

## THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GENDER QUOTAS IN MACEDONIA, SERBIA AND CROATIA

**Abstract.** *In Macedonia, Serbia and Croatia, women activists supported by strong international partners, using lobbying in pre-electoral competitions, succeeded to put the issue of underrepresentation to the agenda of mainstream politics, to introduce party quotas and legislated candidate quotas. Trends regarding women MPs are showing that party quotas were effective in Croatia, but not in Serbia and Macedonia and legislated candidate quotas were effective in Macedonia and Serbia but not in Croatia. This article comparatively analyses reasons for the (in)effectiveness of legislated candidate quotas and party quotas, offers basic evidence on (in) sustainable legal improvements and a conclusion that it would be a great mistake to expect that quotas alone could lead to transformative gender equality aware policies.*

**Keywords:** *women activists, formal and substantive political representation, effectiveness of party quotas and legislated candidate quotas*

### Introduction

During the disintegration of SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), due to the numerous conflicts and wars, gender equality in the mainstream politics in these countries has been for almost a decade framed in the context of belligerent nationalist patriarchal paradigm, while civil society actors were focused on the issues of regaining peace and offering help to the victims of open armed violence.

In all three countries new women's movement, strongly supported by international actors with gender mandate (United Nation agencies; OSCE-ODIHR – Organisations for Security and Cooperation in Europe- Organisation for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights; NDI – National Democratic Institute; FES – Freidrich Ebert Stiftung; Olof Palme Centre; Westminster

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Foundation for Democracy), started the advocacy for better political representation of women in decision making structures, striving to get women accepted as agents of reconciliation, democratisation and normalisation of post war societies. Their advocacy has been focused on political empowerment of women, gender quotas, and electoral systems and on the engendering of the political parties (Lokar, 2001).

The key point of this paper is the analyses of the interaction of the agents (women activists, regional cooperation, political parties and their coalitions, international supporters) that led to establishment of legislated candidate quotas and evaluation of its impact on women's formal (presence in numbers) and substantive representation. It compares electoral statistics for women MPs before and after introducing legislated candidate quotas, explores and explains trends in formal women's representation.

The main subject is the process of adoption, evaluation and implementation of the legislated candidate quotas for raising political presence of women in three post-socialist (i.e. transition) countries. The paper is focused on the cases of Macedonia (MKD), Serbia (SRB) and Croatia (CRO) in the period of democratic changes 1990–2016, using quantitative data (relevant electoral statistics) and relevant empirical research (interviews done by Nacevska, 2013), published reports and internal reports and database of the SP GTF (Stability Pact Gender Task Force) and CEE (Central Eastern Europe) Network for Gender Issues, (collected and partially published by Sonja Lokar from 1990 till 2016) which relate to the researched topic.

According to the categorization by Ann Phillips (1995, 1998) we use the term 'presence' as the most adequate solution for the numerical representation of women in authorities, as opposed to the research of substantive representation (Mansbridge, 2011).

This paper starts from the wide scientifically recognized fact that political underrepresentation of women is rooted in the imbalance among the power of men and women, reflected in the culture, value matrix and political culture. The value matrix and especially the religious and ethnic discourse are reflected in the prevailing conservative understanding of the women's role in politics. In the research case studies, there is evidence that the dynamics of institutional changes did not trigger adequate changes in the value matrix of broader public, especially regarding women interests. For example, in CRO which has the fastest institutional and legislative progress, in 2008, 89.5 per cent of the population expressed strong faith in catholic religious values regarding women social roles (Dobrotić, 2012). In SRB and in MKD at the micro level gender relations, especially in Muslim communities, reveal the prevalence of the notion that women are inferior to men (Nacevska, 2013). Acceptance of stereotypical subordination of women in the private sphere is also typical for the Muslim Albanian minority in the

region (MKD, Kosovo) (Nacevska, 2013). Persistence of patriarchal stereotypes in these societies continuously imposes marginalization of women in the public sphere.

Particular contribution of this article in relation to other dealings with political representation of women is that it explores how party quotas and later legislated candidate quotas were introduced based on the interactions of governing political coalitions, pre-electoral competition between the opposing party blocks (conservative versus modernist and vice versa) and parallel women's activists' coalitions advocating and lobbying for establishing of party and legislated candidate quotas.

