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# WOMEN IN POLITICS:

PATHS TO PUBLIC OFFICE  
AND IMPACT AT THE LOCAL  
LEVEL IN MACEDONIA

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# INTRODUCTION

This study is the result of a project conducted by Reactor-Research in Action during 2014 and 2015, in partnership with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and with funding from the French Embassy in Skopje. The overall objective of the project was to contribute to the improvement of the status of women in the Republic of Macedonia, in particular in the area of political participation. We aimed to achieve this by providing new understanding of the inequalities women and men face in political and public life, mainly through comprehensive research.

The objectives of the research were two-fold. Firstly, we wanted to assess whether and how the increased participation of women in politics in Macedonia has impacted the way decisions are made, priorities are chosen and politics is conducted. Many authors have argued that a 'critical mass' is achieved when 30-40% of the elected officials are women (Kanter 1977a, 1997b; Dahlerup, 1988). Since the quota of 30% has almost secured this 'critical mass' both at the national and the local level, we wanted to assess how this has affected the lives of citizens and whether there are substantial differences and qualities that women brought to politics in the country.

The second objective was to identify why women's increase in political participation has stalled before reaching parity. While the introduction of the quota has secured substantial increase in the participation of women in politics, their impact was limited. Namely, a decade after the introduction of the quotas we have not seen improvement in the participation beyond the quota. On the other hand, where there are no quotas, significant gender gaps exist. In light of this, the study aimed to identify factors that contribute to the persisting gender inequalities at the different levels in which they occur: personal, institutional, economic and political.

We tried to achieve the objectives by evaluating the level of increase of women participation in politics and whether it has influenced politics in general and gender equality in particular. In short, the research tries to respond to the following questions: Are women agents of change? Do they effect the course of public policy, and if yes, how? What are the challenges they are faced with and how do they differ from men in politics? What needs to be done in order to achieve gender parity in politics? What are the roles of political parties in those efforts?

This study is the first of this kind in the country and we therefore believe that it will provide important insight into the dynamics and differences women and men face in the political arena. It is only through recognizing those differences that we can better understand why the electoral and political system does not provide for gender equality and more importantly, propose alternative policy solutions to support the overall goal of achieving gender equality in public and political life. The study is in line with the spirit of the Declaration adopted by the Macedonian Assembly in 1998 on promoting gender equality in the processes of decision-making that called for scientific research that explore the reasons behind achieving full equality, and their public promotion (Assembly, 1998).

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We would like to thank all the women and men who are active in political life in the country and who took the time to participate in this study. Without their participation we would not have been able to gather the data that is contained in this report and that is crucial to future efforts for achieving gender parity in politics.

# CONTEXT

## Gender Equality in the Country

**G**ender equality remains one of the major global challenges and the international community, the Republic of Macedonia included, has pledged to solve this problem.<sup>1</sup> However, the transition that followed Macedonia's independence in 1991 radically altered the social status of its citizens. It increased the gap between women and men, both in terms of social status, opportunities and access to available resources in society (MLSP, 2010). While the country underwent a variety of activities aimed at the improvement of the status of women in all aspects of public life, gender inequality is widespread and a constant feature of modern Macedonian society. The Global Gender Gap report for 2014 ranked the country at 70 (out of 142 countries) with a score of 0.694 on a scale from 0-inequality to 1-equality, with the lowest score earned for the political empowerment - at 0.174, and the highest score earned for education where men and women are considered to be equal, - at 0.989 (World Economic Forum, 2014).

The *Law for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women* provides the institutional framework for protection against gender discrimination, including the introduction of a government representative within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) with a mandate to follow up on gender based discrimination complaints, as well as the establishment of an inter-governmental advisory group on gender equality. An institutional set-up was created to promote gender equality within the state administration (Ministry of Labor's Sector for Gender Equality, gender equality coordinators appointed at all public, state and local administration bodies, as well as Committees for Equal Opportunities in the Local Self-Government and a Parliamentary Committee for Equal Opportunities). The Anti-Discrimination Commission also has a mandate to address and prevent gender-based discrimination. Furthermore, in 2013 the country adopted a comprehensive gender equality strategy that should guide the work of the administration in achieving full equality in the next eight years (2013-2020). In addition to this, a *Strategy for Gender Budgeting* was also adopted that should ensure that the budget is used to promote equality.

In sum, in the last decade many legislative improvements were made, and various legal mechanisms exist. And while removal of *de jure* barriers is necessary, it is not sufficient (CEDAW, 1997). Currently, the implementation is not satisfactory and there is a wide spread perceived ineffectiveness of the established mechanisms, which lowers their impact and discourages women from pursuing justice. For example, the appointed gender

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<sup>1</sup> Promotion of gender equality is one of the UN Millennium Development Goals, and gender equality remains a stand-alone goal in the post2015 UN Sustainability Development Goals.

representative in the MLSP has received very few complaints, none of which are about gender-based discrimination in public life and political participation. Furthermore, an independent civil society assessment on the implementation of the strategy in its first year revealed that only eight out of thirty-three measures have been finished or significantly implemented, ten have seen significant delay in the implementation and almost half (15) have not been started (Reactor, 2014). Gender equality policies and institutional frameworks continuously lack adequate technical, human and financial resources.

Advancing gender equality has been most successful in educational attainment. While parity in education is achieved among Macedonian youngsters, educational gaps still prevail among the working age population, men being more educated than women (SSO, 2014). There are no gender gaps in enrollment rates and no significant gap in drop-out rates, currently at 15% for girls and 12% for boys. However, preschool coverage is very low, between 11 and 21.8% for the age 3-6 age group (Donevska et al, 2007; UNICEF, 2012). On the other hand, young girls outperform boys in school (OECD, 2005; Mullis et al, 2012), as well as outnumber men in tertiary education (SSO, 2012), but there are gender differences in career choices. Men are twice as likely as women to graduate from technical and biotechnical sciences, while women are twice as likely as men to graduate from medical sciences and humanities (MLSP, 2014). There is gender balance in natural and mathematical sciences.

The general socio-economic dynamics in the country hinder women's potential to be actively involved in all public spheres, including their political participation. Economic empowerment is very limited, since the Macedonian labor market puts women at disadvantage. The trend of the status of women in Macedonian economy seems to be negative, i.e., the position of women in the economy has worsened in the last decade, despite the positive development on the legal and institutional level (Korunovska and Maleska, 2015). Women are facing barriers on the labor market, receive lower salaries and are generally employed in lower-paid professions. Additionally, there are a significant number of women working on the illegal labor market of traditional female work such as housekeeping, cleaning, childcare and care of elderly people. In 2014, the activity rate for women, at 45.3%, was lower, while men had a significantly higher rate of 69.3%, while the employment rate for women was 32.4%, which is, again, significantly lower than the employment rate of 50.1% for men (SSO, 2015). On the other hand, in the inactive population, it is only in the age group from 15 to 19 years that the participation of women is equal to that of men. In all other age groups the participation of women in the economically inactive group is from twice to even four times bigger than that of men.

Income is another important subject and while the legal framework requires men and women to be paid equally for equal work, wage discrimination against women remains pervasive, particularly in the private sector. In 2013, women who worked outside the home earned approximately 78% of what men earned (US Department of State, 2014). Similarly, ILO has stated that women experience systemic barriers in almost every aspect of work (ILC, 2009). Lower salaries for women also imply lower pensions in the future,

which further exposes women to poverty and social exclusion. Currently, of the total number of pensioners, only 22% are women (SPIF, 2013).

Gender inequalities limit the opportunities of women. A Reactor study from 2010 revealed that more than half of the women surveyed felt that their household obligations limit their freedom, pointing to the need for improved work-life balance policies (SSO, 2011). Additionally, while inheritance legislation is gender neutral, it has not supported change in traditions and women still are excluded from inheritance. Currently, between 11 and 13% of women own land or property (Reactor, 2012; GfK, 2008).

Even though discrimination of women is a general occurrence, some groups are more affected than others. Examples are Roma, Albanian and the women from rural areas. While most of Roma women and girls are facing double discrimination: gender and racial (EC, 2013), around 89% of Albanian women and 64% of Roma women are not economically active (Mojsoska-Blazevski, 2011). Furthermore, fewer Roma children are enrolled in preschool, only 3.9% compared to the 21.8% national average. There is also a significant gender gap among Roma children enrolled in pre-school, where only 1.1% of girls and 6.5% of boys attend preschool (UNICEF, 2011).

## **Gender Equality in Public Life**

Significant gender gaps exist in the decision-making processes in the country. While there is a significant increase of women's representation in the national parliament (at 34%), women and in particular women from ethnic minorities, continue to be underrepresented in ministerial positions, in high-ranking posts in the diplomatic service, at the municipal level and in mayoral positions.

The increase of women in politics has been a policy priority for the last decade. For the first time in 1998, parliament adopted a Declaration aimed at increasing the participation of women and supporting special measures. The declaration resulted from the shameful participation of women in the Parliament at less than 5%, which put Macedonia at the bottom of the list in Europe at that time.

Following the declaration, special measures were adopted, first with the introduction of 30% quota for members of parliament in 2002. The introduction of the quota for women was clearly a sign and a consequence of women's growing political influence. As one former Member of Parliament stated during the validation meetings, *"we worked together, women from the ruling party and the opposition, to lobby our male colleagues, and secure that the legislative changes would be passed in the Parliament. It was a truly joint effort of all women politicians"*. However, perhaps even more significantly, the quotas allow for an institutional resource for the future mobilization of women. As Dahlerup argues: *"after the introduction of quotas, we do not have to fight again and again for the representation of women"* (Dahlerup, 1988).

On the other hand, if we look at the legislative development (and the follow-up amendments of the 'quota provision') they hint at the grave pervasive systematic discrimination in this area. Namely, the first provisions required only 30% of the candidates for parliament to be from the 'more disadvantaged sex'. This resulted with political parties placing women at the bottom of their lists and therefore the 30% elected quota could not be reached. Hence, amendments were made to secure that at least one in three places is from 'the more disadvantaged sex'. This has significantly improved the situation, however some limitations prevailed. Namely, due to the differences in composition of local councils, the legislation currently does not guarantee equal quota for women and their participation ranges from 22.1% to 33.3%, depending on the total number of councilors, since a 30% is not a requirement, and by rule women are placed on the every third place. Additionally, the practice of women resigning after being elected in office also continued (although in a limited scope), so further amendments were needed to prevent these practices that resulted in their replacement with men immediately after elections. With the last amendment (from 2014), it is now regulated by law that when women resign from office, the replacement must be the next woman on the list.

When we consider that for every measure there needs to be an amendment that prevents women from being discriminated in new and sometimes creative ways, it is not surprising that we observe stagnation in the improvement of women participation well below parity. Furthermore, where quota do not exist (such as mayoral and ministerial positions) gender gaps are wide. Currently there is only one women minister, and the number of women in all government compositions has ranged from one to a maximum of three (up to 8%). Needless to say, we have not elected a woman as a Prime Minister or President of the country. Furthermore, in the 2009 local elections the number of women candidates for mayors was only 4% (14 out of 345), none of which was elected. The total number of women mayors after the 2013 elections are only 4 (out of 81). Previously, only three women were elected in 2000 and 2005. In the 1996 and the 2009 elections not a single woman mayor was elected. Similarly, while women make 35% of all employees at the local level, they are significantly less represented at managerial and leadership positions within the local administration and local public companies - women hold only one quarter of the leadership positions. Women outnumber men only in the judiciary. Women representation in positions of power within the judiciary is predominant, except among appellate courts in the country.

A study of the Ministry for Labour and Social Policy, conducted in 2011, on the representation of women in public life at the local level, revealed great gender disparities in terms of both employment and leadership positions. Namely, men were twice as likely to be employed in local administration and public companies, compared to women. Furthermore, this gap increases when we look at the leadership positions, where men were three times as likely to hold managerial positions (MLSP, 2011). A similar study was conducted by the ombudsman that covered both the national and local administration. This study revealed similar disparities: while women make up 35% of all employees in the state administration, they are significantly less represented at managerial and leadership

positions - women hold only 24% of the leadership positions (Ombudsperson, 2008). The reports revealed not only economic dependence of women but also the existence of gender inequality within the local administration.

As with the other gender disparities, the situation is dramatically worse if we look at the political participation of ethnic women. Apart from Macedonian women, only Albanian women participate at some satisfactory level, although much less at the local level. There are no Turkish or Roma women elected in Parliament, and participation in local councils in municipalities where they are majority is much lower than the legally prescribed quota. There are still practices of resignation of women councilors after they have been elected in office, in particular ethnic Roma and Albanian. In this sense, it is worrisome that the leader of the most prominent Political party of the Roma people stated that *“he does not see the importance of political participation of women”* (Hahxijaha-Imeri, 2010).

Finally, stereotypes and traditional gender roles continue to be portrayed in media and by political elites, undermining the hard work done by the country’s gender equality mechanisms and the civil society sector. Gender equality is still seen as a “woman’s issue” in the country. Men, in general, are not involved in the reforms. There is disproportionate non-representation of men in local Gender Equality Committees, as well as gender equality coordinators within national and local bodies. The situation is similar within the political parties as well.

Furthermore, in many important areas gender disaggregated data is still unavailable. One example is the lack of official data on the turnout of women at elections. If we take polling numbers, from Reactor’s civil engagement study, there are indicators that while gender differences are small, they are significant. In the past elections women were more likely to have voted (79% of men and 81-84% of women) and intentions to vote in the future are somewhat more present among women, where 71-74% of them are sure they will vote in the next elections, compared to 67-68% of men (Korunovska et al, 2015a).

The lack of a systematic approach to address these problems and promote and accelerate an increase in representation of women in political life, for example by adopting temporary special measures or other proactive and sustained measures, was raised as a concern by UN experts (CEDAW, 2013). This study aims to address this gap by proving evidence-informed policy alternatives that should be considered and adopted in order to address systematic barriers women face when entering public life and politics.

# METHODOLOGY

**T**his study is based on a mix method approach, comprising a combination of quantitative and qualitative instruments. The study was conducted in three stages. Firstly, we conducted semi-structured face-to-face interviews with current and former local council members. During the interviews, we explored a range of issues that could interact with or lead to gender gaps in political participation. The goal was to gain in-depth knowledge of the impact women have in the political arena, as well as to identify factors that contribute to their participation, or negatively affect them. Based on those interviews, we designed a questionnaire that in the second stage was administered using computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI). Finally, in the last stage of the study, we conducted group discussions to present and validate results. In the first stage, a total of 34 councilors were interviewed, while the second stage covered 402 active councilors. In the third stage, a total of 104 women councilors participated in the study. The variety of methods allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the context and factors that influence political participation, and established evidence for the promotion of policy alternatives, including those targeting political parties and their internal party mechanisms.

