

# GENDER, REPRESENTATION & RIGHT-WING PARTIES

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## Women's access to right-wing parties in Albania



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# GENDER, REPRESENTATION & RIGHT-WING PARTIES

Women’s access to right-wing parties in Albania



September 2022

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Abbreviations:

PD – Democratic Party	KP – Albanian Conservative Party
PR – Republican Party	PSHA – Albanian Homeland Party
PDIU – Party for Justice, Integration and Unity	PRDSH – Party of Albanian Democratic Reforms
BKD – Christian Democratic Union	PSSH – Social Christian Party of Albania
LDGSH – League of Women of the DP of Albania	PASSH – Albanian Socialist Alliance Party
PSD – Social Democrat Party	LZHK – National Development Movement Party
PDR – Reformed Democratic Party	APO – Party of Albanian Affairs
AD – Democratic Alliance Party	APPD – People’s Alliance for Work and Dignity
PASH – Albanian’s Future Party	ASHE – Albanian European Alliance
PAA – Agrarian Ambientalist Party	AP – People’s Alliance
PV – Independent Candidate	BD – Albanian Democratic Union Party
PBDNJ – Union for Human Rights Party	MEGA – Greek Ethnic Minority for the Future
LSI – Socialist Movement for Integration	PKKA – National Conservative Party of Albania
PKD – Democristian Party of Albania	PPSH – Labor Party of Albania
PBL – Liberal Democratic Union Party	PBKD – Democratic National Front Party
PDS – Social Democracy Party of Albania	PESH – Albanian Emigration Party
PLL – Legality Movement Party	PKSH – Communist Party of Albania
PBK – National Front Party	AMIE – Alliance of Macedonians for European Integration
PS – Socialist Party	
PDK – Christian Democratic Party of Albania	

Chart Legend:

- Figure 1:** Does your political party have an official position, manifesto, or regulation on the following?
- Figure 2:** Do you consider that the number of women in all structures in your party is sufficient?
- Figure 3:** What do you consider as the most challenge issues for a woman engaged in politics? (You can choose only 3 options)
- Figure 4:** How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in deterring women from entering in politics and in political parties?

Women's participation and representation in decision making is increasing globally but those numbers are driven by mostly left-wing parties. Women's underrepresentation in right-wing parties remains a pending subject in politics. In the most recent national elections in the United Kingdom, a record number of women were elected reaching 34% at the House of Commons. However, the majority of the elected women MPs were from the left-wing parties, the Labor party is represented by most women with a record of 104 female MPs<sup>1</sup>, while only a quarter of Conservative party MPs are women. In the US Congress, women make up 37.7% of the Democratic Party, while a mere 8.8% from the Republican Party are women<sup>2</sup>. In Germany, 34.7% of the members of the new Bundestag are women, where the green party leads the way with 58% of women MdBs in contrast with the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) with only 23% women MdBs<sup>3</sup>. In Spain, women represent 42% of the Congress of Deputies, of whom the majority is elected by the Socialist Worker's Party with 30.4% women deputies, followed by the People's Party with 22.29%<sup>4</sup>.

The case is the same in Albania, where 50 out of 140 MPs of the Albanian Parliament are women (35.7%), of whom 64% come from the left-wing parties – 29 SP, 2 SMI and 1 PSD<sup>5</sup>, while 36% are from right wing parties 18 women MPs for DP-Alliance for Change (including RP and PDIU based on Parliamentary groups). This phenomenon is repeated across right-wing parties indicating that right-wing women's political representatives experience significant barriers inside their political parties. The reality is that women in left-wing parties have typically represented in greater numbers and tend to be seen as more active especially concerning social issues or feminist movements, while women in the right-wing parties remain under-represented and sometimes considered as detached from these movements. So far, many of the studies on women's political representation have been focused on women on left-leaning parties and governments providing a biased analysis of women's challenges and opportunities in politics. Why right-wing parties elect fewer women? What is the influence and women's political inclusion in right wing parties? Where do right-wing women stand? Which are the gender dynamics of right-wing parties?

Most of the scholarly work on 'women in politics' has focused explaining women's under-representation in politics through the interplay of structural and societal barriers; gender stereotypes in the process of recruiting, selecting, and having access to political party resources, male-dominated political culture, or the absence of female role models. Some studies attribute the low number of women on right-wing parties to their lack of representation and of role models, often resulting in lack of confidence and political ambitions compared to left-wing women<sup>6</sup>. Left-wing parties are dominated by women who belong to interests groups such as feminist organizations, youth organizations, social movements, or unions<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>Duncan, P., & Busby, M. (2019, December 13). UK elects record number of female MPs | General election 2019. The Guardian. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2019/dec/13/uk-elects-record-number-of-female-mps>

<sup>2</sup>Women Serving in the 117th Congress (2021-2023). (n.d.). Center for American Women and Politics. Retrieved from <https://cawp.rutgers.edu/facts/levels-office/congress/women-serving-117th-congress-2021-2023>

<sup>3</sup>Grundmann, M. (2021, October 2). Opinion: The Bundestag could use more women | Opinion. DW. Retrieved from <https://www.dw.com/en/opinion-the-bundestag-could-use-more-women/a-59374736>

<sup>4</sup>Congreso de los Diputados. Retrieved from: <https://www.congreso.es/busqueda-de-diputados>

<sup>5</sup>Manuali Mandatet parlamentare. (2021, September 10). Kuvendi. Retrieved from <https://www.parlament.al/Files/RaporteStatistika/mandatet.pdf>

<sup>6</sup>Malliga Och and Shauna L. Shames (2018) The Right Women: Republican Party Activists, Candidates, and Legislators.

<sup>7</sup>Perry Bacon Jr. (2018) Why The Republican Party Elects So Few Women. FivethirtyEight. Politics. Retrieved from: <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/why-the-republican-party-isnt-electing-more-women/>

The social activism background of most left-wing women makes it easy to create role models and supply left wing parties with potential women candidates with extended network and experience on the sector. Role models and success stories help to inspire women, boosting their confidence and motivating them to take up leadership positions. In specific, several studies have proved that the path to female leadership begins not only with academic success, or when nominated for positions of power but also from key influences throughout life: role models.

In addition, the aversion to “gender identity politics” is making harder for right-wing women to win seats and advocate on behalf of their gender<sup>8</sup>. The disinclination to gender strategies on right-wing parties is emphasized in the candidates’ selection processes based on individual merit rather than structural barriers<sup>9</sup>. However, right-wing parties who have been focused on diversifying the party and concentrated their efforts on increasing women’s representation are resulting as more competitive and successful in electoral processes. The data indicates that right wing parties who adopt a gender ideology approach, meaning prioritizing electing women, have more effectively attracted, not only more women within the party but also more women voters<sup>10</sup>. Meaning that right wing parties who work as strategic party actors, advocate for women’s increased representation tactics, build gendered ideology and institutional contexts within their party have greater chances to reach out more women voters and win elections. For example, the conservative party in UK launched the “Women2Win”, a female candidate recruitment initiative focused helping women candidates to overcome specific gendered barriers when running for office.

This research aims to assess the position and barriers that women and girls have within the right-wing political parties in Albania, to provide an overview from the examples of right-wing parties of other countries, and to provide recommendations for further steps necessary to guarantee gender equality in political parties in Albania and strengthening their structures. To understand the access of women in right-wing parties in Albania and to address special issues of right-wing women, we have specifically observed the Democratic Party of Albania, the most voted right-wing party in the Albanian Parliament, focusing on several issues as: (a) recruitment and promotional trends, (b) policies and values inside the party and (c) women’s forum role and power within the party to identify the institutional constraints of right-wing women in Albania, as highlighted in the following research.

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<sup>8</sup>Catherine Wineinger. (2020) How do right-wing women advocate for increased representation within parties that reject identity politics? LSE BPP. Retrieved from: <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/right-wing-women-as-strategic-party-actors/>

<sup>9</sup>Marija Taglaga and Katrine Beauregard (2020) The Merit of Party Institutions: Women’s Descriptive Representation and Conservative Parties in Australia and the United Kingdom. *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1554477X.2020.1701934>

<sup>10</sup>Rosie Campbell and Silvia Erzeel (2018). *Exploring Gender Differences in Support for Rightist Parties: The Role of Party and Gender Ideology*. Political and gender. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/politics-and-gender/article/abs/exploring-gender-differences-in-support-for-rightist-parties-the-role-of-party-and-gender-ideology/E5FE0E62B60CCA02AEC2CBE28E8A9D68>

## 1. WOMEN FROM RIGHT-WING PARTIES WHO BROKE THE "GLASS CEILING"

As the gender imbalance in right-wing parties' garners attention, the lack of promotion of women can be cited as one of the causes of the shortage of women on right-wing parties. The power of leadership exists in a close relationship with public visibility, and this relationship is regularly foregrounded in adult interventions that seek to stimulate girls' leadership aspirations through the public pedagogy of role models<sup>11</sup> that broke the "glass ceiling". In light of previous research<sup>12</sup>, which shows the importance of role models in influencing other women to enter politics and participate in decision making, it is important to promote role models of women leaders of right-wing parties.

Women leaders that have achieved success in politics, help show other women the possibilities and the path to power. Studies show that women's views of leadership begin to take shape early in childhood, starting with the values she learns, her exposure to leadership skills, and whether she has positive leadership role models. In addition, their confidence is encouraged by positive role models and the presence of strong leaders' representation. To increase the number of right-wing women at national and local level, we must understand the power of socialization of leadership and modeling leadership and building confidence through role models<sup>13</sup>.

In this context, we have identified and selected some of the women from right-wing parties around the world including United Kingdom, Germany, United States of America, Albania, Spain, and Croatia, that have broken the "glass ceiling" in politics, referred as the intangible barriers within politics that prevents women from upper-level positions. While identifying these women, we will share their path to leadership and legacy in the political arena in the six above mentioned countries.

### UNITED KINGDOM



**THERESA MAY**  
UK Prime Minister  
2016 - 2019

**Born:** October 1, 1956 Eastbourne, UK

**Political Affiliation:** UK Conservative Party

**Education & Career:** May finished high school in the rural are of Oxfordshire and matriculated at the University of Oxford, receiving a Bachelor's degree in geography.

She worked for the Bank of England before moving on to the Association for Payment Clearing Services (APACS), where she served as head of the European Affairs Unit and as a senior adviser on international affairs.

<sup>11</sup>Michele Paule and Hannah Yelinl (2021) don't want to be known for it': Girls, leadership role models and the problem of representation. European Journal of Cultural Studies. Retrieved from: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/13675494211004595>

<sup>12</sup>Ioana M. Latu, Marianne Schmid Mast, Joris Lammers and Dario Bombari (2013) Successful female leaders empower women's behavior in leadership tasks. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology. Retrieved from: <https://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/latu2013.pdf>

<sup>13</sup>KPMG (2015) Women's Leadership Study: Moving Women Forward into Leadership Roles. Retrieved from: <https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/ph/pdf/ThoughtLeadershipPublications/KPMGWomensLeadershipStudy.pdf>

<sup>14</sup>Theresa May. Retrieved from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/history/past-prime-ministers/theresa-may>  
Theresa May. Britannica. World leader. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Theresa-May>

## Political Path:

**1986** – Councilor in the London Borough of Merton until 1994.

**1997** – After failing as Conservative candidate twice, May was elected to represent Maidenhead at the House of Commons.

**1999** – May held several roles as a member of the Shadow Cabinet, including: Shadow Secretary of State for Education and Employment (1999–2001), Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government, and the Regions (2001–02), Shadow Secretary of State for the Family (2004–05), Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport (2005), and Shadow Leader of the House of Commons (2005–09). In addition, she became the first female Chairwoman of the Conservative Party (2002).

**2010** – Following the general elections of 2010, May was appointed Home Secretary and became the longest-serving Conservative Home Secretary. In addition to her role as Home Secretary, she also served as Minister for Women and Equalities from 2010–12.

**2016** – She was elected as Leader of the Conservative Party and appointed Prime Minister.

**2017** – May was elected UK Prime Minister with the support of Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP).

**2019** – Theresa May served as Prime Minister until 24 July 2019. She was re-elected as MP for Maidenhead in December 2019.

## Theresa May's legacy and major acts:



*The second woman Prime Minister of UK who faced the complexities of negotiation during the hardest times of Europe's history.*

### Domestic policies:

- » Investigatory Powers Act 2016 which established the UK's first ever Race Disparity Audit to uncover racial disparities in public services.
- » Announced the largest expansion of mental health services in a generation through the NHS Long-Term Plan.
- » Launched the 25 Year Environment Plan to tackle issues such as plastic waste.
- » Introduced the Modern Industrial Strategy to promote future job creation across the country after UK employment reached a record high.
- » Founded Women2win project with Anne Jenkin with the aim of supporting conservative women during the election campaign and increase their involvement in public life.

### European/International Level:

- » European Union Withdrawal Act in 2017 and 2018. Her administration took forward negotiations with the European Union on the terms of the UK's exit from the EU and future relationship.
- » Theresa May formally committed the UK to achieving 'net zero' climate emissions by 2050, making Britain the first major economy to do so.
- » Coordinated the response against the use chemical weapons in Syria with the unanimous support of the Cabinet and the authorization of the UK armed force to intervene in Syria.
- » After the attack of Russian intelligence to the House of Commons, she secured the largest ever collective expulsion of Russian Intelligence offices around the world.





## ANGELA MERKEL

German Chancellor

2005 - 2021

*The first female chancellor that has ever governed Germany, the third longest holding office for over 16 years.*

**Born:** July 17, 1954 Hamburg Germany

**Political Affiliation:** Christian Democratic Union

**Education & Career:** Merkel finished (1973) high school in Templin, East Germany, and received (1978) a Bachelor's degree in Physics at Karl Marx University (now the University of Leipzig).

