

The project “Equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making for women advancement”

Membership Support Regranting Scheme 2024 / RE-GRANTING AGREEMENT No. MASF2024-006

**Joint Policy Recommendations for Civil Society Organizations
Developed by the Project partners from: Austria, Romania, Lithuania**

1. Title of Recommendation	Policy recommendations for Civil Society Organisations on the promotion of women in politics
2. Main goal and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase Women's Representation in Political Decision-Making ● Empower Women to Participate Actively in Politics ● Foster Gender-Sensitive Political Environments ● Strengthen Civic Engagement and Voter Support for Women ● Promote Inclusive and Diverse Political Participation ● Enhance Collaboration Between Women's NGOs and Political Institutions
3. Description of the policy recommendations	
<p>Short Introduction (state of play)</p> <p>Across Austria, Romania, and Lithuania, women remain underrepresented in political decision-making roles, although efforts are being made to address this imbalance. In Austria, despite recent progress, gender disparity persists at all levels of government. Neither the National Council (Nationalrat) nor the Federal Council (Bundesrat) achieves gender parity, and the underrepresentation is even more pronounced at the local level, where only about 10 percent of municipalities are led by female mayors. Historical data highlights fluctuations in the representation of women in the federal government, with notable milestones such as the Bierlein government in 2019, which achieved gender parity, and the Kurz II government in 2020, where women outnumbered men for the first time. However, the absence of legal gender quotas, unlike in some other European countries, means that Austria still faces significant challenges in achieving gender equality in political representation.</p> <p>In Romania, the situation is complicated by the lack of a comprehensive strategy on gender balance in decision-making, despite having strong policies in other areas, such as combating violence against women. This gap necessitates a different approach, focusing on innovative advocacy initiatives to raise awareness and promote equal representation of women in decision-making roles. These efforts are aligned with the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and emphasize the importance of women’s empowerment.</p> <p>Similarly, Lithuania faces challenges in achieving gender balance in politics, reflecting broader trends across the European Union. According to the Gender Equality Index developed by the European Institute for</p>	

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Gender Equality, gender inequalities are most pronounced in the domain of power, with the EU average of women in parliaments standing at only 33 percent. Lithuania’s efforts mirror those in Austria and Romania, with a focus on both short-term and long-term policies to support greater involvement of women in political decision-making, improve communication with politicians, and foster positive attitudes among voters toward women in politics.

Overall, while each country has made strides in different areas, the journey toward gender parity in political representation remains ongoing, requiring concerted efforts from civil society, political parties, and governments alike.

The three countries therefore suggest the following policy recommendations:

Empowering Women to Participate Actively in the Elections

1.1. Developing Skills and Confidence

- **Training Programs:** Develop and implement targeted training programs at the national and local levels as well as the private sector to enhance women's skills in governance, participation, communication, leadership, and the use of information and communication technologies. These programs should also focus on the role of elected women in gender mainstreaming across all levels.
- **Non-discrimination Advocacy:** Promote non-discrimination of women and advocate for the inclusion of diverse groups (ethnic and cultural minorities, young and older women, women with disabilities) in political decision-making.
- **Mentoring and Work-Shadowing Programs:** Start and pilot a “*Woman to Woman mentoring program*” and develop work-shadowing initiatives. These programs should build confidence and leadership skills among women considering political careers by pairing experienced, gender-sensitive elected women with NGO staff.
- **Engaging Youth:** Encourage the participation of young people, especially young women, in associations to gain experience and knowledge beneficial for political involvement.

1.2. Supporting Work-Life Balance for Women in Politics

- **Public Care Services:** Advocate and lobby for the accessibility, flexibility, and quality of public care services, which are crucial for enabling potential women politicians to balance family duties with active political careers.

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- **Support for Elected Representatives:** Lobby for support measures that help elected representatives reconcile their family and public responsibilities. Parliaments and local authorities should ensure that their schedules and working methods equally accommodate both male and female representatives.

1.3. Building and Maintaining Networks

- **Networking Among Women Politicians:** Initiate and maintain networks of women politicians from different parties to serve as mentors and role models for women interested in political careers. These networks should help keep women's issues on the political agenda and promote positive decisions.
- **Collaboration Across Parties:** Encourage collaboration among women politicians across different parties to support each other and advocate for shared goals.
- **Organize monthly Brainstorming sessions** for community initiatives to promote the role of women in politics.

Communicating with Political Parties to Promote Gender Equality and Requiring Women’s Issues to Take Priority in the Political Agenda

2.1. Formal Policies and Frameworks

- **Gender Equality Policies:** Advocate for the adoption and implementation of formal gender equality policies within political parties. Ensure that gender equality is addressed in party legal frameworks and mainstreamed into political programs.
- **Temporary Special Measures:** Lobby for special temporary measures (e.g., quotas, women-only capacity building and mentoring schemes) to increase women's participation in politics.
- **Learning from Other Countries:** Inform political parties of successful strategies from other countries to promote balanced gender participation in elected assemblies.
- **Media Visibility:** Ensure that women and men candidates receive equal visibility in the media, especially during election periods.

2.2. Creative Communication Strategies

- **Local Council Meetings:** Prepare a detailed plan for local Women’s NGOs to attend Local Council meetings by rotation, providing tailored feedback to council members to emphasize the need for

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more elected women and attention to gender aspects in decision-making.

- **Karl Popper Debates:** Organize debates with senior and youth politicians of each political party on resolutions related to increasing women's roles in political and economic decision-making.
- **Focus Groups with Politicians:** Conduct focus groups with politicians from various parties to discuss the selection criteria for electoral lists, with a particular focus on gender balance.

