

# ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN POLITICAL PARTY FINANCING IN ALBANIA



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## Abbreviations

ALL	Albanian Lek
AP	Action Plan
AWEN	Albanian Women's Empowerment Network
CEC	Albanian Central Election Commission
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
DP	Democratic Party of Albania
EMILY	Early Money Is Like Yeast
EOM	Election Observation Mission
IDEA	International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance
ISP	Institute for Political Studies
LDGSH	Lidhja Demokratike e Gruas së Shqipërisë (Democratic Women's League of Albania)
MP	Member of Parliament
NDP	New Democratic Party in Canada
ODIHR	OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SP	Socialist Party of Albania
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
WFD	Westminster Foundation for Democracy

## Executive Summary

Political parties play an important role in democratic development. Therefore, it is essential for parties to promote women in their candidate lists, provide women candidates with appropriate training and support, and funds. In many countries the adoption of party quotas has increased women's participation in politics, but this has not sufficed to ensure their meaningful representation and their voice in politics.<sup>1</sup> The analysis conducted in this report shows that:

- Transparency of political/election financing is not fully achieved. There is space to improve the legal framework as well as the implementation of provisions related to transparency and accountability.
- While there are fines for political parties that do not meet the quotas for local and parliamentary elections, it has been witnessed that parties would rather pay the fines than increase the number of women in party lists. There are other methods and tools that can be explored and added to the existing legislation such as incentives for political parties that include more women in party lists, decreased funding for political parties that do not meet gender quotas etc.
- Political parties have some basic principles in place in their statutes to promote gender equality in party structures. Most parties analysed in this study do have provisions for gender equality in their structures and have established women wings. However, beyond these provisions, there is no clear strategy in place to empower women within the party. There are no consistent funding mechanisms for women's forums, or training programs targeted at women candidates that are funded directly by the party, and no other programs that aim to increase funding and skills for women candidates. Most of the programs that exist are carried out by CSOs and different foundations and donors. Political parties in Albania can and should do more to meaningfully empower women who are already in the party and attract more women, especially from rural areas.
- Political parties have not conducted a thorough analysis of their structures, statutes, procedures and functioning as far as gender equality is concerned. Therefore, a gender audit is recommended in order to understand better the gaps and good practices already in place and come up with concrete solutions to address the gaps and promote good practices.

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<sup>1</sup> International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics. No date. Best practices used by political parties to promote women in politics. Online: [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)

## Introduction

Women and other marginalized groups continue to face obstacles and challenges in political representation. One of them is a lack of access to political funding, both from party sources as well as from external funding.<sup>2</sup> In 2020, women represented on average only 25% of parliamentarians worldwide. If progress continues at this pace, it will take approximately 48 years to reach gender equality in politics. Gender targeted public funding is one approach towards increasing political representation of women in politics. Linking the amount of funding to the level of gender equality among candidate lists or earmarking portions of public funding for gender equality has the potential to support and increase women's representation. Albania is among a handful of countries that have adopted such an approach and data shows there has been a steady increase in the number of women elected in parliament since the early 1990s.

Despite these legal improvements and concrete steps to ensure equal representation between men and women in politics, the country is still lagging. Women don't have the same access to financial resources, stemming from generally lower-paid jobs, less access to property, financial assets and other resources that are needed during elections. Women are also still lagging behind men in visibility during elections, as noted in subsequent OSCE/ODIHR election reports. The fact that electoral campaigns have been getting more expensive over time adds to the challenge of accessing funding, especially from private sources.

Women represent half of the country's population, and their voices and perspectives are essential to guarantee that public policies respond to the different needs of men and women. This report will delve into the mechanisms, legal and otherwise, for political funding in Albania and their impact on women's representation. The first chapter focuses on a theoretical and practical perspective of gendered political financing and promising practices found around the world. The second section of the report analyses the current legal framework in Albania and combines provisions for political financing and transparency. An in-depth analysis of political party statutes from a gender perspective will help identify gaps and offer recommendations for public institutions and political parties.

The report concludes with a set of recommendations needed to support women's representation in politics, transparency of political financing, party procedures and rules for advancing women within the party and in elected office. A survey conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has found that one of the most significant factors that deter women from entering politics is the lack of finances to contest electoral campaigns.<sup>3</sup> In fact, not all political parties promote gender equality or uphold their manifesto pledges and few women hold top decision-making positions in their ranks.<sup>4</sup> As would be expected, the support of the ruling party is one of the most important factors in introducing and enacting gender-related legislation.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> IDEA. 2020. Political Finance Reforms: How to respond to today's policy challenges. Online: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/political-finance-reforms.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Ballington, Julie, Equality in Politics: A Survey of Women and Men in Parliaments, Inter-Parliamentary Union, Geneva, Switzerland, 2008, p. 18

<sup>4</sup> United Nations Development Programme and National Democratic Institute for International Affairs. Empowering Women for Stronger Political Parties. A Good Practices Guide to Promote Women's Political Participation. Online: Empowering-Women-PolitParties-ENG\_0.pdf (ndi.org)

<sup>5</sup> United Nations DPKO/DFS, Joint Guidelines on Enhancing the Role of Women in Post-Conflict Electoral Processes, DPKO/DFS, New York, USA, 2007, p. 28

## Political party financing from a gender perspective

Political parties stand at the forefront of democratic development, they choose who will stand for elections and make future decisions that impact the whole society. Gender equality within political parties improves their internal democracy, increases inclusion and fairness and increases the likelihood of more transparent, fair and accountable governance within the party<sup>6</sup>, which could be translated in more transparent, fair and accountable governance in general.