She then worked at the Central Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences in East Berlin, earning (1986) a Doctorate for her thesis on Quantum Chemistry.

### Political Path:

**1989** – Joined the “Demokratischer Aufbruch” (DA, i.e. Democratic Beginning) party and served as the deputy spokesperson of the Government of East Germany.

**1990** – In the German federal elections of 1990, Merkel and DA joined the CDU and she successfully stood for election to the Bundestag in the parliamentary constituency of Stralsund – Nordvorpommern – Rügen in north Mecklenburg-Vorpommern.

**1991** – Chancellor Helmut Kohl unexpectedly appointed Angela Merkel as Minister for Women and Youth. She had previously been elected to the Bundestag in her constituency of Stralsund-Rügen-Grimmen in the state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania – as she has been in every election since.

**1994** – After the victory of CDU/CSU, Angela Merkel who remained Minister for Women and Youth until 1994, was appointed as Minister of the Environment.

**1998** – She was appointed Secretary-General of the CDU after the loss of her party in 1998 federal election.

**2000** – Became party chairperson of the CDU.

**2002** – She was the leader of CDU/CSU group in the Bundestag.

**2005** – As she won the elections and formed an alliance of CDU/CSU & SPD, traditionally known in Germany as a “grand coalition”, the Bundestag elected Merkel to be the first female chancellor in German history.

**2008** – The start the major financial crisis in Europe found Merkel playing a major role on the Euro bailout fund and stabilization measures.

**2009** – She was re-elected Chancellor in a coalition of CDU/CSU with the FDP.

**2011** – Following the Fukushima disaster, Merkel announced the phase out of the nuclear power in Germany.

**2013** – Third re-election as Chancellor in a 2nd grand coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD in German history.

**2014** – Called out Europe and the world for solidarity to respond to the Syrian refugee crisis.

**2018** – The fourth term as Chancellor in the third grand coalition.

**2018** – Steps down as Chairwoman of CDU, announces she would not be running in the next elections.

**2020** – Merkel's government resolutely opted for a joint European action plan to the Coronavirus pandemic.

**2021** – Stepped down as German chancellor.

Angela Merkel's<sup>15</sup> legacy and far-reaching decisions<sup>16</sup>



Her position has been symbolically important for women's representation playing a key role on bringing women into key positions.

Domestic policies:

- » Introduced the constitutional debt brake (Schuldenbremse) guaranteeing balanced budgets.
- » Signed the resolution to phase out nuclear energy.
- » Took the decision to override EU rules on asylum seekers and open Germany's borders to more than one million refugees from Syria and elsewhere.
- » Related to the representation of women:



CDU Cabinet Members  
1st Merkel Cabinet



CDU Cabinet Members  
2nd Merkel Cabinet



CDU Cabinet Members  
3rd Merkel Cabinet



CDU Cabinet Members  
4th Merkel Cabinet

European/International Level:

- » Led the austerity and structural reform during the Eurozone debt crisis. Her strong leadership in ensuring a stable Eurozone contributed to wider and stronger Economic and Monetary Union.
- » Supported the EU bonds to fight Coronavirus crisis and the recovery plan for Europe.

UNITED STATES



CONDOLEEZZA RICE

Secretary of State  
2005 - 2009

*The 2nd woman and the 1st African American woman to hold the U.S. Secretary of State position*

**Born:** November 14, 1954, in Birmingham, Alabama. USA

**Political Affiliation:** Republican Party

**Education & Career:** Condoleezza Rice<sup>17</sup> earned a Bachelor's degree in International Relations in 1974. She later obtained a Master's degree (1975) in Economics from the University of Notre Dame and a Doctorate (1981) in International Studies from the University of Denver, where her specialty was Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union, including military and security affairs.

<sup>15</sup>Angela Merkel. Britannica. World Leaders. Retrieved from: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christian-Democratic-Union-political-party-Germany> Deutschland.de (2021) Angela Merkel – her political career in pictures. Retrieved from: <https://www.deutschland.de/en/topic/politics/angela-merkel-governs-germany-16-years-as-chancellor>

<sup>16</sup>Matthias Matthijs (2021) Merkel's Legacy and the Future of Germany Retrieved from: <https://www.cfr.org/in-brief/merkels-legacy-and-future-germany>

<sup>17</sup>Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute United States Department of State. Biographies of the Secretaries of State: Condoleezza Rice (1954–) Retrieved from: <https://history.state.gov/departments/history/people/rice-condoleezza>

Stanford University. Condoleezza Rice. Department of Political Science. Retrieved from: <https://politicalscience.stanford.edu/people/condoleezza-rice>



**Political Path:**

**1989 - Served in the Bush Administration as director of Soviet and East European affairs in the National Security Council.**

**1987** – Served as an advisor to the Joint Chiefs of Staff on nuclear strategy.

**1991** – Became foreign policy adviser to the presidential campaign of George W.Bush.

**2001** – Served as Assistant to the President to President George W. Bush for National Security affairs (National Security Adviser) being the first woman to hold this position.

**2005** – Became the first African-American women to serve as US Secretary of State.

**2009** – Left the position as Secretary of State.

**Condoleezza Rice’s legacy and influence on US. Diplomacy**



*Revolutionized the Foreign Service reforming the institution by supporting the expansion of democratic governments and championed the idea of redistributing U.S. diplomats to areas of severe social and political trouble, addressing issues such as disease, drug smuggling and human trafficking, and reemphasizing aid.*

Rice was the first secretary of state to visit Libya in more than 50 years - and she tackled new issues, primarily launching an extensive Bush administration initiative to spread democracy, an effort aimed especially at the moderate Arab states of the Middle East. Played a key role in the negotiation of several agreements in the Middle East including:

- » Helped to restore the relations between Israel and Palestine to address core issues like borders, refugees, and the status of Jerusalem. Progress was done on the opening the Gaza Border in 2005, ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah forces in Lebanon in 2006 and organized the Annapolis Conference in 2007 which focused on finding a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem.
- » Improved human rights issues in Iran and supported the passage of a United Nations Security Council Resolution for sanctions against the country unless its uranium enrichment program was curtailed.

In addition, Rice led the dialogue and fight against North Korea’s nuclear program. She negotiated the successful signing of the U.S.-India Agreement for Cooperation Concerning Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy (123 Agreement), which would allow civil nuclear trade between the two countries.

**SPAIN**



**ESPERANZA AGUIRRE**

**Mayor of Madrid**  
**2003 - 2012**

*The first woman to become the Mayor of Madrid and President of the Senate.<sup>18</sup>*

**Born:** January 3, 1952, Madrid Spain

**Political Affiliation:** People’s Party

<sup>18</sup>TeleMadrid. Esperanza Aguirre, una vida dedicada a la política. Retrieved from: <https://www.telemadrid.es/noticias/madrid/Esperanza-Aguirre-vida-dedicada-politica-0-1392760728--20120917025137.html>

**Education & Career:** received a Bachelor's degree in Law (1974) at the Complutense University of Madrid and earned a civil servant position with the Information and Tourism Technicians Corp in 1976 and became head of the Tourism Advertising Service.

From 1979 to 1982, she held various positions in the Ministry of Culture: head of the Technical Office of the General Director of Books and Cinematography (1979), Deputy General Director of Studies in the General Technical Secretariat (1980), Deputy Chief General Director of the Technical Office of the Undersecretary of Culture (1981) and Deputy Director General of Foundations and Cultural Associations (1982).

### **Political Path:**

**1983** – Started her involvement in politics in the sixties by joining the Liberal Union and becoming the president of the Union in the community of Madrid until 1986. That same year, she was elected councilor of the Municipality of Madrid under the People Coalition (AP-PDP-UL).

**1987** – Resigned from the Liberal Union and joined the People's Alliance, which was later refunded as the People's Party in 1989. In addition, she was re-elected as councilor of the Municipality of Madrid and became the spokesperson for Villaverde Unit. In addition, she was appointed as the spokesperson for Sport and Public Transport for the Municipality of Madrid.

**1989** – People's Party and CDS govern Madrid for the first time since the restoration of competitive municipal elections in 1979. She was appointed head of the Environment Department of the Municipality of Madrid.

**1993** – Became councilor of Environment, Education, Culture and Sports and consequently in 1995 she became municipal spokeswoman of PP and first deputy mayor of Madrid.

**1996** – Became Member of the Senate and was appointed as the Minister of Education and Culture by Jose Maria Aznar the newly elected Prime Minister. In addition, Esperanza Aguirre became part of the National Executive Committee of the People's Party.

**1999** – Aguirre was replaced as the Minister of Education and Culture but became the first woman in the history of Spain to lead the Senate; President of Senate.

**2002** – Resigned as President of Senate to run for Mayor of Madrid.

**2003** – PP and Esperanza Aguirre won the elections in a rerun. She became the first woman President of the Community of Madrid (Mayor of Madrid) where she served for almost nine years until 2012.

**2004** – Aguirre was elected the leader of People's Party in Madrid until 2011.

**2012** – Withdrawal from politics due to health issues.

### **Esperanza Aguirre, 42 years dedication to politics**



#### *Inspiring role model of women leaders in Spanish transition to democracy*

- » Undertook the reform of Compulsory Secondary Education (CSE) and university curricula and strengthened the humanities studies.
- » Improved the access to health services by reducing the surgery waiting times.
- » Built eight new hospitals.
- » Built 87 new state schools (most of them bilingual).
- » Increased the investment for several scholarships in education.
- » Expanded the underground to suburban areas such as Pozuelo de Alarcón.



## KOLINDA GRABAR-KITAROVIC

*President of Republic*

2015 - 2020

*The first woman to be elected President of the Republic since first multi-party elections in 1990 and independence from Yugoslavia in 1991*

**Born:** April 29, 1968, Rijeka Croatia

**Political Affiliation:** Croatian Democratic Union

**Education & Career:** Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović<sup>19</sup> attended primary school in Rijeka, Croatia and completed her secondary school at Los Alamos in United States of America. She received a Bachelor's degree in English and Spanish from the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb, and in addition completed further education in Portuguese. She completed the Diplomatic Academy of Vienna.

In 2000 she earned a Master's degree in International Relations from the Faculty of Political Science, University of Zagreb. From 2002 to 2003, she was a Fulbright scholar on pre-doctoral research in International Relations and Security Policy at the George Washington University, United States of America.

### Political Path:

**1992** – Advisor to the international cooperation department of the Ministry of Science and Technology.

**1993** – Joined formally the Croatian Democratic Union.

**1995** – Became the advisor to the North America Department of the Foreign Ministry.

**1997** – Was appointed Counselor in the Croatian Embassy, Canada, later Minister-Counsellor and DCM.

**2000** – Social Democratic Party came to power, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović focused her path on diplomatic studies as a Fulbright scholar on pre-doctoral research in International Relations and Security Policy at the George Washington University, US.

**2003** – Was elected member of the Parliament and was appointed the Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration until 2008.

**2008** – Became Ambassador of the Republic of Croatia to the United State of America.

**2011** – Was appointed NATO Assistant Secretary-General for Public Diplomacy until 2014.

**2015** – Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović was elected as the President of Croatia until 2020.

### Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic legacy on international relations and heritage to Croatia.<sup>20</sup>



*A Woman who broke the glass-ceiling on international relations and security*

- » She has pushed many glass-ceilings serving as the first woman appointed as a NATO Assistant Secretary General for Public Diplomacy, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Ambassador to the US.

<sup>19</sup>Council women World Leader. Biography: Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović.. Retrieved from: <https://www.councilwomenworldleaders.org/kolinda-grabar-kitarovi263.html>  
Office of the President of the Republic of Croatia. Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović. Retrieved from: <https://www.predsjednik.hr/en/bivsi-predsjednici/kolinda-grabar-kitarovic/>

<sup>20</sup>Outgoing President Proud of Croatia's Achievements During Her Term Retrieved from: <https://www.total-croatia-news.com/politics/41315-outgoing-president>

- » Lead Croatia on its path to Euro-Atlantic integration and she was Head of the State Delegation for Negotiations on the Accession of the Republic of Croatia to the European Union.
- » Three Seas Initiative, which has brought together 12 EU members to overcome internal imbalances by removing artificial divisions between the old and new member-states and consolidating Europe as a market and territory.
- » Signed the Paris Agreement at the UN Headquarters in New York City.

## ALBANIA



### JOZEFINA TOPALLI

**Speaker of Parliament**

**2005 - 2013**

*The first woman to become the Speaker of the Parliament in Albania (2005 – 2013) and Vice President of the Democratic Party of Albania.*

**Born:** November 26, 1963 Shkoder, Albania

**Political Affiliation:** Democratic Party of Albania

**Education & Career:** Jozefina Çoba Topalli graduated from the Luigj Gurakuqi University in Shkodra with a double major in Mathematics and Law. She subsequently studied International Relations at the University of Padua in Italy and acquired a Master's degree from the University of Tirana in Public Administration and in European Studies; in 2010, she obtained her Ph.D. at the University of Tirana, with a dissertation on the topic of "The Role of the National Parliament in the process of European Integration of the country".

From 1992 to 1995, she worked at the Chamber of Commerce in the city of Shkodra, and in 1995 and 1996 was chancellor and lecturer at the Luigj Gurakuqi University of Shkodra.

#### Political Path:

**1996** – At the 1996 Albanian Parliamentary Election, Topalli was elected as Member of Parliament for the Democratic Party of Albania in Shkodra; she was subsequently re-elected six times. She has been member of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Family, and also Deputy Chairwoman of the Children's Committee.

**1997** – From 1997 to 2013, Topalli has been the Deputy Chairwoman of the Democratic Party of Albania.

**1996** – From 1996 to 2013, Topalli has been a Member of the Parliament for the Democratic Party of Albania for the city of Shkodra.

**2005** – Ms. Topalli becomes the first woman Speaker of the Albanian Parliament in all the parliamentary history of the country and the sixth Speaker of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania in the pluralistic parliamentary history since 1991.

