b>5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - TWO FRONTS FOR SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION</b>	<b>22</b>
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOTH SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN	<b>22</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>24</b>

## Summary

This study attempts to frame the available data on substantive representation of women in the legislatures in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to assess the success of the quota for the under-represented sex as the policy option applied. Data collected for this study indicates that quotas are not the problem but a part of the solution, and that we need to move away from the debate on critical mass in order to focus on the need to have female MPs represent the interests of women as a group. This study concludes that the quota should not remain the only policy option to achieve substantive representation and provides main stake-holders with a set of recommendations for future actions aimed at supporting the substantive representation of women as a group.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The influence exerted by women elected to the legislature is an important precondition for the achievement of the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women. This precondition is based on the idea that women in politics will not only support the goals of their political party but that they will also “act for” and “as women”, i.e. that they will substantively represent the interests of women as a group.

Political scientists concerned with gender equality have long been interested in the numbers of women in national legislatures. Women make up slightly more than 50% of the world’s population, yet average only 16% of the world’s elected political posts. This has led to calls for action to increase the number of women in legislatures based both on arguments of fairness and on claims that such an increase would substantively change decision-making processes and outcomes.

When it comes to the participation of women in the legislature, the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is not much different from the rest of the world. Despite there being a quota for the less represented sex on the list of candidates, in 2006 the number of women elected to the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH was 11.9%, and in 2010, it was 19%. This is well below the 40% that is considered equitable representation according to the Law on Gender Equality in BiH and Council of Europe standards, and even below the Beijing benchmark of 30%.

The under-representation of women in the legislature remains at the centre of most discussions in recent years, because it is believed that with a critical mass of women, the aim of substantive representation will be achieved.

However, numbers alone should not remain at the centre of interest for the main stakeholders involved in gender equality efforts in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This paper aims to take a closer look at all of the variables that influence substantive representation of women and ultimately attempts to discover the level of substantive representation achieved with the current policies. Finally, this study concludes with an analysis into possible policy options to be proposed to the main stakeholders with a view to supporting women in politics.

## 2. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION – WHERE ARE WOMEN IN POLITICS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

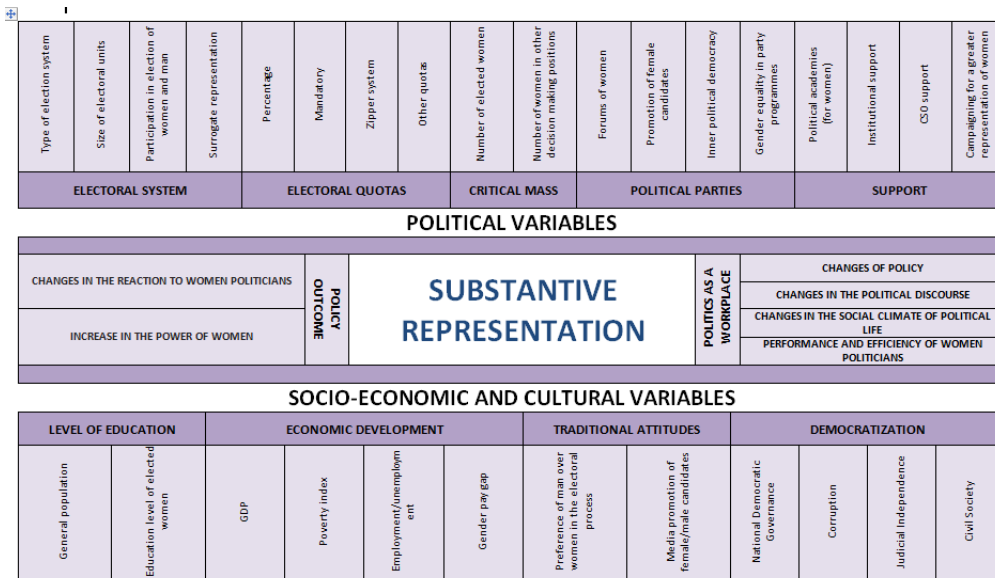
In the absence of research on the variables that influence substantive representation of women, in order to assess its level, we need to take a closer look at the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina before we move on to explore the actual level of substantive representation.

To analyse these variables, the research will use the following research matrix (modified to suit the specific context of Bosnia and Herzegovina) which is based on a background analysis of the best case models applied by scholars and researchers in other countries (Celis, Krook, Grey, Dahlrup, Tripp and Kang, Childs and others).

In order to take into account all relevant variables, this matrix explores the interplay between two recognised sets of variables that influence substantive representation: political variables,



and socio-economic and cultural variables. Due to the objective limitations, indicators for these variables will not be discussed in detail, but the research should point out any existing obstacles. Already existing data will be used, as it is quite important to identify if there are any obstacles arising from these two sets of variables.



All of these variables and the final proposal of three policy options were tested as part of a questionnaire titled "Position of women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina". The questionnaire was a combination of multiple choice and open-ended questions aimed at discovering the attitudes of respondents to the existing policy options, the remaining obstacles, and the proposed policy options.

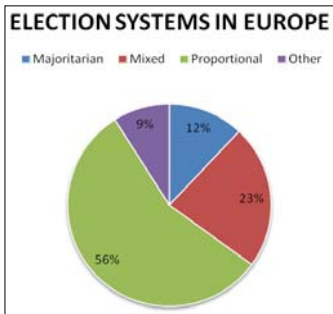
Out of a total of 49 respondents, 11 are currently serving as members of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH (4), the National Assembly of RS (1), the Parliament of Federation of BiH (5), cantonal assembly (1), municipal council (4) and 5 were at one point candidates. The other 38 are members of political parties and/or work for NGOs dedicated to the promotion of women in politics, or are studying political science. This informed public was targeted since the questionnaire aimed for informed feedback on the proposed policy options and not perceptions regarding the position of women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## 2.1. POLITICAL VARIABLES

### 2.1.1. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA – NON-FAVOURABLE TO WOMEN, MEDIUM OR BEST FIT?

Many believe that the electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina hampers the participation of women in legislatures. This section will evaluate the electoral system of BiH with respect to the above mentioned variables, and compare these findings to similar systems in Europe.

Political variables are considered to be of the highest importance when it comes to the participation of women in the legislature. Elections are one the pillars of a democratic society and they represent a chance for the citizens to elect their representatives, who are then meant to translate the preferences of their electorate into new policies.



The main variables arising from these laws and possibly influencing the participation of women include: the type of electoral system; district magnitude—determining how many representatives are elected in one electoral district; the formula—determining how the winner of a seat is chosen; and the ballot structure—determining whether the voter votes for a candidate or a party and whether the voter makes a single choice or expresses a series of preferences. The matrix also includes other features of electoral systems influencing the representation of women as expressed through the following variables: participation of women and men, surrogate representation, critical mass, the role of political parties, and the support women receive from other institutions and non-institutional stakeholders.

In the next few paragraphs, these variables influencing the numbers of women in legislature will be analysed in detail in order to try to find the best-fit model. Additionally, I will try to find if there are any other obstacles in the electoral system of BiH that hamper the participation of women in the legislature.

The electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina belongs to the family of PR list systems with open lists. In this study, electoral systems are categorised into three primary families – majoritarian<sup>2</sup>, combined, and proportional<sup>3</sup> – each with many subsidiary types. PR electoral systems predominate in Europe, and the data published by the ODIHR<sup>4</sup> shows that PR electoral systems are still a significant and consistent predictor of a higher proportion of women in parliament.

