

Countries with legislated quotas could achieve gender balance in parliaments by 2026, those without may take close to twenty years



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Over the last 20 years, gender balance (quota of at least 40 % of each gender) has improved in EU Member States' parliaments. And the application of legislative quotas that aims to ensure a minimum proportion of each gender among candidates has played a key role.

In fact, evidence suggests that the application of legislative quotas has had a positive impact on achieving gender balance in parliaments. Since 2004, the proportion of women members of parliament in countries with legislative candidate quotas doubled, while countries without quotas started from a higher base but ended lower. If both groups continue at their respective rates of change, countries with legislated quotas will achieve gender balance by 2026, while the 'no action' group will take closer to two decades.

Currently, the composition of political assemblies and executives at all territorial levels still too often fails to reflect the gender diversity of the populations they represent.

“Statistical data on gender balance in politics reveal that the lack of parity prevails at all levels: from the EU to local level. This means that women have smaller and limited opportunities to influence decisions that affect all policy areas, as well as our daily lives. It is clear that we need to take firm actions in order to promote more gender-balanced political representation.” - Robert Biedron, Chair of FEMM Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality

While women are well-represented in politics at EU level with the current European Commission demonstrating full gender parity, representation of women among Members of the European Parliament

(MEPs) remains low in several Member States. At national level, women account for only one third of national parliament members, and at regional and local/municipal levels across the EU, women lead only one in five assemblies.

Moving forward, a stronger focus on introducing legislative quota as well as additional rules that ensure equal visibility of women and men candidates within the relevant electoral system (e.g. zippered lists) are needed to translate compliant candidate lists into electoral results.

“Legislated quotas in parliaments accompanied by rules to ensure equal visibility of women and men candidates have proven to be powerful tools. If we apply these tools consistently and at all levels across the EU, we can make gender balanced parliaments a reality in a few years’ time.” - Carlien Scheele, EIGE Director

Over the next few months, EIGE will highlight both the problems and the solutions to show how #3StepsForward can become a broad action plan for all to unite behind to make gender equality a reality for all.

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