Enhancing gender equality within political parties improves their internal democracy. Ensuring inclusion and fairness from a gender perspective in the functioning of a political party increases the likelihood of more transparent, fair, and accountable governance within parties. Moreover, promoting gender equality within political parties is likely to improve their public image and standing, broaden their appeal to more and diverse set of voters, and improve policy agendas by considering more diverse views and inputs. These features should help parties grow into more effective and legitimate political organizations.

In more concrete terms, a gender equality policy helps political parties:

- identify gender-based inequalities as a major inhibitor to equal political participation.
- provide a clear and coherent direction and policy measures for promoting gender equality in politics.
- integrate gender equality into their vision and their strategic missions and plans.
- identify specific objectives in line with key areas of internal organization and operation.
- establish measurable targets and implementation mechanisms; and
- develop internal accountability mechanisms in compliance with these objectives.

Gender targeted public funding contributes to achieving gender equality within political parties. They provide parties with the tools and incentives to include more women as candidates; improve the capacity of individual women to run successful campaigns and; undertake strategic work within parties to improve attitudes and support towards gender equality.

## Tools for increasing gender equality in political party financing

Over time several methods and tools have been developed in response to the under-representation of women in politics. There are measures voluntarily initiated by political parties, while others are related to incentives and limitations that governments put in place in the form of gender targeted funding mechanisms.

## Policy level initiatives

Using the combination of incentives and punitive measures to incentivize political parties to promote women in public office has become a popular tool exercised by governments around the world. Some of the incentives are included in country constitutions, while others are

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<sup>6</sup> International IDEA. 2016. A framework for developing gender policies for political parties. Online: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/a-framework-for-developing-gender-policies-for-political-parties.pdf>

mandated through election laws and party regulations.<sup>7</sup> Measures initiated by policymakers include both incentives for parties that increase their gender parity as well as fines for not meeting these commitments. Studies show that a growing number of countries are using public funding of political parties and election campaigns to encourage gender equality. Gender-targeted public funding has two distinct aspects. First, the eligibility of a political party to receive a certain amount of public funding (or all of it) is connected to the level of gender equality among the candidates it puts up for election (or manages to get elected). Second, a certain proportion of public funding that a political party receives is formally tied to provisions related to gender, or earmarked for gender-related activities, including training and development of female members, developing a gender-action plan, or gender-sensitization within the ranks of political parties.<sup>8</sup>

By linking the amount of public funding to the level of gender equality among the candidates that a political party puts up for election or earmarking a certain portion of public funding for gender-related activities, political finance regulations could support women's participation in politics. Approximately 30 countries have such gender-targeted public funding, including Albania, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Georgia, Kenya and South Korea. Some other tools that governments use include:

- Limits on campaign donations – limited contribution amounts by law in order to level the playing field between men and women. Research has shown that men have more access to funding therefore they are able to raise more funds for their campaigns. By limiting donations.
- Caps on campaign expenditures – in line with limits on campaign donations many governments are also limiting campaign expenditures to control costs of being engaged in politics to try to increase the number of women who can enter the political field.
- Bans on paid advertising – promote more low-key methods of campaigning specially to encourage women from small and rural communities to campaign and get elected. These are in line with other measures to level the playing field.

## Voluntary party initiatives

Political parties don't always need incentives or push from policymakers to increase women's representation among their ranks. There are also initiatives that political parties start themselves. In fact, in some countries (such as Canada, Panama mentioned below) political parties have taken active measures to level the playing field for women candidates. Some of these measures include reducing or waiving nomination fees and establishing targeted fundraising mechanisms, creating funds to train and support women candidates or provide them with subsidies or in-kind contributions such as the cost of childcare support toward

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<sup>7</sup> International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics. No date. Best practices used by political parties to promote women in politics. Online: [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)

<sup>8</sup> Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, Reforming Political Finance for More Political Diversity in Political Office. (New York: Centre on International Cooperation, 2021), available at <https://www.sdg16.plus/>

transportation and campaign materials as well as setting caps on nominations and campaign expenditure.<sup>9</sup>

Research shows that providing skills-based training, specifically on campaign-related topics, is beneficial for women candidates. Political parties provide training to women who are members of the party and, in some cases, to women candidates in the country. Providing training to women is a popular strategy amongst parties that do not adopt quotas (especially conservative parties).<sup>10</sup> Political parties can also take steps to support women, such as funding childcare and travel costs and ensuring that central funds are used fairly to finance campaigns.<sup>11</sup>

## Promising practices

There is a myriad of initiatives, policies, tools, and procedures developed around the world to tackle women's underrepresentation in politics. While Albania has taken significant steps in its legal framework, this section will focus on other initiatives that have been successful and could be considered by political parties to adopt in their structures.

