

## Introduction

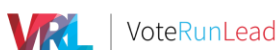
This research report is part of the outputs of the - "Gender Equality, Political Leadership and Education" project which was established in October 2015 with support from ERASMUS+, and aims to share resources and knowledge to develop best practices and increase female representation in political life. Project is run in 4 European countries – Czech Republic, Ireland, Finland and Poland, represented by the following partner organizations:

BRAND-SOFI is a mission consulting service, based in Finland that was founded by Ann-Sofi Backgren. An experienced consultant and lecturer, Ann-Sofi has been actively involved in educational initiatives encouraging female political empowerment for many years.

Fórum 50 % is a Czech non-profit organization supporting equal participation of women and men in politics and the decision-making process. They strive for more balanced decision-making process including not only men's but also women's views and life experience. They motivate women to become politically active, support active female politicians and women in leading positions, co-operate with political parties and other bodies on concrete measures.

Women for Election is a non-profit, non-partisan organisation whose vision is of an Ireland with balanced participation of women and men in political life. Their mission is to inspire and equip women to succeed in politics. The organisation offers tailored training and support programmes to women seeking to enter public life; and provides and facilitates a cross-party network of political women, committed to gender equality in Irish political representation.

Anti-Discrimination Education Association (Towarzystwo Edukacji Antydyskryminacyjnej) was founded in 2009 by people involved in anti-discrimination education. The Association brings together those who specialize in this area, including, among others, women and men who are anti-discrimination trainers, initiators of equality and diversity projects, members of organizations supporting groups threatened with discrimination.



Active Women Association (Stowarzyszenie Aktywne Kobiety) is a non-governmental organization founded in Poland, which promotes gender equality, personal growth and empowerment. They act on local, national, European and transnational levels, running projects in Europe, Africa and Asia.

### **Aim of the research and methodology**

The general aim of the research is to provide comparative analysis of educational and/or training initiatives implemented with aim of supporting women's greater participation in politics. It looks for a broader view on what is going on in this field in project's countries, as well as search for best practices and international inspirations for further developments of similar activities in the future.

The research was conducted in 2 main stages. The first stage aimed at gathering two kinds of country specific data:

- a. the background/context information on national electoral systems and statistical data on women in politics,
- b. description of approximately 5 educational and/or training initiatives supporting women in politics.

On the second stage the research seeks for more in-depth analysis of the educational and/or training activities promoting women in politics in order to assess them and eventually find out good practices.

During the first stage of the research we employed broad definition of "educational and/or training initiatives supporting women in politics" as:

- a. Initiatives (projects, programmes, trainings, courses etc.) which are still in place as well as those implemented and finished recently or in last 5 years.
- b. Initiatives targeting women with different backgrounds, who are already in politics (holding elected positions, being members of political parties etc.), who are interested in political career (but not being a member of a political party or an active politician), who are interested in leadership positions but not in institutional politics yet.
- c. Initiatives led by different institutions: political parties themselves, political foundations, NGOs, universities etc.



d. Initiatives employing different methodologies and tools, which vary in scope, results and impact.

The first stage of the research was based on desk research and in some cases it was followed up with a short interview in order to provide all required data. The first stage involved collection and analysis of already existing data, which were publicly available online and offline. This step allowed to present basic information from existing resources (mainly concerning national electoral systems and data on women in politics) and identify data shortages, especially those concerning the chosen educational and/or training initiatives which support women in political career.

The second stage of the research aimed at gaining more in-depth understanding of the educational and/or training activities identified during the first stage of the research. As the research was designed to find out eventually good practices on promoting women in politics, at the second and the last stage of investigation use mostly qualitative data. Therefore, qualitative, individual, semi-structured interviews were chosen as main research technique.

It is worth underlining that every training/educational initiative selected at the first stage of the research, at the second stage was examined by interviewing two different actors: 1) a leader of the initiative/project or program and 2) its female participant. This was done on purpose in order to produce different, but complementing and equally important information on available, educational support offered to women interested in political carriers. Such design allowed more comprehensive analysis of chosen practices.

In consequence, the guidelines for the second stage interviews included two different sets of questions/themes. In line with the methodology of semi-structured interviews, these guidelines contained two sets of topics to be covered and explored quite flexibly during the conversation with interviewees. Semi-structured interviews were conducted within open framework allowing suitable, two-way communication, natural phrasing of questions and going into details whenever it was needed. Each interview conducted within the framework of the research lasted around one hour and every time it was tailored accordingly to the particular context and conversation dynamics.