The transition from a communist party political system to parliamentary democracy ended up in the creation of ideologically different parties led by autocratic, male dominated executive party leaderships. During the communist regime a model of strong formal presence of women in legislative branches of political representation was imposed, but not in the places where real political power was concentrated (Antić Gaber and Lokar, 2006). Communist state feminists were framing gender equality in the concept of liberation of the working class, seeking for the solutions in public property, self-governance of the workers and citizens, full employment of women and the liberation of women from the non-paid care and domestic work. (Tomšič, 1978). In all three countries during the difficult conditions and processes of disintegration of the SFRY, nationalistic conservative parties revived the concept of the woman as "Queen of the home and mother of the nation" (Lokar, 2001). This ideological shift was especially remarkable through the political revival of traditional division of gender roles and conservative cultural stereotypes (Nacevska, 2013). The presence of women in the three parliaments, after the first free elections at the beginning of the nineties, dropped from 17 per cent in 1982 and 1986 to 3 to 4 per cent in 1990/1991 (Lokar, 2001; Kašič, 2006).

This paper tries to answer the questions: How do legislated candidate quotas influence the political presence of women? Did legislated candidate quotas as well as party quotas have an effect only on increasing the shares of women candidates on the electoral lists, or also on increasing the number of elected women? Is marginalization of elected women a result of the value matrix or one can detect gender sensitive democratic deficits and flaws in the processes of implementation of party and legislative candidate quotas?

### **Introducing legislated candidate quotas (1990/2016)**

A growing number of democratic societies are introducing quotas for overcoming gender barriers and increasing political presence of women in different political decision making bodies. Since 2008, almost 90 countries

have legislated candidate quotas and about 30 countries party quotas (Global quota website, 2016). However, the lower formal and substantive representation of women in higher political positions of power is still evident.

Quotas are most often defined as affirmative measures for achieving targeted per cent of political presence of specific groups within a society (Dahlerup, 2006).

In post-socialist countries introducing legislated candidate quotas had a significant effect on the increasing of the numerical presence of women in decision-making structures. But there are still questions – Will quotas contribute to the political representation of women? – Which variations and combinations of quota-models are the most suitable (legislative candidate quotas, party quotas or reserved seats)? – What kind of quota is most suitable for the women in the multiethnic societies, which are marginalized both as women, and as women from minorities, for example Roma and Albanian women in MKD, Roma and Serbian women in CRO, Albanian, Hungarian and Roma in SRB? Most researchers (Kymlicka, 1995; Mansbridge and Tate, 1992) believe that not all quotas have a positive influence on the political presence of women. Party quotas are in general less influential for increasing the number of women in parliaments, as opposed to legislated candidate quotas binding for all parties. But this is not valid for all countries. For example, in CRO before 2008, SDP (Social Democratic Party) practiced strong party quotas, while there were no legislated candidate quotas, and brought strong women presence in the parliament, while after 2008 when the legislated candidate quotas were introduced without any ranking rules and strong sanctions, the share of women elected on the list of the SDP dropped significantly. It is obvious that something changed in the gender power balance within the party that poorly designed legislated candidate quotas were not able to replace.

## **MKD, SRB and CRO – convergences and differences important for the comparative analyses of the positive measures**

### *Political and electoral system design*

All three countries are parliamentary democracies with the proportional electoral system with d'Hont method for the allocation of the seats. In the past, MKD used to have majority electoral system, followed by mixed electoral system and currently relies on a proportional electoral system. MKD and CRO have several regional lists, SRB has one national list. MKD and SRB have closed lists, while in CRO the voters can use preferential votes, but are not obliged to do so.

### *Legislated candidate quotas in electoral legislation*

First it was adopted by MKD, then by SRB and finally by CRO. Each country had a specific, gradual process of inclusion of legislated candidate quotas in their electoral legislation. MKD and SRB improved the design of their quota rules step by step, using advocacy and lobbying of the big crosscutting women coalitions, making them effective, while CRO initially based the inclusion on requests of the coalition of women from the civil society and WF (Women Federation) of the SDP when the party was a leader of the governing coalition in 2008. 40 per cent legislated candidate quotas, with a long grace period of three parliamentary mandates, without ranking rules and sanctions in the form of fines, had been firstly enacted in the Law on Gender Equality in 2008. Left-centre coalition improved these positive measures by the same type of advocacy action, accepting amended Electoral Law in 2014, enacting 40 per cent legislated candidate quotas without ranking rules but with the strong sanctions (decertification of the lists for non-compliance), only to see their Constitutional Court annihilate these sanctions.

### *Law on Gender Equality and institutional mechanisms*

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In all three countries, even if these laws have explicit positive measures for increasing of political presence of women, it did not produce any positive changes in electoral behaviour of the parties. Gender Equality state mechanisms were not strong enough to force the parties to implement it.