## Best practices from political parties

In Panama, the Panamanian Party has a provision setting aside 30% of the total party training funds specifically for the training of women. The money is allocated to and disbursed through the National Secretariat for Women, which has a powerful structure within the party. In a similar way, political parties in Costa Rica and Panama have internal regulations that designate financial resources for women's activities within the parties and electoral processes. In the case of Costa Rica, the national law that promotes social equity, "Ley de Promoción de la Igualdad Social," introduced in 1990, triggered innovative measures within a number of parties. The statutes of a.) Liberación Nacional (art. 171 reformed in May/97), b.) Movimiento Libertario (art. 72), c.) Partido Acción Ciudadana (art. 37), and d.) Partido Unidad Social Cristiana (art. 52) designate financial resources for training of women candidates. In Panama El Partido Arnulfista (The Arnulfista Party) established within its internal statute the designation of 30% of state subsidies to women's political training. Women may use these resources in forums, seminars, congresses and other training activities that promote gender equity.

Alongside with addressing gender equality in its statutes and regulations, the Citizens' Action Party (PAC) in Costa Rica also established a Prosecutor's Office on Gender Equality, which was mandated to monitor, report, and advise on how the regulations were being implemented.<sup>12</sup> Political parties can also adopt policies and special measures that provide women candidates financial assistance during campaigns and while they hold public office. For instance, the New

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<sup>9</sup> Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies, *Reforming Political Finance for More Political Diversity in Political Office*. (New York: Center on International Cooperation, 2021), available at <https://www.sdg16.plus/>

<sup>10</sup> International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics. No date. Best practices used by political parties to promote women in politics. Online: [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)

<sup>11</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2016. *Compendium of good practices for advancing women's political participation in the OSCE region*. Online: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/8/1/224206.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Freedom House, Costa Rica. Online: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/costa-rica/freedom-world/2021>

Democratic Party (NDP) in Canada has a financial assistance program that allows women and minority candidates to be reimbursed up to C\$500 for childcare expenses incurred in seeking nomination, C\$500 for travel costs in geographically large distances, and an additional C\$500 for costs incurred in seeking nomination in ridings where the NDP incumbent is retiring. Such assistance programs can help women candidates not only cover some of their campaign expenses but also alleviate their concerns for the well-being of their family members and colleagues.

The Canadian Liberal Party uses the party's fund to finance candidate campaigns and provides subsidies to candidates that include compensation costs of childcare during election activities, travel costs reimbursements, printing costs of materials, etc. Establishing fundraising networks to support the campaigns of female candidates is a frequent measure in the UK, Canada, Australia, USA, as countries where it is important to secure funds in the initial phase of party nominations. A good example of donation networking is EMILY list (Early Money Is Like Yeast), an online community established to help women in nominations for positions in the Democratic Party in the United States.

Another example come from Sweden and from the Federation of Social Democratic Women in Sweden called "S-Kvinnor" of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden.<sup>13</sup> The Social Democratic Women's club, established in 1892, in Stockholm and in 1920 returned into the federation of Social Democratic Women in Sweden by representatives from 120 women's clubs. During the early decades S-kvinnor fought for childcare, women's right to education, equal pay, women's right to abortion and against prostitution. Since then, S-kvinnor have promoted and still promote for example equally divided parental leave, the right to full-time employment, better working conditions and women's right to power. S-kvinnor also demand that more resources are granted to fight men's violence against women and children, including honour killing.

#### **Box 1**

##### **S-kvinnor way of function**

The S-kvinnor congress takes place every second year. It is the highest decision-making body and establishes the political orientation for the coming years. The organization's leadership (president, board and general secretary) is elected by the congress.

S-kvinnor approximately 250 local clubs form the most important part of the organization. The clubs work with political education, political debates, influence local politics and participate in international solidarity projects. The clubs are organized in 26 districts.

All members of S-kvinnor are members of the Social Democratic Party, but not all-women party members are S-kvinnor. It is not automatic membership, but an active choice.

**The activities of S-kvinnor are financed by membership fees, contributions from the Social Democratic Party, and government grants.**

**Below is the way how S-Kvinnor raise funds from membership and what they are offering to the people who support them:**

As a member of S-women you get:

- Participate and influence our policy.
- Opportunity for training at local, regional and national level.
- Opportunity to be elected as a trustee.
- S-women's member magazine "Morning breeze".
- Community with women from all over the country in the feminist struggle.

