

WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE POLITICAL SPHERE- MACEDONIAN AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE

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Abstract: Gender equality is a key issue that concerns all government entities in the world and the extent of its legal regulation depends on the inclusion of women in the political sphere of a state. Early women's rights movement dates back to the 1830s when women began speaking publicly against slavery. Since then, the performance by women on the legal and political scene is in continuous progression, but it is not sufficient. Currently the country with the largest number of women in political office is Rwanda, holding the world record with 64% representation. Other countries where women's inclusion in politics is high are the Scandinavian countries, led by Sweden. Contrary to the positive tendency in these two countries concerning this issue, there are those which are first in the non-participation of women in the political sphere, like Ukraine with 10%, Lebanon and Iran 3% and 0.3% in Yemen.

When it comes to gender equality in the Republic of Macedonia, equal opportunities for women and men are guaranteed mainly by the Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia as the highest legal act, but also by a large number of laws that prohibit discrimination based on gender. The participation of women in the parliament of Macedonia for the last parliamentary term (2011-2014) was 34.14%. Raising concern is the women's under-representation in the executive branch, and the Republic of Macedonia cannot claim to have any significant involvement of women in the diplomatic sphere either. Nevertheless, the efforts for a step closer towards increasing women's participation in the decision-making process will not cease.

Keywords: gender equality, women's rights, politics, decision making process, women's inclusion, woman in diplomacy

INTRODUCTION

This paper was made in context of a recent extensive survey of the permanent

under-representation of women at managerial positions, their insufficient involvement in the political sphere and detection of the reasons for insufficient inclusion of women in the decision-making process. The text intends to make a brief presentation of the current state of affairs in the Balkan and European countries in terms of women's presence in high government positions, i.e., to offer clear perception of the position of women in the political sphere. A special section is dedicated to the advancement of women's inclusion in public and political life in the Republic of Macedonia since independence in 1991 until today, that is, their representation and active role in the legislative, executive, and local government.

At the end, a brief elaboration is offered about the progress of women's political action in diplomacy, the way a woman handles this specific profession and whether she manages to make a balance between the challenges that it brings on the one hand and the need for creating and maintaining a family on another hand.

FACTS ABOUT WOMEN'S POSITION AND ROLE

Small number of countries in the world has that miracle when the voice of women is considered as a magic power. Female rulers have always existed. It is believed that the Egyptian queens ruled from 3000 BC, and the first ruler was named Ku-Baba, who was the head of the

Mesopotamian city-state of Ur around 2500 BC.

The beginning of the modern movement for women's rights dates from 1830 when women began speaking publicly against slavery. Sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimke from South Carolina, USA, champions of the movement against the death penalty, were the first to open the way for women to speak publicly against their obedience and poor social status.

Militant political actions by women began in 1903 in the United Kingdom with the establishment of a women's social political union Law Aloud, led by Emeline Pancrate. In early 19th century many countries for the first time allowed women to vote in elections: Australia (1902), Finland (1906), Norway (1907), Denmark (1915) Germany, Austria, and Canada (1918), the Netherlands and the United Kingdom (1919), USA (1920), Sweden (1921), Turkey (1930), Spain (1931), and later, France (1944), Italy (1945), Greece (1952), Switzerland (1971) etc.

The office of "Minister" was first given to women immediately after the First World War in Denmark, in 1960 the world's first woman was elected as a prime minister in Sri Lanka and in 1974 the first female president in Argentina was elected. In 2009 Monaco was the last country in the world to have for the first time in country history a woman elected as a government minister, and in 1999 Sweden was the first country in the world that had more women ministers than men (11 women vs. 9 men).

INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN STATE GOVERNMENT IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBORHOOD

Woman at top positions is no longer taboo in the Balkans. As Balkan countries are moving away from their recent war-related past and move closer to the

European Union, the number of women who are beginning to change the old patterns of behavior and traditions of patriarchal Balkans is increasing.

According to recent research on the status of the women politicians in the region and how they manage to reach the highest state and government offices, it seems that Bulgaria has the utmost confidence in women, which is on top of the other Balkan countries in the representation of women in the executive branch. This country had most active working women in the world in the 1970s and in politics, a vice president, president of the Assembly, four ministers, and mayor of Sofia. Currently inclusion of women in parliament is 24.6% and the share of women ministers in the government of the Republic of Bulgaria is 41.2%, which made the country take the 11th place in the world out of 140 countries for which data were available.

Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama is currently assisted by six women in the newly formed government of Albania. This is the first time so many women to hold ministerial positions in Albania and inclusion of women in parliament is 20%.

Kosovo maintains a good position in this matter and this is confirmed by the fact that the president of the country is a woman.