## **Desktop Research**

Using information attained through desktop research, a comprehensive list was completed with the number of candidates, women candidates and elected candidates in the last three local elections (since the application of the quota system). Due to the lack of proactively published and publicly available information, several means were used to collect the data including: direct contacts with the State Electoral Commission (SEC hereafter), archives of newspapers published following the 2005, 2009 and 2013 elections, as well as official freedom of information requests. Ensuring that any discrepancies and changes are recorded, researchers contacted each individual municipality, obtaining the current number of women and men councilors within municipalities. The data collected was inclusive of the total number of councilors for each of the 81 municipalities in Macedonia and the percentage of nominated and elected women councilors.

A comparative analysis was completed for the local elections of 2005, 2009 and 2013 (including both councilors and mayors). Namely, using the SPSS program for statistical analysis, all 81 municipalities were analyzed for the frequency of mandates of councilors to identify second incumbent trends and their influence on gender differences. Additionally, social factors such as number of schools, employment rates for women, existence of child care centers and other social capital indicators were analyzed for all municipalities,

investigating how those factors interplay to empower women or whether elected women prioritize certain issues.

## **Development of Questionnaires**

Following the literature review, desktop research and explorative meetings with representatives of women's chapters of the three main political parties, a semi-structured interview guideline was drafted. The guideline consisted of 57 questions divided into four main parts. The questions were mostly open-ended (total of 38), allowing for exploration of many topics. The main four parts consisted of questions related to motivation and recruitment, impact from holding office (both at personal, as well as party and political level), questions regarding the work in office (including priorities, membership in committees, power to influence decisions), and gender equality (including reflecting on capacities, priorities and suggestions for improvement of equality). Additionally, a small section for socio-demographic information of interviewees was included in the guideline. The guideline was used for conducting face-to-face formal interviews in the first stage of the research.

## **Face-to-face Interviews**

Qualitative data was collected by conducting face-to-face formal semi-structured interviews with both women and men councilors. In total, 34 councilors took part in this stage of the research, of whom 21 were women and 13 were men. The interviewed councilors mainly came from the statistical region of Skopje (25), the northeast statistical region (8) and one councilor from the Southeast statistical region.

The face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 90 minutes and were conducted by a total of five researchers, two of whom were women. The collection of qualitative data aimed to measure the motivating factors in becoming a councilor, the factual influence of councilors in the decision-making processes and perceptions and views of gender equality in general and within the local council. The interviews were conducted with former and current councilors from the four major political parties, as well as members of smaller parties and coalition partners. The interviews were conducted on various locations; however, it was always in a location and time that best suited the respondents. These locations ranged from their work place, a public café, their homes and Reactor's offices. Prior to starting with the interviews, researchers informed participants of Reactor's privacy policy, including that information obtained is confidential and anonymous and only used for research purposes. Permission was requested by researchers and where permitted, the interview was audio recorded (a total of 19 interviews were audio recorded). Once concluded, the interviews were immediately transcribed.

Transcripts were then coded and analyzed and used to draft both the preliminary findings and the questionnaire for the survey. The questionnaire included demographic information of councilors, such as length of party membership, past and present positions within the party and whether any of their family members were also active in the party. This aimed to measure the level of activity within their party and whether family members influenced their involvement in local politics. The second part of the questionnaire included the nomination and selection process for running for office. In this section councilors indicated whether they were aware beforehand that they would be nominated, whether they had aspirations to become councilors and how satisfied they were in becoming a councilor. This section of the questionnaire also measured the support given to councilors by their family members and within their parties. The third part of the questionnaire measured the motivating factors in becoming councilors and if councilors had any future ambitions in either becoming a councilor again or progressing into higher political positions, such as mayors or members of parliament. The goal was to compare whether women and men are differently motivated when it comes to running for office, as well as identify the differences in aspirations for future participation in politics by women and men.

In these sections councilors were required to rate whether they believe that they would be elected for mayor, a member of parliament or a minister, should such an opportunity be made available to them. Furthermore, councilors were asked to rate their work in the council and how other councilors perceive their work within the council. Perception of personal power or lack of power influencing decision making process in the municipality was also addressed, with the goal of finding out whether women and men councilors have equal power in the decision making processes. The last part of the survey covered general attitudes about gender equality, as well as whether councilors believe that legislations are effective in improving the status of women in politics and what they believe to be the reasons for the small percentage of women mayors in the country.

## **Survey**

The second stage of the research was the survey carried out by Reactor – Research in Action using computer assisted telephone interviews (CATI). The survey was conducted from 10 am to 9 pm every day except Sundays (unless a respondent scheduled an appointment for Sunday). The survey was carried out by 17 ethnic Macedonian and 4 ethnic Albanian interviewers, all trained and supervised by Reactor – Research in Action, including specific training for the survey questionnaire. In accordance with quality control procedures, the first dozen interviews were supervised. Additionally, interviews were audio taped and 15% were back-checked by main the project researchers. The interviewers received daily feedback about the quality of their interviews and ways to improve them.

A total of 402 councilors that are representative of the current Macedonian elected officials on the local level were interviewed. While we attempted to survey councilors from all 81

municipalities, surveyed respondents cover 91% of the total number of municipalities in the country, or come from 74 different municipalities including the City of Skopje. Each telephone survey lasted approximately 15 minutes.

## Sample

Contact numbers of councilors were collected by contacting municipalities and the greater percentage of municipalities willingly provided the number of councilors. Only six municipalities asked that a formal request is submitted to the municipality, which was provided by researchers. At the end of the sampling, a total of seven municipalities could not be contacted or refused to provide researchers with contact information for councilors. From the total of 1.343 councilors, we gathered available telephone contacts for a total of 1.240, out of which 420 (or 30%) were women councilors. Attempts were made to contact all of the councilors; however, due to a large number of non-existent contact numbers, no-answer or difficulty in setting up appropriate time to conduct the interviews, or refusal to participate in the survey, the final result was a total sample of 402 responses. In the sample 43% of the respondents are women, i.e. they are purposively overrepresented. The sample however is large enough for meaningful generalizations to be drawn from it, with a margin of error at 4%.

*Geographical distribution:* The distribution of the sample is representative of the current elected officials at the local level. They come from the eight statistical regions in Macedonia: 17.4% are from the Skopje Region, 15.9% from the Polog Region, 15.7% from the East Region, 11.2% from the Northeast, 10.7% from Pelagonia, 10.4% from the Vardar Region, 10% from the Southeast region and 8.7% from the Southwestern.

*Political party affiliation:* In the sample 175 (43.5%) were women councilors and 227 (56.5%) men councilors. The sample included former and current councilors and councilors which have served in office for more than one mandate. All four major political parties are represented. Namely, 136 (35.0%) councilors are members of VMRO-DPMNE, 86 councilors (22.1%) from SDSM, 50 councilors (12.9%) from DUI and 30 councilors (7.7%) from DPA. The remaining councilors are members of smaller political parties 63 (15.7%) or are not members of a party (independent) (6.2%).

## Validation Meetings

The last stage of the research consisted of validation meetings held in all six electoral districts. Municipalities were selected according to geographical positioning, easy access to neighboring municipalities and demographic indicators. The validation meetings were held on municipal premises in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Strumica, Bitola, Stip, Struga and Tetovo. Additionally, the Skopje region was covered using a national gender

equality conference that was held in Skopje, at which one panel was devoted to the impact of women in politics, where preliminary findings were presented and discussed.

At each of the regional validation meetings, all stakeholders were invited including: representatives of local political parties' branches, former and current women councilors, mayors, members of parliament, and leaders of women chapters of parties as well as influential women from public life. Additionally, local NGOs working on gender equality and media representatives were also invited to take part in the meetings. Participants were invited by e-mail and most meetings were held during working hours (4), one was held after-hours and one on a Saturday.

In total 106 women took part in the validation meetings, representing all four major political parties (DPMNE, SDSM, DUI and DPA). Additionally, members of the Democratic Party of the Serbians in Macedonia and members of DOM also participated. Each validation meeting lasted approximately two hours and it included introduction of the research by NDI representatives and Reactor researchers, followed by presentation of the key preliminary findings divided into five categories. Once the presentation of key findings was completed, each finding was discussed by participants and stakeholders. The discussion part of the validation meetings lasted approximately one hour at each meeting, where participants presented their own experiences and discussed them, agreed or disagreed with the findings and whether they believed the findings depicted the actual situation in local and national politics. The final part of the validation meetings included discussion on how to move forward, including recommendations and alternative solutions to improve the participation and influence of Macedonian women on decisions made at the local and national level.

# GENDER AND POLITICS

## Global Problem

The participation of women in politics has been recognized as a human right necessary for global progress. On the global level, it was first recognized in 1956 and guaranteed with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1956, Article 21). The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women further reiterated the obligations of the states to ensure that women and men have equal rights in regards to voting, participation and representation in their governments (UN, 1979, Article 7 and 8). In 1990, ECOSOC recommended setting targets for achieving equality and proposed those targets to be reached gradually over a decade. It proposed achieving at least 30% representation by 1995, and parity of 50% by 2000 (ECOSOC, 1990).

However, due to slow progress and the worrisome participation levels of women globally, by 1995 the share of women in national parliaments across the world was only just over 10% (UN, 1995). Therefore, during the 1995 Committee of the Status of Women, political participation was recognized as one of the key areas for improvement (as part of the Beijing platform for action). The platform obliged countries to implement a variety of measures to secure women's participation in all levels of power and decision making. Due to systemic social, economic, institutional barriers women face, the platform urged the governments to involve a range of actors in their efforts to support equality, including political parties, regional and sub-regional bodies, and research institutions and non-governmental organizations.

Since then, the United Nations measure progress achieved across countries. In the last decade, increasing women's representation in public and political office has been included as an indicator for tracking progress towards Millennium Development Goal No. 3. And while many efforts at local, national and international level were intended at more inclusive decision-making, women are still widely underrepresented at all levels of governments (UN, 2010) and do not have equal access to political careers (UN, 2006)

The targeted 'critical mass' of 30% participation is gradually being achieved at the national legislative level, however still less than a quarter of the parliaments have reached it. From only five countries that had attained this critical mass in the lower or single house of parliament in 1995 to only 23 in 2009, the global average in 2015 is one in five parliamentary seats held by women (UN, 2015). In 2009, women were Presidents in only 21 of the 176 lower or single chambers of parliaments and 10 out of 73 upper chambers in the world (UN, 2010).

Despite the gradual progress achieved in the last twenty years, the results are far from satisfactory, considering that today women make up 22.2% in national parliaments. Only two countries have achieved equality, nine countries have representation between 40 and 50% and 28 countries have representations between 30-40% (UN, 2015). Therefore, the targeted 'critical mass' of 30% has been achieved in 39 countries, up from five in 1995.

In 2014 only 9 women were Heads of State, from a total of 152 elected Heads of State and 15 were heads of government from the 193 governments (UN, 2015), a significant increase from three and seven heads in 1995, respectively. Furthermore, women continue to be underrepresented as members of governments around the world and participate at an average level of 17% globally, 25% in EU Member States, to below 7% in Macedonia (EU, 2009).

Similarly to national parliaments, there are gender disparities in local governments; however, at the regional level women have a slightly stronger position, and on average one third of the assemblies and local councils are made up of women. There is, however, significant variation between countries, from 48% women in both Sweden and France to below 15% in Slovakia, Hungary and Italy. (EU, 2007) Women are much more disadvantaged when it comes to leadership positions. In Europe on average 14% of mayors are women, and globally they comprise no more than a fifth (UN, 2010). Additionally, only 16% of mayors of capital cities are women (UCLG, 2015).

Therefore, it came as no surprise that in 2011, the United Nations again adopted a Resolution on women and political participation urging states to accelerate efforts to improve the position of women in politics, in particular through adopting special measures, to review impact on electoral system on participation of women in political life, and to "strongly encourage political parties to remove all barriers that directly or indirectly discriminate against the participation of women, to develop their capacity to analyze issues from a gender perspective, and to adopt policies, as appropriate, to promote the ability of women to participate fully at all levels of decision-making within those political parties" (UN, 2011).

## **Factors contributing to inequality**

Understanding the reasons behind the failure to achieve parity in politics is crucial, because the injustice may be unintentional and perpetuated by the system and its practices that inadvertently promote men (CEDAW, 1997). The UN CEDAW Committee has argued that globally the most significant factors that inhibit women from full participation in public life have been two fold. On the one hand it is the cultural frameworks of values and beliefs, and on the other hand the lack of available services, as well as men's failure to share the tasks associated with housework, care and rising of children (CEDAW, 1997). The underlying assumption is that if women are lifted of some of the burden associated with housework and care, it would allow them to participate in the life of their communities.

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Furthermore, global statistics that are regularly gathered and analyzed by United Nations suggest that in general women still encounter structural and attitudinal barriers including discrimination when aspiring to careers in politics (UN, 2010).

Factors that have been identified as having some type of correlation with gender and participation in political life can be broadly grouped into three main categories: societal factors, individual factors, and political factors.

*There are no biases among the electorate against women candidates.* There is compelling evidence that when women run in elections, they are just as likely to get elected as men (Dolan, 2004; Fox, 2010, EC, 2009). A recent opinion poll in Macedonia also showed that the majority of the population support women in politics and that gender is not significant factor during elections (IRI, 2014). While the majority (59%) stated that they do not care about the gender, 23% stated that they would prefer a woman, compared to 16% that would prefer a male candidate. The levels of bias are non-existent to provide impediments to women's chances of election. Although many voters indicate that they would like to see more women in elected positions, there is no strong evidence to suggest that people actually vote on the basis of gender. A study conducted in 2010 in Macedonia also showed that women are most optimistic when it comes to achieving gender equality in the politics, as compared to employment and family and house care duties (Reactor, 2010). Asked whether they believe that in 10 years there will be a woman elected as President of the country or Prime Minister, the vast majority agree.

*Limited number of women candidates behind the underrepresentation of women.* Limited representation is linked to low proportion of women candidates, and not lack of support from voters. A direct correlation was found on data covering 63 countries (UN, 2010). Depending on the electoral system, such differences can be the result either of gender disparities in political ambition or the recruitment and selection processes within political parties. Data from the State Electoral Committee in Macedonia also shows a strong (almost linear) correlation between the number of candidates and the number of elected women. Here the role of political parties is crucial, in particular the way in which political parties allocate candidates to winnable seats or distribute them on lists has a significant part to play in the limited success to date in electing more women from the available candidates (EC, 2009).