2.3. Creating Questionnaires

- **Question Catalogues:** Create and distribute question catalogues to all candidates in advance to gather specific information on their policies and actions related to gender equality. This approach, proven effective in Austria, can be a powerful tool for holding politicians accountable.

Advocating Voters to Support Women in the National Elections

3.1. Public Awareness and Media Engagement

- **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote public discourse favourable to more women in politics through awareness campaigns and public actions like "Women Vote for Women" and "Campaign 50/50." These campaigns should focus on involving young people and emphasizing the diversity of women.
- **Storytelling and Role Models:** Develop and implement storytelling sessions on the Power of Women as Agents of Change, featuring role models at the grassroots and elected levels, to showcase their impact on communities.
- **Media Cooperation:** Cooperate with media outlets to encourage non-stereotypical and objective portrayals of women politicians. Ensure that media professionals provide equal visibility to women and men candidates and elected representatives.

3.2. Engaging the Community

- **Community Initiatives:** Organize monthly brainstorming sessions for community initiatives that promote the role of women in politics.
- **Mapping and Focus Groups:** Conduct mapping exercises and focus groups on local issues and challenges to make voters understand the need for women's involvement at all decision-making levels.

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3.3. Equal Campaign Resources

- **Resource Distribution:** Advocate for the equal distribution of time, financial resources, and other campaign resources between male and female candidates to ensure a level playing field.
- **Community Networks:** Support initiatives that create community-based networks to advocate for women's representation and gender equality in politics.

4. Expected impact of policy recommendations

The implementation of these policy recommendations is expected to:

- **Strengthen the Understanding and Power of Elected Women in Gender Mainstreaming:**
 - By fostering partnerships between elected women and women's NGOs, these recommendations will enhance the **capacity of** female politicians to integrate gender perspectives into all levels of governance, leading to more equitable policies and outcomes.
- **Foster New Communication Methods Between Politicians and Civil Society:**
 - The recommendations will encourage innovative and effective communication strategies between politicians and civil society, particularly women's organizations, to ensure that women's issues are better understood, prioritized, and addressed in political decision-making.
- **Create Long-Term Changes in Attitudes and Behaviors Towards Women's Roles in Politics:**
 - Through targeted advocacy, training, and public awareness campaigns, these recommendations aim to shift societal attitudes and behaviors, promoting a political culture that values and supports women's active participation and leadership in politics.
- **Promote Inclusive and Active Political Structures:**
 - By encouraging diverse participation and collaboration across different levels of society, these recommendations will help build a more inclusive and active political structure where women's voices are integral to the decision-making process.
- **Ensure Sustainable Gender Equality in Political Representation:**

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The long-term implementation of these policies will contribute to sustained gender equality in political representation, ensuring that women's perspectives are permanently integrated into the fabric of political life across Austria, Romania, and Lithuania.
<p>5. Advice for those, who wish to implement this recommendation</p>	<p>Foster Solidarity Among Women:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build Networks: Strengthen cross-party and grassroots networks to support women in politics and share best practices. ● Mentoring: Establish mentoring programs that connect experienced women politicians with emerging leaders. <p>Communicate Effectively with Politicians:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Engage Leadership: Work closely with party leaders to integrate gender equality into party platforms. ● Tailored Approaches: Adapt communication strategies to align with party doctrines and emphasize collaboration. <p>Involve Community Members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Grassroots Engagement: Empower local communities to participate in political advocacy, focusing on the inclusion of women. ● Civic Education: Educate voters on the importance of gender equality in politics and encourage support for female candidates. <p>Promote and Enforce Quotas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adopt Quotas: Encourage political parties to implement voluntary gender quotas and support them with training. ● Formal Policies: Advocate for gender equality policies within parties and monitor their implementation. <p>Implement Targeted Training Programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Skills Development: Provide training in leadership, communication, and digital skills, accessible to women from diverse backgrounds. ● Partnerships: Collaborate with educational institutions and NGOs to develop comprehensive training programs.

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	<p>Advocate for Family-Friendly Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Measures: Lobby for family-friendly policies in political institutions, such as flexible working hours and childcare support. • Broad Support: Engage both male and female politicians to back these policies. <p>Enhance Media Engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balanced Coverage: Work with media to ensure fair and non-stereotypical coverage of women politicians. • Public Awareness: Launch campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes and highlight the achievements of women in politics. <p>Monitor and Evaluate Progress:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking: Set clear benchmarks and regularly evaluate progress to adjust strategies as needed. • Transparency: Publish reports on women's representation in politics to ensure accountability and public awareness.
<p>6. Sources, contacts, references</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. EWL activities towards more women in politics https://www.womenlobby.org/Women-in-Politics-507?lang=en 2. Lithuanian Women’s Lobby. Project Women’s political participation for advancement: from analysis to action https://lmlt.lt/politinis-moteru-dalyvavimas-pazangai-nuo-analizes-iki-veiksmo/ 3. Council of Europe. Recommendation Rec(2003)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision making https://search.coe.int/cm#%22CoEIdentifier%22:[%2209000016805e0848%22],%22sort%22:[%22CoEValidationDate%20Descending%22]}

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4. **Council of Europe. Analytical report Balanced participation of Women and Men in Decision- making** <https://rm.coe.int/analytical-report-data-2016-/1680751a3e>
5. **UN CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23: Political and Public Life** <https://www.refworld.org/legal/general/cedaw/1997/en/39377>
6. **UN CEDAW Draft general recommendation No 40. on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems 18 July 2023** <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/draft-general-recommendation-no-40-equal-and>
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Contacts: office@frauenring.at