**2009** – Ms. Topalli was re-elected Speaker of the Parliament for the second mandate.

**2020** – After being ousted from the Democratic Party in 2017, together with a group of youngsters, establishes the Party "Movement for Change", with which runs for elections in 2021. The Party doesn't achieve to pass the threshold and does not win any seats in the Parliament.

**2022** – Through the process of elections and reformation of the Democratic Party in 2022, Ms. Topalli returns **to the Democratic Party and is elected as member of the Board.**



### *Invested in strengthening and promoting Parliamentary Diplomacy*

- » Ms. Topalli invested in strengthening and promoting Parliamentary Diplomacy. In the framework of parliamentary diplomacy, a novelty brought into Albanian political life by the Speaker of the Albanian Parliament, Jozefina Topalli was engaged in the acceleration of the ratification by the EU states parliaments of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Albania and the EU, as well as the NATO protocols for the accession of Albania into the North Atlantic alliance.
- » In 2013, Ms. Topalli as MP of the opposition, leads the decriminalization legal initiative in the Albanian Parliament.

## 2. GENDER PERSPECTIVE TO RIGHT-WING PARTIES INTERNAL RULES AND REGULATIONS

To advance in the participation and representation of women in the right-wing parties, the first step would be to analyze the internal party rules. The rules and regulations of political parties must ensure proper internal organization and transparency in decision-making helping to determine how the party functions, the roles of the members and its structure. In addition, it also denotes the efforts of the party to attract women and fostering a political environment for equal participation and leadership of women within the party<sup>21</sup>.

In this context, a comparative perspective of internal rules of right-wing parties aims to provide a platform of dialogue, reveal similarities and differences that can lead to a better understanding of right-wing political parties' development and their gender sensitive bylaws. The analysis focuses on mapping right wing parties in the UK, Germany, USA, Albania, Spain, and Croatia looking at<sup>22</sup>:

- ✓ **Internal rules and special measures.** Addressing gender equality in the party's legal framework provides a vision of the party but also entrenches the rules for achieving that vision. Such rules and special measures are included to prescribe a minimum level of representation and to ensure that a number of women are included in the internal structure and bodies of the party.

- ✓ **Special structures of the political parties.** Women's organizations of political parties as an internal party structure that aim to strengthen women's representation within the party and politics in general. The establishment of women's organizations helps to empower women within party in two different dimensions by (1) increasing women's representation in party nominations and (2) amplifying the voice of women in decision making processes, through a set percentage of delegates with voting rights in different levels of the party structure.

- ✓ **Special strategy plans to recruit women within the party.** Provision of skills-based training programs with special campaign related topics that directly benefit women candidates.

<sup>21</sup>NDI (2017) Political parties' internal rules from a gender perspective: Comparatives Experiences. Retrieved from: <https://nimd.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Political-parties%E2%80%99-internal-rules-from-a-gender-perspective-Comparatives-Experiences-NIMD-and-IDEA.pdf>

<sup>22</sup>IKNOWPOLITICS. Best Practices Used by Political Parties to Promote Women in Politics. Retrieved from: [https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr\\_best\\_practices\\_used\\_by\\_political\\_parties\\_to\\_promote\\_women\\_in\\_politics.pdf](https://iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/cr_best_practices_used_by_political_parties_to_promote_women_in_politics.pdf)

Generally, the right-wing parties appear to concentrate their effort on providing women’s forums with an independent structure/platform that aims to identify, train and mentor women candidates for office. Given the argument that right-wing parties prefer to recruit their candidates based on their merits rather than gender, the use of special measures is quite uncommon within the parties. Nevertheless, there are exceptions as the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in Germany. This case is mostly related to the (1) legal system and federalism in Germany which strongly impacts the parties and their process of candidates’ selection and the (2) increasing public pressure to hold party’s accountability on women representation<sup>23</sup>. As a result, CDU has complied with the demands by introducing most recently a clear “gender identity politics” within the party. This aims to ensure a path for women within the party through the introduction of gender quotas at all levels and the rejection of list of candidates that do not comply with this quota.

Despite of the lack of special measures, it is important to mention that the right-wing parties observed in this study have as the core value of the party, the principle of equality between women and men in aspects related to the performance of the institutions which can be seen in the code of ethics, statutes, or ideology approach. *For example:*

*“The People’s Party will ensure equal employment opportunities among all its members to guarantee:*

*(i) Non-discrimination on any ground such as birth, race, sex, religion, opinion, or special condition, physical or social, to foster and promote the diversity of the Party members.*

*(ii) Particular emphasis is given to equality between men and women.”*

**Code of Ethic and Conduct, People’s Party, Spain**



## 2.1 Political parties’ internal rules and special measures✓

UK

Conservative  
Party

*Code of Conduct*<sup>24</sup>: It includes the minimum standards of behavior within the party focused on ensuring non-discrimination and harassment based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, or belief, sex and sexual orientation. (Part 1. Section1) This section is at the Equality Act 2010.

*Constitution*<sup>25</sup>: *On the section of the board, it includes the obligation of the organization to (Art.17.13) ensure that women are properly involved and represented in all aspects of the Party’s work and organization including, if appropriate, the maintenance of an organization to promote the interests of women within the Party.*

The same idea repeated in the Association at the local level with the encouragement of the establishment of special committees including the Women’s Committee.

<sup>24</sup>Conservatives (2022) Code of Conduct for Members and Representatives of the Conservative Party. Retrieved from: <https://www.conservatives.com/code-of-conduct>

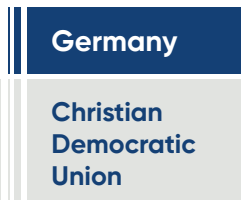
<sup>25</sup>Conservatives. Constitution of the Conservative Party. Retrieved from: <https://public.conservatives.com/organisation-department/202101/Conservative%20Party%20Constitution%20as%20amended%20January%202021.pdf>



*Rules for selection of conservative party*<sup>26</sup>: According to the internal regulation of candidates' selections, the local associations (The Sifting Committee) will have formed a sifting committee composed of the chairman of the association, who will be chairman of the committee as well and who should remain impartial, two deputy chairmen of the association, and two additional members of the association, as well as a minimum of one woman and one person under the age of 30.

In addition, it mentions positive discrimination on the selection of women applications during the selection process.

*Equal opportunity policy*<sup>27</sup>: To ensure equal opportunities within the party (members, officers, and employees), this policy aims to achieve equality and establish the procedure to remove any potential discrimination. The policy specifies direct and indirect discrimination, victimization, and harassment.



*Code of Value*<sup>28</sup>: Includes the concept of gender equality as part of the core values. In addition, it refers to the “actual equality role” played by women and men and their contribution to CDU and the society.

*National Statute*<sup>29</sup>: Provides special measures to ensure women are given equal access to decision making within the party. These include:

- ✓ *Introduction of the principles of equality between women and men members as a core value of the party with special attention and priority to the participation of women with article N. Art 15, which indicates that women should hold party offices in the CDU and be equally involved in public mandates.*
- ✓ *Establishment of Women’s quota at all levels of the party structure being 40%-50% depending on the proportion of woman with respect to the members of the National Assembly.*
- ✓ *Includes the concept of rejection by giving the right to the Electoral bodies to reject candidate proposals if there are insufficient women nominations.*



The bylaws of the Croatian Democratic Union provide for 30% gender quota at all levels of party structure.

<sup>26</sup>Conservative (2018) Rules for the selection of Conservative Party Candidates in Target and Conservative held seats in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for the UK Parliament. Retrieved from: [https://www.wealdenconservatives.com/sites/www.wealdenconservatives.com/files/2019-01/Rules %20for%20the%20Selection %20of%20Candidates.pdf](https://www.wealdenconservatives.com/sites/www.wealdenconservatives.com/files/2019-01/Rules%20for%20the%20Selection%20of%20Candidates.pdf)

<sup>27</sup>Conservative (2021) Equality Opportunities policy. Retrieved from: <https://www.conservatives.com/equal-opportunities-policy>

<sup>28</sup>CDU. (2022) Grundwertecharta. Antrag des Bundesvorstandes an den 35. Parteitag der CDU Deutschlands Retrieved from: <https://assets.ctfassets.net/nwwnl7ifa-how/1HEdtjRCAN8Shf1ihdkYco/bc2b167d0a79037131078d1538eb61bf/CDU-Grundwertecharta.pdf>

<sup>29</sup>CDU. Änderung des Statuts und weiterer satzungsmäßiger Bestimmungen. Anträge des Bundesvorstandes an den 35. Parteitag der CDU Deutschlands Retrieved from: [https://assets.ctfassets.net/nwwnl7ifahow/3j2rZMoSOrcj969avGu4X/8a0a1febee18b2bc418eac32e2777e85/B\\_Aenderungen\\_des\\_Statuts\\_der\\_GO\\_der\\_FBO\\_und\\_der\\_PGO\\_Antraege\\_des\\_Bundesvorstandes\\_inkl\\_B61\\_bis\\_B63.pdf](https://assets.ctfassets.net/nwwnl7ifahow/3j2rZMoSOrcj969avGu4X/8a0a1febee18b2bc418eac32e2777e85/B_Aenderungen_des_Statuts_der_GO_der_FBO_und_der_PGO_Antraege_des_Bundesvorstandes_inkl_B61_bis_B63.pdf)

## US

### Republican Party

*The rules of the Republican party*<sup>30</sup>:

Specific measures are included to ensure equal number of women and men on the Republican party structures:

✓ *The members of the Republican National Committee* shall consist of one (1) national committeeman & one (1) national committeewoman. (Rule No.1)

✓ *Officers of the Republican National Committee:* The eight (8) vice chairmen shall be comprised of one (1) man and one woman. (Rule No. 5)

✓ *Executive Committee of the Republican National Committee:* There are 11 members of whom eight (8) of them must consist of one (1) man and one (1) woman elected by and from each of the four (4) regional caucuses. (Rule No.6)

✓ *Standing Budget Committee:* composed of eleven (11) members three (3) of whom shall be appointed by the chairman of the Republican National Committee, and each of the four (4) regions shall elect two (2) members, one (1) man and one (1) woman, at its regional caucus. (Rule No.10)

✓ *Platform, Credentials, Rules and Order of Business, and Permanent Organization of the convention* must consist of one (1) man and one (1) woman for each committee. (Rule No.41)

✓ *Each state shall endeavor* to have equal representation of men and women in its delegation to the Republican National Convention. (Rule No.1)

Specific measures on decision making:

✓ *Voting:* In the convention, delegations and individual positions including national committeeman; national committeewoman; or state chairman of any state, shall not be entitled to more than one (1) delegate seat and shall not be entitled to more than one (1) vote.

## Spain

### People's Party

*Code of Ethics and Conduct*<sup>31</sup>: The principle of equality is included not only to guarantee equal opportunities between women and men members of the party but also, it is linked to the dignity to the people to prevent violence, abuse and any other type of conduct that can injure the dignity of any member.

*National Statute*<sup>32</sup>: As part of the party value (Art.4), the right of equality and freedom between women and men is mentioned as a core value of the party that is also in accordance with the Spanish constitutional rights.

<sup>30</sup>The rules of the Republican Party: As adopted by the 2020 Republican National Convention August 24, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://prod-stat-ic.gop.com/media/Rules\\_Of\\_The\\_Republican\\_Party.pdf?\\_ga=2.147087863.1148157337.1658054223-1561604281.1658054223](https://prod-stat-ic.gop.com/media/Rules_Of_The_Republican_Party.pdf?_ga=2.147087863.1148157337.1658054223-1561604281.1658054223)

<sup>31</sup>Partido Popular. Código Etico y de Conducta. Retrieved from: [https://www.pp.es/sites/default/files/documentos/codigo\\_etico\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.pp.es/sites/default/files/documentos/codigo_etico_pdf.pdf)

<sup>32</sup>Partido Popular. Estatutos Nacionales. Retrieved from: [https://www.pp.es/sites/default/files/documentos/estatutos\\_definitivos.pdf](https://www.pp.es/sites/default/files/documentos/estatutos_definitivos.pdf)



At the same time, the statute emphasizes the party's compromise to promote reconciliation of family and work between women and men. (Preamble)

More references to the concept of equality can be found along the statute, however, they are not linked to gender equality.

*Regulations*<sup>33</sup>: Practical application of gender quotas is not found on the internal regulations of the political party.



*In the Party Statute of the Democratic Party, there are various provisions to ensure gender equality within the party structures:*

- ✓ *Introduction of the principles of equality and equal opportunities, and inclusiveness of members as a core value and priority to human rights (Art. 2).*
- ✓ *In the section of the objectives of the party, mentions the respect of gender equality with special attention to women's participation in the decision making and executive structures of the party (Art. 3).*
- ✓ *30% gender quota in every structure of the party (art.9).*
- ✓ *30% gender quota in the elected decision making structures of the party as the National Council and the Executive Board - Presidency of the Party. (Art. 44 & Art 47)*

*As part of the executive structures within the Party, the bylaws provide also a Secretariat for Partner Organizations, which are the Women Organization and the Youth Organization of the party, and which also covers gender equality.*

*The party has also drafted a Program and Action Plan for Gender Equality in 2021.*

In addition, most of the right-wing parties selected on this study, except for Spain and Croatia, have an internal structure for women like the Women Organization, focused on encouraging political work and involvement of women and girls within the party. Focusing on understanding and identifying the structure which provides the best substantive power to women division within right-wing parties, we would highlight the National Committeewoman in USA. The Republican Party does not only establish a system that aims to balance representation of women and men within the party structure, one national committeewoman and one national committeeman, but also creates a quota on the party elite, as such controlling and defining their decision-making power. The voting system within the Republican Party helps guarantee some level of gender power balance between women and men members.