*Incumbency in office as a limiting factor for equality in politics.* Because of current widespread underrepresentation of women, re-election of incumbents severely restricts the rate of member turnover at each election. A recent study conducted by the European Commission estimated that, on average, around two-thirds of members are reelected on each occasion meaning that there are limited opportunities for advancing gender equality through election of new officeholders (EC, 2009).

*Lack of capacities of women to participate in decision making and lack of leadership skills* have been argued as one of the key societal factors that exclude women from political life. Namely, women need to be equipped with skills and experiences, through their education and career to take responsibilities of public office (EC, 2007). The participation of women

in higher education and senior management positions – in this sense – has been seen as a precondition for political empowerment. In a sense, those skills build the potential of women who with access to structure of power and adequate opportunities could forward into key political positions (EC, 2009).

*Lack of ambition among women to pursue political carriers.* Some studies have shown that even within the pool of ‘potential candidates’ women are less likely than men to express interest in a political career, including running for office or considering elective office as a desirable profession (Lawless and Fox, 2013). One of the factors that contribute to this is a tendency to be exposed to less political information and discussions. Furthermore, they argue that competitive spirit associated with competitive environments, such as organized sports also correlate with political ambition. Namely, caring about winning can reinforce their will and prepare them for political activism, by allowing them to acquire skills necessary to thrive in political settings, similarly to translating civic skills (Verba et al, 1995). In cross-national studies, boys report higher moderate-to-vigorous physical daily activity than girls at all ages.

*Quotas have been proven to be efficient.* The Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance notes that most of the countries that have achieved the critical mass have an electoral system based on proportional representation and some form of quota system to proactively reduce the obstacles to women entering politics at the national level. Namely 32 of the 39 nations that have achieved 30% women’s’ representation in national parliaments have some kind of quota measures in place. On the other hand, 38 countries that are at the bottom of the list (with less than 10% participation of women in national parliaments) do not have any kind of special measures to support women participation (IDEA, 2011). It should be noted, that even when they exist, special measures are limited to national parliaments and it has also been pointed out that it is very difficult to apply quotas in systems where parties nominate one candidate (so called single winner systems) (IDEA, 2010).

This study looks at the factors described above and tries to identify what holds true in Macedonia. The following chapters present the results of the research that we hope will contribute to the better understanding on all socio-political dynamics at play in the country that result in the underrepresentation of women in local politics and in particular in leadership positions.

# RESULTS

## POLITICAL AMBITION

The study looked at the political ambition and paths to elected office for local government officials, in order to understand whether there are differences and factors that work to women's detriment. We looked at issues such as motivation, desire, qualifications and socio-economic dynamics that might differently influence women and men in their pathways to politics and political activities.

### **Motivation**

When directly asked, both female and male councillors state that they had a big desire to become municipal councillors, with women councilors showing slightly higher results. On a 7 point scale, where 1 stands for no desire at all and 7 stands for great desire, women councilors on average scored 5.4 and men councilors 4.9. More specifically, 42% of women stated that they had a great desire to become councilors (chose 6 or 7), compared to 33% of men, and only 2% of women stated that they had no desire at all (chose 1 or 2) compared to 8% of men.

While in our sample of elected officials women tend to have higher political ambition, this might not be the case with the general population, thus limiting the pool (potential number) of women running for office. As stated earlier, Lawless and Fox showed that political ambition is linked to exposure to political activities at home. In Macedonia, young women tend to follow political news less than young men. While just over half of young men rarely or never follow politics, this is the case with 70% of young women. On the other hand, one in every four young men constantly or regularly follows political news compared to only 14% of young women (Korunovska Srbijanko et al, 2011). A qualitative analysis conducted in 2009 also identified that women are less likely to follow political events (Kostovska et al, 2009) or participate in civic initiatives (Korunovska et al, 2015a). Gender differences might also stem from the differences in competitive spirits and attitudes towards winning that arguably is built through sports, where young men are more likely to participate (Lawless and Fox, 2013). In Macedonia, this difference is 26% of girls compared to 29% of boys at age eleven, and 18% of girls compared to 30% of boys at age 13, for young men and young women, respectively (WHO, 2008).

An important question for future research would be to estimate the level of motivation for women in the general population, so we can see whether our highly motivated women councilors are a small and exceptional part of our society or whether there are many more motivated women who would be willing to follow in their footsteps.

Our study showed that the desire among councillors to become members of council does not only depend on gender, but also on political party affiliation, where DPA and SDSM councillors showed the lowest desire to run for council and DPMNE and DUI councillors showed the highest. This difference does not exist when we control for the position of political power, meaning that on average, the men councilors in opposition parties are less likely to be motivated to run. However, the gender difference stands even when we control for party position and is especially notable among councillors in the opposition, meaning that women councilors are more eager to be involved in politics no matter the circumstances.

## The Role of Employment and Family

Men and women do not only differ in the motivation to become councillors. Our study highlights a number of differences between female and male elected councilors, which hint at:

1. Different criteria in their recruitment process either by the political parties or the (unconscious?) biases of the “electoral gatekeepers,” or
2. Systematic hurdles for some categories of women to be elected municipal councilors.

The first difference comes in the marital status of the councilors and the number of children that they have. Namely, even though there is no age difference between female and male municipal councilors<sup>2</sup>, the women are less likely to be married than their male colleagues:

What is your marital status?		Men	Women	Total
<b>Married</b>	Count	189	126	315
	%	60,0%	40,0%	100,0%
	% within gender	83,3%	72,0%	78,4%
<b>Single</b>	Count	33	38	71
	%	46,5%	53,5%	100,0%
	% within gender	14,5%	21,7%	17,7%

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<sup>2</sup> Average age for both female and male councilors is 42 (t (420) = .40, p = .690)

RESULTS: POLITICAL AMBITION

<b>Divorced</b>	Count	2	3	5
	%	40,0%	60,0%	100,0%
	% within gender	0,9%	1,7%	1,2%
<b>Widowed</b>	Count	3	8	11
	%	27,3%	72,7%	100,0%
	% within gender	1,3%	4,6%	2,7%
<b>Total</b>	Count	227	175	402

This is especially notable because in the general population in Macedonia, women marry on average three years earlier than men<sup>3</sup>. However, it should also be noted that despite this particular gender difference, both among the male as well as the female councillors, the large majority are married (72% of women and 83% of men).

The women are most likely to be married if they are SDMS members (78%, even more than men) and least likely in DUI (18%), but it is fair to say that the sample of female DUI councillors is too small to draw a definitive conclusion.

Not surprisingly, marital status is dependent on the councillors' age as well, with the youngest councillors (those in their 20s) least likely to be married, especially women<sup>4</sup>. Interestingly, women councillors in their 30s are more likely to be married than men councillors in their 30s and they are the only age group where women are more likely to be married than men. After 38 years of age, almost all men councillors are married (over 92%), whereas in the older categories of councillors (above 45) only ¼ of the women councillors are married and we see increased participation of single, divorced and widowed women councillors than men councillors.

There seem to be no differences in marital status between the councillors with different educational attainment, but for women, those who are employed are more likely to be married than those who are unemployed.

Following the difference in marital status it is perhaps not surprising that women are slightly more likely not to have children, i.e., have less children on average. Specifically, the average number of children that female councillors have is 1.4 while the average number of children that male councillors have is 1.7,<sup>5</sup> which means that on average the women are closer to having only one child and men are closer to having two children. This difference exists even if we consider only the councillors who are married<sup>6</sup>.

3 <http://rodovreactor.mk/subject/family/graphs/prosechna-vozrast-pri-skluchuvae-prv-brak-line/>

4 Only 44% of councilwomen younger than 31 are married, compared to 55% of councilmen.

5 One female councillor who has 49 adopted children is excluded from the analysis ( $t(397) = 2.86, p = .004$ )

6  $t(311) = 2.20, p = .028$ .

<b>Do you have children?</b>		Male	Female	Total
<b>No</b>	Number	48	48	96
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	21.1%	27.4%	24.3%
<b>Yes</b>	Number	179	127	306
	%	58.5%	41.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	78.9%	72.6%	75.7%
<b>Total</b>	Number	228	174	402

This difference seems to be influenced by ethnicity. Namely, whereas men councilors from the Albanian parties are more likely to have children than men councilors from Macedonian parties, for women councilors it seems to be the other way around; Albanian women councilors are less likely to have children compared to both Macedonian women councilors and men councilors (both Albanian and Macedonian). So the overall influence is strongly influenced by the Albanian councillors, i.e., women councilors.

Just as with the marital status, younger councillors are least likely to have children and this difference is similar in men and women. The educational attainment has no influence on whether councillors have children or not, but the status on the labor market does. Unemployed women are least likely to have children, whereas for men councilors the employment status does not make a difference. Both employed and unemployed men councilors are highly likely to have children (around 80%) and this is also true for employed women councilors (78% of which have children). However, only 62% of the unemployed women councilors have children.

The last demographic feature that seems to make a difference on whether councillors have children or not is the region, with councillors from the Vardar region least likely to have children. It is interesting to see if the institutional child caring facilities are lower in this region, but statistical data shows that on average they are not lower except compared with the Skopje region.

There is also a tendency for female councillors to have fewer children at preschool age. Specifically, 84% of the female councillors and 77% of the male councillors do not have pre-school children. If we only consider the councillors who have children, 70% of male councillors and 78% of female councillors do not have pre-school children.

<b>How many of your children are in pre – primary age [councillors with children]</b>				
		Men	Women	Total
<b>None</b>	Count	126	99	225
	%	56.0%	44.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	70.4%	78.0%	73.2%
One child	Count	34	17	50
	%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	19.0%	13.4%	16.3%
Two children	Count	19	11	30
	%	63.3%	36.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	10.6%	8.7%	9.8%
<b>Total</b>	Count	179	127	306

In sum, our study indicates that it is easier for married men with children than for married women with children to become municipal councillors (especially among Albanian councillors). One possible explanation might be that there is a lack of available child-care services. Another is that men fail to share the tasks associated with housework, care and raising of children (CEDAW, 1997). For example, the total capacities for preschool children in Macedonia cover between 11 and 20% of the children at preschool age (SSO, 2009). Furthermore, according to the time use survey of the SSO, on average, Macedonian women with small children spend 3 hours and 40 minutes per day more than men on childcare (SSO, 2009 and 2013).

The notion that the burden of housework is hindering women (while pursuing political carriers) is also supported by the fact that female councillors are more likely to have employed partners than male councillors. Whereas the grand majority (70%) of the married female councillors have employed spouses, this is true only for half (51%) of the married male councillors. If we only consider the councillors who have employed spouses, all the differences (the average number of children and the average number of pre-school children) disappear.

<b>Does your spouse work?</b>		Male	Female	Total
Working	Count	96	87	183
	% within gender	50.5%	69.6%	58.1%
Not working	Count	94	38	132
	% within gender	49.5%	30.4%	41.9%
Total	Count	190	125	315

This difference in the employment status of the spouse is also influenced by party membership: whereas DPMNE men councilors are more likely to have employed spouses (especially in comparison to DUI and DPA men councilors) and DUI women councilors (together with DPMNE women councilors) are more likely to have employed husbands in comparison to women councilors from other political parties.

Age makes a difference only for the oldest group of women councilors (over 52) who are least likely to have an employed spouse. Education has a strong influence on whether councilors have employed spouses or not, both for men councilors and women councilors. The higher the educational attainment of the councilors, the more likely it is that they have employed spouses (for example, only 36% of men councilors with secondary education in comparison with 74% of the councilors with postgraduate education have employed wives; and 56% of the women councilors with secondary education compared to 89% of those with postgraduate education have employed husbands). Region also seems to make a difference with councilors from the North-east and Polog regions least likely to have employed spouses (both men and women – which hints at an especially difficult economic situation in those regions).

While female councilors are more likely to have employed spouses, they themselves do not lag behind the male councilors on the labor market. Namely, both the majority of women councilors (69%) as well as men councilors (71%) are employed. This is notable because on the Macedonian labor market only about a third of the working age women and only about half of the men are employed<sup>7</sup>. This means that the pool for women out of which councilors are recruited seems to shrink even more.

There is a difference between the employment status of men councilors and women councilors from DPMNE. Here the men are more likely to be employed than women (89% of the DPMNE men councilors and 74% of the women councilors from DPMNE are employed) and both female and male councilors are more likely to be employed compared to the councilors from the other political parties, as well as from the general population. Overall, DPMNE and DUI councilors are more often employed than the other councilors, especially those from SDSM, who are least likely to be employed.

<sup>7</sup> <http://rodovreactor.mk/subject/economy/graphs/stapka-na-vrabotenost-line/#.VXCisUYpqbs>

Age and education also impact the employment status of the councillors. The youngest and oldest councillors are less likely to be employed (both men councilors and women councilors) and more educated councillors are also more likely to be employed (especially the jump from high school degree to university degree is important for employment of councillors).

<b>Are you employed?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Employed</b>	Count	161	120	281
	%	57.2%	42.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	70.9%	68.6%	69.9%
<b>Unemployed (or economically inactive)</b>	Count	66	55	121
	%	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	29.1%	31.4%	30.3%
<b>Total</b>	Count	227	175	402

The double burden of work (at home and at work), coupled with the long or inflexible hours of political and public life might be preventing more women from being more active (CEDAW, 1997). This was evident during the validation meetings and many women politicians shared similar concerns:

*“Until few years ago I had two underage children, so there was the dilemma whether I can handle it all, due to the loss of time to political engagements. I have to admit that that was the only scepticism back then, but somehow I dealt with it. The entire burden of the family care is on my shoulders.”*

*“Unfortunately in our society and the Balkans in general, there are prescribed stereotypical and patriarchal roles for women. I have to say that the position of women in the society limits our professional and political life. Raising a family, taking care and running a home, unfortunately 80 percent falls on the shoulders of women. So you really need a woman with a lot of energy, a tremendous ability for time-planning and superb organizational skills to be able to harmonize those obligations in terms of raising children, taking care of the family and maintaining the household plus professional life. You have to be Superman to be able to balance all these expectations from the family and society with your political and professional career. It is much easier for men.”*

The expectations were also confirmed by men councilors: *“Yet woman is a pillar of the family. Believe me, if a husband is absent from the home it is a loss but, much less than if the*

*woman is absent – we all known what she represents in our traditional family. She needs to meet those domestic expectations. On the other hand, being a mayor is a very complex thing. It demands a lot of sacrifice of personal time and life.”*

Considering these statements, it is perhaps not that surprising that the large majority (70%) of the employed women councilors work in public administration, compared to a little more than half of the employed men councilors (54%). This is higher than the average for the general population, especially for women (around 43% of the employed women and 39% of the employed men are estimated to work in the public administration in Macedonia)<sup>8</sup>.