Electoral systems can also opt to have “closed” or “open” lists. In closed list systems, political parties still rank candidates, but seats are allocated based on the number of votes for the entire party in a given district that are then proportionally distributed to candidates starting from the top and moving towards the bottom of the list. Closed list systems are criticised because they give political parties the power to decide the ranking on the list and can thus be said to restrict the choice of the electorate. Many researchers claim that List PR systems with quotas, similar to one applied in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are more likely to work when lists are closed because this almost guaranteee that women will be elected. However, the data collected for the purposes this research<sup>5</sup> indicates that although there are no guarantees for a certain number of elected women, the averages for systems with closed lists (25%) and those with open lists (24%) are similar.

It is important to note that in local and cantonal elections, all seats are up for elections, i.e. the list is fully open. At the state and entity level elections, the lists are semi-open since there is more than one electoral district (more on the number of electoral districts in the next chapter). Lists are open for some 70% of the seats, and the remaining 30% of the seats are allocated through compensatory mandates<sup>6</sup>.

### 2.1.1.1. The size of electoral districts

The size or magnitude of an electoral district has a direct impact on the likelihood of women being nominated and elected. If parties can nominate more than one person they will be more likely to nominate a balanced slate than if they are only able to nominate one person per district. The PR list electoral system in Bosnia and Herzegovina allows for multi-member electoral districts. This rule applies to all candidates lists of all the parties that run for legislatures. In fact, most parties nominate as many candidates as there are seats in the legislative body they are running for.

### 2.1.1.2. Participation of women and men in the elections (voter turnout)

There seems to be no problem in terms of voter turnout in Bosnia and Herzegovina. According

<sup>2</sup> Majoritarian electoral systems commonly have smaller electoral districts and are based on the premise that there is a single-winner according to the “first-past-the-post”, “relative majority”, or “winner-takes all” principle.

<sup>3</sup> In a proportional system (PR LIST), the number of seats won by a party or group of candidates is proportionate to the number of votes received.

<sup>4</sup> P. Norris and M. Krook, Gender Equality in Elected Office: A Six-Step Action Plan, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), March 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Using International IDEA database, the quataproject.org database combined with the electoral system data collected from Inter-Parliamentary Union website <accessed on: 12 January 2013>

<sup>6</sup> “Compensatory mandates” are mandates that are allocated to the lists of political parties or coalitions according to the number of valid votes received, and serve to compensate for inadequate proportional representation at the entity level arrived at by summing up the results for the particular multimember electoral units in the entity



to official statistics, there were 2,136,599 registered voters for the 2010 General elections out of which women accounted for 56.6 %<sup>7</sup>. The percentages of the voter turnout disaggregated by sex are almost the same for women (49.17%) and men (50.83%). This leads to the conclusion that this variable has no influence on the numbers of elected women and men, because women and men have almost the same voice in the elections.

### 2.1.1.3. Electoral quotas

Around the world, quotas are one of the most common policy options used to achieve higher numbers of women in politics. As of 2006, more than 84 countries have some form of quota to improve the selection of female candidates to run for office<sup>8</sup>. In many other countries, discussions are under way over whether to implement quotas. During the last decade, particular attention has been paid to the use of legal quotas designed to fast-track women's nomination and election to legislative office. There is evidence that the use of quotas has increased the number of women in parliaments. A recent study has shown that following the introduction of quotas in the OSCE region, the overall number of women increased by 5.8 % compared to what it was prior to the introduction of the quota. There are three main types of political quotas in the world today: **voluntary party quotas** adopted by political parties; **candidate quotas** required by law; and **reserved seats** that only female candidates are eligible for and that are used as a more direct way of regulating the number of women in elected positions. Of the countries that currently apply gender quotas, 61 have voluntary party quotas (often in combination with the other types), 28 have legislated candidate quotas, and 12 have reserved seats for women<sup>9</sup>.

The Election law of BiH established a candidate quota in 1998.

*Article 4.19. paragraph 4. of the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina<sup>10</sup> reads:*

*Every candidates list shall include candidates of male and female gender, which shall be equitably represented. Equitable representation of both genders shall mean that one of the genders makes up at least 40% of the total number of candidates the list. The minority gender candidates shall be distributed on the candidates list in the following manner: at least one (1) minority gender candidate amongst the first two (2) candidates, two (2) minority gender candidates amongst the first five (5) candidates, and three (3) minority gender candidates amongst the first eight (8) candidates et seq.*

2008		2012	
Position	Woman in %	Position	Woman in %
1	9,70	1	11,42
2	89,37	2	89,42
3	6,31	3	6,18
4	17,79	4	16,51
5	81,08	5	82,10
6	7,67	6	8,69
7	17,91	7	15,32
8	81,44	8	81,84
9	7,99	9	7,68
10	21,58	10	17,19
11	76,82	11	81,18
12	8,66	12	9,21
13	20,46	13	18,37
14	77,33	14	78,94
15	8,69	15	8,78
16	21,88	16	20,15
17	74,91	17	77,91
18	9,89	18	11,28
19	25,74	19	19,60

<sup>7</sup> „Women and Men in Bosnia and Herzegovina“, Agency for Statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, December 2011

<sup>8</sup> Tripp, Aili Mari and Kang, Alice, “The Global Impact of Quotas: On the Fast Track to Increased Female Legislative Representation” (2008), University of Nebraska - Lincoln *Faculty Publications: Political Science*. Paper 41.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina („Official Gazette of Bosnia and Herzegovina“ Nos. 23/01, 7/02, 9/02, 20/02, 25/02, 4/04, 20/04, 25/05, 52/05, 65/05, 77/05, 11/06, 24/06, 32/07, 33/08, 37/08 and 32/10)

**Table: Positions women held on the electoral lists in 2008 and 2012**

20	73,68	20	75,57
21	9,92	21	10,41
22	25,08	22	20,31
23	71,04	23	76,51
24	12,78	24	12,89
25	23,63	25	24,28
26	73,32	26	75,32
27	13,16	27	14,57
28	27,71	28	29,00
29	72,30	29	70,72
30	14,50	30	20,51
31	26,40	31	33,85

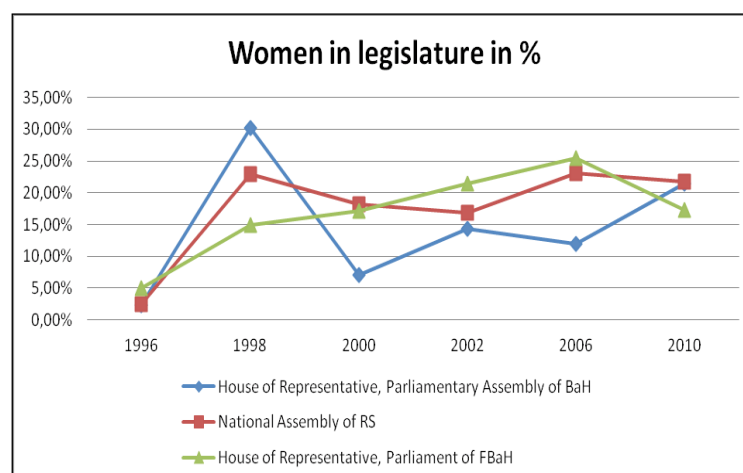
According to this rule, every candidates list shall include candidates of male and female gender. The less represented gender on the list has to make up at least one third of the candidates on the list. The stipulated percentage entails at least 40% for the less represented sex<sup>11</sup>. Apart from the mandatory percentage, the quota in BiH also introduced a mandatory rank-order rule. According to this rule, there shall be at least one (1) minority gender candidate amongst the first two (2) candidates, two (2) minority gender candidates amongst the first five (5) candidates, and three (3) minority gender candidates amongst the first eight (8) candidates et seq. The quota established by the law in BiH is also mandatory. The Central Election Commission will reject a party list if it has not been created according to the quota rule. Additionally, an analysis of the lists of candidates for the 2012 Local elections shows that in almost all of the cases, political parties applied the quota in a minimalistic manner. Data for 2008 and 2012 show that only in 10 % of the cases, women were the first person on the list, and that around 85% of all positions reserved for candidates of the under-represented sex were also women. According to the quota, candidates of the under-represented sex must occupy the 5<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> position on the list, and this is where we usually find female candidates.