In all three countries party quotas were tested before the enactment of the legislated candidate quota.

SDSM (Social Democratic Union) in MKD and SDP in CRO as well as a small SD (Social Democratic) Union in SRB made a statutory decision of 30 per cent quotas for party organs and electoral party lists on the request of their WFs, connected in the SI Women and CEE Network for Gender Issues in 1998. But only the SDP in CRO in times of electoral growth respected their quotas, while the other two parties did not.

Within all three researched countries (MKD, SRB, CRO) legislated candidate quotas enacted within electoral laws or Gender equality act, obliged all parties competing in elections to nominate a certain per cent of women on the candidate lists. They had a positive effect, strongly increasing the share of women candidates on the electoral lists and though not satisfactory, they produced a positive effect on the number of elected women MPs; they did increase political presence of women i.e. numerical representation.

In SRB, after the 2000 elections which have ousted Milošević, the per cent of elected women in parliament was 5.1, while after the introduction of legislated candidate quotas (2004) and their implementation on the parliamentary elections in 2007, the per cent of women MPs increased to 20.4. This increase

was the result of strong sanctions against political parties that would not respect the obligation of quotas for under-represented gender. As opposed to 1.7 per cent elected women in 1992 or the highest 5.5 per cent by the ending of the authoritarian regime of president Milošević, legal changes expressed through the modification of the Law on election of members of parliament in 2004, and the introduction of 30 per cent quotas for the under-represented gender, even without any ranking rules, led to the higher level of political presence of women in the national parliament. Also, this happened due to the big women's crosscutting coalition and its parallel electoral campaign before the elections in 2007. In 2011, the enlarged crosscutting coalition of women activists has renewed its efforts and succeeded to persuade the parliament to enact firm ranking rules: at least every third candidate had to be from the less represented sex. This amendment made legislated candidate quota rules in SRB finally effective. Today, Serbian parliament has 34 per cent of women MPs.

As a result of heavy advocating and lobbying of the big national women's coalition, the Law on Election on Members of Parliament in MKD (Сл. Весник на РМ, 42/2002) introduced 30 per cent legislated candidate quotas in 2002, and this led to the changes in the political presence of women in the Assembly of MKD from 6.7 per cent in 2000 to 18 per cent in 2002. The Electoral Code from 2006 (Сл. Весник на РМ, 40/06) envisaged firm ranking rules: out of every three places on the list, at least one should belong to the under-represented gender. The distribution of female candidates and their positioning on the lists in MKD in 2006 varied from 4.53 per cent between the first five candidates, 7.81 per cent from the sixth to the tenth place, and 19.84 per cent from the eleventh to the twelfth place on the list. Unlike in the previous elections in the majority electoral system (1990, 1994) and mixed system (1998), the per cent of elected women varied between 4.1 per cent, 3.3 per cent, 6.6 per cent, while after the introduction of the 30 per cent legalized candidate quotas within the proportional electoral system the per cent of elected women increased to 18 per cent in 2002. The positive influence of the quotas was reflected also in the Albanian ethnic community in MKD- an Albanian woman was elected MP for the first time in 2002. Today, in MKD legislated candidate quota guarantee a diversity of women from different ethnic background. But, still, it has not happened without political action led by a big national women's crosscutting coalition. In order to protect the rights of women candidates from the list of ethnic minority parties, civil society movement had to exert direct public pressure on the national electoral commission to ensure that the lists of the parties of ethnic minorities, based on the principle of ethnicity, have to apply legal ranking rules the same way as any other party.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Internal report on the advocacy visit payed to the National Electoral Commission in 2002 by Stavka Todorovska and Sonja Lokar.*