This difference could be due to the secure work and more flexible hours that employees enjoy in the public sector, which can enable more women to get involved in municipal politics. Alternatively, it can also be the case that women who work in the public sector are closer to or more interested in politics or even that the public positions are rewards for the men councilors and women. Either way, this is another discrepancy between the men and women in municipal positions that does not correspond to the general population.

<b>Where do you work?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Employed in /a public/state institution</b>	Count	88	83	171
	% within gender	54.3%	69.7%	60.9%
<b>Employed in a private business/firm</b>	Count	74	36	110
	% within gender	45.7%	30.3%	39.1%
<b>Total</b>	Count	161	120	281

## **Influence of Educational qualifications, Professions and Career Choices**

Our study shows that women councilors and men councilors differ in their professions, especially when it comes to expert positions. Namely, 58% of the employed women councilors are experts, scientists or educators, while this is true only for 37% of the men councilors. The next most frequent occupations are technical occupations such as technicians, nurses etc. which represent 15% of women councilors and 18% of men. The third most frequent occupations are the executive, i.e., managerial positions that are held by 13% of councilwomen and 14% of men. It seems that the recruitment process of councilwomen is stricter than that of men in this aspect as well, because women need to have higher employment positions.

<sup>8</sup> REACTOR (2015) Work conditions and WORK-LIFE balance: A gender analysis.

<b>What is your occupation?</b>				
		Men	Women	Total
<b>Members of legislative and executive bodies, other officials, senior civil servants, diplomats and executives.</b>	Frequency	23	16	39
	%	59.0%	41.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	14.3%	13.3%	13.8%
<b>Experts and scientist (doctors, professors in high schools and universities, teachers)</b>	Frequency	60	69	129
	%	46.5%	53.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	37.2%	57.5%	47.4%
<b>Technical and similar occupations (technicians, nurses, dental technicians, veterinarians)</b>	Frequency	29	18	47
	%	61.7%	38.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	18.0%	15.0%	16.5%
<b>Civil servants (office secretaries, bookkeepers, employed in finances, statistics and record keeping of material and transport goods and services)</b>	Frequency	7	5	12
	%	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	4.3%	4.1%	4.2%
<b>Employees in sales and services (cooks, police officers, security)</b>	Frequency	24	5	29
	%	82.6%	17.4%	100.0%
	% within gender	14.8%	4.1%	9.45%
<b>Professional employers in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting.</b>	Frequency	2	2	4
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	1.2%	1.6%	1.4%
<b>Occupations in non - industrial manner of production (construction workers, carpenters and fitters)</b>	Frequency	6	0	100.0%
	%	100.0%	0.0%	
	% within gender	3.7%	0	1.65%

<b>Plant, machine operators and assemblers (drivers, minivans drivers)</b>	Frequency	3	1	4
	%	75%	25%	100.0%
	% within gender	1.9%	0.8%	1.7%
<b>Elementary occupations (factory workers)</b>	Frequency	4	1	5
	%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	2.5%	0.8%	1.6%
<b>Not enough information to be classified</b>	Frequency	3	3	6
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	1.9%	2.5%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	Frequency	161	120	281

In order to be recruited into politics, women do not only need to have higher employment positions, but a higher level of education as well. Namely, whereas only one in five (21%) women councilors do not have an undergraduate education, this is true for almost half of the men councilors (45%). Furthermore, while two thirds (64%) of women councilors are university graduates, this is true only for about half of men councilors (45%). Lastly 15% of women councilors compared to 9% of men councilors have a postgraduate education.

As with the previous differences, this discrepancy is especially noteworthy when one considers the fact that men are more educated in the general working age population of Macedonia<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, this particular difference points strongly towards a biased recruitment process. Whereas having more children and (care giving) unemployed spouses was an advantage for male councillors, which can be explained as a social factor that does not necessarily have a relation to the recruitment process, the level of education is not and there is no reason why women councilors should be more educated than their male colleagues.

It is worth noting that this discrepancy is notable in all political parties except for DUI, where men and women seem to be equally educated.

The education gap is present in every age group, but it is least prominent among the youngest and oldest councillors. Furthermore, the younger the councillors, the more educated they are and this is true for both genders, but especially for men.

<sup>9</sup> [http://rodovreactor.mk/subject/education/graphs/rabotosposobno-naselenie-spered-ekonomskata-aktivnost-polot-i-shkolskata-podgotovka-stacked\\_column/#.VXClykYpqbs](http://rodovreactor.mk/subject/education/graphs/rabotosposobno-naselenie-spered-ekonomskata-aktivnost-polot-i-shkolskata-podgotovka-stacked_column/#.VXClykYpqbs)

<b>Education</b>				
<b>What is your last completed educational attainment?</b>		<b>Men</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>High school</b>	Count	26	7	33
	%	78.8%	21.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	11.4%	4.0%	8.2%
<b>Vocational high school</b>	Count	57	22	79
	%	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%
	% within gender	25.0%	12.6%	19.7%
<b>Higher vocational education</b>	Count	20	7	27
	%	74.1%	25.9%	100.0%
	% within gender	8.8%	4.0%	6.7%
<b>Bachelor degree</b>	Count	103	112	215
	%	47.9%	52.1%	100.0%
	% within gender	45.2%	64.4%	53.5%
<b>Masters</b>	Count	18	21	39
	%	46.2%	53.8%	100.0%
	% within gender	7.9%	12.1%	9.7%
<b>PhD</b>	Count	4	5	9
	%	44.4%	55.6%	100.0%
	% within gender	1.8%	2.9%	2.2%
<b>Total</b>	Count	228	174	402

## Proximity to Political Incumbency

When it comes to the motivation of councillors to run for office, one of the factors is proximity to political incumbency. Between the municipal councillors in Macedonia, women seem to have closer proximity to political incumbency than men. Namely, 14% of women and 8% of men have a family member who is or was a politician, held office or a high function in a political party. This means that having a pull factor in the form of proximity to incumbency is somewhat more important for women than men. The UN expert committee for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women has argued that in some countries, when women do assume power, this can be result of the

influence of their fathers, husbands and male relatives rather than electoral success of women leaders (CEDAW, 1997). This is somewhat supported for women councilors in Macedonia, but it is also true for men councilors. Still, women are twice as likely to have someone in their family who held an office or a high position within a political party.

<b>In your family, currently or in the past, was anyone a politician, counselor, mayor, or held a high position within a political party?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Yes</b>	Count	18	25	43
	% within gender	7.9%	14.3%	10.7%

Namely, most of the family members of the Macedonian councillors (over 80% both for male and female councillors) who have had or have a political function are male. For women, the political connection is most likely to be the spouse, for men the father.

<b>Family member who had or has a political function</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Father</b>	Count	8	7	15
	%	53.3%	46.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	44.4%	28.0%	34.9%
<b>Mother</b>	Count	1	3	4
	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	5.6%	12.0%	9.3%
<b>Brother</b>	Count	3	4	7
	%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%
	% within gender	16.7%	16.0%	16.3%
<b>Son</b>	Count	0	2	2
	%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	0.0%	8.0%	4.7%
<b>Spouse</b>	Count	2	9	11
	%	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	% within gender	11.1%	36.0%	25.6%

RESULTS: POLITICAL AMBITION

<b>Father in law</b>	Count	1	3	4
	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	5.6%	12.0%	9.3%
<b>Uncle</b>	Count	3	0	3
	%	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	16.7%	0.0%	7.0%

There is a trend that the youngest councilors are more likely to have a relative with a political function, but the difference is not statistically significant. Furthermore, the difference between male and female councilors does not seem to be present in SDMS, where more than 10% of both male and female councilors have a relative with a political function. The other demographic characteristics of the councilors do not seem to impact the proximity to political incumbency.

# RECRUITMENT PROCESS AND PATHS TO ELECTIVE OFFICE

In the following section we take a closer look at the process of recruitment, from the idea for candidacy, through the reactions of the councillors upon learning about their candidacy to the support or discouragement that they received in the process.

## Encouragement

First we take a look at the idea behind the candidacy for municipal council. We see that amongst women councilors, 11% stated that it was their own idea to run, 30% that it was the political party's idea, 57% say it was a joint decision between them and the political party and only 1% got the idea from the people in their municipality. Women councilors over 45 years of age were most likely to get the idea from the political party, i.e., around half of the older women councilors were sought out by the party. For men the numbers are slightly different, with 17% stating it was their own idea, 22% the idea of the political party, 57% say it was a joint decision and 4% were encouraged by the people. Age made no difference.

Even though these differences are not always statistically significant, we can observe a tendency among female councillors and especially among older female councillors<sup>10</sup> to ascribe the idea more frequently to the political party and less to themselves. For example, when asked during interviews, whose idea it was to run for office, one councilwoman said:

*"The idea was not mine personally; it was the idea of the party. I was in shock at first, I did not want to run, but the party convinced me and finally I accepted the nomination."*

Or, as another women councilors who shared her story put it, she did not even want to run at all, but suggested that encouragement and recruitment from political parties is very influential:

*"I greatly opposed being nominated. I was against going to the local elections, but the party always has the last word."*

Or one councilman who said:

*"The idea came from the party. I did not have such ambitions."*

Similarly, a councilman shared the acceptance of the party culture where the main decision is made within party structures:

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<sup>10</sup>  $\chi^2=5.28, p = .022$

*“As every man that is a party member and has a long-time experience in the party, my party decided to give me the confidence and to nominate me as one of the candidates for the municipal council.”*

Not only women, but also the employed are less likely to say it was their own idea to become councillors. It suggests that the electoral gatekeepers are more likely to seek future councillors among the employed than the unemployed party members. No other demographic characteristic of the councillors impacted the idea behind the candidacy.

<b>Initially, the idea to become a council was it personally yours, that of your party or mutual?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Personal</b>	count	39	20	59
	%	66.1%	33.9%	100.0%
	% within gender	17.2%	11.4%	14.7%
<b>The party's</b>	count	50	53	103
	%	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	22.0%	30.3%	25.6%
<b>Mutual</b>	count	129	100	229
	%	56.3%	43.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	56.8%	57.1%	57.0%
<b>Community (Citizens)</b>	count	9	2	11
	%	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	4.0%	1.1%	2.7%
<b>Total</b>	Total	227	175	402
	%	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%

That this tendency might be real is suggested in the responses to the next question, which reveals that female councillors are less likely to know that they would be nominated for council. Namely, as much as 38% of female councillors, compared to 29% of male councillors did not know that they would be nominated.

<b>And did you know that you would be nominated?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>No</b>	Count	65	65	130
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	28.6%	37.6%	32.5%
<b>Yes</b>	Count	162	108	270
	%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	71.4%	62.4%	67.5%
<b>Total</b>	Count	227	173	400

This suggests that party nomination policies and practices are not transparent ahead of campaigns. For many of the surveyed councillors, this is acceptable practice that is justified due to the polarized context in which parties operate. They felt that a more transparent process well ahead of elections could allow opponents to discredit nominees. Therefore it is a serious cause for concern, because it indicates that the party (or men within the party) chooses, nominates and places women (and to a lesser extent men) on the party lists without consulting them, thus not only undermining their legitimacy, but taking away their agency as they take on a role as decision-makers. An additional potentially worrisome issue here is whether having no say in the candidacy will extend to their time in office: it can be expected that party allegiance and obligation towards party interests would be greater in these cases.

The political parties differ in this aspect of their recruitment process as the differences between female and male councillors are not observed everywhere. For example, councillors from DPMNE (but especially men councillors) were least likely to know that they would be nominated compared to men councillors from other political parties, whereas in DUI they (especially women councillors) were most likely to know. On average, 41% of DPMNE councillors and 22% of DUI councillors did not know that they would be nominated. In both of these parties there are no noticeable gender differences in the information process, so the overall difference comes from the other political parties (especially SDSM). No other demographic characteristic of the councillors impacted whether they knew that they would be nominated.

The reaction of the elected councillors upon learning that they have been elected also hints that the women expected or knew less about the election process (recruitment and chances), as they were happier and more surprised than men. Men also more often than women (and especially older men and men from SDSM) explicitly said that their election was to be expected (which could be the result of a bigger sense of entitlement compared to women). Councillors and especially women councillors from the political parties in power (DPMNE and DUI) were more likely to be happy with the nomination, whereas employed

women councillors and women councillors with children were more likely to feel proud (more than their unemployed female colleagues who do not have children).

On the other hand the councillors with lower education and the unemployed (both men and women) were more likely to feel surprised. For some reason, there was a tendency for women councillors from SDSM and men councillors from DUI to feel more worried about their nomination and for older councillors (especially women) to have opposed the nomination. The unemployed councillors (especially women councillors) were also more likely to have opposed the nomination. All in all, we see that councillors from different backgrounds had different expectations and reactions to their nominations, which might suggest systematic discrimination of some subgroups and these differences need to be considered if measures are to be adopted towards more equal recruitment processes.

<b>What was your reaction once you were suggested /placed on the candidates list?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Happy</b>	Count	86	88	174
	%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
	% within gender	37.9%	50.3%	43.3%
<b>Proud</b>	Count	40	32	72
	%	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	% within gender	17.6%	18.3%	17.9%
<b>Surprised</b>	Count	16	26	42
	%	38.1%	61.9%	100.0%
	% within gender	7.0%	14.9%	10.4%
<b>Worried</b>	Count	12	10	22
	%	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	5.3%	5.7%	5.5%
<b>I opposed it</b>	Count	6	6	12
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	2.6%	3.4%	3.0%
<b>I did not react</b>	Count	64	27	91
	%	70.3%	29.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	28.2%	15.4%	22.6%

<b>It was pleased</b>	Count	14	14	28
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	6.7%	8.0%	7.35%
<b>It was expected</b>	Count	21	6	27
	%	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	9.2%	3.4%	6.3%
<b>It was obligatory</b>	Count	2	4	6
	%	33.3%	66.7%	100,0%
	% within gender	0.9%	2.3%	1.6%

During interviews and validation meetings, women and men did not differ significantly in their assessment of how their life has changed since they were elected to the municipal council. One councilwoman shared her opinion that the political party was mostly affected from her election, apart from the family. *“They have certain expectations. They expect loyalty and constructive work, because it has happened not only in my party but in others that councillors leave and change party affiliation.”* Furthermore, women were much more likely to report negative consequences in the workplace. This could suggest a general societal bias towards women engaging politics, as the men in our sample did not report experiencing the same problem.