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<sup>13</sup> S-Kvinnor Demands. Online: <https://s-kvinnor.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/S-kvinnor-Demands.pdf>

## Best practices from policy measures

Bearing in mind that public funding is regulated by law, and most often there are no rules on the use of funds, political parties are free to allocate a percentage or particular share of these funds to activities aimed at empowering women. Some countries prescribe the mandatory percentage which political parties must allocate to the empowerment of women (e.g. in Italy and Brazil, parties must invest at least 5% of allocated funds in the strengthening of capacities of female candidates and politicians).

In *Chile*, the state provides financial assistance to female candidates directly and via parties who nominate them. In France, political parties are penalized through a reduction in their state funding if they do not respect the country's parity quota. In Ireland, parties are financially penalized for failing to implement a quota, and in South Korea, parties are given a financial reward for successful quota implementation.<sup>14</sup>

In *Croatia*, a change to the Political Parties Law in 2001 introduced a gender-targeted aspect to the existing system of public funding for political parties. Parliamentary parties receive public funding in proportion to the number of MPs that the party has. The amendment provides political parties with an additional 10 percent of the envisaged public funding for each candidate elected out of underrepresented gender. There are no restrictions on how political parties use the public funding they receive.<sup>15</sup>

In *France*, a legal reform in 2000 introduced the concept of gender parity into French legislation, rather than explicit quotas, and the resulting system is sometimes described as a 'de facto' quota. The provision meant that if the gender gap between all the candidates presented by a political party was larger than 2 percent (in practice larger than 51 percent men and 49 percent women), the public funding received by that party would be reduced. The reduction was originally set at half of that gap, later increased to two-thirds and since 2014 has been 1.5 times the gap. This means that if a party nominates 60 percent men and 40 percent women (a gap of 20 percent), its public funding is reduced by 30 percent, and if it were to not nominate any women at all it would forfeit all the public funding that it would otherwise have received.<sup>16</sup> In addition to the public funding of political parties, male and female candidates who gain at least 5 percent of the vote and whose financial reports are approved can be reimbursed for not more than 50 percent of their campaign expenses, excluding any personal contribution to their campaign.

In *Portugal* political parties with more than 67 percent of their candidates of the same gender (a 33 percent quota decided in the Parity Act) lose 25 percent of the public funding they would otherwise have been entitled to. This penalty increases to a 50 percent deduction if more than

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<sup>14</sup> Murray, Rainbow & Muriaas, Ragnhild & Wang, Vibeke. (2021). Editorial introduction: Gender and political financing. *International Political Science Review*. 44. 019251212110409. 10.1177/01925121211040961.

<sup>15</sup> International IDEA. 2018. Gender-targeted Public Funding for Political Parties: A comparative analysis. Online: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/gender-targeted-public-funding-for-political-parties.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

80 percent of the candidates standing are of the same gender. Portugal therefore has an unusual two-step sanctioning mechanism.

In *Georgia*, “an additional 30 percent in funding is awarded to parties that have 3 women for every 10 candidates.” While in *Moldova*, “parties with 40 percent women candidates receive additional 10 percent public funding, plus an unspecified multiple for each woman elected.” Lastly in *Mexico*, “each party must devote 2% of its annual regular public funding to the training, promotion and development of women’s leadership”. Another interesting incentive is free-of-charge media time that is granted to political parties promoting women candidates.<sup>17</sup>

## Political party financing and gender equality in Albania

### Legal and policy framework

Article 9/3 of the Constitution requires the financial resources of political parties as well as their expenses to be made public. Detailed rules regarding the financing of political parties as well as election campaigns are set out in (i) the law on political parties and (ii) the Electoral Code, which has undergone significant revisions with the latest ones being made in 2017 and 2020 in order to increase transparency and accountability of political party financing. As noted in ODIHR’s latest report on Albania’s 2021 elections<sup>18</sup>, changes to the law on political parties in 2020 brought it in line with the Electoral Code, which eliminates inconsistencies related to political party financing.

According to Albanian legislation, political parties and their candidates can receive funding for the purposes of their election campaign only from:

- Local, non-public natural and legal persons  
State budget.
- Activity of the party itself.
- Funding from foreign countries, from foreign legal or natural persons, as well as from local public legal entities is prohibited.

Contestants might also finance their campaigns from their own funds, donations from Albanian citizens, legal entities, and bank loans. Donations, including in-kind, are capped at ALL 1 million. Contributions above ALL 50,000 must be made through a designated bank account. The total campaign expenses of a party may not exceed ALL 167,480,000; the expenses of independent candidates cannot exceed ALL 27,913,000. Third party campaign financing is not regulated by law.

This fund is divided according to the following rules:

- 70% of the budget is received by the parliamentary parties in accordance with the number of seats in the parliament.

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<sup>17</sup> International Knowledge Network of Women in Politics. No date. Best practices used by political parties to promote women in politics. Online: [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)

<sup>18</sup> ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission, Parliamentary Elections 25 April 2021, 2021. Online: Final Report <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/1/493687.pdf>

- 20% of the budget is equally distributed to parties that have over 10 thousand votes.
- 10%, according to the percentage won among the political parties that have participated in the last parliamentary elections and have won over 1% of the votes nationwide.