<sup>11</sup>The 40% quota was introduced in march 2013 and has not yet been implemented in any election cycle. To this date the quota of 33,33% or one third was applied.

### 2.1.2. IS THERE A CRITICAL MASS OF WOMEN IN BiH LEGISLATURES?

The idea behind the critical mass concept is that is that a (critical) number of a women in legislature would improve the substantive representation of women. The most common assumption is that as women grow more numerous in legislative chambers, they will be increasingly able to form strategic coalitions with one another in order to promote legislation related to women’s concerns (Thomas 1994). However, already in the 1980s, the idea of a specific turning point was rejected by the academia. Dahlerup<sup>12</sup> concludes that “it may be that the attempt to link the relative number of women to policy outcomes is largely misplaced in research” and that „the number of women in parliaments is probably not the most crucial factor”.

<sup>12</sup> Grey, S., Manon Tremblay, Dahlerup, D., Childs, S. Krook, M.L. „Do Women Represent Women? Rethinking the “Critical Mass” Debate”, in *Politics & Gender*, 2 (2006), 491–530





Ever since the first democratic elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, women were never elected to a percentage that could be considered to reach the critical mass, and they were almost always below what is considered equitable representation according to the Law on Gender Equality in BiH and the Council of Europe standards of 40%, and even below the Beijing benchmark of 30%.

The numbers of women in local legislatures (municipal councils and municipal assemblies in BiH) are only available for the last 2 election cycles. In 2008, women accounted for 15% and in 2012 for 16,5% of the elected candidates.

Municipality	No. of seats	Position in BiH	Results 2008	Results 2012
Banja Luka	31	North	19,35%	9,57%
Centar Sarajevo	31	Middle	19,35%	22,58%
Stolac	17	South	23,52%	29,41%
Široki Brijeg	25	South	16%	16%
Modriča	27	North-east	11,11%	22,22%
Trebinje	31	South-east	6,45%	14,81%
Mrkonjić Grad	23	Middle	30,43%	16%
Bosanska Krupa	25	West	16%	24%
Odžak	25	North	12%	12%
Bugojno	25	Middle	8%	16%
<b>Average number of women</b>			<b>16,22%</b>	<b>18,25%</b>

For both the 2008 and the 2012 Local Elections, women made up over one third of all nominated candidates. However, in 2008 only 15% and in 2012 only 16,5% of all elected municipal councillors were women. The number of elected women varies from municipality to municipality. In the majority of municipalities, the proportion of women elected to municipal councils coincides with the overall average, but a number of municipalities falls below the average and a number of municipality councils have more than the average percentage, even up to 54.45%. Again, if we compare the data for 2008 with data for 2012, we will notice significant oscillations in the number of women elected in different municipalities.

Given that there are 142 municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and that it would be quite challenging to evaluate the results for all of them, this study will focus on the following ten municipalities for the purpose of analysis: Banja Luka, Centar Sarajevo, Stolac, Široki Brijeg, Modriča, Trebinje, Mrkonjić Grad, Bosanska Krupa, Odžak and Bugojno. These municipalities were selected in line with the following criteria: the number of seats available in the local legislature, the geographical position, and the number of women elected. An in-depth analysis of the results in these municipalities will help us discover the variables influencing these numbers of women elected.

The ten municipalities analysed for the purpose of this study show oscillations in numbers of women elected to municipal councils. Thus, for example, we have the case of Banja Luka where there was a threefold decrease in the number of elected women, or the case of Modriča with a twofold increase in the number of elected women.

### 2.1.3. POLITICAL PARTIES – GATEKEEPERS FOR PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS?

According to Young<sup>13</sup>, political parties are the most common vehicle for the representation of opinions. Parties often put forward programmes that are not so much an expression of the interests of a particular constituency as they are a way to organise the political issues of the day according to the principles, values, and priorities the party claims to stand for in general. Parties are entrusted with perhaps the most strategic responsibility in a democracy – that of preparing and selecting candidates for election and supporting them in positions of leadership and governance<sup>14</sup>. It is, therefore, quite important to recognise the importance of the role played by political parties when it comes to including women in their membership and effectively promoting women as potential candidates. In preferential voting systems, for a long time, women candidates were seen as being less attractive to voters than males, irrespective of other characteristics<sup>15</sup>.

To evaluate the position of women in political parties, I used the responses of the political parties to the questionnaire, which was addressed to the political parties represented in the Assembly. This questionnaire was prepared by Ms Maria Stavrositu from the Romania Group of the European People's Party as part of the process of drafting of the Report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe „Political parties and women's political representation“. Interestingly enough, 7 political parties represented in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH responded to this questionnaire, which was the highest number of responses compared to other legislatures in Europe. This is quite a representative sample because it includes parties from the left, the centre and the right, and all of them were at some point in the ruling majority at the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH.

The data collected does not indicate that political parties pertain to be the gatekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but without an in-depth analysis this presumption cannot be confirmed.

All parties report to have a relatively high number of women members of the party, ranging from 33% in SDA to 52% in SBB BiH. The parties (with the exception of SNSD) have implemented activities to mobilise the support and encourage women to become members. Usually, this task is performed by designated women-only structures in the parties. In the main decision making bodies in these parties, women make up from 10% to 40% of the presidencies/ executive boards and up to 66,66% in the supervisory board of SDP BiH.

Five parties have implemented a positive measure (a gender quota) to ensure the participation of women in their executive bodies, and women account for 10% (SDS), 25% (HDZ and SNSD) and 30% (SBB and SDP) of party presidency members. When asked whether they promote gender-mainstreaming<sup>16</sup> in their statutes, most parties' responses show that they still lack an understanding of this concept. Most statutes include provisions on eliminating discrimination or promoting gender equality in general, but nothing more.

Also, all the parties have a women-only structure, most commonly a women's forum. However, not all political parties have allocated financial resources to these structures, nor do they report to have a clear vision of what these structures should do. Most political parties do not recognise the importance of investing in a policy for media access and media training specifically designed for women. Where training on access to the media has been organised, it was not aimed at women in particular, but intended for all candidates.

<sup>13</sup> Young, Iris Marion, *Inclusion and democracy*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, 2000

<sup>14</sup> J. Ballington, R. Matland, *Political Parties and Special Measures: Enhancing Women's Participation in Electoral Processes*, United Nations, 2004

<sup>15</sup> M. Leyenaar, *Political empowerment of women the Netherlands and other countries*, Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2004

<sup>16</sup> According to the UN, Gender Mainstreaming involves ensuring that gender perspectives and attention to the goal of gender equality are central to all activities - policy development, research, advocacy/dialogue, legislation, resource allocation, and planning, implementation and monitoring of programmes and projects. None of the parties have given a response which would indicate that they actually do have gender mainstreamed in their statutes.





#### **2.1.4. WHO SUPPORTS FEMALE CANDIDATES?**

There is a trend in most countries, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, for other stakeholders to provide support for women in political parties and not just the political parties themselves. These stakeholders usually include the institutional gender mechanism, NGOs and international organisations. They provide training on campaigning, and sometimes even funding.

Women's fund-raising organisations also might have a huge effect on the flow of money to women candidates. The third type of support provided to women in political parties takes the form of knowledge networks with the aim to exchange ideas on effective ways to raise public awareness and to assist women in running successful campaigns. Women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina first received support following the first post-conflict elections when NGOs, with the support of international organisations, effectively led a campaign resulting in the introduction of quotas into the Election Law. Today, support for women in politics in Bosnia and Herzegovina is provided by political academies for women, institutional mechanisms for gender equality, and civil society organisations.