## Support from Political Parties

The difference in the reaction of councillor’s colleagues within their political parties is even more interesting. Namely, whereas 61% of men councilors said they had full support from their colleagues, this was true for 51% of women councilors. This difference is not very large, but it is indicative of women getting less support even at the party level.

There was no difference between the parties, although it seems that a tendency exists for the colleagues in the Albanian political parties to be more supportive of each other, especially the men councilors. Women councilors in SDSM received most support from their political party, but as noted, these are only tendencies, i.e., the difference was not statistically significant. A significant difference, however, did exist for women councilors of different ages. Namely, the youngest and oldest women councilors were more likely to get support when compared to their colleagues between the ages of 31 and 51. For men it was the opposite: the youngest and the oldest received the least support (however, for men the differences were not statistically significant). Finally, unmarried women were more supported than married women (although marital status and age go together).

What was the reaction to your candidacy within your party?				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>I was supported by everyone</b>	Count	138	89	227
	%	60.8%	39.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	61.3%	51.1%	56.9%
<b>Most people supported me</b>	Count	74	76	150
	%	49.3%	50.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	32.9%	43.7%	37.6%
<b>Some supported me some did not</b>	Count	11	6	17
	%	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	4.9%	3.4%	4.3%
<b>Most were against it</b>	Count	2	3	5
	%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	0.9%	1.7%	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	Count	225	174	399
	%	56.4%	43.6%	100.0%
	Total %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Strong party support can be very empowering for women candidates, sometimes even crucial. This was confirmed during interviews:

*“The decision was a bit difficult. Party colleagues didn’t support me - I was discouraged. My parents supported me - it motivated me. However, when I got support from the highest ranks of the party, then I made the decision to run.”*

The role and support from the political party and party colleagues is very important for candidates and many women shared their perception from the party during interviews and validation meetings. One woman stated:

*“There is a good category of people that when they see your capabilities, they are supportive and want you to get ahead, because they believe you will be a driving force for the party and they want high capacities to come to the surface, and it is a good thing that most of the people in the political parties think like this. But to be honest, there are categories of people that are envious. Understandably, not everyone will welcome the decision with applause; some will assume that they deserve that position, so they*

*comment ‘why was she nominated and not me.’ If I told you that everyone said ‘well done!’, that would be a lie.”*

Similarly, one councilman shared his opinion:

*“No one in the world will receive full support, and certainly not me. There will always be people who think they can do better and give better results.”*

During interviews, women reported more internal-party opponents than men. Those opponents are exclusively men who believe that they should have been on the lists and that women have unjustly pushed them out due to the quota in place. The latter has a negative effect on the support women receive as part of their campaigns. Furthermore, there are indications that political parties place lower value on women candidates. For example, one notable indicator is coalition negotiations. By rule, smaller parties get a “female designated” place on the list. One women councillor from a smaller political party shared her experience:

*“Well, the reaction from some party colleagues was good but, I did not have support from others. They wanted a man to be nominated as a candidate from our party, but the lead coalition party gave us a place on the list that was designated for a women candidate. So, I got the support.”*

## Support from Family

There were no notable differences in the support that women councillors and men councillors received from their families. Almost all female and male councillors (from all demographic backgrounds) got full support from all (or most) of the members of their families. However, there was a tendency among older women councillors to get slightly less support from their families (even though they received more support in their parties).

What was the reaction in your family?				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>I was supported by everyone</b>	Count	185	151	336
	%	55.1%	44.9%	100.0%
	% within gender	81.9%	86.3%	83.8%
<b>Most people supported me</b>	Count	28	20	48
	%	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	12.4%	11.4%	12.0%

<b>Some supported me some did not</b>	Count	11	3	14
	%	78.6%	21.4%	100.0%
	% within gender	4.9%	1.7%	3.5%
<b>Most were against it</b>	Count	1	1	2
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
<b>Total</b>	Count	226	175	401
	%	56.4%	43.6%	100.0%
	% within gender	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

This was also evident during the validation meetings and interviews. One councilwoman stated:

*“Honestly, my children are proud of me right now because their mother became a public figure. But my parents were a little sceptical because my obligations grew, and we live together.”*

Or another that stated: *“Parents and family members gave me the greatest support. They convinced me; after all, it is a great honour to be a counsellor.”*

While the family rarely does not support a candidacy, some of the councillors indirectly shared scepticism that comes from the family members. For example, one councilman said that his family *“always complains and bothers me. They will tell me why not stay at home, why bother, since they are confident that I would not change anything. They are sarcastic about political engagement.”*

A councilman from one of the smaller parties also stated that in his view women cannot become politically involved if their families do not support them:

*“I hold a senior position within the party and I know that it is not easy for women. Their husbands always complain about their political commitment and the time they spend away from their families. This places women under pressure and they start to limit their commitments.”*

## Motivation

Another interesting difference in the motivation and recruitment processes lies in party loyalties between male and female councillors. Even though women councilors received less support from their party colleagues upon being nominated and elected, when directly asked about their motivation to run for council, almost one in four women councilors (23%) answered that it was their political party who motivated their nomination. Among men councilors, 12% gave this answer.

However, women councilors are more likely to choose the party as their motivator for running irrespective of their time spent in the political party<sup>11</sup>. For men this does not hold. Men who are in the party longer were more likely to state that the party was behind their motivation<sup>12</sup>, and were less likely to state that they ran because they saw it as a personal challenge<sup>13</sup>. This could mean that the political parties only reward their male members for long service, but not their female members.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the main motivation for running for both men councilors and women councilors are very similar, with the majority stating that helping the community and improving the situations were the main motivators (more than half of the councillors chose both options, but men were more likely to choose improvement of the situation). The third highest motivator was the political party for women and personal challenge for men.

The answers differed depending on several demographic characteristics. For example, the councillors from DUI were very unlikely to choose the political party as a motivator, but women councilors from the same party were most likely to choose advocating for minorities as their reason for running. Furthermore, the councillors with a postgraduate education were more likely to choose that improving the situation in the municipality was their motivator to run for council, and younger men councilors (especially those without children) were more likely to see the job as a personal challenge.

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11 The correlation between the time councilwomen spent as a members of a political party and stating that it was the party who motivated their main motivator is nonexistent  $r = .04, p = .610$

12 The correlation between the time councilmen spent as a members of a political party and stating that it was the party who motivated their main motivator is positive and significant  $r = .20, p = .006$

13 The correlation between the time councilmen spent as a members of a political party and stating that they ran because they saw running for office as a personal challenge is negative and significant  $r = -.15, p = .033$

<b>What motivated you to become a councilor?</b>				
		Male	Female	Total
<b>Financial rewards</b>	Count	5	7	12
	%	41.7%	58.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	2.2%	4.0%	3.0%
<b>Helping the community</b>	Count	131	99	230
	%	57.0%	43.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	57.7%	56.6%	57.2%
<b>Stepping stone to further my political career</b>	Count	16	8	24
	%	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	7.0%	4.6%	6.0%
<b>To improve the municipality</b>	Count	143	94	237
	%	60.3%	39.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	63.0%	53.7%	59.0%
<b>Personal challenge, I believed that this position is very important</b>	Count	33	30	63
	%	52.4%	47.6%	100.0%
	% within gender	14.5%	17.1%	15.7%
<b>For the party</b>	Count	28	41	69
	%	40.6%	59.4%	100.0%
	% within gender	12.3%	23.4%	17.2%
<b>Representing minorities/women</b>	Count	3	8	11
	%	27.3%	72.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	1.3%	4.6%	2.9%
<b>Dissatisfaction</b>	Count	7	2	9
	%	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	3.1%	1.1%	2.1%

# POLITICAL CAREER

**T**his section looks at the political career of women councillors and men councillors, i.e., their time and function in their political parties, their ambition for political careers and their assessment of their chances for advancement.

The first difference between women councillors and men councillors is their membership in a political party: 9% of men councillors and only 3% of women councillors do not belong to a political party, i.e., ran as independent candidates. This hints that men have slightly higher chances than women to run (and win) a campaign independently from a political party.

Out of the councillors who belong to a political party, there is no big difference in the time the men councillors and women councillors spent as members of their political parties. Namely, elected men councillors have been members of their political party on average for 12 years, whereas women councillors for 11 years. There was no difference in age between men councillors or women councillors (on average councillors are 42 years old for both genders) or the age at which they joined their political party (on average they joined their party at 31 for both genders).

However, the political parties differ greatly in this respect. The Albanian political parties for example give their councillors a chance a lot sooner than the Macedonian political parties. This is especially true for women. Whereas DUI and DPA women councillors on average have been with the party for 7 years<sup>14</sup>, women councillors from DPMNE and SDSM have 11 and 13 years respectively.

Expectedly, there is also an age difference in length of party membership, but the differences are not too large. Even among the youngest group of councillors, the average membership is over 8 years, whereas among the oldest it is only 14 years. This only shows that the country is a very young democracy. Interestingly, the more educated councillors have been with their party the shortest time, which again indicates that more educated councillors are more valuable to the party, but this is especially true for women. Namely, whereas a degree “buys” a year when you are a councillor, if you are a councilwoman it buys you a year and a half to two.

More important than length of party membership, however, is the difference between the functions men councillors and women councillors hold (or held) in their respective political parties. Namely, men are more likely to be or have been presidents of their local units, members of the executive board, members of congress and presidents of their youth units. They also tend to be more likely party secretaries or chiefs of electoral

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<sup>14</sup> The question referred to a total period engaged in politics, so for DUI members, it could also include activity before the party was established

headquarters. Women are only as likely as men to be members of the youth units, members of commissions and slightly more likely to be party spokespersons.

On first look, one can conclude that it is then easier for women to be nominated for municipal council because they do not have to be as advanced in their political carriers as men, especially when it comes to being a member of congress or the executive boards.

<b>Positions within the party</b>				
		Men	Women	Total
<b>President of a local organizational unit</b>	Count	101	60	161
	%	62.7%	37.3%	100,0%
	% within gender	48.6%	35.3%	42,6%
<b>Member of the executive</b>	Count	96	50	146
	%	65.8%	34.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	46.2%	29.4%	38.6%
<b>Member of congress</b>	Count	140	77	217
	%	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	67.3%	45.3%	57.4%
<b>Member of the executive of the youth organization</b>	Count	39	27	66
	%	59.1%	40.9%	100.0%
	% within gender	18.8%	15.9%	17.5%
<b>President of the youth organization</b>	Count	31	4	35
	%	88.6%	11.4%	100.0%
	% within gender	14.9%	2.4%	9.3%
<b>Member of a committee</b>	Count	136	124	260
	%	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%
	% within gender	65.4%	72.9%	68.8%
<b>Head of election headquarters</b>	Count	4	1	5
	%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	2.1%	0.7%	1.5%
<b>President of the union/ organization of women</b>	Count	N/A	70	70
	%	N/A	100.0%	100.0%
	% within gender	N/A	41.4%	20.6%

RESULT: POLITICAL CAREER

<b>Secretary of the party</b>	Count	6	1	7
	%	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	2.6%	0.6%	1.6%
<b>Spokesperson</b>	Count	1	5	6
	%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	0.5%	2.9%	1.6%

However, if we look at the pool of women within the parties in the executive branches we see that it is even tougher for women to get nominated. For example, in the three biggest political parties in Macedonia between 13% (in DPMNE) and 25% (in SDSM) of the members of the respective executive committees i.e., boards are women and only between 3% (DUI) and 7% (SDSM) of the presidents of the local committees, i.e., boards are women.

The parties did not disclose the number of their members, so we cannot know the total percent of men and women in the political parties to make final conclusions, but if we consider that the women are overrepresented in our sample (43% in our sample in comparison to 30% in the councils) and they are still only 34% out of all executive board members in our sample (in comparison to 13% to 25% in their respective parties), we can safely say that the results are indicative of both a systematic discrimination within the political parties, as well in the recruitment process for municipal councils.

	VMRO DPMNE		SDSM		DUI		DPA	
	N	Women %	N	Women %	N	Women %	N	Women %
<b>Party president</b>	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
<b>Executive committee/ Executive board/ Central Presidency</b>	24	12.5%	24	25%	7	14%	*	*
<b>Municipal committee / organization/local organization</b>	76	5%	74	6.7%	33	3%	*	*
<b>Youth Presidents</b>	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%	1	0%
<b>Executive body youth branches/ organizational structures</b>	24	29%	24	25%	*	*	*	*

*\*Data not available*

That there is a systematic difference in promoting men and women for council is further confirmed by our demographic analysis.

Firstly, we see a different recruitment process in the different political parties. For example, the Albanian parties recruit fewer presidents of local units, whereas DPMNE has the highest number of female presidents (41%) among their women councilors, so for women of DPMNE gaining a presidency of local units might be an important step for running for council. Furthermore, in SDSM the majority of councillors come from the executive boards, namely 78% of men councilors and 63% of women councilors, which is much more than the other political parties. However, the discrepancy between men and women remains noticeable. A big discrepancy can be noticed between members of congress for men and women of DPMNE, but this gender difference is not noticeable in the other parties. On the other hand, in SDSM and DPMNE there is a big discrepancy for presidents of youth organizations both in comparison to women from their party and for men from other parties, so for young men of SDSM and DPMNE being a president of the youth organization may be enough of a jump board for municipal council. Lastly, in DUI and SDSM more women councilors are members of commissions, whereas in DPMNE they are more represented among men councilors. In sum, the way that political parties recruit and in the process discriminate women are different, but found in every one of them.

A more telling result that points to the systematic discrimination of women in the recruitment process are the differences in age, education and employment status between women councilors and men councilors with different political functions.

Namely, the expected age differences for the executive positions are much smaller for men than for women. Specifically, among the men councilors who are presidents of local units and members of the executive boards the only underrepresented age group is the youngest, i.e., those younger than 31 years. It means that as soon as men turn 31 they are very likely to reach a senior position in their respective political party. However for women this only happens when they turn 38 and 45, for presidency and executive boards respectively. This is typical evidence that men are given a chance based on potential, whereas women must prove themselves before they get a chance.

Similar patterns are observed for members of congress, although here the differences are more gradual for men and women, and the older the councillors, the more likely they are to be member of congress. However, in all age groups men are more represented than women and their jumps in numbers at congress come at an earlier age. Finally, for the councillors who are members of commissions, women are more represented at almost all ages, and especially amongst the youngest.

Differences in education and employment status are not so prominent, but members of executive boards are more likely to be postgraduates and this is especially true for women. On the other hand, for membership of congress education makes a difference only for men. Finally, it seems that the employment status matters for the female presidents of local units. Namely, 40% of the employed women councilors are presidents of their local units,

but only 25% of the unemployed, whereas there is no difference between the employed and unemployed men councilors. For members of congress however, employment matters both for men councilors and for women councilors.