Table 1: LEGISLATED CANDIDATE QUOTAS FOR THE UNDER-REPRESENTED GENDER AND ITS APPLICATION  
ON THE NATIONAL ELECTIONS

	Elect. system	Year of the first adoption of LC quota	(%)	Ranking order for the party list	Sanctions for non-compliance	(%) of elected women in national parliaments before the introduction of LC quotas	(%) of elected women in national parliaments after the introduction of LC quotas
MKD		2002 Electoral code (Ср. Весник на РМ 42/2002)	2002 – Legislated candidate quota (30%)	YES: One in every three positions on the candidate lists is reserved for the under-represented sex (Article 64 (5) of the Electoral Code (42/2002).	YES. If the political party does not fulfill the quotas, the list shall be rejected (Article 67 (1–4) of the Electoral Code (42/2002).	2000 / 6.7%	2002 / 18%
		2004 Law on Local Elections – (Ср. Весник на РМ 35/2004, Article. 15).	30%	2004 – Positioning in the upper or lower half of the list.	YES		
Proportional system		2006 Electoral code (Ср. Весник на РМ 40/2006).	30%	2006 – At least one in every three places on the lists should belong to the under-represented sex.	YES		
		2008 and 2012 Law on Equal Opportunities (Ср. Весник на РМ 117/2008) and (Ср. Весник на РМ 6/2012)		2015 – At least one out of every three places will be reserved for the less represented gender and additionally at least one place out of every ten places Article 21 of the Law amendments and modifications to the electoral code (Ср. Весник на РМ 196/2015).	YES		2010 / 32.5%
		2015 – Law amendments to the electoral code (Ср. Весник на РМ 196/2015).	40%				2016 / 35%
SRB		2004 (Ср. Гласник РС 18/04)	Legislated candidate quota (30%)	YES: For every three candidates on the electoral list there shall be at least one candidate of the under-represented sex on the list (first group of three places, second group of three places and so on until the end of the list) (Article 40a, 36/2011).	YES. If the submitter of the list does not respect it, the Republic Electoral Commission shall refuse the electoral list (Law on the Elections of Representatives, Article 40a).	2000 / 5.1%	2007 / 20.4%
		2009 Gender equality act (Ср. Гласник РС 104/09)					
		2011 Electoral Law (Ср. Гласник РС 36/2011).					2012 / 33%

	Year of the first adoption of LC quota	(%)	Ranking order for the party list	Sanctions for non-compliance	(%) of elected women in national parliaments before the introduction of LC quotas	(%) of elected women in national parliaments after the introduction of LC quotas
CRO	2003 / 2008 Gender Equality Act (NN 116/2003) and (NN 82/08)	Legislated candidate quota (40%) 10% financial compensation for the political parties for each candidate from the under-represented gender.	None	Even according to the Electoral Law (NN 19/15) — The implementation of the provision of 40% gender quota WAS guaranteed by sanctions — not acceptance of the lists by the SEC, the Constitutional Court in Croatia in September 2015 overturned this sanction. The sanctions were abolished.	The envisaged sanctions for non-compliance were planned over the next three elections (national and local) from the moment of the enforcement of the GEA  1992 / 5.4 % 1995 / 7.1 %	2000 / 21.9%  2004- 19%
	2015 Electoral law (NN 19/15)	Article 21a – obligation of at least 40% of candidates of both sexes (NN 19/15).	Proportional system			

Source: Nacevska, 2013; Quotaproject [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org).

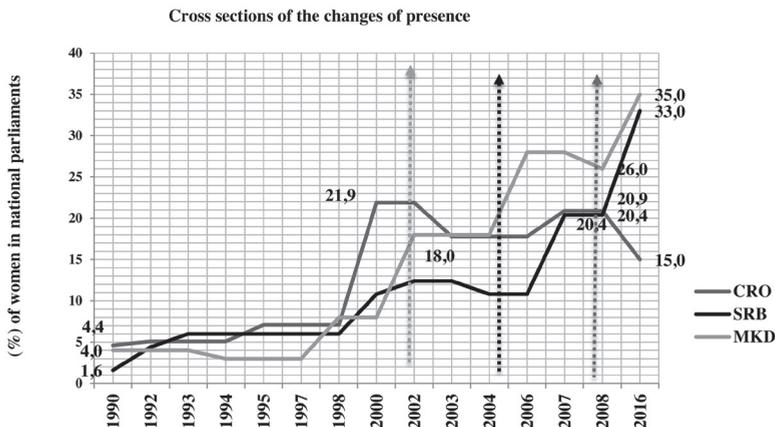
In SRB and MKD, the introduction of legislated candidate quotas with firm ranking rules and drastic sanctions (disqualification of the list in case of noncompliance) had positive effect in the increasing of elected women in national parliaments in comparison with the previous parliaments. The selection of women candidates, capable or not for the real representation of women's interests, now becomes an issue of each party value system, program, political power of their women's party organization, internal capacity building, women's cross party cooperation and cooperation between elected women and women in civil society movements. While political parties, regardless of their ideological affiliation, stay the biggest hurdle for real political representation of women, SRB has a lot to be proud of with regard to women's crosscutting coalitions: Palić process, Women's Parliamentary Network and their joint Women's Platform for the Development of SRB, "Follow us" Kosovo and SRB women peace initiative (Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia 2014–2020). It has yet to be seen how much the strengthening of radical right, nationalistic and belligerent governing authoritarian parties and global swing to the radical populist right will be able to jeopardize these positive developments.