### **2.2. THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IS A MEDIUM FIT SYSTEM**

The electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina can be characterised as a medium fit system when it comes to the aim of increasing the participation of women. The quota applied has ensured that women have to be placed on the candidate list, it has a rank-ordering rule and a percentage which is now 40%. This is an excellent example of a functioning quota for the under-represented sex with all the necessary safeguards.

However, the preferential system with small electoral districts (or a small number of seats available in these districts) is more likely to work for persons on the top of the list and not for those ranked below the first spot. In systems with larger electoral districts, the chances for other candidates on the list rise exponentially.

### **2.3. SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES AND CULTURAL VARIABLES**

Several studies have highlighted that socio-economic and cultural factors are among the main causes of the under-representation of women in political decision making. These are manifested by arguments that women are "not suited" to decision making, and gender roles that define what women and men do, effectively excluding women from decision making.

An additional constraint is that women tend to be viewed in different terms than men. Stereotypes about women are perpetuated through the media and contribute to overall societal stigmas about women.

It is, therefore, important to explore these variables and to see which of them might exclude women from entering into politics. Another part of this section will focus on finding evidence that traditional attitudes and stereotypes still exist amongst the electorate and/or finding evidence that the general population is still not convinced that women make as effective legislators as men.

### 2.3.1. Education

The numbers of boys and girls enrolled in primary and secondary education in Bosnia and Herzegovina are similar. The gap between women and men starts among the numbers of students that graduate. Generally, more women graduate from faculties in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2010, the number of female graduates was 11.229 compared to 6.948 male graduates. Women also make up more postgraduates (677 compared to 621 men), but men dominate among PhD students.

### 2.3.2. Level of Economic Development

BH is an open economy with good export potential and a GDP per capita of approximately BAM 6,500 (US\$4,500) in 2010. Some 65% of value added is created in service sectors (retail trade, public administration and financial services, etc.), while the remaining 35% is split between manufacturing, 25% (industry, construction and energy production), and agriculture, 10%.

According to data of the Agency for Statistics of BiH for 2008, the unemployment rate in BiH was 23.4% (21.4% for men and 26.8% for women); while in the same period in 2007, it was 29.0% (26.7% for men and 32.9% for women). The unemployment rate was highest among young persons aged 15 to 24, amounting to 47.5% (44.8% for men and 52.3% for women). According to data of the Agency for Statistics of BiH for 2008, the activity and employment rates were 43.9% and 33.6% respectively, while in 2007, they were 43.9% and 31.2% respectively. The rates were considerably higher for men than for women.

Despite doubling the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita between 2000 and 2007, one fifth of the population continues to live in poverty. Families with three or more children, women, Roma and other ethnic minorities, internally displaced persons (IDP), children with disabilities and young people remain particularly vulnerable. According to the 2007 Household Budget Survey - Poverty and Living Conditions, the percentage of women and men among the poor population is roughly the same.

### 2.3.3. Traditional attitudes

The patriarchal value-orientation is based on the the belief that men are assigned a more appropriate role in the sphere of public life, while the appropriate role of women is in the private

Barriers women face to enter politics	Significant	Little influence	Not significantly	Not at all	Don't know
Traditional attitudes toward the role of women in the society	79%	10%	8%	3%	0%
Family obligations	51%	33%	13%	3%	0%
Lack of party support	69%	28%	0%	3%	0%
Politics seen as dirty and corrupt	36%	49%	13%	0%	3%
Lack of self-confidence	49%	33%	3%	10%	5%
Lack of support from the electorate	49%	36%	5%	5%	5%
Lack of support from other women	51%	44%	3%	0%	3%
Lack of support from men	49%	44%	5%	0%	3%



sphere of life. In contrast to the patriarchal is the liberal value orientation, with its positive attitude towards equal opportunities for access to public office and positions for women and men, as well as the equal division of labour and responsibilities in the sphere of private life and intimate relations. A recent study<sup>17</sup> has indicated that patriarchal attitudes still prevail in Bosnia and Herzegovina with over 62.3 % of citizens manifesting patriarchal attitudes. The respondents to the questionnaire also found traditional attitudes to be the main barrier for women in politics.

#### **2.3.4. Media**

In support of this claim, a recent study on media reports from the pre-election period for the 2004 and 2008 elections (over 345 media reports) has shown that men still dominate in the media<sup>18</sup>. Women were also asked more gender-based questions, such as questions about the rights of women, children and youth, education and culture, whereas men were asked questions about economic activity, economic development, civil service reform, infrastructure etc.

#### **2.3.5. Civil society**

The BiH Constitution provides for the freedom of assembly and association, and the various levels of government generally respect these rights in practice. The last methodologically relevant estimate of the number of NGOs in BiH was made in 2008 and amounts to 12,189 NGOs. For the sake of comparison, there are 18,119 registered NGOs in Serbia, 11,326 in Macedonia, and 3,454 in Montenegro, which shows that BiH is among the countries with the highest number of NGOs relative to population size in the Western Balkans. There is a number of NGOs that focus on gender equality and human rights of women. Some achievements of these NGOs in the area of participation of women in decision making were already described in previous chapters.

### **2.4. DO WE FIND OBSTACLES IN TERMS OF POLITICAL OR SOCIO-ECONOMIC VARIABLES THAT HINDER THE SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?**

There is no doubt that the socio-economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is severe, but the above presented data does not point to great gender differences. Women dominate among graduates and are becoming more educated than men. However, the activity and employment rates for women are significantly lower than those for men. What this research pointed to are the persisting gender stereotypes regarding the role of women in politics that hinder an increase in the numbers of women in politics. The media did not contribute to increasing the overall awareness of the importance of the role of women in politics.

## **3. WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION ACHIEVED?**

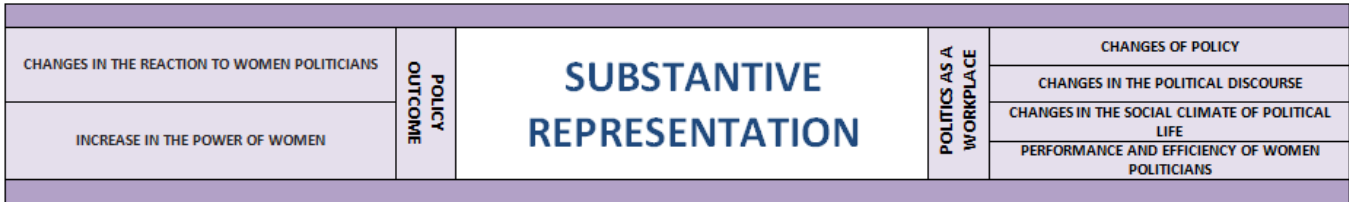
Achieving substantive representation requires qualitative results from women's engagement in politics. In these debates, the messenger, as well as the message, is seen as important (Catt 2003), and once elected, women politicians are seen as not only "standing as" women but also "acting for" women as a group (Celis 2009, Lovenduski and Norris 2003; Pitkin 1967)

Although it is much harder to research the level of substantive representation as opposed to descriptive representation, some 20 years after the Beijing Declaration a number of scholars

<sup>17</sup> Attitudes of the citizens of the Republika Srpska on gender equality, Gender Centre of Republika Srpska, 2012

<sup>18</sup> Niska reprezentacija žena u medijima za vrijeme predizbornih kampanja: Odgovornost medija, izbornog zakona ili samih političarki?, Aleksandra Miletić available at <http://data.zenskaposla.ba/node/22>

have tried to evaluate the progress made. Most of them agree that although quotas resulted in significant progress in terms of the descriptive representation of women, a longitudinal study of the level of substantive representation is needed (e.g. Dahlrup).