In sum, it is much harder for women to progress in their political parties, or as one women councilors suggested:

*“They (men) maintain key party positions, and they guard them well. They think they are the best at what they do and they do not give women the opportunity to prove themselves.”*

So the fact remains that women are underrepresented in party functions as well as on the municipal and national level. One of the frequently quoted reasons for this is their own lack of ambition to build political careers.

However when we directly asked the municipal councillors about their political desires, we found that women are in fact more ambitious. Namely, 37% would want to run for council again (compared to 25% of men), 32% would want to become members of parliament (compared to 23% of men councilors) and 33% would like to be members of government (compared to 23% of men). On top of that, even between the councillors who answered with “maybe,” we have slightly more women councilors than men councilors in all the categories except for running for municipal council again. All in all, the women councilors do not show bigger aspirations than men councilors only on the question of becoming a mayor (where they show equal ambition), so we can conclude that it is not for their lack of ambition that they are underrepresented on the Macedonian political scene.

Do you have aspirations to be in one of the following positions?				
		Men	Women	Total
<b>To be reelected for a council?</b>	Count	95	59	154
	%	61.7%	38.3%	100.0%
	<b>No</b>			
	% within gender	41.9%	33.7%	38.3%
<b>Yes</b>	Count	57	65	122
	%	46.7%	53.3%	100.0%
	% within gender	25.1%	37.1%*	30.3%
<b>Maybe</b>	Count	75	51	126
	%	59.5%	40.5%	100.0%
	% within gender	33.0%	29.1%	31.3%

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<b>To become a mayor?</b>	Count	154	106	260
	%	59.2%	40.8%	100.0%
	% within gender	67.8%	60.6%	64.7%
<b>No</b>	Count	44	41	85
	%	51.8%	48.2%	100.0%
	% within gender	19.4%	23.4%*	21.1%
<b>Yes</b>	Count	29	28	57
	%	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%
	% within gender	12.8%	16.0%	14.2%
<b>Maybe</b>	Count	139	79	218
	%	63.8%	36.2%	100,0%
	% within gender	61.2%	45,1%	54.2%
<b>Member of parliament</b>	Count	53	56	109
	%	48.6%	51.4%	100,0%
	% within gender	23,3%	32,0%**	27.1%
<b>Yes</b>	Count	35	40	75
	%	46.7%	53.3%	100,0%
	% within gender	15.4%	22.9%	18.7%
<b>Maybe</b>	Count	139	82	221
	%	62.9%	37.1%	100.0%
	% within gender	61.2%	46.9%	55.0%
<b>Part of the government?</b>	Count	53	58	111
	%	47.7%	52.3%	100,0%
	% within gender	23.3%	33.1%	27.6%
<b>Yes</b>	Count	35	35	70
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100,0%
	% within gender	15.4%	20.0%	17.4%
<b>Maybe</b>	Count	35	35	70
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100,0%
	% within gender	15.4%	20.0%	17.4%

In addition to gender, we see differences in political aspirations between councillors with different age, education, marital status, employment status and political party. Namely, younger councillors and especially younger men councilors show more ambition than

their older colleagues. For them, the ambition to run for council again drops drastically at age 38 (from 40% to 13%). For women we see a similar but weaker pattern only for running for council again, where the ambitions drops at 38 (from 41% to 19%), but picks up again after 45 (to 38%) and drops a little again after 52. For the other positions, especially parliament and government, the ambition decreases with women councilors’s age, but very gradually and slowly and not as abruptly as with men councilors. Interestingly, the aspiration to be mayor never drops for women councilors, even though it seems that this is a position most elusive for female politicians in the country.

Except for rerunning for council, the higher the education of the councillors, the more likely that they aspire for higher political positions and the same can be said for employment status. The employed councillors have higher political aspirations than their unemployment colleagues. Not being married is also a driver for political aspiration especially and sometimes only among women councilors. Finally, councillors from DUI and DPMNE have more ambition than councillors from SDSM.

In sum, we see that women are more likely to want to have more influential political functions, but how do they judge their chances of getting to such positions? To find out, we asked the councillors who had aspirations to further their political careers to judge their chances of realizing their aspirations.

When it comes to the councillors judging their chances of re-election, as well their chances of becoming mayors, members of parliament or members of government, it is interesting that women councilors are fairly hopeful (when one considers their underrepresentation in all of those institutions). Namely, it is only when it comes to their chances for re-election in council that women councilors are less hopeful than men. Granted, they show a tendency for judging their chances a bit lower than their male colleagues for the other positions as well, but all these differences are not statistically significant. Specifically, when it comes to re-election for council, on a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 stands for “very little chance” and 5 stands for certain re-election, women councilors score 3.7 on average, while men councilors score 4.0. This difference stems from 37% of the men councilors being certain that they would be re-elected (if they ran) compared to only 23% of the women councilors.

How do you judge your chances of being reelected for council?			
		Male	Female
<b>Very small chance 1</b>	Count	1	2
	% within gender	1,9%	3,3%
<b>2</b>	Count	2	4
	% within gender	3,7%	6,6%
<b>3</b>	Count	12	20
	% within gender	22,2%	32,8%

<b>4</b>	Count	19	21
	% within gender	35,2%	34,4%
<b>Certain 5</b>	Count	20	14
	% within gender	37,0%	23,0%
<b>Total</b>	Count	54	61
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

On the other hand, whereas women councilors gave themselves a 2.8 chance of becoming a mayor, the men councilors gave themselves a 3.5 chance. This difference is not statistically significant, but the tendency is observable. Especially if we consider that 21% of women councilors think they have very small chances of becoming a mayor compared to 12% of men councilors who think the same.

<b>How do you judge your chances of being elected a mayor?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>Very small chance 1</b>	Count	5	8
	% within gender	12,2%	21,1%
<b>2</b>	Count	3	5
	% within gender	7,3%	13,2%
<b>3</b>	Count	17	13
	% within gender	41,5%	34,2%
<b>4</b>	Count	11	9
	% within gender	26,8%	23,7%
<b>Certain 5</b>	Count	5	3
	% within gender	12,2%	7,9%
<b>Total</b>	Count	41	38
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

When it comes to being elected Member of Parliament or appointed as a Minister, we observe neither a difference nor a tendency. Namely, while women councilors think they have weaker chances for themselves for the mayor positions and those of municipal council, they do not differ from men councilors when it comes to positions in parliament and government. Specifically, women councilors give themselves a 2.9 chance to be elected MPs, and 2.3 chances to be appointed ministers, compared to the 3.0 and 2.5 chances

that men councilors give themselves for being elected MPs and appointed ministers, respectively.

How do you judge your chances of being elected a member of parliament?			
		Male	Female
<b>Very small chance 1</b>	Count	7	11
	% within gender	14,3%	20,0%
<b>2</b>	Count	5	10
	% within gender	10,2%	18,2%
<b>3</b>	Count	23	17
	% within gender	46,9%	30,9%
<b>4</b>	Count	10	10
	% within gender	20,4%	18,2%
<b>Certain 5</b>	Count	4	7
	% within gender	8,2%	12,7%
<b>Total</b>	Count	49	55
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

How do you judge your chances of being elected a minister (member of government)?			
		Male	Female
<b>Very small chance 1</b>	Count	14	19
	% within gender	30,4%	35,8%
<b>2</b>	Count	11	12
	% within gender	23,9%	22,6%
<b>3</b>	Count	8	13
	% within gender	17,4%	24,5%
<b>4</b>	Count	10	6
	% within gender	21,7%	11,3%
<b>Certain 5</b>	Count	3	3
	% within gender	6,5%	5,7%
<b>Total</b>	Count	46	53
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

Among men their expectations seem to depend on the political party to which they belong: namely, men councilors from DPMNE and DUI judge their chances better than men councilors from SDSM. This difference, however, is not so prominent for women councilors. Age on the other hand made a difference only among men councilors who want to run for mayor: the older they were the higher they saw their chances to actually become one. Education, interestingly, makes no difference in their assessments, nor do other demographic features of the councillors.

# POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT AND DIFFERENCES IN QUALITY

**W**hen asked whether they consider that they are qualified for holding office, both women and men are generally very confident in possessing the knowledge and capacity necessary for fulfilling their obligations as local officials. However, women councilors and men councilors differ in the judgement of their own work in the council. Namely, women councilors consider themselves a little bit more capable than men councilors. Specifically on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 stands for “do not meet the requirements” and 7 stands for “fully meets the requirements”, 78% of women councilors give themselves a 7 (47%) or a 6 (31%). This is true for 71% of men councilors. This difference is statistically significant<sup>15</sup>, but not very big: namely, women score 6.2 on average where men score 6.0. It is the education of the councillors that contributes for the biggest differences, where expectedly, the more educated councillors judge their competencies a bit higher than those with lower degrees of education.

## Do you think that with your knowledge and capabilities you meet the requirements for the municipal councilors

		Male	Female
<b>1 Do not fulfill the requirements</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,4%	0,0%
<b>2</b>	Count	2	0
	% within gender	0,9%	0,0%
<b>3</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,4%	0,0%
<b>4</b>	Count	14	4
	% within gender	6,2%	2,3%
<b>5</b>	Count	46	34
	% within gender	20,5%	19,5%
<b>6</b>	Count	63	54
	% within gender	28,1%	31,0%

<sup>15</sup>  $t(396) = 1.99, p = .048$

<b>7 fully meet the requirements</b>	Count	97	82
	% within gender	43,3%	47,1%
<b>Total</b>	Count	224	174
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

When the question is reformulated and councillors are asked to compare themselves to other councillors, the results are reverse. Men are more assured of their contribution to the council, i.e., more than half of them (57%) judge their work to be exceptional in comparison to the other councillors (they judge their work to be in the top 15%). Women councillors are not so self-assured, but even among them the majority (46%) think that they are in the top 15% of councillors. On average, both men councillors and women councillors consider themselves to be above average, and the difference between men and women is significant<sup>16</sup>. Not only men councillors, but also the more educated, the employed, and for men, those coming from the Macedonian political parties (DPMNE and SDSM) judge their capabilities more highly.

<b>How do you judge your work at the council, compared to the other councillors</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>In the top 15%</b>	Count	127	79
	% within gender	57,0%	45,7%
<b>Above average but not in the top 15%</b>	Count	38	33
	% within gender	17,0%	19,1%
<b>Similar as the others</b>	Count	56	59
	% within gender	25,1%	34,1%
<b>Below average but not in the worst 15%</b>	Count	1	2
	% within gender	0,4%	1,2%
<b>In the worst 15%</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,4%	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	Count	223	173
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

<sup>16</sup>  $t(394) = 2.23, p = .027$

The results are very similar when councillors are asked how they would judge what the other councillors think of their work: the majority of men councillors (53%) and women councillors (43%) think that their colleagues judge them to be in the top 15% performers.

Other than gender, the oldest generation of councillors (both women councillors and men councillors) feel more regarded by their colleagues. The more educated men councillors also feel more regarded than their less educated colleagues, but education plays no role for women councillors. Here too the employed councillors feel more regarded than the unemployed.

<b>How do you think the other councillors judge your own work at the council?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>They think I am in the top 15%</b>	Count	105	65
	% within gender	53,3%	42,5%
<b>They think I am above average but not in the top 15%</b>	Count	41	32
	% within gender	20,8%	20,9%
<b>They think I am similar as the others</b>	Count	50	52
	% within gender	25,4%	34,0%
<b>They think I am below average but not in the worst 15%</b>	Count	0	4
	% within gender	0,0%	2,6%
<b>They think I am in the worst 15%</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,5%	0,0%
<b>Total</b>	Count	197	153
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

The relationship between these two answers is not ideal but it is big<sup>17</sup>, which means that those councillors who think that they are excellent performers also believe that the other councillors see them as excellent performers (and vice-versa). The average discrepancy between what the councillors believe and what they think their colleagues believe is - 0.05 for women councillors and - 0.01 for men councillors. A negative discrepancy means that the councillors judge themselves to be better than what their colleagues give them credit for (in their own opinion), but the numbers are so close to zero, that we should not interpret the result in that direction. What the tendency tells us is that women are slightly more likely to feel that their colleagues do not appreciate them, but this difference too is very small and not statistically significant.

<sup>17</sup>  $r = .66, p = .000$

When men councilors and women councilors explicitly judge the difference in quality between the male and female councillors, we see that most of them have a balanced view (think that both genders work similarly). However, 34% of women councilors and 13% of men councilors think that women actually do a better job, whereas 18% of men councilors and 4% of women councilors think that women do a worse job than men. In other words, every third councilwoman thinks that the work of her female colleagues is better than the work of her male colleagues, whereas almost every fifth councillor thinks that women councilors are notably worse workers. The answers do not depend on any demographic characteristic of the councillors, except that men councilors from DUI hold their female colleagues in higher regard than the men councilors from other political parties.

<b>How would you judge the work of your female colleagues?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>Most of them work better than the male councilors</b>	Count	30	58
	% within gender	13,4%	33,7%
<b>Mostly they work on the same level as the male councilors</b>	Count	146	103
	% within gender	65,2%	59,9%
<b>Most of them work worse than the male councilors</b>	Count	40	7
	% within gender	17,9%	4,1%
<b>I don't know what they think/ Can't say</b>	Count	8	4
	% within gender	3,6%	2,3%
<b>Total</b>	Count	224	172
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

When it comes to the influence councillors believe they have on the decisions made in the council, there are no observed differences between men and women. Again, on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 stands for “I have no influence” to 7 “I have huge influence”, women councilors score 4.9 on average, whereas men councilors score 4.6, which means that both men councilors and women councilors think they have fairly big influence on decisions. The difference between women and men is not statistically significant.

The perceived influence is mostly dependent on the councillor’s political party, where councillors from DPMNE think they can exert the most influence and councillors from SDSM the least. Employed councillors (especially men) also believe they have bigger influence than the unemployed councillors.

<b>How would you judge your influence on the decisions made by the council?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>1 I have no influence</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,4%	0,0%
<b>2</b>	Count	2	0
	% within gender	0,9%	0,0%
<b>3</b>	Count	1	0
	% within gender	0,4%	0,0%
<b>4</b>	Count	14	4
	% within gender	6,2%	2,3%
<b>5</b>	Count	46	34
	% within gender	20,5%	19,5%
<b>6</b>	Count	63	54
	% within gender	28,1%	31,0%
<b>7 I have huge influence</b>	Count	97	82
	% within gender	43,3%	47,1%
<b>Total</b>	Count	224	174
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

During the interviews, women were much more likely to perceive having limited influence over the decisions and the work of the councils. When asked ‘In what ways is the work different from what you expected?’ the majority of the interviewed women identified limited influence over decision-making, which was not the case with the male council members. Furthermore, when asked ‘Knowing what you know now, would you run again?’, while the majority of both women and men responded affirmatively, it was only women who responded that they would not run because there are no opportunities to influence decision-making. The reasons for this could be that women feel that most of the decisions are done within the party, dominated by men. This shows that due to the ‘party culture’ women are more excluded from decision-making even when they are in power. However, it also indicates that women are more critical and are more likely to engage wider groups in the policy making process, including those that are traditionally disengaged.