For annual funding, political parties must submit a report to the Central Election Commission (CEC), no later than March 31 of the following year which contains:

- sources of funding based on a standardized format, approved by the CEC.
- expenditures based on the standardized format, approved by the CEC.
- entities related, directly or indirectly, to political parties or controlled by them, which are declared by the political party itself.

Each political party must record in a special register, according to the format approved by the CEC, the amount of funds received from each natural or legal person, as well as data related to the clear identification of the donor. In any case, the donor, at the time of donation, must sign a donation declaration, according to the format approved by the CEC. The list of persons who donate amounts not less than 100 thousand ALL, as well as the respective value, must always be made public.

During elections, electoral subjects are obliged to submit a financial report for the election campaign to the CEC within 60 days from the announcement of the election results. The report, as a rule, should contain information on:

- any donation, loan or credit given to the party and its candidates during the election campaign, six months before the campaign, as well as its source, including donations or services in kind.
- income for election campaign purposes from all other permitted sources.
- all items of expenditure for the purposes of the election campaign.
- the balance of assets and liabilities of the political party for the period from the decree of the election date to the election date.

While the legal framework has drastically improved in recent years there are still inconsistencies and standards in ensuring accountability and transparency. According to the latest ODIHR report on 2021 elections in Albania:

1. The fact that there is no interim reporting on campaign income and expenditure limits transparency and the ability of constituents to make informed choices. Therefore, there is a need to enhance accountability of political parties by requiring contestants to disclose campaign incomes and expenditure before election day.<sup>19</sup>
2. While the CEC is tasked with overseeing compliance with campaign finance regulation, ODIHR notes that the monitoring reports did not contain any methodically collected findings on financial activity of contestants. There is still room to improve oversight capacities of CEC to effectively enforce the legislation in place.

### **Political financing in action**

Despite legal and policy improvements in recent years, the situation on the ground sometimes speaks of a different reality of the cost of politics and transparency of political party and election

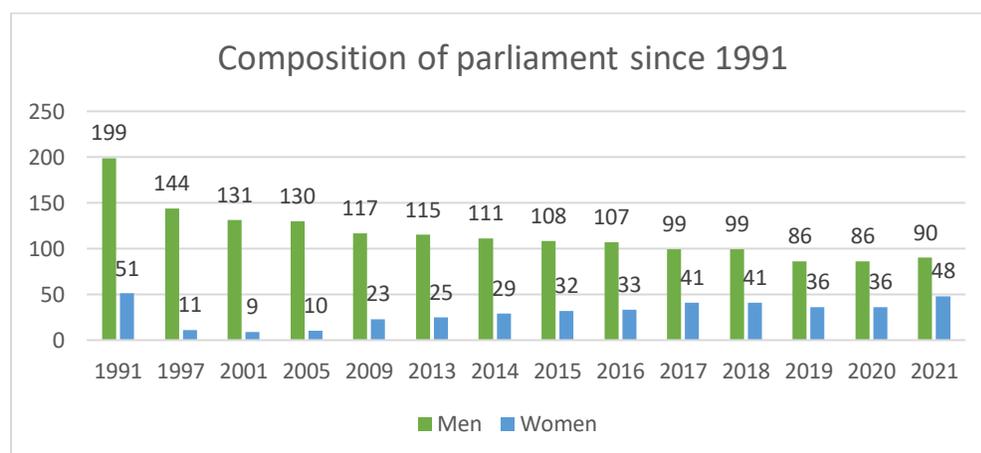
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<sup>19</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2021. Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report: Parliamentary Elections 2021. Online: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/1/493687.pdf>

financing. Research conducted previously by Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD)<sup>20</sup> showed that expenditures of political parties are significantly higher than the official statements made to the CEC. Numerous reports have highlighted the lack of transparency and the informal financing of political parties and their campaigns. Another issue raised in the report was regarding political rallies in Albania. According to the report, more than 2,600 rallies were held in Albania. CEC auditors have provided a cost estimate for these rallies which shows a hidden cost that on its own is higher than the total costs reported by the three main political parties in Albania. Estimates by the CEC auditors said the cost for a single rally varied from €1,500 to €40,000. If each political rally costs at least €1,500, then in total, all political parties in Albania spent at least €3.9 million on political rallies alone, which is higher than the €2.8 million reported by all political parties during the 2017 elections.

Some of the key findings from the report on the cost of politics include the fact that the current system favours big political parties at the detriment of smaller ones, which inadvertently also impacts women’s participation in politics. In addition, the report notes that even though substantial improvement has been made by the Central Election Commission in auditing political parties’ financial statements and making them available to the public for scrutiny, there still is a mismatch between what political parties report and what they really spend during elections.