**3.1. POLICY OUTCOME PERSPECTIVE**

To evaluate changes in policy outcome, I plan to use the results for the House of Peoples of the PA BiH at the General Elections held in 2006 and 2010, and the results of local elections held in 2008 and 2012 to examine the reactions of the electorate to female candidates. My main focus will be on the extent to which the electorate picked men over women irrespective of women’s positions on candidates lists, and how many seats for women were consequently lost.

This methodology will be largely facilitated by the data published after each election cycle on the website of the Central Election Commission. The data gathered will then be compared to the results from the previous election cycles (2006 and 2008) to monitor for any progress or regression. Particular focus will be on the attitudes of the electorate towards women that had been elected to the legislature in the previous mandate. The analysis of the 2012 local elections will offer an insight into the most recent attitudes of the electorate.

This research should point to the general perceptions of the electorate and changes in attitudes towards women, but will also show the level of confidence of the electorate towards women. The success of the quota applied and the reaction of political parties to this quota will also be monitored.

**3.1.1. GENDER BIASED VOTING? A CLOSER LOOK AT THE GENDER PREFERENCES OF THE ELECTORATE**

In preferential voting systems, the mandatory vote for a single candidate entails a choice between men and women. In order to discover if the electorate is more inclined to vote for men over women or vice versa, we need to take a closer look at the results of the elections. This gives voters greater power over the outcomes of the election process; it may benefit women if voters express a preference for female candidates, or hurt women’s chances if voters are unwilling to endorse female candidates.

The methodology of this part of the research is based on the results of the general and local elections in the last two election cycles. The data used is the data available on the web site of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina for each election cycle. The analysis will be solely based on official data published after the elections and will not take into consideration any changes that may have happened after the results were published.



This analysis will take into account every list of candidates of political parties that were elected to the Parliamentary Assembly in every district and in each of the 10 municipalities. A total of 45 lists (22 in 2006 and 23 in 2010) for the PA BiH were analysed and over 160 lists for local legislatures. The following factors were taken into consideration:

- How many women were elected
- How many seats were influenced by voter preference for men over women resulting in “seats lost for women”
- Are there examples of women that moved up the lists
- Are there other conclusions to be made on the overall attitude of the electorate.

The data collected should give an indication of whether gender-biased voting exists and to what extent it is still present. The data for the last two election cycles will be compared to discover whether there was a change in the attitudes of the electorate and if we can find any progress or regression.

Nevertheless, these findings will be just an indication of whether a system that we can consider equally favourable for the participation of both women and men leads to results corresponding to the proportions of men and women candidates.

#### **3.1.1.1. Evidence on gender-biased voting at the 2006 and 2010 General Elections**

In 2006, only 2 or 6,66 % women were elected, whereas the number in 2010 increased to 3 or 10% women elected directly to the PA BiH. As already explained, due to the interplay of various electoral system variables, 76.6% of elected MPs were the first persons on the list and men where in over 98% of cases the first persons on the list. Only in one case (or 1,6%) the first person on the list was not elected. Interestingly enough, that was the case of the list of SBB BiH in the 2012 elections where Ms Ismeta Dervoz, who occupied the second position on the list of candidates, was elected over Mr Iseric Enver, who was the first person on the list.

Again taking into account the various variables (the district magnitude and the number of political parties participating in the allocation of available seats), the numbers of seats “lost” were calculated. Basically what was calculated was the number of (winnable) seats influenced by voter preference to see whether we can find any patterns of gender-biased voting.

According to the analysis, a total of 6 seats (or 20% ) were influenced by voter preference in 2006, and 3 (or 13.33 %) in 2010 (calculating the abovementioned change on the list of SBB BiH as a negative seat -1). These seats would have been won by women if it were not for the voters’ preference for male candidates. This is an indication of the general attitude of the electorate towards female candidates showing that gender-biased voting does exist. We should also take into account that only 7-8 of available direct seats were not won by the first person on the list, and that the electorate influenced these seats favouring men over women. There is a limited number of examples of women that moved up the list. With the exception of Ms Dervoz, there was only one other example of a woman that moved up the list to be directly elected. In the 2010 General Elections, in electoral district 514, Ms Nermina Zaimović-Uzunović moved up from the third to the second place on the list of SDP BiH.

#### **3.1.1.2. Evidence on gender-biased voting at the 2008 and 2012 Local Elections**

An analysis of the numbers and possible gender-biased voting based on the results of the 2008 and 2012 local elections will allow us to find more patterns, simply because there are no limit-

ing factors arising from other variables. The analysis will be based on the results for ten local legislatures and a total of over 160 lists.

The analysis shows that some parties won up to 15 seats in some legislatures, which definitely enables the potential of applying the quota beyond the first two places on the list. On average, 7 parties won seats in local legislatures. In 2008 in Stolac, only 3 parties won seats, and in Odzak, a total of 10 parties won seats in 2012. Only in the case of the 2008 local elections in Stolac was one political party able to form the majority by itself (i.e. made up more than 50% of the seats in the municipal council). In the case of Odzak, in 2012, five parties won only one seat, because the threshold is 3% even for local elections. Only in 4 cases, women were first on the list, and in one case men where the under-represented sex on the list (list of the Pensioners' Party for the Municipality Centar Sarajevo).

The results show that voters are much more prone to voting for their preferred candidate in local elections. There are almost no rules on the extent to which the electorate will influence the list of candidates. Both women and men move on the list. To illustrate this, we could look at the 2008 results for the Municipality Centar Sarajevo and the list of SDA where out of the ten elected councillors, only 4 were originally among the top ten candidates, whereas one candidate climbed from the 33<sup>rd</sup> place to the 7<sup>th</sup> place, while the 25<sup>th</sup> candidate on the list was elected as the fourth.

However, the results show that the electorate is much more inclined to vote for men than for women. Out of a total of 260 available seats, the voters influenced 48 or 18.46% of seats for women in 2008, and 38 or 14.61% in 2012. To illustrate this we can take a look at the results of the elections in 2008 in Modrica where out of nine elected councillors, no woman was elected and where the top placed woman occupied the 11<sup>th</sup> place. Of course, there were lists from which more than one councillor was elected and where women did not lose any places, and even a list where more women were elected, but the overall numbers indicate that gender-biased voting does exist to a large extent.

### **3.1. POLITICS AS A WORKPLACE PERSPECTIVE - DO FEMALE MPs REPRESENT THE INTERESTS OF WOMEN IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA?**

Substantive representation exists when elected women act in the interests of women (voting, introducing and supporting bills, speaking for women, broadening the political agenda, formulating women's interests, gendering debates and policy content, lobbying the state, conducting feminist policy analysis and feedback) that deal with issues of specific importance to women situated in the private and/or public sphere and/or aiming at feminist goals.

Can we find evidence that elected women in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH have substantively represented women's interests? To answer this question, a longitudinal analysis of the work of the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH was conducted in order to explore whether women in this House have provided support to women's interests and/or whether they have provided different approaches to women's interests. In the mandate period 2006-2010, the House of Representatives held 83 sessions and I focused on the activity of MPs on plenary sessions. As indicators, I plan to use qualitative analysis of activity of MPs in general discussions and in making proposals of motions focusing particularly on topics that directly influence the rights of women or gender equality.



The analysis pointed to a number of sessions where issues directly related to women were discussed and that can serve as case studies:

- Composition of the Council of Ministers
- Discussion concerning the proposed amendments to the Election Law/Law on the Financing of Political Parties
- The adoption of gender specific policies

### **3.1.1. Composition of the Council of Ministers**

One of the main indicators of equality between women and men in politics is the composition of the executive part of the government. According to the Constitution of BiH, the Council of Ministers, as the state-level executive government, is approved by the House of Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH. One of the main indirect expectations of the quota applied in the Election Law was that an increase in the number of women in legislature would influence their demand for women in the Council of Ministers.