The interview with a leader focused on: 1) reasons laying behind launching the initiatives, 2) definition of the barriers hindering women's participation in politics at the national level, 3) diagnosis of needs of women who are interested in more active political involvement, 4) most positive characteristics of the education/training initiative and its most forward-looking effects, 5) development and improvement plans for the future, 6) general ideas of what is needed in order to increase number of female politicians.

The interview with a participant, i.e. a female interested in becoming a political leader, concerned the following issues: 1) available and most effective sources of information reaching women interesting in more active involvement in politics, 2) main types of motivation related to the participation in such a training, 3) main positive and inspiring features of such training/educational initiatives from women's perspective, 4) main impact of such training on women, 5) further (non-educational) needs of women interested in active political involvement.

## II. Research outcomes

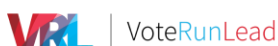
As an opening statement, it is important to mention, that participant countries have significant differences of demographics, legal and electoral systems as well as history of women's right and social situation. This has a great influence on the way that women are present in politics, therefore it is reflected in research findings.

### Background information and local context.

To draw a background picture of compared countries, we investigated the following issues:

#### 1. Since when women have got the electoral rights in your country?

This question revealed the differences in historical, formal engagement of women in political sphere. The earliest suffrages' gaining belongs to Finland, which dates in year 1906, then in 1918 Poland and Ireland respected women's right to vote, however Irish women had to be at least at the age of 30 and be a property owner to be allowed to vote in the General Election. In 1922 suffrage extended to include all women over the age of 21 (same as men). In Czech Republic women have won the right to vote in 1920.



Thus, apart from Finland, which overtakes other countries by more than ten years, in other states women gained active and passive electoral rights in the second decade of the 20th century.

## 2. What are the current female shares (in percentage) of the following political bodies:

In this part we explored current (meaning by the time of the research, which is January – May 2016) representation of women in political bodies of various levels.

### 2.1. Parliamentary seats – upper chamber:

Starting with Finland, which has a unicameral parliament with 200 members, of which 41,5 % are women, next comes Ireland with 28.5% (but at the time of research they were awaiting selection of 11 senators, so the situation was dynamic). Czech Republic managed to place 18,5% of women and Poland only 13,0%.

### 2.2. Parliamentary seats – lower chamber:

In lower chambers, situation look different: Czech Republic starts at point of 20,5% of women MPs, followed by Ireland with 22% and Poland reaches 27,2%. Again Finland has a unicameral parliament with 200 members, of which 41,5 % are women

### 2.3. National government seats:

As to share of seats in the state governments, Czech Republic starts with only 17,6% of female ministers (3 out of 17) then comes Ireland with 22% (3 out of 15 ministers) Poland had 25% (6 females, including Prime Minister and 18 males). Finland is again on top with 35,7 % (5 out of 14) ministers.

### 2.4. European Parliament – national representation:

As to female representation outside the country - in EP – countries block into two groups: one with lower level are Poland (23,5%) and Czech Republic (23,8%), while second with almost twice bigger representation consists of Finland (53,8 %) and Ireland (55%).

## 2.5. Local government seats:

In local government, the share of female representative looks as follows: Ireland: 20,5%, Poland: 25,8%, Czech Republic: 27,1% and Finland: 36 %.

## 2.6. Regional government seats:

If we take a step higher and take a look at the regional governments, then the picture shows Czech Republic with 19,9%, Ireland with 21% and Poland with 23,1%. Interesting situation is faced in Finland, where the 'regional government' consists of persons that have been elected to the local governments, so they are indirectly elected. Based on the results in the local elections there are negotiations between the political parties and the 'regional government' has to take into consideration also gender equality, which means that 40% quota is respected.

## 3. Does the electoral system of your country employ quotas for women?

We investigated the following aspects:

- What type of quotas are applied – legislative quotas (binding for all political parties) or voluntary party quotas?
- What is the percentage of quota for women?
- Does the quota provision employ zipper mechanism (ranking order)?
- In which elections/in what way the quotas are applied?

If we want to see the development of women's supporting mechanism, which is quotas, the situation differs importantly:

In the Czech Republic there is no legislative gender quotas. In the past there were two bills (in 2010 and in 2014) introducing legislative gender quotas that would be binding for all political parties, unfortunately they weren't adopted.

Green Party and Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia use quotas (where in case of Communists they are termed obligatory recommendations, not quotas) in all elections except election to Senate. Czech Social Democratic Party uses quota in election to Chamber of Deputies (lower chamber) and regional election. Green Party and Czech Social Democratic Party use also quotas for electing party structures.