Women are additionally impacted by the current landscape of political and election financing models in Albania. As the WFD report shows, it is very difficult for young people and especially women to enter politics — practically because they cannot afford the high cost of doing politics. Thus, having unequal access to financial resources not only influences women not to participate in elections but also restricts their engagement in many political activities. Women’s lack of knowledge about fundraising and their inability to self-cover the expenses of an electoral campaign explain why there are fewer women than men in the political scene.



**Source: INSTAT, Women and men in Albania 2022**

The ODIHR report on the 2021 parliamentary elections showed that political parties made attempts to increase visibility of women as candidates in the campaign and the mandatory quota

<sup>20</sup> WFD. Cost of politics in Albania. Online: <https://www.costofpolitics.net/reports/eastern-europe/view/c51ce410c124a10e0db5e4b97fc2af39/>

for women was exceeded in most candidate lists.<sup>21</sup> Women received over one third of the seats in the new parliament. Female candidates and other actors received only 19 per cent of campaign coverage in the news and current-affairs programmes in the media monitored by the ODIHR. A similar conclusion was made for the 2015 local elections. Women were active but underrepresented in electoral campaigns. However, the largest political parties did not always respect the gender quota in their candidate lists and women candidates received little media attention. While some 40 percent of candidates were women, they received only 26 percent of seats in the new parliament. Women were active and visible in the campaign and several events specifically targeted women voters that contested the elections were women. Women candidates received little media attention; the public and private television channels monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM devoted 13 percent of campaign coverage to women.<sup>22</sup>

In general, the quota system seems to have created a conducive environment for women to enter and advance in politics. At the local level, during the 2015 elections, only those councillor candidate lists that included 50 percent of each gender were registered, resulting in 44 percent of local councillors' seats being won by women in these elections. Eleven women ran for mayor and eight (13 percent) became mayors. Nevertheless, few women hold leadership roles within political parties. With some exceptions, women politicians did not feature prominently in the campaign or opposition protests.<sup>23</sup>

Previous research on women's experiences during electoral campaigns showed that the majority of financial support during campaigns is provided by family members (63%), compared to political parties (54%), businesses (20%) and other sources identified as community members, civil society, and international sisters' parties. Overall, 46% of women candidates reported receiving support from their political party for capacity building and 26 percent reported receiving support from civil society to participate in trainings and organize roundtables with voters. Participation in civil society-organized activities (trainings/capacity building for candidates, citizen roundtables, town hall meetings, etc.) was higher among elected candidates (25 percent) than those who were not elected (8 percent).<sup>24</sup>

Financing is one of the challenges women politicians reported in a 2022 survey conducted by WFD. According to the research 54.9% of women surveyed reported lack of financial support from the political party as one of the main aspects that negatively impacts women's decision to enter the political party realm. Lack of continuous training and mentoring of female candidates was mentioned by 44.11% of those surveyed.<sup>25</sup>

In general, despite progress, Albania's political landscape continues to be dominated by men. As a 2021 report from AWEN/WFD notes, it is still concerning that women are still

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<sup>21</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2021. Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report: Parliamentary Elections 2021. Online: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/5/1/493687.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2015. Election Observation Mission Final Report: Local Elections 2015. Online: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/f/2/180731.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> OSCE/ODIHR. 2019. Election Observation Mission Final Report: Local Elections 2019. Online: [https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/f/429230\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/f/429230_0.pdf)

<sup>24</sup> Women's Network Equality in Decision making. 2018. Women, Money, and Politics. Online: [http://www.platformmagjimore.al/publikime/#EDM\\_publikime](http://www.platformmagjimore.al/publikime/#EDM_publikime)

<sup>25</sup> WFD. 2022. Gender, representation and right-wing parties: women's access to right wing parties in Albania. Online: [https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/WFD%20Women%20Access%20to%20Right%20Wing%20Parties\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/WFD%20Women%20Access%20to%20Right%20Wing%20Parties_ENG.pdf)

underrepresented in local structures of political parties as well as leading electoral campaigns, which is rarely entrusted to women<sup>26</sup>, a finding in line with OSCE/ODIHR reports on women's visibility during the campaign period.

## Analysis of political party statutes

### Democratic Party

The Democratic Party statute establishes a 30% quota of women's representation in steering committees and the party's National Council. There is also a women's forum in charge of representing the interests of its members in all party structures, with a membership of about 20,000 women (ISP, 2017). According to the DP statute, the function of the women's forum is to promote the participation of women in policymaking, decision-making structures of the party and their engagement in political functions (DP Statute, no date). One of the principles outlined in the statute is that the role of the party is to promote gender equality in the life of the party and participation of women in elected and executive positions.

At the leadership level there are currently 5 women or 33% of the total, which makes it in line with the commitments in the party statutes to have at least 30% from the less represented gender at all levels of the party structures.

The Women's Democratic League is one of the partner organizations established by the statute. Partner organizations of the party are supported in their activity to advance the party's mandate. Point 3 of the statute posits that the Democratic Party shall guarantee the representation of partner organizations at all levels of political representation, where the representatives of the League of Democratic Women is at the level mandated by the electoral code.