However, in the last two compositions of the Council of Ministers of BiH, not a single woman was appointed as a member of this Council. In both 2006 and 2012 this issue was brought up in discussions by members of the Parliamentary Assembly.

In 2006, during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Session of the PA, the issue of no female members of the Council of Ministers was raised by Ms Hadziahmetovic. She pointed to the fact that this decision would derogate the Law on Gender Equality in BiH that stipulates equal participation of women and men. In her discussion, Ms Kristo also pointed out this fact, but emphasised that her party (HDZ BIH) had proposed candidates by their merit and not only to fulfil a legal obligation. Interestingly enough, both MPs were members of parties that had a male member nominated for the Council of Ministers. However, there was no more discussion on this issue and an all-male Council of Ministers was appointed. Unfortunately, the results of voting by individual MPs are not available to see if either of the two MPs that spoke up had also voted differently than other members of their party, even though this is highly unlikely.

The same situation was repeated in 2012, but this time the discussion was more vigorous. Again, the issue of no women among the nominees for the Council of Ministers was raised by a female MP, this time Ms Dervoz. Ms Hadziahmetovic joined the discussion and mentioned the letters sent to the political parties by the Committee on Gender Equality of the House of Representatives of the PA. This time the discussion was also joined by Mr Lozancic, who was the Chair of the Committee on Gender Equality that had prepared the letter, and who said that a Council of Ministers without women was an insult to the women of BiH and to female MPs. Mr Kalabic said that such remarks were the product of frustrations of the opposition and that MPs certainly have nothing against women. This time Ms Dervoz and Ms Hadziahmetovic were from parties that were not in the new ruling majority, as opposed to Mr Lozancic. Just like in 2006, the composition of the Council of Ministers remained unchanged. In 2012, out of 8 female MPs that were present, 5 voted for such a composition of the Council of Ministers (all from parties that formed the majority) and 3 were against. Only Mr Lozancic, a member of HDZ BIH, a party within the ruling majority, voted against this proposal.

### 3.1.2. Discussion concerning the amendments to the Election Law

Another interesting example is the discussion concerning the amendment to the Election Law proposed in July 2009 by the Committee on Gender Equality. The main aim of these amendments was to ensure higher numbers of women by “closing” the lists of candidates. According to the calculation accompanying the proposal, this would lead to a 12 % increase in the number of female MPs. The discussion was quite spirited and 18 MPs (out of the 28 present) from almost every party represented in the PA joined in the discussion. The entire discussion circled around the fact that there were not enough women in the PA, and the proposal to close the lists. MPs discussed whether the proposal to “close” the candidates lists was a step backward for democratic elections and whether such a step was worth the proposed 12% increase in the number of female MPs. To illustrate this, Mr Lagumdžija said, “If we need to choose between open lists and gender equality, we (SDP BiH) are for full gender equality.” Mr Izetbegovic was of the opposing opinion when he said, “I don’t think that we need to sacrifice one to get the other, that is, to sacrifice open lists that have proved to be a good corrective of the will of political parties...” All the female MPs present at this session participated in the discussion and supported the proposed amendments:

Ms Markovic: “As a women, and a as member of this Parliamentary Assembly, I fully support this initiative...”, Ms Alajbegovic: “I would be ready to support this law, considering the calculation made by the Committee on Gender Equality” and Ms Malic: “This doesn’t lead to less democracy, it is an adaptation to realistic conditions...”

However, due to formal obstacles, this proposal was never put up for a vote and was never adopted. Only a few sessions later, without any discussion, amendments to the Law on the Financing of Political Parties were adopted, including a positive measure to support political parties with female MPs in the PA BiH by allocating them 10% more funds from the state budget.

### 3.1.3. Adoption of Gender Specific Policies

The sessions of the adoption of gender specific policies were usually held without any discussions but with full support to the materials received. They included the discussion around the Strategy to Prevent and Combat Domestic Violence in BiH held at the 53<sup>rd</sup> session, the Concluding Observations of the UN Committee for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women held at the 58<sup>th</sup> session, and the amendments to the Law on Gender Equality in BiH at the 63<sup>rd</sup> session, as well as the Resolution to Combat Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.

For example, when a male MP, Mr Nanic, questioned some provisions of the proposed amendments to the Law on Gender Equality, both Ms Malic and Ms Alajbegovic responded to his concerns and consequently this led to the unanimous adoption of the Law.

### 3.1.4. Can we find evidence of substantive representation of women by female MPs?

Looking at the discussions held around the abovementioned case studies, we can conclude that even with relatively low numbers women did manage to influence decision-making processes. Legislation and policies focused on the empowerment of women and/or gender

equality were passed almost without any opposition. Even where some MPs opposed the proposed materials, female MPs were ready to respond and to advocate for the adoption of such





proposals. It is also interesting to note that this research found evidence that male MPs also supported these policies, which points to the development of the political culture. The lively discussion around the amendments to the Election Law, which were ultimately not adopted, cannot be considered to constitute opposition to gender equality, but is rather a case of politically motivated opposition to the proposed intervention in the political system.

The impact female MPs had in their parliamentary activity on:	Substantive	Noticeable	Small	Unnoticeable	Don't know
Content of discussions around new legislation	15%	46%	21%	8%	10%
Voting on new legislation	13%	36%	23%	13%	15%
Working in parliamentary bodies/committees	18%	44%	18%	8%	13%
Reports in parliamentary bodies/committees	18%	44%	18%	5%	15%
Support to new (gender specific) issues which were discussed in the parliaments	26%	31%	18%	8%	18%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>14%</b>

#### 4. HOW TO IMPROVE SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN?

This research has found new data on the variables that influence both the descriptive participation and the substantive representation of women.

The analysis of political variables has pointed out the fact that there is little that can be done to improve the electoral system. Although the critical mass, as defined by international and domestic standards, has not been reached, this research has not found any obstacles on the side of the electoral system and the applied quota for the lists of candidates. Additionally, the research has shown that political parties might not be the gatekeepers, but that to a large extent they seem not to pay enough attention to the participation of women as candidates, and that they do not actively promote gender equality as a part of their party programmes. Thus, the support female candidates and elected women have received from various stakeholders outside the parties has emerged. This support might not have always been adequately focused, and it may have also lead to the isolation of women within political parties, away from formal party structures.

The research into socio-economic variables has show that the socio-economic situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina is severe, but the above presented data does not point to great gender differences. Women are dominant among university graduates and are becoming more educated than men. However, the activity and employment rates for women are significantly lower than those for men. Additionally, persisting gender stereotypes hinder an increase in the number of women in politics. These stereotypes are supported by media reports during election campaigns.