The disadvantage of voluntary party quotas is that it has been non-binding and not enforceable in practice. Moreover, the majority of Czech political parties does not practice quotas. Therefore, influence of party quotas on women's political representation is limited.

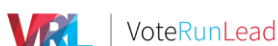
Ireland: Legislative quota for women on the level of 30%. This must increase to 40% within seven years from the date of the 2016 general election. No zipper mechanism. The quota applies to general elections. 30% of party candidates must be female, and 30% must be male. As Ireland is a PR-STV non-list system there is no zipper mechanism. If parties fail to reach the quota they will lose half of their state funding.

Poland: Binding quota (except for Upper chamber in Parliament and the municipal councils) since 2011. The sanction for failing to meet the obligation of 35% representatives of each sex is a refusal to register the list. No zipper mechanism.

Finland: All indirectly elected public bodies (government inquiry commissions, other similar bodies, municipal executive boards and other municipal boards and committees) must be composed of at least 40% of women and men. The quota paragraph of the Finnish Act on Equality between Women and Men (1995) also includes inter-municipal and regional decision-making structures in which the representatives are indirectly elected from the councils of the member municipalities. The Finnish quota expressly excludes all democratically elected organs.

The gender quotas are applied in all government committees, advisory boards, working groups and other corresponding bodies for preparation, planning and decision-making as well as municipal bodies excluding municipal councils elected in elections. After municipal elections each political party chooses a party negotiator, who together with the other negotiators decide how many seats each party gets in the different committees and the number of women/men each party will present to the committees.

As it is visible in above description the situation in participant countries is diverse in regard political and historical context as well as around quotas, which work on different levels in participant countries: from non-obligatory agreement applied in selected institutions to a legislative procedure which applies not only in direct parliamentary elections, but also in decision-making bodies.





We looked deeper into available support tools which aim at increasing of political involvement of women (mainly educational initiatives/trainings) along with barriers hindering women's participation in politics at the national level. That was done in the second part of the research through structured individual interviews, which outcomes are presented below.

## **Educational and training initiatives for women**

We have identified good practices in the four project countries in terms of training initiatives that aim to support higher women's political participation. First of all, we compared who had been running these educational initiatives. Secondly, we focused both on the trainings' content, as well as on the knowledge and skills that the participants gained through these trainings. Finally, we analysed results and success of these initiatives.

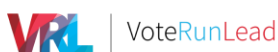
Overview of good practices training initiatives – country, name of the initiative, leader(s) of the initiatives:

### Poland

- Women's Elections - Active Women Association
- Feminine face of politics - Active Women Association
- Summer Academy - The Congress of Women
- School for Political Leaders, PAFF Leaders Program, Women's Inspirations - The School for Leaders
- Women and development - Women's Space Foundation

### Czech Republic

- Training programme for female politicians - Fórum 50 %
- Academy of Social Democracy - Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in the Czech Republic, Masaryk Democratic Academy





- Green Female Politicians Forum - Green Party, Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung in the Czech Republic
- Women Academy - Women's Forum
- Women Electoral Academy - Christian Democratic Party, European Academy for Democracy

### Ireland

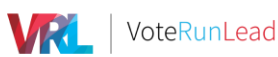
- EQUIP Campaign School - Women for Election
- INFORM Programme for Third-Level Students - Women for Election
- INSPIRE (Cross Border Project) - Women for Election
- INSPIRE - Women for Election

### Finland

- Diamanten - Diamanten in Finland
- Ledarskapsakademin (Leadership Academy) - Svenska Bildningsförbundet
- Våga Ta Makten! Dare Take (Grab Power!) - Women's organization of the Swedish People's Party

There is quite a difference when we have a look at who has been the leader of the initiative. In Poland and Ireland the trainings are mostly run by non-governmental organizations, whereas in Finland it is mainly the domain of political parties. In the case of the Czech Republic both NGO sector and political parties organize trainings for publicly active women and women politicians. The initiatives that are led by non-profit organizations are usually non-partisan and open to women with different political affiliation. In contrast political parties and their respective political foundations organize their recruitment process based on party membership/support.

Our goal in this part of research report is to pinpoint main similarities of the educational initiatives in order to inspire stakeholders to launch more of these types of trainings and as a result increase numbers of women in political decision-making. In general the main aim of all the training programmes is to provide women with



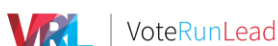
necessary skills and knowledge needed for political life and to empower women as leaders and increase their self-esteem. Over the course of programmes women get to know the practicalities of running for and holding office.