#### Box 2.

##### Article 55

##### Party finance

- The financial resources of the party are composed of membership quotas, state budget, in kind and other donations as well as other financing and resources allowed by the relevant legislation.
- Membership quotas are determined by the leadership of the party. Rules for collecting, administering and using quotas are outlined in dedicated acts.
- Balances, including income and expenditure, from the annual budget of the party, are published in the online webpage of the DP.

The statute itself does not contain any provisions on how partner organizations, such as the women's league, will be supported and financed. In additions, despite provisions of transparency of financial resources and expenditure, which according to Article 55 of the statute shall be posted online on a yearly basis, such reports are missing from the party's website.

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<sup>26</sup> AWEN/WFD. 2021. Perfaqesimi i grave ne zgjedhjet parlamentare: Raport Monitorimi. Online: [https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PËRFAQËSIMI-I-GRAVE-NË-ZGJEDHJET-PARLAMENTARE-2021\\_Raport-Monitorimi\\_AWEN-converted.pdf](https://awenetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PËRFAQËSIMI-I-GRAVE-NË-ZGJEDHJET-PARLAMENTARE-2021_Raport-Monitorimi_AWEN-converted.pdf)

There are no specific, ongoing, and inclusive programs that target women members of the party. It is not clear how finances are distributed and if there are regular resources going into the Democratic League of Women. With the exception of the 30% quota mandated in the party's statute there seem to be no other efforts to support women candidates. As noted in consecutive OSCE/ODIHR reports on elections in Albania, while the number of women has generally increased since the introduction of gender quotas in electoral code, women are still underrepresented in electoral campaigns, they receive less media attention and often cannot access resources. According to previous research from WFD, 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.<sup>27</sup> However, there are no actions undertaken to implement the AP.

## Socialist Party

The Socialist Party statute articles 3, 23, 37, 43 and 63 contain several provisions to encourage women's participation in its party structures. It imposes a 30% gender quota on party structures and a 50% quota for national party congresses and candidates running for local councils in local elections. With about 30,000 women members in their structures, the Socialist party has also established, since 2003, a Women's Forum (ISP, 2017). The Socialist Party of Albania Statute and Regulation foresees that the forum represents the interests of women, but also provides for the principles of women's rights in society, including gender equality in the labour market, political participation and representation in public life (SP Statute, no date).

### Box 3.

The Socialist Organization is established:

- a. Based on the principle of no less than 30% representation of each gender.

The Socialist Organization is led by two co-chiefs, one from each gender.

### Congress delegates

Candidate lists to be voted and the list of winners as delegates should ensure 50% representation of each gender. In each list, 10% are young women and men up to the age of 30.

### National Assembly

The list of candidates and winners list for the National Assembly should ensure no less than 40% representation of each gender.

The statute of the Socialist Party contains detailed provisions on the source and use of financial resources. Chapter 14 is dedicated to provisions of financial and material resources of the party. Specifically, these resources come from membership quotas, state budget, legal in-kind donations, income from enterprises that use its assets and other income in accordance with the law. One of the sources is also aid from members supporters and party constituents. It is not clear the nature of the aid referred to in article 68 of the statute.

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<sup>27</sup> WFD. 2022. Online: [https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/WFD%20Women%20Access%20to%20Right%20Wing%20Parties\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/WFD%20Women%20Access%20to%20Right%20Wing%20Parties_ENG.pdf)

Differently from the other party statutes analysed here, the SP statute foresees also specific rules for gifts, how they are registered, who is eligible and the limits on gifts. While the statute contains other provisions on the use of financial resources (specifically article 72) it does not refer to gender equality and gender targeted financing for women members of the party. In line with other party statutes analysed here, the SP statute does not make any other provisions on gender equality beyond the gender quotas outlined above. There are no further references to gender equality mechanisms within the party statute. A gender equality strategy has been developed, but it is not clear how and if it is being implemented in practice.

## **Freedom Party**

The statute of the Freedom Party contains a general provision in Article 17, which posits that the Women's Movement for Integration is represented through specific candidate lists in the party's forums at all levels at the rate of no less than 50%. This is the only provision related to gender quotas in the party statute. The statute also contains provisions on the establishment of the Women's Movement for Integration within the party and differently from all other statutes analysed here, Article 17 of the statute provides for separate budget lines for the women's wing of the party as well as for the youth wing. This is a good practical example that could be considered for other political parties in Albania. The statute however does not specify where the funding for these wings will come from and at what percentage compared to other party structures and activities.