The analysis into substantive representation has pointed to two main conclusions. Firstly, the attitude of the electorate towards voting is largely gender-biased. However, even in their limited number, women in the Parliamentary Assembly of BiH have made an impact and have put forward or supported policies that empower women or support gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina. However, civil society organisations that focus on women’s rights and gender equality in BiH remain disappointed and feel betrayed. The entire debate continues to circle around the percentage of women and they continue to criticise female members of parliament (MPs) as they do not see them as representing the interests of women as a group in the legislature<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>19</sup> Such statements are heard quite frequently but most recent events include „Open Forum: Politics has a female gender“ organised by Sarajevo Open Centre, April 2012, „Worldcafe: The Role of Women in BiH Politics“ organised by Fridrich Ebert Stiftung, February 2012, Conference „How to increase the number of women in politics“, organised by Committee for Gender Equality of the PA BiH and OHCHR, November 2011

There are three possible policy options, or rather goals, we can pursue to achieve substantive representation:

- **Changes to the Election Law – introduction of closed lists**
- **Efforts to continue to sensitise political parties**
- **Efforts to support women in politics**

<b>POLICY OPTIONS</b>	<b>CHANGES OF THE ELECTION LAW (CLOSED LISTS)</b>	<b>SOCIALIZATION OF POLITICAL PARTIES</b>	<b>SUPPORT TO WOMEN IN POLITICS</b>
<b>GOALS</b>			
<b>Descriptive participation</b>	10-15% increase	Should increase over time	Should increase over time
<b>Substantive representation</b>	No contribution	Contributes to an increase in the activity of female candidates and MPs	Contributes to an increase in the activity of female candidates and MPs
<b>IMPLICATIONS TOWARDS THE ELECTORATE</b>			
<b>Attitude change (electorate)</b>	Not a variable if the lists are closed	Should change over time	Should change over time
<b>Attitude change (political parties)</b>	Not a variable if the lists are closed	Changes over time	Changes over time
<b>Interaction with women/electorate</b>	The interaction decreases (comparative analysis)	Increases significantly	Functional interaction
<b>CONSTRAINTS</b>			
<b>Cost</b>	Generally decreases the cost of elections	Funds channelled to support these efforts	Funds channelled to support these efforts
<b>Main stakeholders</b>	No stakeholders	Political parties/ IGM/ NGOs and IOs	IGM/ NGOs and IOs
<b>Capacity to deliver</b>	In place	Needs to be supported	In place
<b>Political feasibility</b>	Supported by political parties in position	Existing political will	Already existing initiatives
<b>Public acceptance</b>	Generally not supported	Supported by stakeholders which are ready to cooperate with political parties	Supported
<b>RANKING</b>	<b>LEAST FAVOURABLE OPTION</b>	<b>FAVOURABLE OPTION</b>	<b>FAVOURABLE OPTION</b>



#### 4.1. Changes to the Election law

As already noted, the electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina is a medium fit system. This study has pointed out that although it applies an excellent quota for the under-represented sex, it also combines the List PR system with small electoral districts. This, along with the relatively high number of political parties that enter into parliament, decreases the potential success of the quota.

Introducing a closed list system is often mentioned as a policy option that could increase the number of women in politics. Such debates were especially sparked by the Recommendations the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women made to BiH after reviewing the Initial, Second and Third Report that BiH submitted to this body. In Recommendation 30, the Committee urged for the Election Law to be harmonised with the Law on Gender Equality<sup>20</sup>. Ever since, the debate on policy options to increase the number of women in the legislature has revolved around this Recommendation.

If we take into account the findings of this study on gender-biased voting, we can see that if we apply this option to the results of the general or the local elections, there would be an increase in the numbers of elected women.

ELECTION YEAR	GENERAL ELECTIONS		LOCAL ELECTIONS	
	2006	2010	2008	2012
RESULTS OF ELECTIONS WITH OPEN LISTS	9,6%	19%	16,22%	18,25%
CALCULATED INCREASE	20%	10%	18,46%	14,61%
TOTAL CALCULATED INCREASE	29,6%	29%	34,28%*	32,86%*

\* Percentage calculated for the ten local legislatures that were analysed

It should be noted that the increase resulting from this policy option would be more favourable for the representation of women only in descriptive and not necessarily in substantive terms. Findings of other research studies indicate that one of the indirect negative outcomes of closed party lists is the fact that MPs alienate themselves from the electorate and do not maintain regular contact with the electorate<sup>21</sup>. This depersonalises the mandate holders and diffuses the mandates to the entire party.

Nevertheless, this policy would decrease the cost of the elections and has the necessary political support. However, this policy option does not achieve anything in terms of substantive representation of women as a group in the legislature. It can only jeopardise the potential, as well as the already established links between female MPs and the electorate.

Although over 82% support the existence of quotas, only 7 (or 14%) of all respondents ranked this policy option as the most favourable. Out of the women currently serving as MPs at any level, only 2 (or 18.18%) support this policy option. This policy option has provoked many respondents to elaborate on their responses. For example, one respondent said:

*“Closing the list might be a current option, we will have more women but the quality would not increase. Other policy options would present a long-term solution for women,”* while another respondent concluded that *“closing the lists would be an artificial solution that doesn’t guarantee any success”*. Other respondents were more categorical saying that closing the lists *“would undermine democracy,”* and would *“force the electorate to vote for a man or a woman”*.

<sup>20</sup> Recommendations of UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women: Bosnia and Herzegovina, No. 30 CEDAW/C/BIH/CO/3

<sup>21</sup> Bowler, Shaun, and David Farrell. 1993. “Legislator Shirking and Voter Monitoring: Impacts of European Parliament Electoral Systems upon Legislator-Voter Relationships.” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 3

## 4.2. Efforts to continue to sensitise political parties

Political parties are the main venue for launching a political career. Political parties are interest groups that gather candidates, provide funds and campaigns in the pre-election period. The importance of political parties was also recognised by respondents that ranked this policy option as favourable, along with the support to women in politics. One respondent concluded that without political parties „a woman would not be on the map in the election period“. Respondents also recognised that “women will usually vote along party lines,” but that “more needs to be done to promote women’s interests amongst the political parties in order to harmonise the goals of the party and the goals of women”.

The data collected for this study does not indicate that political parties pertain to be the gatekeepers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but there is also no indication that political parties are doing anything to support the substantive representation of women. All parties analysed have relatively high numbers of women members, ranging from 33% in SDA to 52% in SBB BiH. In the main decision-making bodies in these parties, women make up from 10% to 40% of the presidencies/ executive boards, and up to 66,66% in the supervisory board in SDP BiH.

Also, all parties have a women-only structure, usually a women’s forum. Not all political parties have allocated financial resources to these structures, nor do they report to have a clear vision of what these structures should do. These structures need to start serving as an important platform for women inside political parties, both in mobilising around women’s issues and in gaining commitments from party leaders for increasing the recruitment of female candidates. Non-governmental and international organisations should focus their support on women in politics, and need to recognise political parties and men in political parties as the necessary partners in this process. They are fundamental in supporting the candidacies of women, and provide a central link between the institutions of governance and civil society.

## 4.3. Efforts to support women in politics

Women in politics need support. This policy option was also rated by the respondents as the second most favourable policy option. It may sound like a simple conclusion, but it requires a number of actions and includes a number of stakeholders.

There are three main reasons why women need support:

- 1. The current political culture discourages women from actively engaging in a political career**
- 2. The existing stereotypes put up additional obstacles for female candidates**
- 3. The expectation for women to act in the interest of all women puts an additional burden on women in politics**

### 4.3.1. The current political culture discourages women from actively engaging in a political career

Many women possess the qualifications needed to hold political office. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, women are generally more educated than men and continue to hold important positions in the academia, civil service and the judiciary. Women, however, do not always have



access to the same information as men in terms of learning how to launch a political career. That is why programmes focused on developing these skills are crucial for enhancing women's political representation. This is usually achieved by training efforts, but can also entail mobilisation campaigns. They can be conducted by political parties, but also by other stakeholders such as civil society organisations, international organisations and institutional mechanisms for gender equality.

The ultimate goal of these activities is to build up the capacities of women to effectively participate in political parties, and to impose themselves as credible candidates for the election lists. The quota already applied in the electoral system mandates the number of candidates of the under-represented sex, but without qualified candidates there is an objective threat that women will be included on the list only as tokens.

Respondents agree that political parties should organise these trainings (in 56% of responses) but so far only 10% of the respondents have participated in such events organised by political parties, while 74% have participated in events organised by other organisations.