Politics in Croatia, the newest member of the European Union, still remains "a male job," "because women held a very small percentage of the top managerial positions. But it still can claim to have four women ministers and one deputy woman prime minister and more recently a woman as head of state. The inclusion of women in parliament is 23.8% and the share of women ministers in the government of Croatia is 20%, or 43rd place in the world out of 140 countries for which data were available.

Slovenia belongs to the group of countries that have women holding high political office. Even in 2013 the Slovenians got the their first woman prime minister, while the number of women members of the Slovenian Parliament and participation of women councilors at the municipal level is between 20% and 34.4%. Currently Slovenia has two women ministers out of a total 11 or 18.2% and the inclusion of women in parliament is 33.3%, which puts it at the 27th place in the world out of 160 countries for which data were available.

Bosnia and Herzegovina cannot be satisfied with the number of women in the executive and legislative branch, because currently there is only one woman minister and 21.4% of the MPs are women, so it is at the 69th place in the world out of 160 for which data were available.

Montenegro recently appointed three women ministers out of 18 ministers or 16.7% and 14.8% of the MPs are women.

Serbia has two women ministers out of 22 ministerial positions. Currently the Assembly has 84 women MPs, which is more than 1/3 of the total seats and sets the Republic of Serbia at 5th place in Europe and 23rd in the world.

When we talk about Greece, it is striking that women are absent from the cabinet of current Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras. They actually are traditionally under-represented in Greek politics, so the Greek society is characterized by the lowest levels of female inclusion in powerful and highly decisive positions.

INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN STATE GOVERNMENT IN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

According to recent data from the last three to four years, the average representation of women in national parliaments of the 15 member states (excluding the new members from Eastern Europe) is 23% and in the European Parliament it is 31%. In Sweden the figure is highest (45%) and lowest in Italy (9.8%) and Greece (8.7%). Sweden comes after Finland with 42.5% women in parliament or 85 of the 200 seats, followed by Iceland with 41.3%, Spain 41.1%, Norway 39.6%, Belgium 39.3%, Denmark 39.1%, Netherlands 38.7%, Germany 36.5%, and thereafter the Republic of Macedonia with 34.1%. The lowest representation of women in parliament is 10.1% in Hungary, Armenia 10.7%, Ukraine 11.8%, followed by Romania, Turkey, Ireland, etc.

In terms of ministerial positions in European countries, according to the latest report of the United Nations for 2014, representation of women is as follows: Sweden was second in the world with 13 women ministers out of 23 ministerial posts, or 57.1%, Finland ranked third with 9 female ministers out of 18 or 50%, France was fourth with 18 female ministers out of 37 or 48.6%, Norway was fifth with 8 female ministers out of 17, Netherlands was sixth with 7 female ministers out of 15, Denmark was seventh with 10 female ministers out of 22, ninth place goes to Switzerland with 3 female ministers out of 7 posts, Belgium holds tenth place with 5 female ministers out of 12.

If we go the other way around, the lowest percentage of female ministers is seen in: Belarus, Turkey, Greece, Slovakia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary, Armenia, Ukraine, Malta, United Kingdom, etc.

Countries that stand out with female senior leadership positions as country president and prime minister are: Denmark, Germany, Lithuania, Norway, Croatia, and female heads of Parliament: Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Italy, Serbia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and 188 vice presidents of the Assembly.

INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN POLITICS IN MACEDONIA

Macedonia is a country where the role of women and gender equality are important issues, a country which is actively fighting discrimination against women in order to ensure equal opportunities and gender for personal and professional advancement and development.

Macedonia has completed a system of laws and strategic documents for gender equality and non-discrimination which is based on a National Gender Mechanism— which, according to many estimates, is the most developed one in Southeastern Europe. Women in the country have acquired the right to vote and to be voted in 1945, for the first time women were elected to Parliament in 1990 and in 2000 the first female mayor was elected. Chronologically, the Macedonian major efforts for greater

inclusion of women in politics and decision-making process at national and local level began with the introduction of affirmative action (quotas) in legislation or more specifically, the Law on Election of MPs (2002) and the Law on Local Self-Government (2004) which include quotas of at least 30% participation for both sexes on the candidate lists for members of parliament and councilors.

The Republic of Macedonia, since its independence in 1991 until today, had seven prime ministers. From the caretaker government of Nikola Kljusev which did not have any women, till today there have been 17 women ministers. The participation of women in the legislature since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia in 1991 to 2002 was unimpressive and small until the introduction of quotas in the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia.

The issue of quotas in the country for the first time in early 2000 was promoted by the women's movement as organized by the Macedonian Women's Lobby in response to the small presence of women in Parliament and on the basis of the recommendations of the conventions and declarations signed by the Republic of Macedonia. Even in 2006 a quota was also promoted which mandated inclusion of women by 30%.