The right wing parties selected from Spain<sup>34</sup> and Croatia<sup>35</sup> do not have a formal structure of women within the party. Instead, these parties have established a separate organizational entity that aims to influence national policy on diverse issues including gender-based violence, family, economic empowerment of women, etc. Interestingly, these structures do not have a status of legal entity under the party, however, their organogram includes women members of their party and their political agenda includes activities linked with the party.

<sup>33</sup>Partido popular. Reglamentos. Retrieved from: <https://transparencia.pp.es/normativas/>  
<sup>34</sup>Mujeres e Igualdad. Retrieved from: [http://www.mujeresenigualdad.com/Mesa-Feminismo-Liberal\\_es\\_1\\_4142.html](http://www.mujeresenigualdad.com/Mesa-Feminismo-Liberal_es_1_4142.html)  
<sup>35</sup>HDZ. Zajednica žena "Katarina Zrinski". Retrieved from: <https://moj.hdz.hr/mi-smo/ustrojstvo/zajednica-zena-katarina-zrinski>

2.2 Special structures of the political parties

✓

UK

Conservative Party

CWO - Conservative Women’s Organization works for the women members of the Conservative Party, to represent their views to the Party Leader, Chairman and MPs. The CWO provides training, mentoring, and speaking opportunities. It supports women who wish to become involved at all levels of public life and in their local community.

Women’s Committee – local committee association within the party.

Germany

Christian Democratic Union

FU – Women’s Union of Christian Democratic Union of Germany is a structure inside the CDU party that aims to lobby for the concerns of women within the party.

US

Republican Party

National Committeewoman<sup>36</sup> is a women’s structure inside the Republican National Committee composed by female members of the Republican party.

Spain

People’s Party

37

Croatia

Croatian Democratic Union

38

Albania

Democratic Party

LDGSH<sup>39</sup> - Democratic Women League that was founded on August 18, 1991 as a voluntary organization of Albanian women based on the principles and values of liberal democracy in Albania. LDGSH aims to promote the participation of women in policy making and decision making within the political functions of the Democratic Party of Albania.

<sup>36</sup>The rules of the Republican Party: As adopted by the 2020 Republican National Convention August 24, 2020. Retrieved from: [https://prod-stat-ic.gop.com/media/Rules\\_Of\\_The\\_Republican\\_Party.pdf?\\_ga=2.147087863.1148157337.1658054223-1561604281.1658054223](https://prod-stat-ic.gop.com/media/Rules_Of_The_Republican_Party.pdf?_ga=2.147087863.1148157337.1658054223-1561604281.1658054223)  
<sup>37</sup> & <sup>38</sup> Based on the research and materials available the People’s Party in Spain and the Croatian Democratic Union do not have official structures of women.  
<sup>39</sup>Partia Demokratike. Lidhja e Gruas. Retrieved from: <https://pd.al/lidhja-e-gruas/>

In terms of recruiting women within the party, three different processes of recruitment are observed within the right-wing parties selected in this study: direct recruitment, indirect recruitment, and combined recruitment.

**Direct recruitment** takes place when the party has an active role identifying and supplying itself by creating specific programs or initiatives for women and girls. Such programs aim to create a space inside the party focused on women being heard and also to support them to enter politics. The best example of this type of recruitment is the Conservative Party in UK who has an initiative, Women2win, within the party which aims to increase the number of women in the Parliament and public life.

**Indirect recruitment** refers to those right-wing parties who do not have an internal official project but supply their parties with women through organizations with similar ideology and agenda. Spain and Croatia fall under this type of recruitment focusing on raising women’s issues and creating a women’s agenda feeding the party policies and programs, from outside the party. This type of strategy is based on the philosophy of individual merit over structural barriers. Albania can be categorized as part of the indirect recruitment.

The last type would be the **combined recruitment** where the party has its own project but also, uses different other channels of recruitment by partnering-up with other organization with similar ideologies. The Republican Party in the US would be an example of this form of recruitment. The party has developed significant efforts to include a special project for women within the party, while at the same time strengthening relations with organizations such as Maggie’s List<sup>40</sup> to increase the number of conservative women in US politics.

2.3 Special strategies and programs to recruit and raise capacities of women within the party

✓

<div>UK</div> <div>Conservative Party</div>	Women2win project is an on-going initiative founded on 2005, focused on mentoring conservative women and supporting them during their electoral campaign. In addition, it is seen as a pressure group within the Conservative party which has brought more conservative women to the political arena and the House of Commons.
<div>Germany</div> <div>Christian Democratic Union</div>	Women support Women <sup>41</sup> is a mentoring program that aims to provide female members of CDU with personal support and advice to enter in politics while also, access to training, networking, and forum of discussion.
<div>US</div> <div>Republican Party</div>	Project Growing Republican Opportunities for Women <sup>42</sup> (GROW) was an initiative launched by the Republican National Committee which aimed to bring more talented women to the party. The GROW strategy focused on recruitment and training.

<sup>40</sup>Maggies List. Retrieved from: <http://maggieslist.org/about>

<sup>41</sup>Fraue Union. Bericht zur politischen Gleichstellung von Frauen und Männern Retrieved from: <https://www.frauenunion.de/sites/www.frauenunion.de/files/artikelimages/220121-34pt-gleichstellungsbericht.pdf>

<sup>42</sup>Mallig Och. (2017) assessing efforts to make the republican party more woman-friendly. Retrieved from: <https://scholars.org/contribution/assessing-efforts-make-republican-party-more-woman-friendly>

<b>Spain</b>	<b>Croatia</b>
People's Party	Croatian Democratic Union

<b>Albania</b>
Democratic Party

The LDGSH has implemented several capacity building and awareness initiatives but not part of a structured long lasting program and strategy of the party. In 2021, the LDGSH drafted the Strategy and Action Plan for Gender Equality of the Democratic Party.

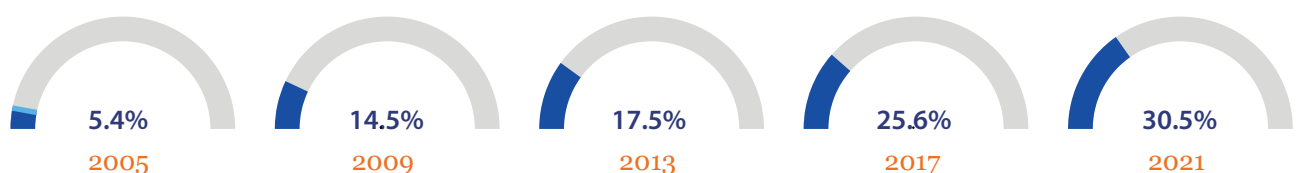
### 3. WOMEN'S ACCESS TO RIGHT-WING PARTIES IN ALBANIA

#### Democratic Party Case Study

The right-wing parliamentary parties in Albania are the Democratic Party, which is the second largest Party in Albania, and the smaller parties, the Republican Party and the Party for Justice, Integration and Unity.

The women's participation in politics and decision-making positions has been increasing year by year, especially due to the work and pressure of the movements for women's rights. As such, there has also been an increasing trend in the participation of women in Parliament when it comes to right-wing parties. In the 2001 Parliamentary Elections, 4.6% of MPs (2 out of 45) were women, specifically Jozefina Topalli and Marieta Zace Pronjari. In 2005, 5.4% of MPs (3 out of 56) of the Democratic Party and 10% MPs (1 out of 11) of the Republican Party were women. Namely, Jozefina Topalli, who became Speaker of the Parliament, Majlinda Bregu and Arenca Trashani, who became Cabinet Members from DP and Lajla Pernaska from the RP.

In the 2009 Parliamentary Elections, due to the introduction of a 30% quota for women representation in the Electoral Law, 14.5% of MPs, 10 out of 69, from the Democratic Party and zero from the other right wing parliamentary parties, were women. With a larger representation in the Parliamentary Group of DP and vocal MPs, such as Lajla Pernaska, Mesila Doda and Albana Vokshi, concerning gender equality, there was a greater emphasis and focus on advocating for gender equality and women's issues inside the party and in the Parliament. While in the following Parliamentary Elections, the number of women elected in Parliament on behalf of the Democratic Party saw an increasing trend. As such, in 2013 there were elected 17.5% women, 10 women out of 57 MPs; in 2017 there were elected 25.6% women MPs, 11 out of 43 DP MPs, and 1 woman from PDIU; and in 2021 there are at present 30.5% women MPs, 18 out of 59 of DP MPs in the Parliament.



At present, there are 50 elected women out of 140 MPs in the Parliament of Albania, where 36%, 18 out of 50, are representatives of the Democratic Party of Albania and right-wing parties, and 64%, 32 out of 50, are representatives of the left-wing parties. This means, as previously mentioned in this study, in Albania as well as in other countries around the world, there is a considerable gap in the representation of women in politics when it comes to right-wing and left-wing parties.

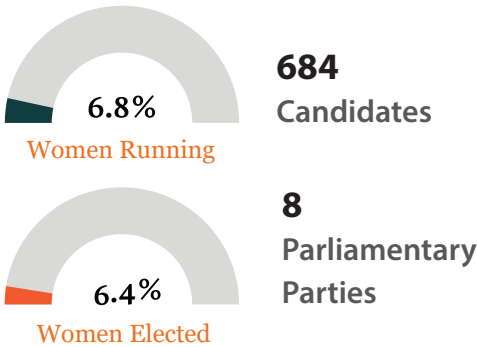
Although fewer in numbers, women MPs from the right-wing parties have been very active in the movements for gender equality and decision making. As such, they contributed in the re-establishment of the Alliance of Women MPs<sup>43</sup> in 2008 and have been leading it for several years, Mesila Doda 2009-2013, Dhurata Cupi 2013-2021, Merita Bakiu at present. The Alliance of Women MPs is a cross-party non formal structure of women MPs in the Albanian Parliament. In the framework of the Alliance, women MPs work jointly and have achieved mutual objectives for the empowerment of women in politics, decision making and other areas of social life. They have achieved such through joint legal initiatives and various initiatives. They were crucial in supporting the civic society initiative for the introduction into the electoral law of a 50% gender quota of representation in the Local Councils in Albania and the review of the Electoral Code for better representation of women in candidates lists during the past years.

Regarding the representation of women in the Government, since the year 2000, the Democratic Party, in coalition with other smaller parties has led the Government for 2 mandates (2005 – 2009 and 2009 – 2013) during which 2 women have been ministers, Ms. Arenca Trashani (2005 – 2009) and Ms. Majlinda Bregu (2009 – 2013). Not regulated by gender quota, the number of women candidates for mayor at local level, has been historically very low, despite political parties (left wing and right wing). Following the introduction of the legal provision of 50% gender quota in the lists of candidates for local municipality councils and the refusal of the lists by the Central Elections Commission in case of non-compliance, the number of women candidates and local councilors has increased exponentially for all political parties. While for the positions for mayor where there is no quota provided by law, the number are still very low.

From a general comparative overview of the candidates and winners in the parliamentary and local elections from 2001 to 2021, it is observed that in most cases, the left parties in Albania have had a tendency to nominate more women and girls candidates than right-wing parties, resulting in a higher number of women elected on their behalf.

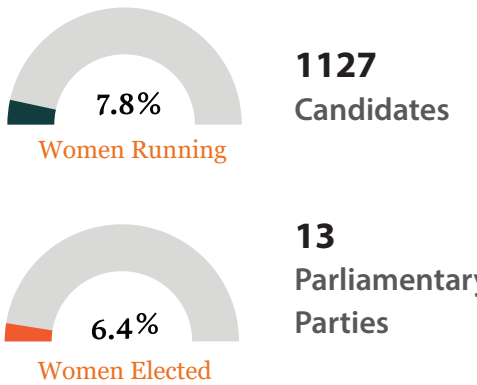
Parliamentary Elections 2001

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	93	3	43	2
PS	87	10	67	7
PSD	91	6	4	0
PDR	76	4	6	0
AD	89	6	3	0
PASH/ PAA	82	5	3	0
PBDNJ	83	10	3	0
Independent	36	3	2	0



Parliamentary Elections 2005

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	94	4	53	3
PS	90	8	38	4
LSI	92	8	5	0
PR	94	4	10	1
PSD	89	18	5	2
PDR	91	8	4	0
PAA	90	6	4	0
AD	83	7	3	0
PBDNJ	82	2	2	0
PDK	41	4	2	0
PDSSH	95	5	2	0
BLD	88	12	1	0
Independent	9	2	1	0

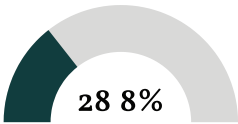


<sup>43</sup>The Alliance of Women MPs is a voluntary organization of women legislators of all groups and political parties in the Parliament of Albania. The women's caucus in the Albanian parliament was first established in 1995 and was re-established in 2008 <https://www.parlament.al/Kuvendi/AleancaGraDeputete>

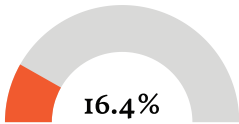
Parliamentary Elections 2009

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	105	39	59	10
PS	109	34	52	13
LSI	98	42	4	0
PR	104	37	1	0
PBDNJ	60	41	1	0

669 Candidates  
5 Parliamentary Parties



Women Running

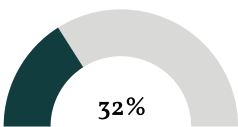


Women Elected

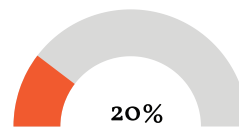
Parliamentary Elections 2013

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	106	44	47	10
PS	115	38	50	15
LSI	92	48	13	3
PDIU	86	51	4	0
PR	171	81	3	0
PKD	90	42	1	0
PBDNJ	76	43	1	0

1083 Candidates  
7 Parliamentary Parties



Women Running

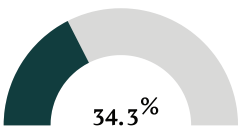


Women Elected

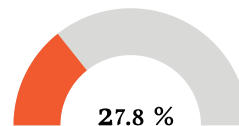
Parliamentary Elections 2017

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	153	41	32	11
PS	104	52	53	21
LSI	87	59	15	4
PDIU	81	63	2	1
PKD	89	54	1	1