In MKD, authoritarian and populist conservative governing coalition and the fact that the big women's crosscutting coalition has fallen apart, are now the main reasons why the progress of genuine representation of women in MKD has turned little by little into a backlash, visible clearly in the field of family policy and personal women's rights (Legal abortion was made much less liberal and affordable, the government has accepted conservative policy of special income and pension to encourage women to stay at home with many children). Due to the strong women's movement within the SDSM, the competition between VMRO DPMNE (Democratic party for national unity in Macedonia) and pre-electoral coalition led by SDSM before the last election (2016) led to the raise of minimal legislated candidate quota from 30 to 40 per cent and for the first time ever the opposition formed a joint platform for the improvement of gender equality (SDSM: *За живот во Македонија*). Political outcome of the election in December 2016 was tight and contested. The incumbent party VMRO DPMNE got the first chance to form the government. If it succeeds, gradual progress made from 2003 in political presence of women in Macedonia is very likely to come under a serious threat.

Positive changes in CRO are noticeable from 1996 as a result of pressures of organized women within SDP on one side and national Ad Hoc civil society women's coalition formed by B.A.B.E. (NGO) on the other. SDP was the first party in CRO to establish Women's forum (Women's forum in CRO) and incorporate party quotas for party organs and party lists in their statutes. However, these quotas gave the best result in 2000 elections when the party was sure it would win election. In 2004, a the moment of losing

the election, SDP despite respecting its party quotas, got very disappointing election results for women candidates, as they could not get enough winnable places on the party list. At the same time, the winning HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) appointed a woman Deputy Prime Minister (Nacevska, 2013). First positive measures aimed at all parties were included in the Law on political parties (NN, 76/93; NN, 164/98; NN, 36/01 determining a 10 per cent additional financial compensation for the party for every candidate from the under-represented gender. 10 years later the Law on Gender Equality in 2008 (NN, 82/08) enacted 40 per cent legislated candidate quotas for the under-represented gender. This law obliged political parties to include a minimum of 40 per cent of under-represented gender in the electoral lists with a long grace period of three regular national elections. Weak sanctions – fines for the non-compliance were enacted too. This law has never been applied. Instead the laws on elections have been changed, in 2014 with 40 per cent legislated candidate quotas without any ranking rules, but with the sanction of discarding the list for non-compliance. Constitutional Court has annihilated this sanction before the 2015 elections.

Figure 1: CROSS-SECTION OF THE CHANGES IN THE PER CENT OF PRESENCE AFTER THE INTRODUCTION OF LEGISLATED CANDIDATE QUOTAS



Source: Nacevska, 2013; Quotaproject [www.quotaproject.org](http://www.quotaproject.org); A3C, 2012; DZS HR, 2013.

Note: Vertical arrows mark the year of introduction of legislated candidate quotas.

In elections for the Croatian Parliament (Sabor) in 2007, elected women accounted for 21.9 per cent of the total number of elected members of parliament, while in 2011 elections, with the 40 per cent legislative candidate quotas, this per cent fell to 19.9 (DZS HR, 2012). Most of the parties did not respect 40 per cent legislative candidate quotas as they were not binding.

From 313 regional candidate lists for national elections 37.70 per cent had 40 per cent female candidates on the lists, while 62.30 per cent had less than 40 per cent (PRS, 2011). There were even amendments to the election law adopted by the parliament in February 2015, introduced mandatory gender quota for candidate lists, in 2015 elections, the share of elected women dropped from 15.2, in 2016 to 12.6 percent. In the last elections of 2016 only 14.7 per cent of the party lists were led by women candidates, two biggest coalitions HDZ and Narodna koalicija where SDP was a leading party, did not respect 40 per cent quotas. This negative trend has a lot to do with bad quota regulation design, unclear and long grace period, annihilation of strong sanctions, but it is mostly due to absence of big crosscutting women's coalition in CRO, which would have given additional support to the women within all parties. The last electoral swing of Croatian political scene to the nationalistic and populist Catholic right and huge political polarisation of the country gave little hope that this trend will change, especially since women's power within the biggest central left party in the country, SDP, seriously declined too, as one has to conclude from the results of the percent of elected SDP women MPs. In spite of the party quota of 40 per cent, SDP got only 14 per cent of elected women MPs. After the lost elections, the deterioration of women's power within the SDP got additional confirmation: in presidential elections in the party, 3 women candidates for the party president got less than 3 percent of the party members' votes combined with the elections of the new party executive national organ, only 4 men became elected vice presidents and in newly elected party presidency, only 17 per cent of elected members are women (3 out of 17).<sup>2</sup>