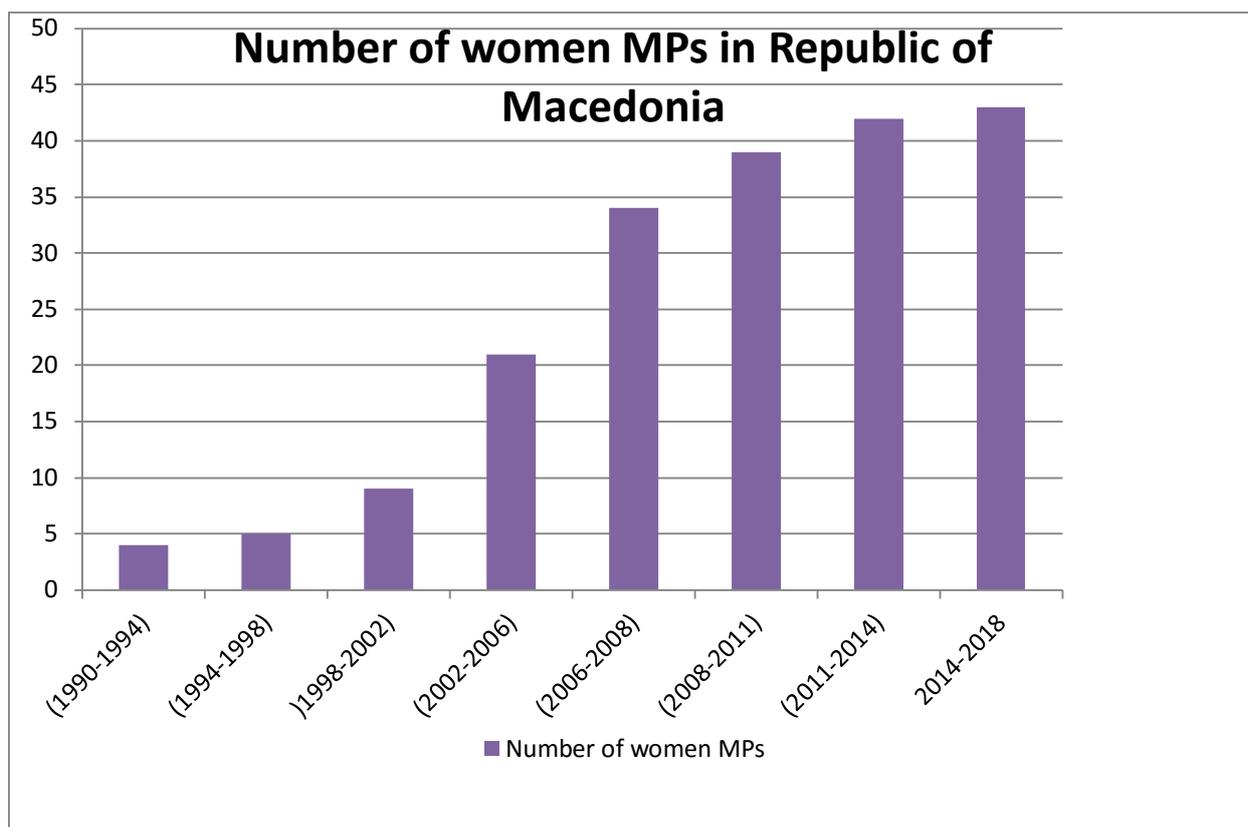


Chart 1: Participation of women in the legislature since the independence of the Republic of Macedonia until today

In the last parliamentary term (2011-2014) 34.14% of the MPs were women (42 of 123 MPs) and the country was 23rd in the world (at the moment of writing the paper, the present composition of the parliament is under reconsideration and the definite figures are not known); so the last updated figure was 41 women MPs (33.3%), with a higher percentage than the European average (24.3%). The representation in the executive branch is very small; there is only one female minister out of 23 ministers and Macedonia is 76th in the world out of 140 countries. A key issue for qualitative participation of women in political and public life is its place and role at local level. Although legal provisions for the quota system provided an increased proportion of councilors in local elections in 2009, still the number of elected female mayors (currently 4) is insufficient.

WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY

A proverb says: "Behind every successful man stands a successful woman, and behind every successful woman stands a divorce." Unfortunately this anecdote is absolutely correct when it comes to women in diplomacy. Balancing career and family life has always been a challenge for women and a great journey for the lifestyle that lead diplomats.

Ragnar Numelin, leading Finnish writer on the history of diplomacy, in many of its analysis concluded that women are peacemakers and their role is to create and maintain harmonious relations with the other side; in contrast, men increasingly fits and befits the role of command. This thinking is a big challenge for nascent and future generations of analysts who, by

further study of the benefits (or possible shortcomings) of the inclusion of women in diplomacy, concluded that their greater involvement in this field can lead to improved procedures for building peace and can bring qualitative changes in international relations.