783 Candidates  
5 Parliamentary Parties



Women Running

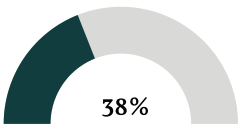


Women Elected

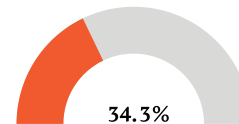
Parliamentary Elections 2021

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD/ AN	102	51	41	18
PS	94	59	46	28
LSI	92	61	2	2
PSD	90	63	2	1

612 Candidates  
4 Parliamentary Parties



Women Running



Women Elected

Local Elections 2003

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD+PR+PBL	60	0	23	0
PS	59	1	33	0
PBDNJ	22	3	2	0
PDS	44	1	1	0
PLL	3	2	0	0
PSD	32	2	0	0
PDR	31	2	0	0
Independent	19	1	0	0
PBK	16	0	0	0
PDK	12	0	0	0
PKSH	10	0	0	0
PSH	9	0	0	0
PBD	3	0	0	0
PBKD	3	0	0	0
PESH	2	0	0	0
PAP	2	0	0	0
Pkons	2	0	0	0
PSHA	1	0	0	0
PRDSH	1	0	0	0
PKDSH	1	0	0	0
PMP	1	0	0	0
PSKSH	1	0	0	0
PASSH	1	0	0	0
PBKDSH	1	0	0	0

**380** Candidates  
**24** Parties  
**0** Women Elected

Local Elections 2007

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	42	0	23	0
PS, LSI, PSD ,PDS ,AD	51	4	25	1
PD ,PR	9	0	5	0
PD, PAA	3	0	1	0
PKSH	16	0	0	0
PBDNJ	11	0	3	0
Independent	27	1	0	0

**195** Candidates  
**7** Parties  
**1** Woman Elected

Local Electionse 2011

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD	49	2	28	0
PS	63	2	32	2
LSI	11	0	2	0
PR	2	0	1	0
PBDNJ	1	0	0	0
LZHK	1	0	0	0
PKSH	1	0	0	0
PÇSH	1	0	0	0
Independent	2	1	0	0

**136** Candidates  
**9** Parties  
**2** Women Elected



Local Elections 2015

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
APPD*	59	3	38	8
ASHE*	45	3	13	2
PBDNJ	5	0	0	0
PFM	2	0	0	0
AP	3	0	0	0
Independent	13	1	0	0

**158** Candidates

**6** Parties

**10** Women Elected

Local Elections 2019

Political Party	Candidates Men	Candidates Women	Winners Men	Winners Women
PD*	0	0	0	1
PS	53	8	52	8
BD	17	3	0	0
PKSH	2	0	0	0
MEGA	1	0	1	0
SHN	4	0	0	0
PKKA	1	0	0	0
AMIE	1	0	0	0
Independent	6	0	0	0

**96** Candidates

**8** Parties

**9** Women Elected

**\*** PD did not participate in these elections

Women's Organizations in the Right Wing Parties

LDGSH - Democratic Women’s League of Albania

The Democratic Party of Albania was established in 1990 and it is the largest conservative party in Albania. It was founded after the Student movement against the regime of the time and as a strongly anti-communist party with the majority of its followers being from the politically persecuted dissidents of the communist dictatorial regime, it is the first opposition party in Albania after more than 45 years of a communist dictatorship. In March of 1992 the Democratic Party won the second pluralistic elections in the history of Albania and was seen as the main standard-bearer of ideas of democratic reform. It took the responsibility to execute reforms and move the country from a communist based regime into a free market liberal democracy; and start Albania’s path towards the integration in the Western world.

The first woman to be involved in the early stages of the formation of the party was Merita Zalosnjaja<sup>44</sup>, she was also the first and only woman in the first elected executive board, presidency of the Democratic Party.

On August 18, 1991 the Democratic Women’s League (LDGSH) was established as a voluntary organization of Albanian women based on the principles and values of liberal democracy in Albania, with the aim to promote the participation of women in policy making and decision making within the political functions of the Democratic Party of Albania. Through the years the LDGSH has been led by Flutura Hasko, Antoneta Luli, Marieta Zace and Albana Vokshi (present leader of LDGSH since 2009).

The LDGSH has been engaged at local and national level in promoting the representation of women in the Democratic Party, as well as in politics.



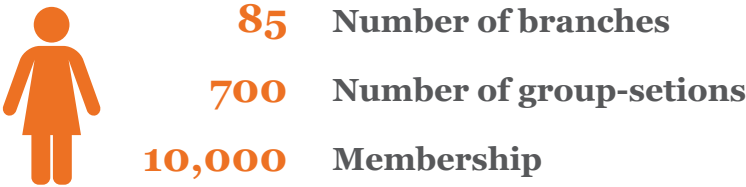
Some of the main activities undertaken by the LDGSH are engagement in policy making of the party, preparing gender equality strategy and action plan for the party, organizing capacity building activities for its members, engaging in discussions and awareness campaigns on social and political issues (as gender quota for women candidates in local and central elections, breast cancer awareness initiatives, etc), organizing women and LDGSH structures during electoral campaigns, etc.

The LDGSH is part of international organizations as the **International Women Democrat Union** & **European People’s Party Women’s Organization**. Ms. Albana Vokshi, president of LDGSH was elected in 2022 **vice president of the EPP Women**.

More specifically some of the activities undertaken by LDGSH are as follows:

- » Organization of local, regional and international forums on gender equality in politics, promotion of women in politics, etc.
- » Capacity building activities on electoral campaigns, gender equality, etc.
- » Organization of thematic protests and rallies (protection of women, March 8, sexism in parliament)
- » Activities with a social character: as breast cancer awareness campaigns, support of children with different abilities, activities and awareness campaigns on domestic violence, etc.
- » Activities for the economic empowerment of women.
- » Literary and cultural activities for women and girls.
- » Surveys on gender equality program of the party and governance priorities.
- » Drafting the PD / LDGSH program: for strengthening the role of women in development and integration (2012). & Drafting the gender equality electoral program (2021).

**Present Structure of LDGSH:**



**Pillars of LDGSH’s Program:**

- » *Equal Opportunities*
- » *Equality in Decision-Making*
- » *Fight Against Gender Based Violence*

**Main Achievements of LDGSH:**

<i>Increase of the gender quota inside the structures of the Party: from 25% to 30%</i>	<i>Submitted in Parliament the Resolution on Protection of Women for gender based violence (2017)</i>	<i>Submitted and supported in Parliament the legal amendments of the Electora Code for the introduction of 50% quota for local councils.</i>
<i>2021: 50 women on the list of candidates for parliament, of which 29% won.</i>	<i>Women make up 30% of the leaders in each branch, of the National Council and the Presidency of Party.</i>	<i>Women lead three important parliamentary commissions and have been among the most active in the opposition’s action to denounce government corruption &amp; misgovernance in the present parliamentary mandate.</i>
	<i>Changing the Statute of the DP and increasing the representation of LDGSH and FRPD in the Party’s Leading Bodies</i>	

<sup>44</sup>[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic\\_Party\\_of\\_Albania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democratic_Party_of_Albania)

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The Republican Party of Albania and the Party for Justice and Integration, although are small parliamentary parties, have established Women's Forums as partner organizations of the party, which are more mostly active during electoral campaigns.

The Women's Forum of the Republican Party was founded in 1991 as a partner organization of the Republican Party established in January 10, 1991. The first leader of the forum was Ms. Tamara Luarasi, Teacher. Later, the Women's Forum was led by Mirela Bogdani, Xhuljeta Jaho, Teuta Boci, Suzana Gjevori, Brunilda Laboviti and is led at present by Erjola Keci. One of the most prominent women representing the Forum in the government was former Minister of Health, Ms. Anila Godo. The present parliamentary group of the Republican Party is composed of 2 women and 2 men MPs (elected in the 2021 Parliamentary Elections as part of the PD-AN list (Democratic Party - Alliance for Change). In the Statute of the Republican Party, it is specified that: the chairwoman of the Republican Women's Forum is simultaneously a member of the party's Presidency. The leadership of the Republican Party consists of 23 members, of which 8 belong to the Women's Forum. Two of the branches of the Republican Party in Lushnje and Devoll, are led by the coordinators of the Women's Forum, Ms. Mirela Lipe and Ms. Diana Kapo.

In order to assess the position, access and challenges of women in right wing parties, being the Democratic Party the largest right wing party in the country, it has been selected as a case study in the framework of this research.

### 3.1 Findings: quantitative component – survey



In order to assess the position, access and challenges of women in right wing parties, being the Democratic Party the largest right wing party in the country, it has been selected as a case study in the framework of this research.

#### Characteristics of women members of the Democratic Party participating in the Survey

- ✓ Democratic Party women's experience in politics and as part of the political party structures
- ✓ Challenges of women members of the Democratic party in politics and within the party

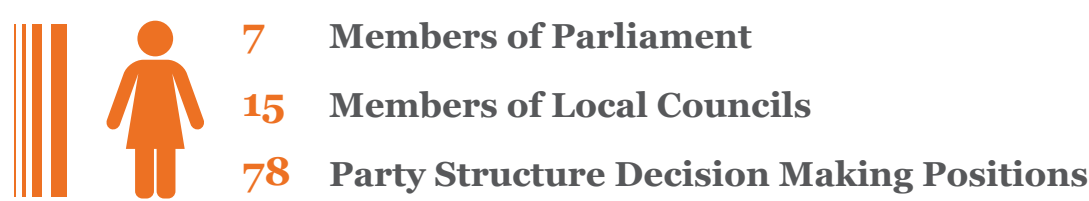
✓ During the research for this report has been observed that there is scarcity of official and accessible information on Women's Forums of the Political Parties, lack of archives and publication of the information related to the history and activities implemented by the Forums. For this reason, an online survey was conducted in order to assess the position and barriers that women and girls face in politics in general and more specifically in the right-wing parties; as well as to voice their recommendations on further steps that are needed to guarantee gender equality and empowerment of women inside the party. The survey was conducted during June – July 2022 and it included 102 women, members of the Democratic Party of Albania, being the largest right-wing party in the country.

The survey was designed based on three main categories: women members’ background and personal experience, women’s experience in politics and as part of political party structures, and challenges within the parties. In addition, a selected number of women from DP were interviewed in person to obtain a deeper understanding on their experience and reveal inside stories and recommendations. For information about the research methodology and survey questionnaire, please consult Appendixes 1 and 2 of this report.

3.1.1 Characteristics of women members of the Democratic Part participating in the Survey:

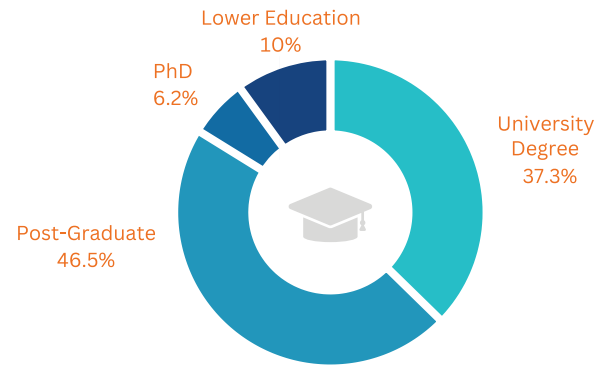
This section provides information on women socio-demographic characteristics and their political path in the party, as a useful instrument to determine the profile of women members and leadership opportunities across the supply chain within the party.

**Women’s profiles:** The survey was conducted with 102 women members of the Democratic Party with a diverse political status including 7 Members of the Parliament, 15 Members of the Local Councils and 78 women members, who hold different decision making positions within the party structure. Such positions include the head the Women and Youth Organization, spokesperson, assistant of the chairman, head of the group section and secretary of the group session.

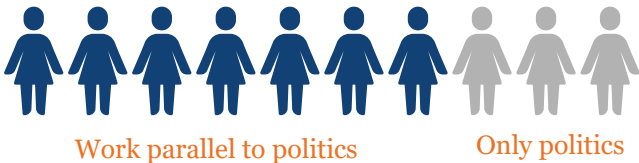


Specifically, the socio-demographic characteristics of the women that participated in the survey are as following:

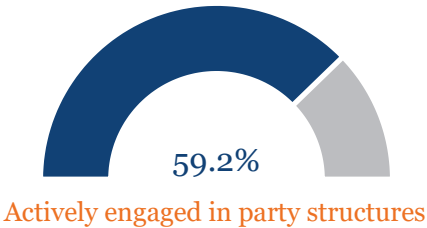
» The majority of the women have a higher-level education. 36.2% of the women members interviewed have a university degree, 45.1% have a post-graduate degree and 6% have a PhD. Only 9.7 % of the women members interviewed have lower education.



» The majority of women part of the survey are more likely to work in their professions while being involved in political life. 75.5% of the women members declared to work in other sectors parallel to being involved in the party, while only 24.5% are exclusively engaged in politics.



» 59.2 % of the women interviewed were actively engaged in party structures at national and local level.



» 60.4% of the women members interviewed were married, 29.7% were single and 9.9% had other civil status including divorce, partnership, etc.

**Route to the party:** Most of the women members interviewed declared to join the party through their involvement in the party organizations, namely the Youth and the Women Organization, (67.6%). This data shows the important role played by the Women and Youth Organizations in recruiting women and girls within the party. Other ways of entering their party were due to family and tradition (58.8%) and through the participation in party activities (56.9%). 29.4% of the women members interviewed reported to be invited by the party to run for different positions or to get engaged in the party structures.