## Missed opportunities

In order to assess what were the most critical issues and incidents, or what councillors thought that they could have done better, we asked them to critically reflect on their work and tell us if there is something that they would now do differently. While almost half of the councillors would not change anything, they differ greatly in the reasons. While 10% have faith in their work and think they have done everything perfectly, 13% would not change anything because they have been discouraged. As much as 13% stated that they would not change anything because they are in opposition and have no influence over decision-making.

The table below depicts the answers categorized into the most common reasons provided:

<b>Looking back, is there anything you would change, or do differently?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>Would improve the work if the council, including change in dynamics and power between the council and the mayor, voting in the interest of the people as well as improve communication, including transparency and communication across party lines</b>	Count	56	33
	% within gender	24.7%	18.9%
<b>Improve fiscal stability, fundraise more projects, improve efficiency in public spending</b>	Count	25	24
	% within gender	11.0%	13.7%
<b>Increase participation of women in decision-making and positions of power</b>	Count	2	12
	% within gender	0.9%	6.9%
<b>Infrastructure investments (road, sewage, water supply, etc)</b>	Count	31	14
	% within gender	13.7%	8.0%
<b>Investments in other areas (education, health, pre-school, rural development, youth, sports, culture)</b>	Count	17	19
	% within gender	7.5%	10.9%
<b>Nothing</b>	Count	73	60
	% within gender	32.2%	34.3%
<b>NA/DK</b>	Count	23	13
	% within gender	10.1%	7.4%
<b>Total</b>	Count	227	175

While the biggest share of councillors would not do anything differently (one in three), they differ in the reasons why. The majority of them believe that they have done a really good job, while 8% of all councillors were discouraged because they believed they could not do anything differently because they belong to the opposition. The second most common response (every fifth councillor) was regretting how they worked in the council and that they would change the way it operated – from more checks and balances over the mayor, to achieving better communication and cooperation across party lines and working in the interest of the people and communities. The third most common response was investments in infrastructure and capital investments in social services. There were no gender differences, apart for promoting greater gender equality in decision-making at local level.

During interviews, both men and women reported that they could not have done anything differently, as they believe that they do not have actual power. However, it is worth noting that it was only men who said they wouldn't have done anything differently because all of their ideas were accepted and they are satisfied with the outcomes.

*“I did not expect that it would be so difficult to do something differently, but those are the conditions in the community. Theoretically you think you can make a great change but, when you become an elected official you realize that there are so many constraints and you need to adapt to the conditions which are difficult. I had a lot of information before I entered the campaign and thought I knew what to expect, but I did not expect that the financial crisis in which we are will be so deep.”*

Additionally, councillors were asked to share what they believe is their biggest personal success. Their answers reveal that women and men differ in their priorities. Women are more likely to prioritize social issues, health, education, environmental problems. Representing women's interest is considered a personal responsibility of elected women across all parties. Women are also more likely to give priority to policies related to care giving and traditional roles of women in the society, such as child care, education, health, elderly care, etc.

Furthermore, while investments in infrastructure cited the most, women and men have different priorities in those investments. Women support investments in social capital (kindergarten, ambulances, playgrounds etc.) and water supply, compared with roads and transportation among men.

Gender equality issues are still women issues. Women in public office, at local level, are more active on gender equality issues, regardless whether they believe that advancing gender equality is their priority or not. Women are more likely to participate in trainings and capacity building activities related to gender, but still in general lack information and capacities for integrating the gender perspective in policy-making processes. And while women in general have participated in some kind of initiative to advance gender equality, men councilors did not report such engagement. However, the initiatives mainly focus on increasing awareness and cooperation. Few initiatives have been reported that target

women's rights such as access to employment or budget changes to address women's needs.

Furthermore, women are more likely to try to change the way local government works, by improving communication, engaging citizens and promoting transparency.

6.9% of the women declared that they regret they did not work more on increasing the participation of women in politics. During validation meetings, women stated, and were proud of, their attempt to be as objective as possible. They stated on many occasions that when they are in leadership positions or involved in recruitment and selection processes at party level, they look at the quality of the individual candidate, not at the gender. The same issue was raised almost 30 years ago by Dahlerup in her pivotal study on women in politics. She argued that one of the key paradigm shifts in political empowerment in Nordic countries happened when women politicians started to deliberately recruit other women. She calls this critical act necessary for increased influence. She argues that before, women politicians felt uncomfortable about recruiting other women. "The women politicians have accepted the point that in a world of systematic differentiation between women and men, sex-neutrality is probably impossible, in fact often a blind for selecting men" (Dahlerup, 1988).

Such a 'paradigm shift' has not happened in Macedonian politics. To the contrary, women councilors and women engaged in politics were proud that they judge people objectively on their competences. However, they start to realize that men (and the party structures in general) are biased and inclined towards men. As one councilwoman stated: "*The problem is that we are objective. When we are in leadership positions we try to be as objective as possible, whereas men stay together and support each other*". And while only less than one in ten of the surveyed women councilors regret that they have not worked deliberately to support and recruit other women, it shows that more and more women are aware of this and that we could see an increase in this trend in Macedonia, which could in the long term support increased equality.

# GENDER EQUALITY IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

The final part of the research focused on questions specifically targeting opinions and reflections about gender equality. We looked at issues such as attitudes toward women in politics, assessment of the impact the law on equal opportunities and quotas had on increasing gender equality, as well as opinions about the attitudes of men vis-à-vis the increased representation of women. Finally, we measured the level of responsibility for deliberately working on the issue of gender equality among councillors. Namely, we inquired about the personal responsibility councillors felt for increasing gender equality, their assessment of the influence the law on equal opportunity has had on bringing more equality and finally their estimation on when in the future true gender equality in politics will be reached.

## **Personal opinions about the involvement of women in politics**

As mentioned above, we asked councillors to give us their opinion on whether women should be involved and/or included in politics and also give us their opinion on whether they thought men councilors accept that women should be involved in politics.

The results are staggering, especially when it comes to personal opinion. Namely, on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 stands for “not at all” and 7 stands for “greatly”, less than half of the men councilors (48%) think that women should be greatly involved in politics and one in five gave a score lower or equal to 4 (which is the middle of the scale) meaning that they lean toward an opinion that women should not be involved in politics or at least not equally represented.

Expectedly, their answers are in stark contrast from those of their female colleagues, but it is somewhat surprising that even among women councilors, one in four is not of the opinion that women should be greatly involved in politics (chose 6 or less).

<b>In your opinion should women be included in politics?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>1 Not at all</b>	Count	3	0
	% within gender	1,3%	0,0%
<b>2</b>	Count	2	0
	% within gender	0,9%	0,0%
<b>3</b>	Count	9	0
	% within gender	4,0%	0,0%
<b>4</b>	Count	28	6
	% within gender	12,4%	3,5%
<b>5</b>	Count	50	16
	% within gender	22,2%	9,2%
<b>6</b>	Count	25	20
	% within gender	11,1%	11,6%
<b>7 Greatly</b>	Count	108	131
	% within gender	48,0%	75,7%
<b>Total</b>	Count	225	173
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

That not all men support female politicians is “known” or “felt” by both female and male councillors. Namely, 19% of women councilors feel that most of their male colleagues do not think that they (women) should be involved in politics, and 9% of men councilors share their opinion. Around a third of both women councilors and men councilors think that the opinions of their male colleagues are split when it comes to women in politics. Almost half of councillors are of the opinion that most men councilors think that women should be involved in politics. The differences between men and women on this question are notable. Women are more likely to believe that they are not welcomed by their male colleagues in the political arena.

<b>Do your male colleagues think that women should be involved in politics?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>Most of them think women should be involved in politics</b>	Count	109	73
	% within gender	48,9%	42,2%
<b>Some of them think women should be involved in politics, some of them don't</b>	Count	72	62
	% within gender	32,3%	35,8%
<b>Most of them do not think that women should be involved in politics</b>	Count	20	32
	% within gender	9,0%	18,5%
<b>I don't know what they think/ Can't say</b>	Count	22	6
	% within gender	9,9%	3,5%
<b>Total</b>	Count	223	173
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

Many men councilors were critical towards their colleagues during the interviews. It means that there are men that are willing to support the process of increasing the participation of women in politics and could be very valuable allies in this process. However, it seems that such linkages have not been established yet and possibly this could be the way forward.

*“I do not know what is needed to encourage more women. The woman is a backbone of the family and all those problems which she faces running the family, she certainly knows how to solve them. Therefore, women’s wisdom, tolerance and charm certainly should be involved in the municipality by increasing women’s participation. Because it is much better to work with councilwoman, they are more tolerant, they care about the issues, they work on problems like they are personally concerned and therefore I personally would be supporting initiatives to increase the number of women in politics. But I do not know how we can encourage that, I have never spoken about this with the women councilors in my municipality or party.”*

Or another councilman: *“I think that there are a small number of women mayors due to fact that men are better than women in these political positions. We had a women mayor and we did not experience any benefits from it. In fact we were worse off when a woman was the mayor.”*

## Individual responsibility for promoting gender equality

Women councilors and men councilors differ in their felt responsibility for increasing gender equality. On average, on a scale for 1 to 7 where 1 stands for “I do not have any responsibility” and 7 stands for “I have full responsibility” women score 5.3 whereas men score 4.8. One in three women councilors and one in four men councilors feel they have full responsibility for increasing gender equality, but 11% of men councilors and 2% of women councilors do not think it is their responsibility to bring about more equality for men and women. In fact, 22% of men councilors and 13% of women councilors score below the middle of the scale, meaning they either do not feel any or feel little responsibility when it comes to gender equality. However, seeing that women feel more responsible for achieving gender equality, one can expect that having more women in politics will bring more equality (and not only in numbers).

Do you think that you are personally responsible for increasing gender equality in Macedonia?			
		Male	Female
<b>1 I do not have any responsibility</b>	Count	23	4
	% within gender	10,5%	2,4%
<b>2</b>	Count	7	6
	% within gender	3,2%	3,6%
<b>3</b>	Count	18	12
	% within gender	8,2%	7,1%
<b>4</b>	Count	40	25
	% within gender	18,2%	14,9%
<b>5</b>	Count	49	43
	% within gender	22,3%	25,6%
<b>6</b>	Count	24	25
	% within gender	10,9%	14,9%
<b>7 I have full responsibility</b>	Count	59	53
	% within gender	26,8%	31,5%
<b>Total</b>	Count	220	168
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

*“I support women in politics but I feel that 30 percent is in itself discriminatory - why should we provide only 30, when it could be 50/50 or 70 percent could be women. I*

*believe that the percentages should be deleted and we should set criteria based on education, knowledge, and capabilities. I believe that the 30 per cent is disgraceful for women.”*

## Impact of the law on equal opportunities

In the opinion of the majority of councillors, the law on equal opportunities has increased gender equality since its introduction and women councillors and men councillors do not differ in their opinion. Specifically, one in four councillors thinks that the law has contributed a lot to increasing gender equality and a good majority (63%) give the law a grade of 5 or more on a scale from 1 to 7, where 1 stands for “The law hasn’t contributed at all” and 7 stands for “The law has contributed a lot”. However, a significant minority, i.e., almost every fourth councillor (19%) judge the law to be unsuccessful (graded the law below the middle of the scale).

In your opinion, how much has the law on equal opportunities contributed to increasing gender equality in Macedonia?			
		Male	Female
<b>1 Hasn't contributed at all</b>	Count	13	5
	% within gender	5,9%	2,9%
<b>2</b>	Count	16	4
	% within gender	7,3%	2,3%
<b>3</b>	Count	14	24
	% within gender	6,4%	14,0%
<b>4</b>	Count	37	26
	% within gender	16,8%	15,2%
<b>5</b>	Count	56	38
	% within gender	25,5%	22,2%
<b>6</b>	Count	27	28
	% within gender	12,3%	16,4%
<b>7 Has contributed a lot</b>	Count	57	46
	% within gender	25,9%	26,9%
<b>Total</b>	Count	220	171
	% within gender	100,0%	100,0%

While progress has been made, it is limited to the legislative minimum, which shows that the law might secure increased representation, but is not enough to change the political culture. Therefore, while activists and gender equality advocates hoped that the law will be a starting point for achieving parity, unfortunately it seems that there is no positive trend on increased participation. One of the women members of parliament that were active in promoting legislative changes stated:

*“We should be even ashamed of what we have achieved. We thought that increased participation would lead to greater equality and a process of gradual increase of participation, but we don’t see that happening. We failed to continue to work together across party lines on this issue as a joint concern.”*

Another councilwoman noted the lack of equality where there is no quota imposed as a clear sign of the real problem with women participation in politics:

*“Equality does not exist. You can look for yourself how many women councilors, ministers and mayors women there are. My opinion is that men deliberately do not give us space in this field of work and we are in the political life still repressed.”*

*“There is no equality because men do not want to give more space to women than is obligatory, according to the law. If the legal framework is thirty percent, this is what they will do and nothing more. I am not satisfied, why should we stick with the minimum and we don’t provide equal opportunities to all.”*

During the interviews, men councilors were also critical about the real effect the legislation brought in real politics, both in terms of implementation, as well as in terms of impact:

*“It is very easy to write a law, but for it to be actually implemented is very difficult. We have a good legal framework, but the reality does not match legal aspirations, or the spirit of the law. If someone reads our laws he or she would think that we are somewhere in the Scandinavian countries and not in the south of the Balkans.”*

*“I do not think that there is a change. Women still cannot influence decisions, because there is no equal gender representation.”*

Other men councilors also pointed to the limitation of the legislation mainly due to the systemic discrimination against women that prevails because of stereotypes and prejudices that hinder implementation, which are widespread.

*“With a law we can achieve something, but this is forced change. We need to raise awareness, change the mentality, so there are no obstacles for women.”*

*“The real context can be seen at the mayoral level. Mentality of the Balkans is such that we think that the women are not capable to be in politics, to take care of a city, to be mayors. In Macedonia, especially in rural areas, the common perception is that the place of the woman is in the home. We cannot change that overnight, the change requires time. There are plenty of situations in which women were not present, or they*

*were not treated in accordance with their qualities. The mentality is such, that men should have the last word.”*

## Reasons behind inequality

Councillors were also asked to provide reasoning behind the inequality in political life, when they were faced with the fact that of the 81 municipalities in Macedonia, only 4 are headed by women. They were free in providing answers, i.e. it was an open-ended question without provided possible reasons. Once the data was collected, answers were coded and we could identify 5 major categories presented in the table below.

