

Conclusions and Recommendations about the Network of Women in Politics

Tirana, April 2015

The Context of reforms before the elections in June 2015

Since 2008, when the gender quota was determined in the Electoral Code, many national actors supported by international stakeholders proved to be active on its implementation and they analyzed the reasons for such quota failure. After the parliamentary elections in 2013, it was established the Alliance of Women MPs, which undertook an initiative for amendments to the Electoral Code where political parties had to nominate not less than 20% women candidates for mayors and not less than 40% women candidates for municipal councils. The amendments also anticipated the non-acceptance of lists for chairman/chairwoman and candidates if these two criteria had not been met. Regarding the composition for the lists of candidates for municipal councils, the zebra version (one man –one woman) had to be implemented, and if such criterion would not be applied, then the Central Election Commission would not accept the lists, and the fine alternative would be removed in case of not fulfilling this criterion.

As a result, the amendments to the Electoral Code approved on 2nd of April 2015 allow for 50% of women as candidates for municipality councils, implementation of zebra version within the lists as an obligatory criteria, removal of the fine as an alternative to non-implementation of zebra version, and not-acceptance of lists by the Central Election Commission if the political parties do not apply these criteria.

At present, with the announcement of candidate mayors by the political parties, it appears that women mayoral candidates almost reached 10% (12 out of 122) in total, and according to the two big political coalition, we have respectively: 7 candidates from the Socialist Party, 2 candidates from the Democratic Party and 3 candidates from the Socialist Movement for Integration.

The current situation of women's involvement in politics in Albania within the framework of fulfilling the amendments to the electoral code reveals to us that the challenge of increasing their representation requires constant attention by all stakeholders. Experiences show that **the party forums** and **civil society** are the main sources of women's inclusion in politics, hence, support

should be provided to both groups in order to influence the increased participation of women in politics.

The significant changes made in the Election Code on April 2nd, 2015, enable the drafting of the lists according to the zebra version and avoid the “fear” that the administrative-territorial reform would aggravate the representation of women in the upcoming local elections.

Such changes bring the effect of increasing the number of women as council members with at least 40%.

As a result of such intervention, the political parties will have to establish criteria and procedures for the selection of women in the lists of candidates, thus enabling **a transparent process**. The criteria should be applied transparently to both genders, but if we refer to the criterion of unemployment, the national level data show that long-term unemployment mainly affects more women than men and that the number of people who are discouraged to find a job is higher among women than among men.

The time when changes occurred (the amendments to the Electoral Code and the amendment of the Organic Law, April 2015) is too short to take preparatory steps and, to a certain extent, the parties somehow may result unprepared. Failure to acknowledge the rights and obligations for the new members of municipal councils under the Territorial-Administrative Reform also creates diverse problematics in the design of electoral campaigns and promises that women and men candidates will have to make to their communities.

Interviews with activists of various organizations (political parties and civil society) on site show a campaign focus mostly on numerical calculations rather than generation of competitive ideas. The changing of territory, especially in those units where rural-urban ratio results altered, constitutes a challenge for the presentation of integrated ideas.

The Network of Women in Politics (dldp) supports the idea that the prioritization, financing and offering of the qualitative social services does impact the increase of the reputation of the individuals engaged in politics, not only within political parties, but in their communities as well.

Recommendations for support:

(i) Short-term:

- Involvement of women and girls from rural areas as candidates in the political lists, to assure the representation of the issues of these areas in the electoral programs of the parties;

- Promotion of public debate and within political parties on the stipulation of criteria relating the selection of women in the lists, enabling transparency and mobilization of adequate human resources, so that the changes in the Code not be just numbers, but have a long-term impact in decision-making and policies;
- Impementation of information campaigns on the amendments to the Electoral Code and amendments to the Organic Law;
- Promotion of successful women in local level by developing on the basis of international practices;
- Encouraging women to participate in the staffs who design political programs and campaigns of candidates for mayors. Inclusion of gender sensitive policies in the electoral programs of the candidates, using the increased role of women and girls in the future Councils with direct impact in the increase of the quality life of communities.
- Cooperation with media is considered as the proper channel in the conditions of the need for information and massivization of gender issues and time pressure.

(ii) Mid-term:

- Increasing the capacities of future councils (men and women, boys and girls) in order to improve strategic decision-making in issues of socio-economic cohesion of the integrated territory;
- Extensive consultation of the Organic Law (under review process) and Law of Local Finances (planned 2015-16) in order to reflect gender aspects and social equality, particularly in the field of services, participation and representation.

(iii) Long-Term:

- Pursuant to the Law on Public Information, public hearings and consultation processes should reflect the principles of access and gender equality;
- Increasing the membership of women and girls in political parties and strengthening their advocating and lobbying capacity;

Note:

This material is based on the findings of the interviews and focus groups undertaken during the period February-April 2015 with members of local councils and members of political parties forums (Districts: Shkodër, Lezhë, Kukës, Durrës, Dibër), representatives of the Albanian Parliament, national and international organizations involved in gender issues and local development. The initiative is developed within the Network of Women in Politics, established as a platform within the Program for Local Development and Decentralization (dldp) since 2008, supported by the Swiss Cooperation in Albania.