Women movement in MKD and SRB, but not in CRO, succeeded in their advocacy to efficiently change electoral legislation. The parties did not have any other choice but to nominate women on the lists according to the obligatory 30 and 40 percent quotas and obligatory ranking rules with hard sanctions for non-compliance (exclusion of the lists from the race). This is why these quotas have a strong positive influence on the political presence of women in SRB and in MKD. Legislative candidate quotas proved to be a good first step solution for improved numerical presence of women in the parliament. But the effect on women's political influence (substantive representation) remains a question for deeper research and discussions.

However, it is clear that legislated candidate quotas alone could not change existing power balance between men and women in political parties in a way that women MPs would automatically exert substantive representation. Levelling of power skew between men and women within the parties to a crucial extent depends on the ability of organised women within

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<sup>2</sup> More on SDP official website- [ww.sdp.hr/nasi-ljudi/](http://ww.sdp.hr/nasi-ljudi/)

the parties to snatch women's half of the power from male dominated and gender equality insensitive old boys' party networks and leaderships.

### **Impact of political parties on women's position in politics in the selected countries**

Lovenduski and Norris (1993) define political parties as 'Gatekeepers' due to their very important role regarding the political representation. In the SEE post conflict societies, the initiative, advocacy, lobbying and creating of parliamentary support for the enactment of the quotas were on the shoulders of women from the centre left and liberal oriented political parties depending heavily on their ability to help to build societal consensus on this issue bottom up, with the advocates from the civil society and with the support from international actors and mainstream media. This means by using so called "sandwich strategy" (Lokar, 2014).

According to Jalušić and Antić Gaber (2001), the left and centrist oriented parties (liberal, socialist, democratic and Green) are less capable and eager to block and reject women as agents of change in the political process than right-oriented parties (people's parties, Christian parties, parties of free enterprise, etc.).

In the researched countries, when the post conflict stabilization has been started till the birth of the new radical left and radical right parties after the economic crises of 2008, it is difficult to apply a classical division between the left and the right wing parliamentary parties. Regardless of other ideological differences, the differences in the male dominated party leaderships' perception of the need to establish gender power balance within the parties are minimal. None of them really embrace it. Proportional electoral systems led to the coalition governments of all kinds. The change of the electoral legislation always needs constitutional majority. That means: no cross position-opposition consensus in the parliament, no change. Even if it is true that in all three countries women from progressive NGOs, SD and liberal parties were pushing harder for the firm legislated candidate quotas, not in all cases this "per definition" more progressive parties were the ones to accept these proposals the first. In SRB the right wing parties (at that moment in 2011, still in opposition) were the ones to corner the biggest "left" party DP (Democratic party) in a way that it had to give in to the civil society amendment put forward by a young woman MP from a small party named League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, for the enactment of the firm ranking rules. Effective legislated candidate quotas were not enacted because any of the parliamentary party leaderships really thought they were crucial for the success of their social project, but in spite of their reluctance, always due to the good organization, strategy and advocacy of broadly organized women's

pressure groups and coalitions and their savvy use of so called “sandwich strategy” and parallel electoral campaign strategy (Lokar, 2014).

In SRB and in MKD, both centre-left and right coalitions have not raised the number of nominated women just to fulfil enacted legislated candidate quotas. In fact, before these measures were introduced, there was an exceptionally low level of women candidates on all party lists. Crucial reasons for the change in party attitude towards women were powerful and publically vocal pre-electoral crosscutting women coalitions. In SRB for example, the direct result of the pressure exerted by women’s crosscutting networks established at the Palić 1 conference in 2000 was not more women on electoral lists and more elected women MPs in 2000, but the raise of women on powerful executive positions: speaker of the parliament, mayor of Belgrade, governor of the National Bank (Lokar, 2001). In all three researched countries, the first party quotas came into being after mid-nineties, in connection with the attempts of their different SD parties (LSDV-League of Social Democrats of Vojvodina, SD Union of SRB, SDP in CRO, SDSM in MKD) to be accepted as members of the Social International and as a result of their regional cooperation within CEE Network for Gender Issues. Following the rules of the SI, established due to the pressures of the SI Women, they were directly asked to form women’s party organizations and to introduce party quotas in their statutes in order to earn full membership status within Socialist International. Second encouragement to establish women party organizations and set up party quotas was organized by the Women Can Do It II regional project of the SP GTF (Lokar, 2010), implemented from 2002 till 2009, when also other political parties introduced party quotas. In MKD, in 1994, within SDSM, out of a total of 79 members in the Central Board of the party only 10 were women. However, after the introduction of the 30 per cent party quota in SDSM in 1997, women’s presence in party elected bodies increased to 30 per cent. Serious improvement of one big party in dealing with women’s representation triggers contagion effect and party competition for swinging votes. On the other side, the biggest right-oriented party, VMRO-DPMNE, where women never had and do not have any public voice or visible engagements even when they hold higher positions in the party, there is the highest number of women within the party decision making bodies – 51 per cent. This is due to the party neck to neck competition for the voters with SDSM, during the period when VMRO-DPMNE was in opposition for almost eight years. The same motive today drives SDSM to target absentees and undecided voters also by developing specific gender equality policies and electoral promises (SDSM: *За живот во Македонија*, electoral programme 2016). Before 2016 elections SDSM led coalition succeeded also to raise legislated candidate quotas from 30 to 40 per cent.