<b>At the moment there are only 4 female mayors in Macedonia in the 81 municipalities. What are the reasons for such a difference? How would you explain the situation?</b>			
		Male	Female
<b>Prescribed roles for women and men, Women are burdened with household responsibilities</b>	Count	36	45
	% within gender	15.8%	27.9%
<b>Society does not support women in politics</b>	Count	24	17
	% within gender	11.2%	10.6%
<b>Men dominate political parties and do not give power. Political parties do not trust women</b>	Count	66	64
	% within gender	30.8%	39.8%
<b>Women are not interested, lack of candidates. Women are less ambitious, do not want to take responsibility.</b>	Count	90	35
	% within gender	42.1%	21.7%
<b>Total (Councillors who did not answer the question not included)</b>	Count	214	161
	% within gender	100.0%	100.0%
<b>DK/NA</b>	Count	13	14
	% within gender	5.7%	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	Count	227	175
	% within gender	100.0%	100.0%

As can be seen from the table, the majority of male councillors (42%) “blamed” women for their lack of participation, i.e., they saw the reason for the low participation in women’s lack of interest, ambition and/or will to take responsibility. However, the second most frequent reason given by the male councillors (given by almost one in three - 31%), was that it is actually men in politics who are holding women back.

The second most frequent answer for men councilors was the most prominent among the women councilors. Here 40% believed that men dominate political parties and do not want to give away their power and/or that political parties do not trust women, whereas the second most frequent reason (given by more than one in four of the women councilors – 28%) were the traditional roles of men and women in our society, especially the burden of the household responsibilities. This reason is seen as crucial by only 16% of men councilors.

Furthermore, more than one in five of the women councilors (22%) believe that it is the women's own fault that they are not more involved in politics.

Finally, around 10% of both men councilors and women councilors believe that it is society that does not trust and support women in politics.

The differences in answers between men councilors and women councilors are not only obvious but also statistically significant.<sup>18</sup>

Similar reasoning was also provided during the interviews and validation meetings. Some women stressed the political culture within the parties, which is still predominantly male, as the biggest obstacle.

*“Stereotypes and prejudices still prevail against women in our society; the opinion is that we cannot be a good mayor. That is the reason in my opinion. Women also think that men are more capable.”*

*“Men's mentality needs to change so more opportunities are provided for women. Secondly, women need to strengthen their efforts and increase their ambitions. Thirdly, we need to change legislation to secure 50-50 representation not only for members of parliament and councils but within party structures, so that we have 5 women where we have 5 men. If we continue with this tempo we will not achieve equality, opportunities are not equal, rules are not equal, paths to office are not the same, and women do not get chances.”*

*“No, there is no equality. I think we should increase our awareness and secure parity. We should not judge on the basis whether it is men or women but on the quality of candidates. It is good that we have quotas because if we don't have them, from 33 candidates for the council maybe there will be only ten women who will be placed at the bottom of the list.”*

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<sup>18</sup> Chi<sup>2</sup>(1) = 3.85, p < .05

## **Prediction on when parity will be reached**

The study also tried the measure the optimism among politicians about the time needed to achieve parity in politics. Men councilors and women councilors do not differ in their opinion on when true gender equality will be reached. On average women think it will be 13 years, men 14 years before equality is reached. Specifically, around 8% of councillors think that gender equality has already been reached, and around 30% think that we will need only 5 years to reach it. Around two thirds think that we will need 10 years, and 90% think that we will achieve it in 20 years or less. Only 2% believe that we need another 50 years.

But this is only if we consider the 17% of councillors who believe that equality will never be reached or at least not in their lifetime.

Councillors were more critical during interviews and validation meetings. While stressing the achievements already made, they also pointed to the many contextual factors that hinder women's participation at an equal level with men. One councilwoman said:

*“The first obstacle is the attitudes of the men to only keep strictly to the quotas and that they would not give women more space and believe in them so that women can prove that they are capable. Secondly, when societal attitudes change and lift the load of the family obligations from women. Our only way out as women is to educate new generations that the family obligations, including care for children is the responsibility of all family members, not only for women. When these two elements merge, I think than women will be more empowered.”*

Similarly, one councilman shared his pessimism:

*“I believe that although we live in a democratic state and in theory we state that there is equality between women and men, essentially there is not. I don't expect that we will achieve equality in my lifetime.”*

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## KEY FINDINGS

**T**he study identified many gender differences in political career paths, ambitions, perceptions and personal attitudes. In this final chapter we want to stress the different complex findings that we believe are most crucial in preventing women from becoming a candidate and holding office, at least in the near future. We believe those are the ones that need to be urgently tackled. Additionally, we also identified factors that are falsely used to account for gender inequalities, while the study showed that they do not stand true in Macedonia.

### **Four main factors that impede parity in politics in Macedonia:**

#### **1. Political parties discriminate against women and hold them back**

The study showed that there is a systematic discrimination against women within the political parties, as well in the recruitment process for municipal councils. While it is true that the way political parties recruit and in that process discriminate women differently, discrimination was found in every one of the main political parties.

In sum, political parties provide chances to men based on their potential, whereas women must prove themselves before they get a chance. As a result, it is much harder for women to progress in their political parties. The results reveal that, on average, as soon as men turn 31 years they are very likely to reach a senior position in their respective political party. However, for women this only happens when they turn 38 and even 45.

As a result of the discrimination, the recruitment process for women councilors within the political parties is stricter than that for men. Women need to have higher employment positions: namely, 58% of the employed women councilors are experts, scientists or educators, while this is true only for 37% of the men councilors. Additionally, in order to be recruited into politics, women do not only need to have higher employment positions, but a higher level of education as well. Namely, whereas only one in five (21%) women councilors do

not have an undergraduate education, this is true for almost half of the men councilors (45%). Furthermore, while two thirds (64%) of women councilors are university graduates, this is true for only about half of men councilors (45%). Lastly, 15% of women councilors compared to 9% of men councilors have a postgraduate education.

## **2. Limited number of women candidates proposed and stricter pool of candidates for women**

Data from the State Electoral Committee in Macedonia shows a strong (almost linear) correlation between the number of candidates and the number of elected women. Here the role of political parties is crucial, in particular the way in which political parties allocate candidates to winnable seats or distribute them on lists has a significant part to play in the limited success to date in electing more women from the available candidates.

Additionally, it seems that political parties recruit women only from a small pool of potential candidates. Firstly, the study showed that the majority of women councilors (69%) are employed. Taking into consideration that on the Macedonian labor market only about a third of working age women are working, this is a very limiting factor for women. Secondly, as already stated, the study showed that women councilors and men councilors differ in their professions, especially when it comes to expert positions, with almost two of three women in political office being experts, scientist or educators. Additionally, 70% of women in office work for public or state administration (as compared to 43% in the national average). This points out that political party recruit women only from a very small pool of professions.

That political parties (which are still men-dominated) impose stricter conditions and judge women differently was also evident in the reasons provided for the existing gender gaps. Almost one third of men councilors (31%) stated that it is actually men in politics who are holding women back. This was voiced as the biggest reason by women in office - 40% believed that men dominate political parties and do not want to give away their position and/or that political parties do not trust women.

## **3. Women are still predominately responsible for childcare and family obligation**

The double burden of work (at home and at work), coupled with the long or inflexible hours of political and public life are preventing more women from being more active. Our study indicates that it is easier for married men with children than for married women with children to become municipal councilors (especially among Albanian councilors). Women in office are less likely to be married than their male colleagues, and women are slightly more likely not to have children, i.e., have less children on average. Additionally, there is also a tendency for female councilors to have fewer children at preschool age. The notion that the burden of housework is hindering women (while pursuing political carriers) is also supported by the fact that women councilors are more likely to have employed partners than men councilors. Whereas the vast majority (70%) of the married women councilors have employed spouses, this is true for only half (51%) of the married men councilors, thus receiving more support at home.

This was also confirmed when councilors were openly asked what they believed to be the biggest reasons behind gender gaps in leadership positions. The second most frequent reason for women councilors (given by more than a quarter of the women councilors – 28%) was the traditional roles of men and women in our society, especially the burden of the household responsibilities. This reason is seen as crucial by only 16% of men councilors, thus indicating that they are ‘blind’ toward the ‘unequal playing field’ for women.

The responsibilities at home also hinder women’s ambition to run for office. The study indicated that women view activities much more negatively than men, and indicated more personal trade-offs, such as being away from the family, compared to men.

#### **4. Gender equality is still considered only a ‘women’s’ issue’**

Gender equality is still seen as a ‘woman’s issue’ in the country. Men, in general, are not involved in the reforms. There is disproportionate non-representation of men in local Gender Equality Committees, as well as gender equality coordinators within national and local bodies. The situation is similar within the political parties as well.

The study revealed that when speaking about what should be a priority, women are disproportionately more likely to prioritize gender equality and increasing women participation in politics compared to men, while there were no gender differences in other mentioned priorities. Namely, on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 stands for “not at all” and 7 stands for “greatly”, less than half of the men councilors (48%) think that women should be greatly involved in politics and every fifth councilman leans toward an opinion that women should not be involved in politics or at least not equally represented. Expectedly, their answers are in stark contrast from those of their female colleagues, where the vast majority (90%) support increasing equality. However, even among women councilors, one in four is not of the opinion that women’s participation in politics should be increased.

### **Factors that could promote parity in politics**

#### **1. Women politicians are equally qualified, competent, confident and risk-averse as men**

Traditionally it has been considered that men embrace more risk-taking characteristics and responsibility-taking burdens that come with the electoral race. Our study has showed that this is still a prevailing opinion among men in politics. Namely, the majority of men councilors (42%) “blamed” women for their lack of participation, i.e., they saw the reason for the low participation in women’s lack of interest, ambition or willingness to take responsibility.

However, the study also showed that this is not true and revealed that women and men were equally confident in having the knowledge and capacity necessary for fulfilling their obligations as council members, and women were slightly more ambitious. When directly asked, both female and male councilors state that they had a great desire to become municipal

councilors, with women councilors showing slightly higher results. The men councilors in opposition parties are less likely to be motivated to run. However, the gender difference stands even when we control for party affiliation and is especially notable among councilors in the opposition, meaning that women councilors are more eager to be involved in politics no matter the circumstances.

When men councilors and women councilors explicitly judge the difference in quality between the male and female councilors, we see that most of them have a balanced view (think that both genders work similarly). However, 34% of women councilors and 13% of men councilors think that women actually do a better job, whereas 18% of men councilors and 4% of women councilors think that women do a worse job than men. In other words, every third councilwoman thinks that the work of her female colleagues is better than the work of her male colleagues, whereas almost every fifth councilman thinks that women councilors are notably worse in politics.

## **2. Society supports women in politics as much as men**

There are no biases among the Macedonian electorate based on gender. A recent opinion poll in Macedonia also showed that the majority of the population support women in politics and that gender is not a significant factor during elections. While the majority (59%) stated that they do not care about the gender, 23% stated that they would prefer a woman, compared to 16% that would prefer a male candidate. The levels of bias are non-existent to provide impediments to women's chances of election. Although many voters indicate that they would like to see more women in elected positions, there is no strong evidence to suggest that people actually vote on the basis of gender, and election results suggest that women are just as likely to succeed in elections as men.

Therefore, when it comes to politics the electorate is supportive of greater parity. This is also 'felt' by the politicians. The study showed that only 10% of both women councilors and men councilors think that gender gaps exist because society does not support women in politics.

## **3. One third of men recognize the need for closing gender gaps and support an agenda for change**

The study revealed that one in three men councilors is not satisfied with the current situation, that they value the work of women in politics and support reforms towards achieving parity. This means that there are men that are willing to support the process of increasing the participation of women in politics and could be very valuable allies in this process. However, it seems that such linkages have not been established yet and this could possibly be the way forward.

Additionally, every fifth councilor is dissatisfied with the way decision-making takes place in the country, and would like to work to improve the political culture. This is a significant share of politicians who are open to structural and systematic improvements in the way decisions are made. Therefore, identifying and mobilizing those agents across parties could be a great potential for achieving gender parity in politics.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## **At policy and legislative level**

- Gender equality policies and institutional frameworks should be strengthened and allocated adequate technical, human and financial resources to improve their efficiency and impact
- Investment in childcare facilities and introducing of measures that would contribute towards balance in family obligations such us introduction of paternity leave and incentives for parental leave by both parents
- Introducing special measures where they do not exist, in particular at the level of Government and in Parliamentary bodies
- Revise the legal framework to secure at least 30% in all decision-making positions, as well as consider raising the quota to 40%
- Improve gender statistics relevant for decision-making, including elections turn-out

## **Financial incentives**

- Provide incentives for women chapters within political parties, such us earmarked funding from the state budget
- Consider revising the rules for campaign financing to provide incentives for political parties that will nominate more mayoral candidates

## **At the level of political parties**

- Recruiting more women, and earlier is crucial, and might be the only solution to closing the existing gender gap
- Introduce special measures (quotas) for decision-making bodies at all levels and in all organizational structures of the party
- Provide special capacity building opportunities for women within the political party. In particular, develop mechanisms and training to encourage women to participate in the electoral process, political activities and other leadership activities, and empower women to assume public responsibilities by developing and providing appropriate tools and skills

- Revise the recruitment procedures to identify discriminatory practices (election gate keepers) and secure that women are judged equally with men and to expand to pool of potential candidates
- Provide child-care when party meetings take place to ease the burden of women and provide equal chances for participation

### **At the personal level**

- Women politicians should intensify their efforts to recruit other women. Women in leadership positions within parties should work deliberately to recruit more women and try to influence their male colleagues to do the same
- Engage men in the gender equality agenda, work deliberately to support those that already recognize the gap and believe in the cause
- Identifying and mobilizing agents of change across parties on gender equality issues or on issues that could contribute to parity and building solidarity with them will be crucial and could be a catalyst for change

### **At the level of civil society**

- Women organization continue to be a hub for future women leaders, and should continue to prioritize working on empowering women and achieving parity in decision-making
- Consider devising activities and services that would help women candidates couple with personal-trade offs during campaigns
- Campaign to promote women leaders and encourage more young women to enter politics
- Regularly monitor the implementation of policy and legislative commitments on gender equality and unfailingly push for closing gaps

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