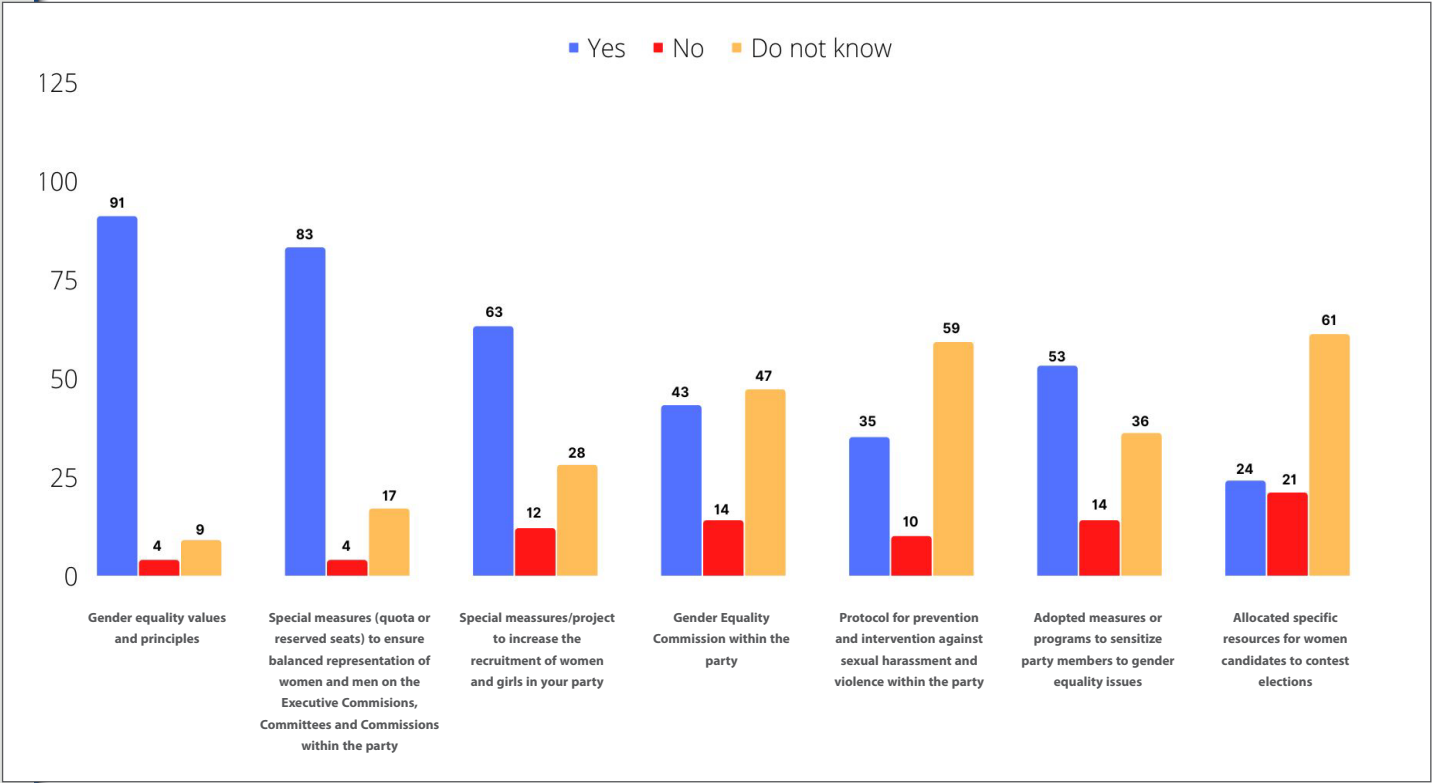
**3.1.2 Democratic Party - women’s experience in politics and as part of the party structures:**

This section provides information on the internal organization of the party, internal democracy and transparency, women’s structures and the support to women members in the point of view of women members of DP participating in the survey.

**Party organization:** As mentioned *previously throughout the study*, to guarantee gender equality and equal opportunities it is of high importance to establish rules and regulations within the party. The rules and regulations of the Democratic Party have been assessed to understand the level of effort and commitment of the political party to recruit women and create an environment for equal participation and leadership of women within the party.

In this context, to assess the presence, the transparency and the influence of internal rules and regulations on women members, the participants in the survey were asked to share if their political party has special measures and regulations to ensure the participation and representation of women within the party structure and in leading positions.


**Figure 1: Does your political party have an official position, manifesto, or regulation on the following?**



- » 88.23% of the women reported that their party has gender equality values and principles.
- » 80.39% affirmed that their party has introduced special measures (quotas or reserved seats) to ensure a balanced representation on different structures of the party; as well as executive positions, committees and commissions.
- » 61.76% of the women members indicated that their party has special measures/projects to increase the recruitment of women and girls in the party.
- » 46.07% of the women members reported not knowing if their party has a gender equality commission within the party structure.
- » 57.84% of the women members did not have information if their party has protocols to prevent and intervene against sexual harassment and violence within the party.
- » Only the half of the women affirmed that their party has an official program to raise awareness amongst its members on gender equality issues.
- » 58.82% did not know if the party has specific resources allocated for women candidates during elections. In addition, only 20.58% of the women affirmed that their party has resources allocated for women candidates, mainly as logistical support during electoral campaigns.

These figures are very significant because they provide an insight on political party transparency and information availability to their members. It shows that it is important that even when regulations and internal rules are established, there should be enough information provided to the members, otherwise these rules and regulations prove not to be effective. Moreover, the lack of information results in the vulnerability of the members.

**Most common comments by survey participants:**

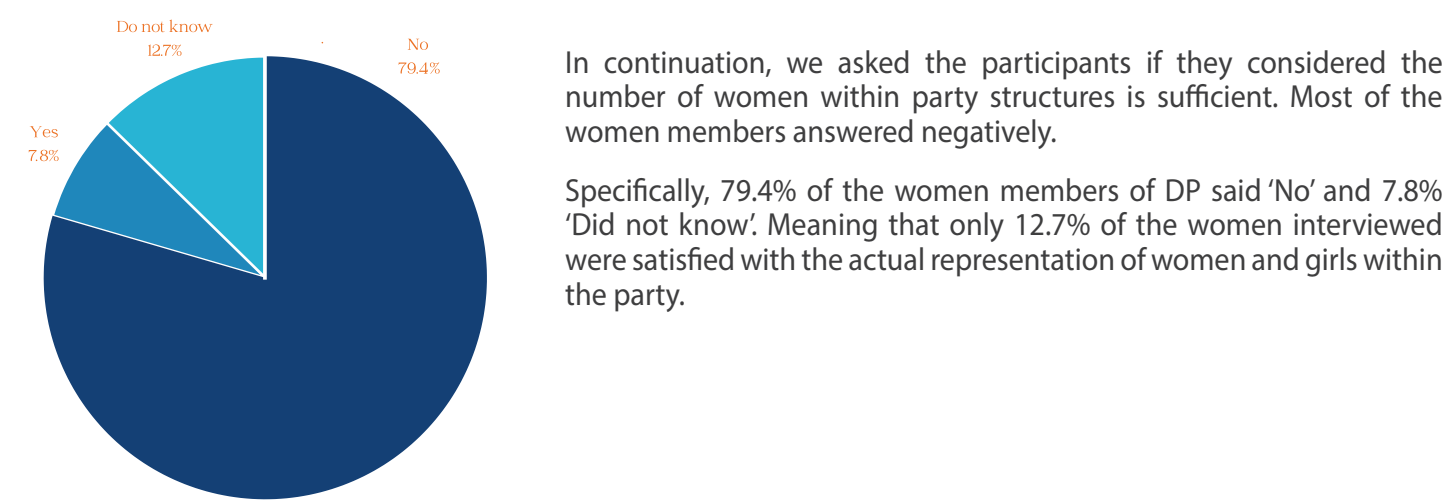


“There should be more financial resources to promote women's participation in politics, especially during elections. How can women run if they don't have access to resources?”

“I don't know if there are any other structures within the party that support gender equality and women, apart from the Women's Organization”.

“Everything is written in black and white, but it is important for rules and support not to remain on paper. We need to be a party that advocates for implementation of these rules and that achieves real support for women”.

**Figure 2: Do you consider that the number of women in different structures of your party is sufficient?**



**Most common comments by survey participants:**



- “In the rural areas, there are fewer women, and their engagement is limited to low positions giving them no opportunities to be in charge.”
- “Group sections, especially in non-central areas, are dominated by men leaving women’s path within the party only through quotas.”
- “Quota is an excellent method to bring more women to the table but it also hampers the system of meritocracy and fair competition. In many cases women who do not speak, are promoted and the strongest women are pushed aside.”
- “We need more women in leadership positions to change the party culture.”

**Women’s organization:** To learn more about the dynamics and role of the Women’s Organization in the party, the women members of the Democratic Party were asked to identify the main tasks of the Women’s Organization. The data indicates that women members mostly agreed as main the task of the Women’s Organization being:

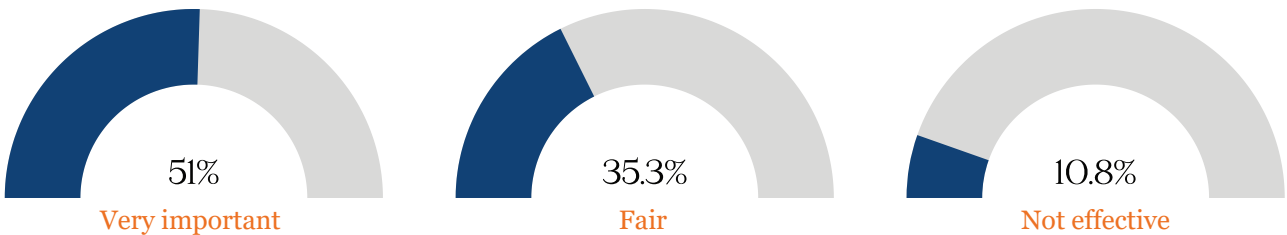
- » 76.47% Provides organizational and logistical support to the political party
- » 73.52% Provides input into decision-making in the party
- » 74.50% Undertakes to promote women’s participation in political life
- » 78.43% Supports women candidates during elections
- » 67.64% Provides support to women elected to parliament
- » 76.47% Mobilizes the women’s vote ahead of elections
- » 72.54% Advocates for gender issues within the party.

Women members of the DP described the Women’s Organization (LDGSH) as a crucial structure within the party that ensures, not only women’s participation and representation in the party and public life, but also helps to push a gender equality agenda within the party, as well as win election campaigns by reaching out to voters and supporting candidates.

In addition, women members of the DP were asked to rank the substantive power of the Women’s Organization. More than the half of the participating in the survey described the Women’s Organization as very important for the participation of women within the party (51%), followed by fair (35.3%) and (not very effective 10.8%).

One of the surveyed women commented that: *“The women’s organization promotes women as candidates during the electoral campaigns. It is a unique support that we have from the party”*. Other women members mentioned that even though the Women’s Organization was an important structure, it lacked organizational skills and support by the Party.

Role of Women’s Organization for the participation of women within the party



**Most common comments by survey participants:**



“The Women’s Organization has been able to integrate gender quotas within the party, and has done a lot for women, but it lacks power in the decision making processes inside the party”.

“The lack of support and the lack of funds have significantly reduced its impact in the party and in the community”.

“The Women’s Forum needs to have a sustainable structure, regulations and responsibilities between members, in order for everybody to contribute duly.”

In the same line of thought, the participants were asked to present their suggestions based on their experience, knowledge and needs on how to strengthen the Women’s Organization within the party.

1. Strengthen the decision-making power within the party.
2. Set up a more efficient organizational structure.
3. Allocate funds and resources for the Women’s Organization.
4. Improve communication and PR, and strengthen cooperation between the local branches.
5. Develop regular meetings and activities on diverse aspects, even outside the political sphere.
6. Raise capacities of members and support the organization with technical skills.
7. Invest on women role models with trainings and mentorship programs.
8. Create advisory groups with women professionals from various fields and invest on the research capacities of the Women’s Organization.

As a summary, of this section, it results that the women members are aware of the important role of the Women’s Organization within the Party, the internal organizational issues and challenges, as well as of the need of more support especially regarding access to resources.

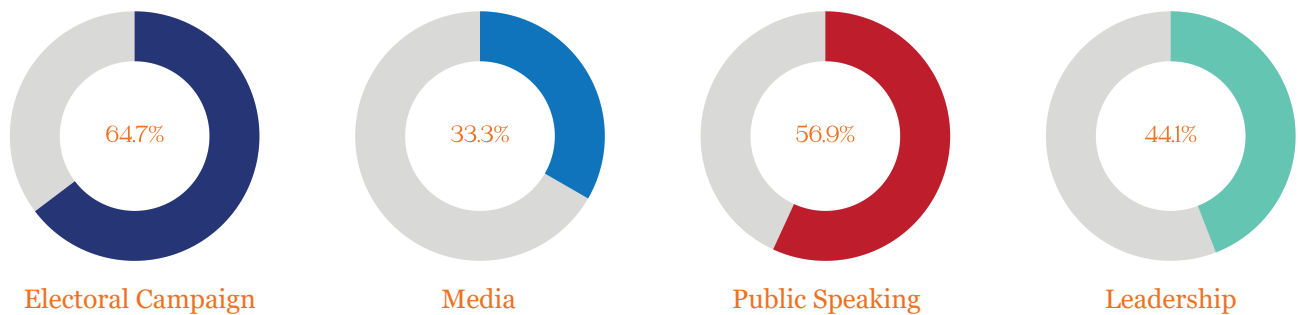
**Capacity Building and skills:**

To ensure women’s participations in internal structures and advance their representation in politics and public life, it is crucial to provide them with the opportunity for capacity and skill building, creating the necessary space to discuss policies and specific issues and networking with each other. In this context, women members interviewed were shown a list of trainings and asked to select which ones they had participated in and the actor that provided those trainings. The data indicates as follows:

- » 64.70% of women members interviewed have been trained on electoral campaign.
- » 58.82% of the women members interviewed have been part of gender mainstreaming training.
- » 56.86% of the women members interviewed have attended communication and public speaking training.
- » 44.11% of women members interviewed have joined a leadership training.
- » Less than a half (41.17%) of the women members interviewed have knowledge on political party functions, and have been trained on this topic.
- » 31.37% of the women members interviewed have been engaged on legislative advocacy trainings.
- » 33.33% of women members interviewed have received a training on Media.
- » Only 19.60% of the women members interviewed have participated in trainings on gender budgeting.