In SRB, as a result of the political conditions, specifically, interwoven processes of armed conflict and post conflict marred economic and social

transition, was not realistic to expect huge increase of political presence of women in legislative power that will lead automatically to the consistent policies in favour of better everyday life of women. What really happened was that women activists were able to become an active part of the mainstream politics of democratic change and to make the best of it to increase the effectiveness of their future political agency such as Palić II and Palić III coalitions, gender sensitive new Constitution, Women's Platform for the Development of SRB, Parliamentary Women's Network, "Follow us initiative". In MKD and in CRO, with very similar political and ideological challenges, there would be no freedom of abortion any more, in MKD, positive measures for women pensions would have been banned, a woman would need the consent of her partner, husband, to be able to get an abortion.

### **Influence of electoral system and party ideology on designing gender quotas**

In researched countries, there is a strong evidence of bigger support of centre left-oriented coalitions and political parties to the numerical increase of elected women and to the acceptance of positive measures within the parties in times when they are striving to get to power. Their enthusiasm diminishes if they are losing support or are even fearful of losing the elections. Proportional electoral system makes the designing of effective party quotas or legislated candidate quotas easier.

After the ten-year ruling of right wing HDZ, in 2000, in the context of the victory of the coalition led by Račan, as a centre-left party with party quotas, the per cent of elected women in parliament has sharply increased. In this case, former low level of the women MPs was mainly due to the majority of nationalist and conservative policy of HDZ (Glaurdić, 2001). However, at the next elections in 2004, the institutional set up of electoral system did not change, neither in the country nor in the SDP, the share of elected women MPs in SDP dropped to disappointingly low level. This proves that the share and number of elected women in political parties are in close connection with the party electoral trend. The misbalance of power between men and women within the parties is generally mirrored in the following rule: when the party is winning, women will get more seats but proportionally less than men, when the party is losing, women are the first to lose and they will lose more than men will. In a research of women's power within SD political parties in the internal case study, done within SP GTF in Women can do it II project in 2009, a new indicator for the growth of women's real political power within the parties has been discovered.<sup>3</sup> In times when the party is

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<sup>3</sup> *Final internal WCIDI II Report by Sonja Lokar to Norwegian Development Cooperation, 2009.*

winning, women get proportionally more seats than that of male candidates or in times when the party is losing, women proportionally lose fewer seats than that of party men candidates, and vice versa.

In MKD positive changes happened only after the introduction of normative solutions and institutional changes in the electoral system, combined with the change of the ideological colour of the coalition in 2002. Majority system has been transformed firstly in the mixed electoral system in 1998, but due to the victory of the centre right wing coalition, the share of elected women MPs stayed dramatically low. The introduction of legislated candidate quotas without ranking rules in 2002 and the transformation of mixed electoral system in a proportional system after the victory of a centre-left parties led to a sharply improved share of the women MPs in MKD Parliament – Sobranie. Due to the strong national cross cutting coalition of women activists advocating for the strict ranking rules within the legislated candidate quotas, this improvement, voted with a lot of opposition within SDSM male leadership, but with strong support of women MPs of the centre left coalition and of the women from the right wing opposition in 2006, stayed, due to this crosscutting coalition, formally intact also in the next ten years of very conservative and autocratic right wing coalition from 2006-till 2016. Centre left coalition entered neck to neck electoral campaign in 2016 by forging a nation – wide parliamentary consensus on the next step in strengthening of the legislated candidate quotas, by raising them to 40 per cent and making them obligatory also for future executive posts.