In 1923 the Soviet Union became the first country to appoint a woman as head of a diplomatic mission. The United States, which began to include women in the newly profiled American diplomatic service in 1925, even a decade later appointed its first ever female diplomat abroad - to its mission in Denmark. In France, women were allowed to join the diplomatic service in 1930 for the first time and after a while to be appointed in French missions abroad. After the Second World War, the participation of women in diplomacy sharply increased and more women were appointed as ambassadors. But despite these changes, some countries, especially the developing countries, stick to their firm position that diplomacy is a male profession and that women should not be appointed as ambassadors because they face almost insurmountable difficulties in combining marriage with diplomatic career.

Leading countries in the respect of inclusion of women in the diplomatic field are the Scandinavian ones: Norway, Finland, and Sweden. Norway has sweeping highest proportion of women ambassadors in Europe of around 30% and Finland and Sweden are not far from this percentage with 27%. In the rest of Europe, Great Britain stands out with 21% female ambassadors, 19% female high commissioners and 22% women at senior positions in the British Foreign Office. About 22% of the heads of delegations of the European Union are women and that number increased sharply after Catherine Ashton became the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs. Central Europe is quite good in this area with an average of 27%.

WOMEN IN DIPLOMACY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Although Macedonia cannot claim to have significant representation and involvement of women in the diplomatic field, still it is trying to make a move in the direction of increasing their participation in the decision making process. Specifically in the diplomacy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia is maybe the best example that leads us to the conclusion that the authorities responsible for the creation and implementation of foreign policy need to break the monotony of male dominance and there is need for greater promotion of women at decision-making positions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Macedonia has finally encouraged allocating a significant part of the powerful offices and key representative positions to women; so, now two out of the three top Foreign Ministry positions - deputy minister and state secretary - are held by women, and about 50% of the total number of Ministry employees are women. This move is really important given the growing awareness worldwide about the need for the inclusion of women in the political sphere, especially in diplomacy, where they could play a significant role in establishing, regulating, and deepening the diplomatic relations between states. Nevertheless, the diplomacy of the country still "wears male clothes" - in percentage terms, the number of women ambassadors in the Macedonian diplomatic network amounted to only 2.85% of all Macedonian ambassadors; only 1.71% positions of Consul General are held by women, or a total of 4.56% of the heads of missions are actually women.

CONCLUSION

The main subject in this paper is de facto a particularly sensitive and debatable topic, for which, as more we acknowledge and return back in the history of the position of women in society, the more it seems that the old symbolism "all oceans and seas of the globe are guardians of women's tears spilled from oppression" is true. Disparity of male and female rule in the world is the key to all wars, conflicts and misunderstandings, or in other words, giving greater rights to women and placing women in high state positions is the initial step to wards building peace in the world. This is especially true of the women involved in foreign policy and diplomacy, because they have a central role in creating the international rating of a given country or, in other words, these women are "the face" of their country and their influence is crucial in determining the fair success there of. As long as men and only men are placed in high state and diplomatic positions, it is much likely the country they serve in "to fall out" with another country. The explanation is simple, biological and anthropological; it is proven that man has a natural affinity for causing war and woman for diplomacy, so those who understand or want to understand and solve the problems that follow mankind from long ago, will agree with the conclusion that the need to intervene as soon as possible for eradicating monotony of male rule is necessary.

In Macedonia, the three key functions - President of State, President of the National Assembly and President of the Government are still reserved for the male world. Macedonian politics in the first decade of political pluralism objectively was evaluated as "exclusively male while female participation was an exception," but in recent years the situation has significantly become better. Today it may be noted that Macedonia has made a major

step in breaking these barriers, especially with the increased presence of women in the legislature, which is due to the election regulations, i.e., mandatory 30% women in political party electoral lists. But it does not mean that the involvement of women in political life should be reduced to satisfy the legal quotas and female parliamentarians should not have the feeling that parliamentary mandate is a "gift" from the legislation. The legal quota of 30% required for the parliament is not the top in terms of satisfying the right to equality between men and women in the Republic of Macedonia, respectively, given the fact that the number of men and women in this country is almost identical, inclusion of women in the legislature should have growing progression, i.e., to reach 50 percent.

If Macedonia sticks to the concept of sync with the policies of the grotto of the developed societies in the world, especially with the helm of the European Union, it is needed in Macedonia to make greater efforts for more intensive involvement of women in the executive branch and diplomacy, or promoting them as ministers, mayors, ambassadors, etc.

The balanced participation of women and men in the decision making process produces different ideas, values and behaviors for a fairer and more balanced world for all. Women represent half the potential talents and activists for the prosperity of mankind and their non-participation in the decision-making process is a loss for society as a whole.

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