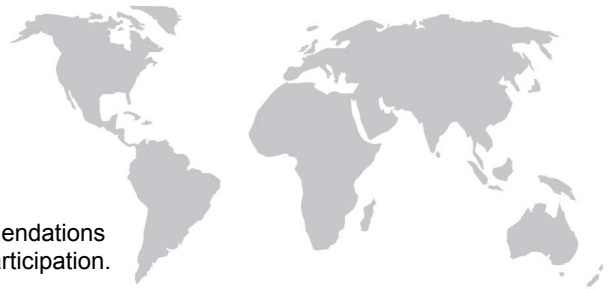




POLITICAL PARTIES IS KEY FACTOR TO INCREASE WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION IN DECISION MAKING

Interviews with Political Parties in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan



International Gender Policy Network brings important recommendations to the political parties on how to enhance women's political participation.

Political parties are critical for ensuring women's political participation. Interviews were held with politicians in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan, set of recommendations is based on the conclusions from interviews.¹

Document presents the political parties' attitude towards the issue of women's representation, analyzes the current situation in the three countries and prepares recommendations for the political parties and other stakeholders. The aim of this paper is to make the political parties aware of their role in enhancing women's political participation and to advocate for parity in representation.

Almost none of the active political parties in these three countries, have set gender equality and/or equal opportunities of women and men as one of their political objectives, nor do they have strategies for increasing women's representation – be it on the party list and/or in the national or local assemblies – is the general common finding of the study. The women's wings, which are essential in terms of agenda setting and pushing for parity representation, are often dismantled or marginalized in the current party structures. Few politicians – male or female – are gender aware and/or make the issue of women's representation to a political objective.

High socio-economic standing, often with prominent position in society and the backing of powerful interest groups is the main criterion for the pre-election nomination of a candidate in Georgia and traditionally men fit these requirements better than women. Many of the party representatives admitted that, on the other hand, women are active in elections and excellent promoters of party politics at the local level. Another observation from the interviews with the Georgian politicians is that parties do not realize their potential role in socializing and educating voters and citizens of the importance of women's equal representation and instead point at external hindering factors. The parties on the whole do not realize how to apply a gender sensitive approach to their own internal processes. In spite of this a new trend can be observed – during the pre-election process women party members are now interested in finding women leaders in the rural areas of the country and providing special education for them. Hopefully this can boost female politicians not only on the local level.

In Ukraine, which has been represented by a strong female leader Yulia Tymoshenko – the first woman in the position of the Vice-Prime-Minister and the Prime Minister in the Ukrainian government. However, this hasn't affected the representation of women on the candidate lists nor has it contributed to more programs related to women's issues and/or equal opportunities of women and men. One explanation is that women party leaders in Ukraine are not considered to be part of the women's movement. Equal conditions and absence of any discriminatory treatment towards women was declared by interviewed political parties, nevertheless the lack of women in the party structures and at the top positions was not properly explained. The majority

¹ The aim of the interviews was to start a dialogue with political parties on women's political participation in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan and to formulate a set of recommendations in order to increase women's political representation. Interviews focused on the demand for women candidates: Are the political parties in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan recruiting, nominating, and supporting women candidates? You can find the complete document at: www.igpn.net.

of the interviewed politicians did not show any interest in attracting, training and strengthening the role of women in their political forces.

The electoral system in Kazakhstan allows political parties to directly influence the number of women on the candidate lists since it uses "a closed party list" feature. It means the decision about mandate according to the election outcome lies on the party's leadership. However the ruling political party Nur OTAN shows only in rhetorics but not in actions that it takes women's rights and women's political representation seriously. For example, it didn't vote for the proposal on quotas for women in political institutions. Another example that demonstrates its lack of commitment to gender equality is that during the presidency of Kazakhstan in OSCE, the Nur OTAN party didn't met one of the main criterion ascribed by its European colleagues: a woman in the party leadership. But as the analyses of the other political parties in Kazakhstan shows - even they ignore potential female candidates and female voters, viewing them as being uninterested in public affairs. This in spite the fact that more and more women on the local level are running for political candidates.

What next?

Set of recommendations and strategies to promote women's political participation is part of the document. The experience from other countries demonstrates that political parties can consciously decide the level of women's representation on their candidate lists but for this to happen the party leadership must be gender sensitive. In many situations parties will be gender neutral in their selection process, that is, the procedures by which they select candidates are likely to neither advantage, nor disadvantage women. However, if the political parties truly want to increase the number of women, they need to implement some kind of temporary special measures, such as quotas for their candidate lists and for the governing bodies within party structures. This together with the inclusion of a gender equality and women's empowerment agenda in party platforms and an active women's wing should ensure more women in politics.

About methodology

Part of the IGPN's long-term engagement in the area of Increasing Political Participation of Women was conduction of interviews with politicians in Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. The interviews were carried out by women's organizations using the same standardized questionnaire prepared by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and Gender Links. The questionnaires were translated into the national languages and adjusted to some extent so they could be applied in the different national contexts. All of the interviewers, which came from the Feminist League (Kazakhstan), the TASO Foundation (Georgia) and the Ukrainian Women's Fund (Ukraine), have extensive experience working with women's rights and gender equality in their respective countries. In the document you can find short introduction to the country and the level of women's representation in the national and local assemblies and the presentation of the electoral systems.

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