Trainings Participation



Actors who provided more support with trainings mentioned by the women members interviewed are CSOs and International Organizations (such as the National Democratic Institute, Konrad Adenauer Foundation, Women’s Network “Equality in Decision Making”, International Republican Institute, Jarl Hjalmarson Foundation, Robert Schuman Foundation, etc) and the Political Party itself.

3.1.3 Challenges of women members of the Democratic Party in politics and within the party

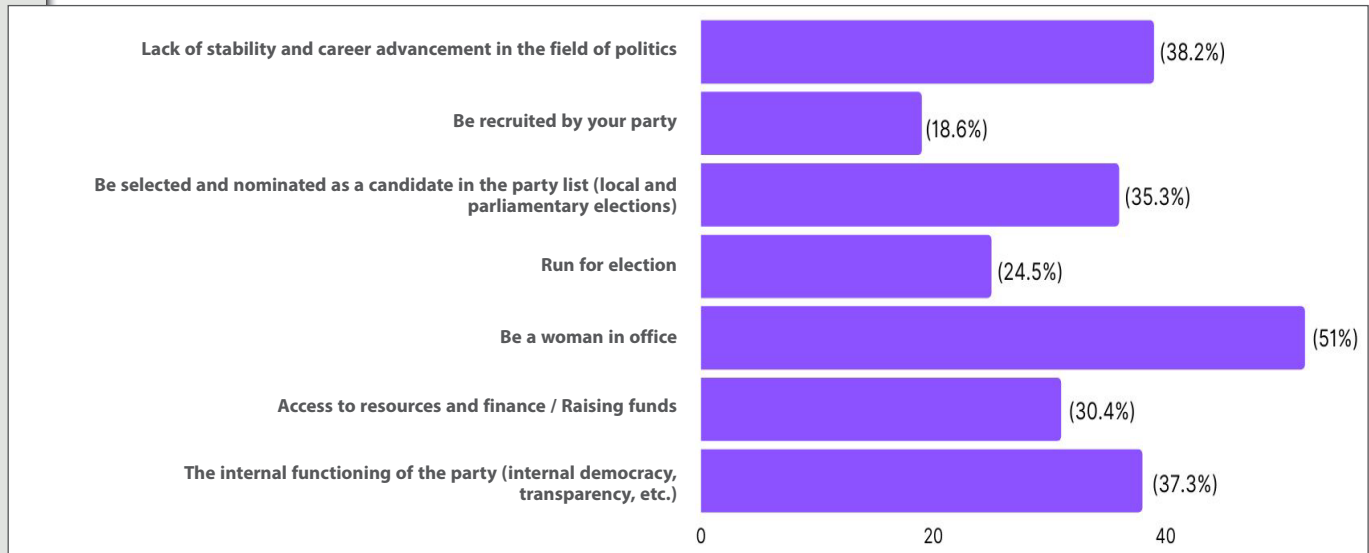
Challenges of women members:

This section provides information on the main challenges and barriers that women part of the survey, face in their engagement in politics and as members of the Democratic Party. They were asked on the problems and difficulties they faced within the party tackling different dimensions:

Challenges as women engaged in politics:

Most of the women members interviewed reported the following challenges: being a woman in politics (51%), lack of stability and possibility to advance in political career (38.2%), internal organization and functioning of the party, for example: internal democracy, transparency, etc. (37.3%).

Figure 3: What do you consider as the most challenging issue for a woman engaged in politics? (You can choose up to 3 options)

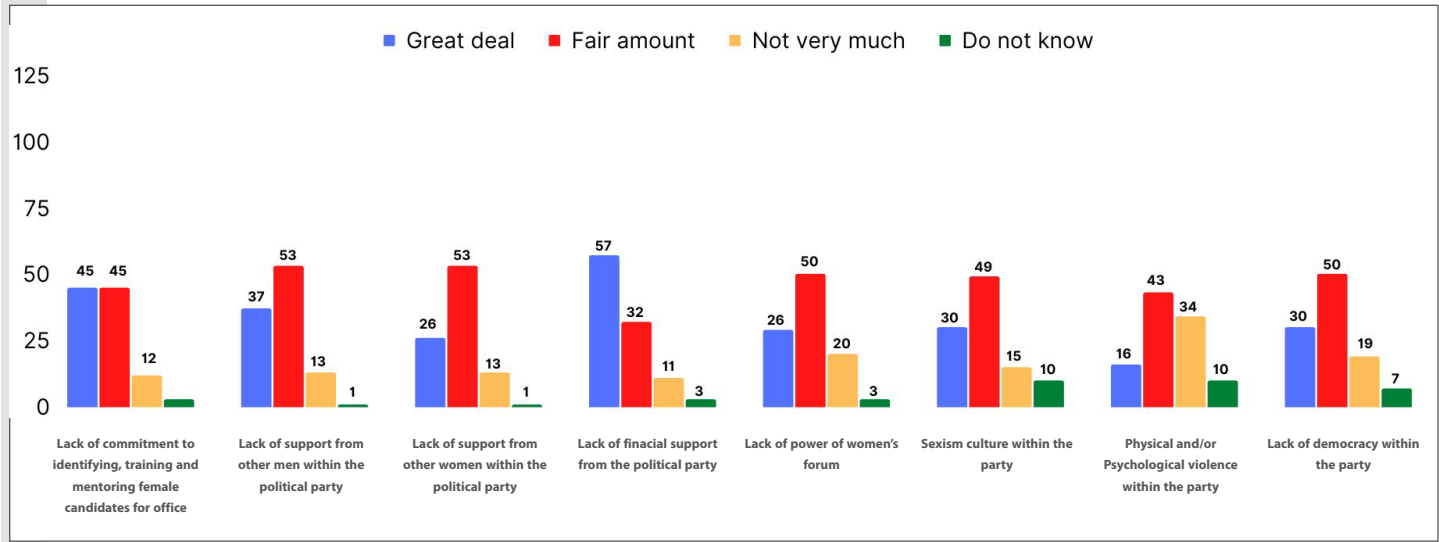


Challenges within the party:

In continuation, women members interviewed were asked on their opinion for the main aspects that negatively influence women to enter the political party; listed from the most-mentioned: Lack of financial support from the political party (54.90%), lack of commitment to identifying, training and mentoring female candidates for office (44.11%) and (36.27%) lack of support from other men within the political party.



**Figure 4: How much influence, in your opinion, does the following have in deterring women from entering in politics and in political parties?**



Challenges experienced as part of the political party:

Finally, the participants were asked to share their experiences within the party and they affirmed to have experienced the following difficulties:

- » 78.43% of the women members interviewed pointed out as the most challenging aspect the patriarchal culture and men domination within the party.
- » 41.17% of the women members interviewed indicated the unwritten rules and norms as an obstacle within the party.
- » 35.29% of the women members interviewed have experienced sexism and gender barriers.
- » 34.31% of the women members interviewed affirmed to have experienced disparaging or harassing remarks within the party.
- » 26.47% of the women members said that they have experienced lack of access to resources or information which has undermined their work and success.

Most common comments by survey participants:

*"Bullying, sexism and hate speech in social media is a normal aspect of being a woman in politics."*  
*"Politics is considered a men's job. Old mentality and patriarchalism continue being the main challenges for women in politics."*  
*"Lack of information and transparency within the party penalizes especially women."*  
*"I consider family responsibilities as one of my biggest challenges. To balance politics and family is extremely difficult especially during electoral campaigns, no support is given in this aspect..."*  
*"Women in career are not treated in the same way than men. We can be highly competitive and skilled; however, we live in a society and as a result in a party which is highly patriarchal..."*



### Stories, challenges and recommendations from Women Members of the Democratic Party

In the framework of this report, to assess more deeply the position, access and challenges of women in the Democratic Party, in addition to the survey, personal interviews were conducted with women in different decision making positions, backgrounds and experience within the Party. A summary of these interviews is as follows:

#### ALBANA VOKSHI



Albana Vokshi, born on 24 February 1971, graduated from the University of Tirana with a Bachelor in Engineering and completed her Master's degree at Columbia University. Albana is a member of the Parliament of the Republic of Albania representing the Democratic Party. She is a prominent figure of the Democratic Party, being an MP since 2009. In the Albanian Parliament she has held the position of Head of the Committee on Health and Social Welfare 2021, and in previous legislations she has been the Chairwoman of the Committee on Education and Media, 2017–2019, Chairwoman of the Committee on Health and Social Welfare, 2013–2017 and Chair of the Subcommittee on Gender and Child Protection 2009–2013.

During her activity she focused on creating policies for health services free or with a low payment, women employment and education and training facilities for women. As part of the structures of the Democratic Party, Ms. Vokshi has been Chairwoman of the Women's Organization of the party, the Democratic League of Albanian Women - LDGSH, member of DP's Executive Board since 2009 and at present Chair of the DP Election Commission.

Ms. Vokshi is the first woman from the Balkans Region elected Vice President of the EPP Women, in 2022. As Chair of the Women's Organization of the Democratic Party, Albana states that the role of the Women's Organization inside the party has been increasing year by year, due to the work, organization and contribution of women and girls. The number of women in leadership positions inside the party coming from LDGSH is increasing as well.

Some of the major challenges for women in politics in Albania, according to Ms. Vokshi are, access to political finance and resources, gender stereotypes and violence against women in politics. One of the major challenges faced in the sustainability of the Women's Organization is the financial support and access to resources. To better implement its duties and be the key point of women recruitment and empowerment inside the party, the Organization would need to keep reorganizing periodically, to raise capacities of its members, to create the possibility of a better infrastructure to tackle women's issues not only inside the party and in politics, but also social issues that impact women in the society.

To empower and guarantee the participation of women in the political party, it is important to improve, harmonize and gender sensitize internal regulations and decision making processes. It is crucial to support the the women members of the party, at local and central level, providing capacity building, possibilities of networking and cooperation, promoting more women and the Women's Organization activities in media and social media, exchanging best practices through creating regional and international support networks, etc.

**LAJLA PERNASKA**



Lajla Pernaska is an Albanian right-wing politician, elected 2 times as MP in the Parliament of Albania, with extensive experience in politics, human rights, gender issues and international relations. Ms. Pernaska has been engaged in the public sphere as a civil society activist as well as a political elected official. She has been involved with the Democratic Party since 1995. She has been member of the Presidency of LDGSH (1995-1998), head of the Department of Social Affairs of the DP (1999-2001), Member of the Executive Board of DP, Tirana Branch (2009-2013), member of the National Council of the DP (2010-2015), member of the Executive Board of DP (2011-2014) and coordinator and representative in the Assembly for Unit No. 2, Tirana District (2005-2013).

She has a professional profile as an expert with a wide level of knowledge and experience in legislation, policy-making, planning, drafting, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs/projects, in the field of Public Health, gender equality and social issues. She has engaged in the work to reform the health care system in Albania, the preparation of health strategies and policies, since 1995. Expert on the gender perspective in development policies and programs, since 1996 with in-depth knowledge in the field of political leadership, organization and management, with experience in cooperation for development programs, with International Organizations such as UNICEF, UNDP, Council of Europe, European Commission, USAID, World Bank, WHO. During her political career, Ms. Pernaska has been elected also to leadership positions in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Related to her experience, Ms. Pernaska states during the interview: “It has not been easy for me to run for Parliament in a moment when the Party wasn’t open to women and gender equality issues, but with the due perseverance I ran and I won my first parliamentary mandate in 2005, after 10 years of active contribution for the party.” Ms. Pernaska affirms that the Party needs to invest more in opening the real competition inside the party, and to guarantee gender equality not only in representation but also in regulation and policy making. It is of crucial importance to invest in re-establishing the trust and mutual cooperation of right-wing women with the political party structures and invest more in projects and initiatives of capacity building for women and girls members of the party. According to Ms. Pernaska the Women’s Organization of the Party should have a more effective and accessible organization in order to be stronger inside the party.

**ORJOLA PAMPURI**



Orjola Pampuri was born on 13 November 1981, and she graduated from the University of Tirana with a Bachelor degree in Psychology, where she later also completed her PhD studies. Starting from September 2017, she became an MP of the Democratic Party of Albania in the Parliament of Albania. She is a career psychologist and professor at the University of Social Sciences and Medicine in Albania. Before entering politics, she was engaged as a specialist of mental health in the Public Health Institute.

During the interview Ms. Pampuri states that her route to engage in politics, was through an invitation of the Party and she thinks is it very important for the party to invite and actively engage women professionals from different fields. She states that although there have been very good achievements related to gender equality, it is still difficult to speak about women and men that run with equal opportunities, because politics is still considered a men’s job. Ms. Pampuri states that she believes more in qualities than in quotas, but quotas can be removed only when citizens and professionals will have created trust in politics and intellectuals will not be hesitant to engage in politics. As part of her experience Ms. Pampuri said that she has not faced challenges because of her gender, while being in politics. For a better representation and empowerment of women in the Party, Ms. Pampuri suggests that a Commission for Gender Equality should be created as part of the Women’s Organization that would undertake initiatives on designing programs, drafting legal initiatives for women’s rights, contribute to fundraising initiatives, tackle and address issues of women parliamentarians and gender equality. Transparency, meritocracy and values such as integrity should be guaranteed in the functioning of such Commission.