Participants of educational initiatives acquire communication, debating and presentation skills through media and public speaking trainings. They learn how to construct a clear communications method, how to maximise the reach of the message, how to prepare for broadcast interviews and most importantly they develop the confidence for strong public speaking. Besides the soft skills most of the training initiatives also pay attention to preparation of participants for running successful campaigns for political office. Participants undergo a video interview, develop a personal social media strategy and prepare for any possible problems that may appear in their specific campaigns. In some cases lectures in the programmes also discuss gender equality issues and raise awareness about specific measures regarding equality of women and men.

What have been the achievements of the training initiatives so far? Several participants have gone on to hold office after the training programmes. The alumnae have had electoral successes in local, regional, national or European politics, they have also taken on leadership roles within their parties, or they have run campaigns for other candidates. Another crucial benefit of the trainings could be seen in the networking element that creates solidarity among the participants to share their different expertise with each other. Some women stay in touch and cooperate on political level after the courses are finished.

### **Barriers for higher women's representation**

Women in Poland, Czech Republic, Ireland and Finland face similar barriers when entering politics or running for office. From the institutional point of view the biggest barrier for higher women's political participation resides in political parties and candidate selection. They tend to nominate much less women into leadership positions than men and give women unfavourable and unwinnable positions on the candidate lists in elections.



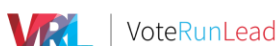
It is apparent that political parties are gatekeepers when it comes to nominations and elections to political posts because they dominate the recruitment and selection of candidates. Party networks are also important because they provide the resources required to get on the party ticket and finance a political campaign. Since political parties tend to be male dominated and the networks are often more at the disposal of aspiring men than women, they as a consequence tend to promote and support men over women.

Regarding the types of electoral system we could state that in general majoritarian electoral system is less favourable for women's representation than proportional electoral system. It could be illustrated on the example of Poland – there is a strong negative impact of single mandate constituencies in Senate and local government elections that is reflected in the lower numbers of women elected.

The crucial social barrier for women's political participation is traditional male and female roles. There is a different socialization of boys and girls that usually leads to less self-confidence of women. Under these circumstances it comes as no surprise that most of the training initiatives described above have been focused on empowerment and confidence.

The unequal distribution of unpaid work within family has impact on women's inequalities in the public field including politics. Women are still more likely to bear the primary responsibility for childcare in society, but political system is not constructed to facilitate those with caring responsibilities. For instance, although there is now a crèche in the Oireachtas (Irish Parliament), the structures of sitting days and meeting times have not been reformed to accommodate the caring responsibilities of politicians.

Traditional gender stereotypes also influence perception of female politicians. Women are not seen as legitimate political actors, their competence and qualification are more questioned than qualification of male candidates. The society usually applies different standards to male and female politicians. Gender stereotypes are also present in media and in their way they portray female politicians. Media mirrors gender



stereotypes by asking female politicians about their private lives and how they manage work-life balance. These types of questions are rarely addressed to male politicians.

The appearance of female politicians is also more commented than in the case of male politicians – for example in the case of the Czech Republic there was an online voting competition “Miss of the Chamber of Deputies”. Finland that has the highest women’s representation from the countries in this research is no exception in this respect. Finnish media also often comment looks of female politicians rather than their political work.

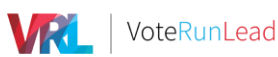
## Conclusions and recommendations

1. When entering politics or running for political office women face many barriers ranging from gender stereotypes in media and society to unwillingness of political parties to nominate women into the leadership positions.

RECOMMENDATION: It is crucial to emphasize the need for constant, on-going and widespread antidiscrimination education in regard women equality as well as other means of discrimination faced by women (as women often experience multiple discrimination). Educational activities should reach out not only for women, but also men in order to raise awareness of their privileged position.

2. The training initiatives are more accessible for women from big cities or already socially engaged, but they do not represent the whole range of women and their needs.

RECOMMENDATION: Support should be accessible for women from different social background. Therefore, if the courses are not free of charge, scholarships should be provided to women who could not otherwise attend the trainings. They should also reach out for women from different minority groups such as ethnic minority but also the parental status as well as living outside of big city should be considered.



3. Training initiatives are crucial in supporting women's political participation and the alumnae have benefited from them, especially in terms of empowerment and confidence. Needless to say, if we strive for higher women's representation in elected positions the educational activities have to be accompanied by structural measures such as gender quotas, transparent system of candidates' selection or family friendly environment within political parties.

RECOMMENDATION: Available support should consist of various element such as training initiatives, mentoring programs and structural measures that are not a temporary experience but a personally designed development plan of women political career.