## Conclusion

This analysis shows that:

- Transparency of political/election financing is not fully achieved. There is space to improve the legal framework as well as the implementation of provisions related to transparency and accountability. Increasing capacities of political parties to uphold the principles of their statutes on political financing, reporting and transparency.
- While fines are envisaged for political parties that do not meet quotas, parties have been inclined to rather pay fines than increase the number of women in party lists. There are other methods and tools that can be explored and added to the existing legislation such as incentives for political parties that include more women in party lists, decreased funding for political parties that do not meet gender quotas etc.
- Political parties have some basic principles in place in their statutes to promote gender equality in party structures. Most parties analysed do contain provisions for gender equality in their structures and have established even women wings. However, beyond these provisions, there is no clear strategy in place to empower women within the party.
- There are no consistent funding mechanisms for women's forums, no consistent training programs targeted at women candidates that are funded directly by the party, no facilitation for women's participation in the party and no other programs that aim to increase funding and skills for women candidates. Political parties in Albania can and should do more to empower women who are already in the party and attract more women, especially from rural areas.
- Political parties have not conducted a thorough analysis of their structures, statutes, procedures and functioning with a gender lens. Therefore, a gender audit is recommended to understand better the gaps and good practices already in place and come up with concrete solutions to address the gaps and promote good practices.
- While Albanian legislation applies some form of gender targeted political financing, through fines for political parties that do not meet gender quotas, there are other mechanisms, such as incentives, that could do a better job of increasing financial resources available to women from political parties.
- Political parties do not apply specific gender-targeted funding for their women candidates and women factions. There are good examples from around the world that could be considered and included in their party statutes and other procedures and regulations.
- Women's political forums in Albania are weak structures and do not have any special access to political party funds. Also, women's forums do not collect a membership fee or have a clear management structure to create the possibility of collecting funds to be used later to finance women's participation in electoral campaigns.

## Recommendations

**For policy makers:**

- Introduce gendered criteria for the allocation of public funding, linked to the percentage of female candidates put forward by each party or elected to parliament, or the percentage of women at the top of candidate lists.

- Implement all recently adopted campaign finance regulations and reform those that do not work in practice; all regulations should also apply during the nominations period.
- The disbursement of public funding should be made conditional on the implementation of gender quotas within parties.

#### **For political parties**

- Develop and strengthen political parties' internal rules on the nomination process of candidates. Political parties should use intra-party fundraising mechanisms and grassroots political networks to support female candidates at the pre-nomination stage; and provide them with money should they be adopted.
- Organize training for female candidates with a focus on the main campaign finance regulations and candidates' duties and responsibilities.
- Organize training for male members of political parties on the issue of gender equality and the importance of women's participation in politics.
- Introduce a gender equity policy into national parties' statutes to ensure that female candidates are placed in competitive and 'winnable' positions and can benefit from an equitable distribution of campaign funding and other resources.
- Establish special 'earmarked funds' for female candidates that can be used to help organize electoral campaigns; ensure women benefit from a more equitable distribution of campaign financing and other resources.

#### **For women's political forums**

- Address gender equality in internal party regulations. The adoption of a statement on gender equality in the parties' founding documents is an important first step in providing the framework for moving toward more inclusive and responsive political parties. Several political parties include equality clauses in their vision statements and party bylaws.
- Request to adopt quotas and measures for women's participation in decision-making structures within the statute of the political parties. Political parties can ensure that women are appointed to key party committees, taskforces, and working groups.
- Contribute to policy development, promote women's interests in policy platforms and advise party leadership on gender issues.
- Contribute to, or oversee the implementation of, gender equality policies, including the implementation of quotas in the candidate recruitment process.

#### **For CSOs**

- Conduct a civic education campaign on the importance of women's participation and representation in politics.
- Organize tailor-made training and capacity development for women candidates on effective strategies for raising both direct and indirect resources, as well as effective ways to use those resources.
- Raise awareness of media and professionals on the importance of gender equality in media coverage and profiling women as capable leaders.
- Monitor parties' accountability mechanisms on campaign expenditure and internal budgets.

## Annexes

### Box 4.

#### Gender Audit questions

##### Who does what?

- Which activities do men and women usually perform?
- Do women undertake certain party activities more than men because they are women?
- Are any positions more predictably assigned to men or women?

##### Women's groups and secretariats

- Does the party have a women's group?
- Is this group part of the party's decision-making and executive structures?
- Does this group articulate women's interests and opinions pertain to the party's internal and external policies?

##### Who gets the highest posts?

- How many men and women are in the party's National Executive Committee? What roles do women have?
- How many women and men are in the Political Committee? What roles do they have?

##### Who has more access to resources?

- Do women and men have equal access to party finances in general? During electoral campaigns?
- Do women or men have more access to parties' resources and support (Organizational and logistical, political, etc.)?

##### Who has more access to training opportunities?

- Does the party provide regular training? On what issues?
- Does training address raising awareness about gender equality?
- Are men and women equal beneficiaries of training opportunities?

##### Who decides which candidates are nominated and how?

- How does the party nominate its candidates for elected offices? Are the rules and criteria clear?
- Does the party strive to achieve gender parity among its candidates?
- Do women party members participate in candidate selection committees?

##### Party manifestos and programmes

- How does the party develop its manifestos and programmes?
- Is this process open and inclusive of diverse groups from within a party? • Do women members have effective access to and a voice in this process?

**Source: Idea International. Online:**

<https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/a-framework-for-developing-gender-policies-for-political-parties.pdf>

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