## BESMIRA PETRITI



Besmira Petriti was born on 25.09.1988 in Korça and completed her studies at the Faculty of Law, and a Master of Science in "Politics and Governance of the European Union", at the Institute of European Studies, University of Tirana. For more than 10 years Ms. Petriti has practiced her profession as a lawyer in the public administration in institutions such as the Ministry of Finance, the Municipality of Tirana, the High State Control and recently the Office of the Ombudsman where she worked as the head of the International Relations and European Integration Sector. Since October 2019 onwards, she is engaged as a lecturer at "Beder University College" as well as a part-time lecturer at Qiriazhi College.

Coming from a politically persecuted family has encouraged her to invest in the passion for politics, international relations and justice. In 2007 she was elected vice-president of the Youth Organization of the Democratic Party of the Faculty of Law. She was then engaged in all upcoming electoral campaigns of the Party and in the management of elections processes. In 2015, she was elected vice-president of the Youth Organization of the Democratic Party as well as a member of the National Council for two terms until present. In 2017, she was a candidate for MP in Tirana.

During her interview, Ms. Petriti brought on a different point of view, as part of the Youth Organization of the DP, bringing to attention her own personal experiences while being engaged in politics. The language of hatred due to strong positions taken and attacks especially from male functionaries, as well as financial difficulties and lack of access to resources while running for MP (as the party did not have any help or special budget for female candidates) were some of the challenges faced during her political engagement. "I would recommend more attention to women and girls who dare to do politics in a difficult environment, such as that of political parties." – states Ms. Petriti, while she accentuates the need for provision of political training for women. The professional growth, according to their area of expertise would serve to better policy-making and it would benefit not only the women themselves, but also the Democratic Party so that it can become a very good alternative to lead the country. The political party should provide conditions for women's empowerment within the party at the management and organizational level even when quotas are not foreseen. "Despite the many efforts made so far, I think that there is an urgent need to encourage competition and meritocracy, the promotion of good models, as well as the opening of the party, and especially of the Women's Organization, to women professionals, experts and people with integrity, as currently, our society is in crisis due to the above-mentioned shortages, which of course is also reflected in the party" – states Ms. Petriti.

## MIMOZA HAJDARMATAJ



Mimoza Hajdarmataj was part of the students' movement engaged in the riots against the communist regime and democratization of Albanian in 1990. Following her degree in Electronic Engineering in 1992, she started to work for the Telecommunication State Agency, for a period of 15 years. In 2010 after completing a Master of Science in International Relations, she served for a year as Director of Electronic and Postal Communication Directory at the National Agency for Information Society. In 2011, she was nominated by the Prime Minister of Albania as the General Inspector of the Central Inspectorate. In 2015 Ms. Hajdarmataj was elected as the first parliamentarian woman, representing Kukësi, the northern region of Albania, substituting one of the men MPs that withdrew from the Parliament. In 2018 she has established the Center for "Women in Public Service" Albania determined to bring in the broad her experience gained in executive, politics and civil society to empower and stand up for women and young girls.

Ms. Hajdarmataj has entered the party through different activities and emphasizes the need to invest in women and youth not only during electoral campaigns, but also when women are in office (in Parliament, in local councils, etc.).

**MERITA PONI**



Merita Poni is a lecturer at the University of Tirana, in the Department of Sociology, where she teaches and conducts research in the field of gender, sociology, education, crime, terrorism and violent extremism, transitional justice and research methods. She studied Sociology, Philosophy and Law as a bachelor and completed master's studies in social policies, master's in education and a PhD in gender studies. She has long experience in local governance, protection of human rights as an activist and researcher.

During her mandate as local councilor representing the Democratic Party she led in the Alliance of Women Local Councilors of Tirana and trained other women councilors to set up alliances and commissions on gender equality. Ms. Poni co-chaired the Municipal Commission on Gender Equality and Commission on Social Protection; designed Gender Responsive Budget for municipalities, and social protection policy and in municipal commissions crosscutting with gender such as: health, education, employment, transport, judicial, fiscal, etc. During the interview Ms. Poni states that she has entered the party through an invitation of the

Based on the interviews results that during the years when the Democratic Party was in government, various legal initiatives on gender equality, gender based violence and protection from discrimination have been undertaken, as follows:

- » Ratification of the Convention of the Council of Europe "On measures against trafficking of human beings" (20.11.2006).
- » Amendments to the Criminal Code (2007), where, among other things, a criminal offense, motivated by gender-related motives, is designated as an aggravating circumstance.
- Adoption of the law on the rights and treatment of the sentenced to imprisonment and pre-trial
- » detention, (2008), where one of the main principles that is foreseen is non-discrimination due to gender.
- Adoption of Law No. 9970 dt. 24.07.2008 "For gender equality in society", for the protection of
- » citizens from any kind of discrimination based on gender, guaranteeing equal opportunities and chances for both men and women. For the first time, gender quotas of 30% are foreseen in the law to achieve balance in the bodies of legislative, executive, judicial power and public life.
- Introduction of the gender quota in the Electoral Code, which ensures the minimum
- » representation of 30% of the less represented gender in the candidates lists for the general and local elections and ensures inclusion of at least 30% of each gender in the administrative bodies of the central and local elections process.
- » Adoption of Law no. 10.329, dated 30.09.2010 "On some additions and changes to the law no. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On measures of violence in family relationships" as amended".
- » Adoption of Law 10221 dated 4.2.2010 "On Protection from Discrimination"
- » Drafting and adoption of the National Gender Equality Strategy 2011-2017, with the corresponding costed action plan.



### Strengthening of the structures for gender equality and domestic violence:

- » Establishment in the Albanian Parliament of the Parliamentary Subcommittee for Gender Equality and Juvenile Issues;
- » Establishment of the National Council for Gender Equality (KKBGJ) with (Prime Minister's Decision No. 3 dated 8.1.2009), as an advisory body to the Council of Ministers for gender policies.
- » Establishing and strengthening the network of gender officials at the central and local level, which has made it possible to include gender policies in government policies at all government levels.
- » Establishing the institution of the "Commissioner against Discrimination", as an independent institution that guarantees protection from discrimination.
- » The establishment of support structures for victims of violence through the operation of the first National Shelter for victims of domestic violence.
- » Establishing the Mechanism for Referral of Cases of Domestic Violence and gender based violence.

## CONCLUSION

While a significant progress has been made related to women's participation and representation in decision making in right-wing parties in different countries of the world, much work remains to be done, for a substantial empowerment of women inside political parties. The increased number of women in the Parliament and in other decision making institutions, as well as inside the Political Parties, has entailed the reorganization and enhancement of the decision making power of women, as well as the political parties' structures and leadership, nevertheless, the gap with the left-wing parties still remains and needs to be addressed.

The access of women in right wing parties and generally in politics, is still challenging and needs a serious effort to remove the barriers for women and girls to fully develop a political career. Women's political underrepresentation in right wing parties is caused by a lack of gender ideology. In order to bring change within the right-wing parties, it is necessary to recognize the importance of introducing affirmative actions to break the institutional constraints of the party and overcome specific gender barriers while running for office.

The present study indicates different forms to approach "identity politics" and recruiting women to right-wing parties. The data indicates that the more efforts the party does on introducing gender ideology within the party including measures, regulations and special structures and project, the greater is number of women and the electoral success of the party. As such, in the UK, the Conservative Party has taken an active role to ensure that the number of conservative women is increased in the UK House of Commons, within the party and the public life by: (a) introducing measures that guarantee women candidate selection procedures, (b) special structures within the party for women and (c) a direct strategy plan for recruitment. Advocating for women's representation tactically within the party has contributed to an increase of the representation of conservative women MPs in the House of Commons from 9% to over 20% in four elections<sup>43</sup> or from 198 seats in 2005 to 365 seats in 2019<sup>44</sup>, while also becoming the most voted party in UK. On the other hand, right-wing parties who lack of significant affirmative steps to recruit and support women candidates are generally underrepresented by women.

In Albania, the Democratic Party has made significant progress to ensure greater women's representation in decision making in Parliament, at local level and inside the Party structures. From the study it results as well that the DP has initiated and supported important steps on improving the legislation and structure that guarantee gender equality and equal opportunities in the society and specifically in decision-making. Positive steps have been undertaken to ensure a certain degree of representation of women within the party with the introduction of the internal quotas and the voluntary organization of women, and the party has a structured and active women's organization (LDGSH).

<sup>43</sup>Women2win. Retrieved from: <https://www.women2win.com/about-us>

<sup>44</sup>Official Website of the UK Parliament. Retrieved from: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/how/elections-and-voting/general/previous-general-elections-in-the-uk/>

However, the lack of internal long-lasting and sustainable strategic plans for women, lack of access to finance and to resources, makes structures still vulnerable inside the party. Although positive results have been achieved regarding the representation and participation of women in decision making inside the party and in politics, it is necessary to work deeper on the institutional context of the political party to create long lasting changes and more effective results.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to tackle the main issues emerged during this study we would recommend the following to:

### Empower the Women's Organization through raising capacities of the women members of the party: ✓

- ✓ Supporting them with trainings acquiring special technical skills necessary based on their professions and interests, in order to better contribute to party policy making and to addressing women's needs in the community.
- ✓ Raising capacities investing in research skills, feeding and gender sensitizing the Party policies.
- ✓ Support the Women's Organization to address not only political issues, but to also engage in social actions, in order to strengthen the relations with the community.

### Strengthen collaboration and experience-sharing between the Women and Youth Organization: ✓

- ✓ Facilitate the coordination of activities and relationships between the Women's and the Youth Organization. These ties may benefit both women and youth candidates to establish stronger relations with grassroots and constituencies while also empowering their voices within the party.

### Empower the Women's Organization through: ✓

- ✓ Creating sustainable forms of financial support and fundraising possibilities, as well as access to resources of the party.
- ✓ Enhancing the efficiency of the organizational structure and improving communication with members and the public

### Improve women's access to resources and funding during elections: ✓

- ✓ Financial resources are necessary for women to successfully run for elected office. Therefore, political parties should consider the issue of gender when it comes to finance and resources. Political parties should also ensure that women and men candidates have equal access to funding and assist women candidates by including them in party campaign efforts for fundraising.



### **Set up a special strategy plan for women & create sustainable recruiting programs especially for women professionals:**

- ✓ Create a mentoring and pressure group within the party that promotes the election of more women and increased involvement of women in public life. Invest in programs that open the doors of the party to women professional and benefit effectively from their contribution.

### **Identify and disseminate party positions on issues that are priorities for women:**



- ✓ Identify and disseminate party positions on issues that are priorities for women. Introducing women concerns into the party priorities can aid women candidates because it provides an agenda and it facilitates better reaching of women voters.

### **Encourage women to represent the party in the media:**



- ✓ Media has become a central part of the political development and voter outreach. All media, intentionally or not, subtly tend to promote “male politics”. In specific, 90 percent of the politicians invited in Evening Talk Shows during the 2021 Electoral Campaign were men, hence making women voices in politics less heard<sup>47</sup>. In this context, there should be emphasis in the importance of selecting and preparing women to represent the party in the media and at the same time sensitize journalists on professional and gender sensitive media programs and coverage.

### **Enhance transparency, improve internal democracy and communication**

- ✓ Within the party as one of the issues raised during the study is the need for more transparency, information and communication to achieve a better and more effective engagement of women in the decision making processes and in the political party activities.

### **Strengthen cooperation with CSOs and international organizations**



- ✓ CSOs can play an important role in identifying and raising capacities and skills for women and girls. CSOs have been strategic partners to push for larger participation and representation of women and girls on right-wing parties.

<sup>47</sup>Women's Network Equality in Decision Making (2021) Fair media coverage of women and men candidates in 2021 parliamentary election campaign in Albania: monitoring period during electoral campaign.

## APPENDIX 1: Research Methodology

The study has followed three-stage process: desk review, online survey with women from right-wing party DP, and storytelling.

In the first phase, diligent **desk research** was conducted to gather information and best practices in Europe, Western Balkans, and USA. This comparative analysis helped the team to better understand this phenomenon while also allowing us to delve deeper into the structural and ideological differences, and the gendered impact of those differences. The desk research focused on mapping conservative parties in the UK, Germany, USA, Albania, Spain, and Croatia and identifying at least 6 success stories of right-wing women politicians. Building a comprehensive desk review, supported by secondary data analysis, is the corner stone of the assessment helping us to refine the approach and focus data collection for the survey and storytelling stage.

In the second phase, the **online survey** aimed to better understand the position of women on right-wing parties in Albania helping us to identify (a) internal dynamics of the political institution which are determining women's participation in elections, while also recognizing challenges, barriers, and opportunities and (b) formal initiatives to recruit potential women candidates. The survey was conducted with right-wing women politicians – Members of Parliament, former Council Members, Mayors, Council chairs, and party members- at the local and national level. The sampling included 102 right-wing women from the Democratic Party of Albania (DP). The survey was designed and conducted in a way to provide nationally representative data for the population in question, with the principle of randomness of selection.

In the third phase, storytelling was carried out to (a) provide a space for women to share stories that were important to them; second, (b) to understand women's experiences from their perspective; and third, (c) to reveal experiences that so far have remained invisible. We used purposeful sampling to select a heterogeneous group of right-wing women – Members of the Parliament, former Council Members, Mayors, Council Chairs, and party members – and we paid attention to characteristics such as age, political experience, ethnicity, and disability.

By choosing two different methodological approaches – one quantitative and one qualitative – we were able to capitalize on the respective strengths of each and to compensate somewhat for the weaknesses of either.

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Women's Network Equality in Decision Making (2021) Fair media coverage of women and men candidates in 2021 parliamentary election campaign in Albania: monitoring period during electoral campaign.

Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) is the UK public body dedicated to supporting democracy around the world. Operating internationally, WFD works with parliaments, political parties, and civil society groups as well as on elections to help make countries' political systems fairer, more inclusive and accountable.



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