The situation in SRB in the first ten years after SFRY's dissolution with the autocratic nationalistic Milošević right wing regime, running under the tag of “pure left and centre-left” was dire for women in the parliament with the share of 3–4 per cent from 1990 till 2000. After the fall of this regime and the change of the government in SRB with the victory of the centre named Democratic Opposition of SRB – DOS (led by the leaders of the DP – Zoran Đinđić, Zoran Živković, Boris Tadić from 2000–2012, and replaced by the pure right coalition led by Vučić, from 2012-till today) the changes in the political presence of women in the Serbian parliament took a positive trend. Once again due to the crosscutting national women's coalition, broadened cleverly exact in the last moment before the elections in 2012 with the women MPs from the right parties, in the form of the newly established Women's Parliamentary Network of SRB (Women in parliaments, 2014).

This improvement would not have been accepted due to the reluctance of the DP leadership, but joint lobbying of the women from the civil society and from all parliamentary parties had brought the far right wing parties on board for the first time. This has, in the end, led to the acceptance of the ranking rules amendment in the Serbian parliament with unanimity.

## Conclusion

Empirical analyses (Nacevska, 2013) of the legislated candidate quotas, as well as of the influence of proportional electoral systems, show a significant positive influence of properly designed quotas on the increasing of the number of women candidates. But even when the number of elected women is higher, it is still not at the satisfactory level and does not ensure the parity of women candidates and elected women. Larger share of women MPs did not trigger a sustainable large presence of women in political decision-making positions in the governments – the trends are mixed. There might be a need to enact additional legislated quotas for positions in different fields of decision making. MKD seems to be on this track already.

Political parties have the key role in forming, recruiting and nominating the candidates.

It can be concluded that political parties, apart from being “friendly persuaded” in acceptance of effective (SRB, MKD) or toothless (CRO) legislated candidate quotas, do not work for real, substantive political representation of women. They do not invest in strategic and capacity building work of their women’s party organisations, they do not develop mentorship schemes for promising newcomers, they do not develop merit based career plans and transparent, democratic recruitment and nomination procedures for the female activists (neither for the male ones) in their parties.

Male dominated party leaderships are doing everything to keep gender power imbalance intact (Old boys’ network power structure and its rules of the game). When there are no quotas, they simply exclude women. When they have to accept quotas for the party organs and/or party lists (due to the pressure of organised women within the party and in the society) they adopt to the new situation: they co-opt the women who will play along established priorities and rules of the old boys’ network.

How do they do it?

They monopolise the distribution of the eligible seats in party bodies or /and on the electoral lists, making sure that they have the last word of who will get real opportunity to get elected. They choose women who are loyal to them, not to the interests of at least those women who vote for their party. Male leaders can do it, because internal party democratic selection and nomination procedures are not transparent and democratically organised, or they are only on paper, and the democratic rules are cleverly avoided, tacitly not respected (OSCE-ODIHR, 2014; Lokar, 2014).

It would be a big mistake to expect that efficient, perfectly designed legislated candidate quotas or even legislated parity for elected seats could solve this problem. Imbalance of power between men and women in the parties and party internal democracy are much tougher nut to crack!

It is thus important to discuss how to strengthen voters' influence in the elections. In Croatia, in 2016 elections for example, there were several women candidates who got elected or were pushed higher up on the lists contrary to their parties believe, with the preferential votes, but also several which have lost the seat or were pushed further down the list, due to the higher number of preferential votes, given to the male candidates. We were not able to make deep analyses of what has influenced voters' behaviour in CRO: to what extent if at all, women candidates could have been rejected or less preferred just due to gender stereotypes and prejudices of the voters. Public opinion surveys (WVS, 2011) show the dominant value matrix: patriarchy, collectivism and family-orientation in all three countries. One can realistically assume that the state needs to undertake special measures for changing prevailing negative public attitude towards women in politics (Nacevska, 2013). The changing of the patriarchal conservative stereotypes is a long process. Awareness raising campaigns should be focused not only on the male but more over on the female misperceptions. From the point of view of ensuring equal representation of men and women in decision making positions in a shorter term, there is a need for an open discussion of the question: *how to design the positive measures in order to insure that voters will be able to have the final word, that candidates from their party lists should seat in the parliament and at the same time get elected gender balanced representation of each party delegation to the parliament.* Technically such solutions are not too difficult to device, but political consensus that this would be fair and needed might be much more difficult to forge.

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