#### **4.3.2. The electorate is largely gender-biased**

Beliefs that women should not run for political office are informed and reinforced by gender stereotypes that associate men with the public sphere of politics and women with the private sphere of the home. This was also confirmed by the respondents when they rated traditional attitudes as the main reason preventing women from entering into politics, which was later also seen in the analysis of the results of the elections.

Changing these stereotypes can increase the number of women considering a political career, as well as alter how voters – and political parties – view female candidates. One mechanism for combating such stereotypes is the use of *media campaigns* aimed at changing how citizens think about politics.

#### **4.3.3. The expectation for female MPs to act in the interests of all women puts an additional burden on women in politics**

The electorate expects from women in politics, and especially from women in legislature, to not only act as parliamentarians, but also to act for women. They expect these women to act not only on behalf of their constituency, but also to act on behalf of all women in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This double expectation can be overwhelming.

Because women need to act outside their constituency, which is usually geographically bound, they need information on the status and problems women face as a group in the wider society. This is why they need support in order to be able to effectively act for women, and especially in terms of articulating the problems that women as a groups face in the country.

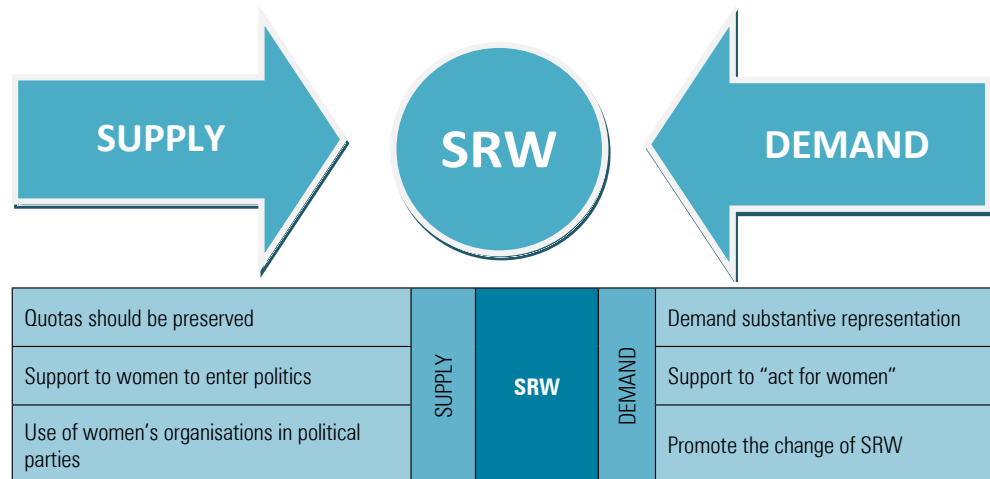
There can be a range of stakeholders that can provide women in politics with input on the kinds of problems women as a group face, but most notably this should be done by the institutional mechanisms for gender equality embodied in the executive Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the two entity Gender Centres.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS - TWO FRONTS FOR SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION

Bosnia and Herzegovina is among the countries that have recognised the importance of actively working for and promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women. One of the main priorities in these efforts is to promote equal and effective participation of men and women in political life and decision making by removing all the obstacles to women’s active participation. To date, this was achieved by a number of actions, but the main policy option applied is the quota for the under-represented sex on candidates list. Although this quota was introduced in 1998, women remain under-represented. The electorate, usually presented by civil society organisations, remains disappointed because the change that was expected did not occur.

For the purposes of this study, I have adapted the basic economic theory of supply and demand since the study has found barriers both on the supply side (the number of women with aspirations for politics and women already in politics), but also on the demand side (the current attitudes toward women in politics, gender-biased voting and the perception of substantive representation).

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BOTH SUPPLY AND DEMAND OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN (SRW)



### ACTIONS TO INCREASE THE SUPPLY OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

#### 1. Quotas need to be preserved

Quotas remain one of the main policy options to boost the numbers of women in the elections worldwide. Although quotas are sometimes perceived as temporary special measures, given the current traditional attitudes, the quotas are a necessary part of the electoral system of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Further monitoring of the success of the quotas needs to be conducted after each election cycle and the Agency for Gender Equality of BiH and/or the Central Electoral Committee need to conduct an impact analysis of any changes to the election system. It is important to recognise that the quota applied in the Election Law of BiH has all of the necessary safeguards to ensure its full potential. Nothing more can be done to improve its efficiency. Any



further discussions around the need to improve the quotas are obsolete. On the other hand, the critical mass or the need to have a certain percentage of women in parliaments needs to be taken as an indicator and not the goal behind all of the activities aiming at substantive representation. That is why the focus of campaigns should not rest on the numbers, but rather on the change women do or would bring to the political discourse.

## **2. Women need support to build their capacities to enter politics**

Aspirations to enter politics are largely influenced by the current political discourse. Action is needed to mobilise women and to train aspiring women with the skills necessary to be noticed in political party structures. Most effective could be the mobilisation campaigns and the political academies organised by civil society organisations, international organisations and institutional mechanisms for gender equality. Where possible, these activities should be implemented in partnership with political parties in order to impose women as credible candidates for the elections.

## **3. Political parties should utilise the capacities of women's structures within political parties**

Although the organisational structure of political parties is currently unregulated, efforts are necessary to influence political parties to start using the capacities of women's structures within political parties to support substantive representation. This can be achieved through support to political parties in adopting guidelines and budgets for the activities for these structures, or through the "naming and shaming" of political parties that only use these structures as tokens.

## **ACTIONS TO INCREASE THE DEMAND OF SUBSTANTIVE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN**

### **1. Substantive representation needs to be demanded from women in politics**

The main aim behind the quotas as a policy option, and the policy options proposed by this study is not to achieve descriptive representation but rather to ensure that women in politics "act for women". This "acting for women" should result in policies that are either gender sensitive or focus on the empowerment of women. The absence of a "critical mass" (whatever percentage we come up with) should not be used as an excuse, and in our contact with female MPs, we need to demand substantive representation. This study has pointed out already existing examples of substantive representation, but achieving the goals of gender equality requires constant action.

### **2. Women in legislatures need support to act for women**

In order to demand substantive representation, we must be aware that women in the legislature need support to in order to act for women. The expectation from female MPs to act not only in the name of their constituency, but also "for women", is a double burden. This is why it is necessary to communicate the priorities relating to women in society to female MPs, so they can act in the interests of women within parliaments. The Agency for Gender Equality of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the two entity Gender Centres, along with NGOs, should be the main stakeholders in defining these priorities.

### **3. The changes women are making in politics need to be promoted**

Traditional attitudes regarding the role of women in politics have proven to be one of the main

obstacles women face in terms of access to decision-making positions. In order to combat these stereotypes, the changes women are making in politics need to be promoted. Female MPs are already making changes and the electorate needs to be informed about these developments. Since the achievements in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women are not high up on the political agenda, and are not usually promoted by the media, the institutional gender mechanism and NGOs need to step in.

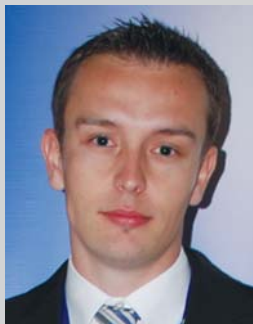
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A "Policy Development Fellowship Program" has been launched by the Open Society Fund BiH in early 2004 with the aim to improve BiH policy research and dialogue and to contribute to the development of a sound policy-making culture based on informative and empirically grounded policy options. The program provides an opportunity for selected fellows to collaborate with the Open Society Fund in conducting policy research and writing a policy study with the support of mentors and trainers during the whole process. Ninety fellowships have been granted since the starting of the Program.