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THE COST OF INEQUALITY: FUNDING FOR ELECTION CAMPAIGNS OF WOMEN CANDIDATES



THE COST OF INEQUALITY: **FUNDING FOR ELECTION** **CAMPAIGNS OF WOMEN** **CANDIDATES**

Pristina, July 2021

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ELECTION CAMPAIGN POLITICAL FUNDING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This paper aims to understand the correlation between political party funding and women's political participation, based on the premise that campaign financing has a direct impact on women's electability for legislative seats. Given the challenges that women candidates for MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo face in the electoral process, specifically due to the lack of funding for the election campaign, this analysis attempts to shed light on the practices of political entities in Kosovo, in terms of gender distribution of party funds dedicated to election campaigns.

By using desk research, namely the analysis of the legal framework that governs the issues of political entity and election campaign financing, as well as the primary survey conducted with women candidates for MPs from six political entities in Kosovo in the last seven legislatures of the Assembly - respectively women candidates from Self-Determination Movement, Democratic League of Kosovo, Democratic Party of Kosovo, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, Social Democratic Party, and Social Democratic Initiative, as well as with financial officers of these political entities, the paper analyzes the cost of the election campaign and the level of support that political entities give to candidates on candidates' lists in general, and women candidates in particular. Specifically, given the unsatisfactory level of representation of women MPs in the Assembly of Kosovo, the report seeks to understand whether the lack of adequate financial support for the election campaign of women candidates for MPs affects their electability to parliamentary seats.

The main findings from the interviews with women candidates for MPs, as well as financial officers from the political entities mentioned in this report, are as follows:

- ~ *50% of women respondents indicate that the financial cost of conducting the election campaign for parliamentary elections ranges between 2000 to 5000 Euros per candidate.*
- ~ *The election campaigns of 50% of the women respondents are funded from their own funds, and 50% of the women respondents claim that their election costs are covered in combination of their own funds and funds from political entities.*

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- ~ 75% of women respondents do not receive any financial coverage for vehicle fuel during campaign trips, and only 25% of women have access to political entities' vehicles for meetings during the election campaign.
- ~ Only 38% of women respondents have access to volunteers and logistical assistance of their political entities, while organizing and coordinating electoral activities.
- ~ 50% of women respondents pay out of pocket for public spaces used for meetings and electoral rallies with citizens.
- ~ 75% of women respondents feel discriminated against within political entities in the process of allocation of human and financial resources during the election campaign.
- ~ 50% of women respondents consider that the internal regulation of their political entities regarding the media appearances of candidates during the campaign offers somewhat equal opportunities to men and women candidates, while 13% consider that the regulation of the entities they belong to is discriminatory against women to a large extent.
- ~ 100% of women respondents consider that the support of political entities regarding media appearances plays a role in their electability as MPs.
- ~ Only 13% of women respondents find that the absence of women candidates in the media does not play a role in their electability as MPs.
- ~ Only 1 in 4 women respondents (25%) state that within their political entities there is transparency in the management of financial resources, by providing full access to financial management.
- ~ Only 25% of women respondents say that women's issues are fundamental for their entities and that women are part of the whole process of managing and allocating financial resources during the election campaign.
- ~ None of the political entities interviewed had internal regulations on special funds to support the election campaign of women candidates.

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- ~ *Political entities consider that they do not have discriminatory practices against women candidates in elections, including the allocation of funds and human resources during a campaign.*

INTRODUCTION

Although women's political participation and representation has increased significantly in recent years, women remain largely under-represented in politics. The data show that men still hold more than 75% of parliamentary seats worldwide.¹ In Kosovo, the highest percentage of seats won by women goes just beyond the minimum legislative quota, with 36% of women MPs elected in the eighth legislature after the 2021 elections.²

However, here the share of women representation in politics is of high significance. Firstly, the political representation of women has a significant impact on policies in general. Women lawmakers are more likely to serve the interests of women and push forward

important legislation that is beneficial to women. Secondly, the legitimacy of democratic political systems depends on the presence of women legislators. Having an unequal gender composition in important decision-making institutions reduces the rules of democratic processes, thereby legitimizing the political system.³

Although most countries recognize the legal right of women to participate in politics on an equal footing with men, equal opportunity for official representation does not necessarily translate into a significant increase in the percentage of women in important positions of political power.⁴ Political, social and economic inequalities remain crucial factors that prevent women from fully seizing the advantages of political opportunities. In such

¹ Inter-Parliamentary Union. (2021). Retrieved from: <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages?month=4&year=2021>

² The Assembly of Kosovo. (2021). Retrieved from: <https://www.kuvendikosoves.org/shq/deputetet/>

³ Jones MP. (1998) Gender Quotas, Electoral Laws, and the Election of Women: Lessons from the Argentine Provinces. *Comparative Political Studies*.

⁴ Hughes, Melanie & Paxton, Pamela & Krook, Mona. (2017). Gender Quotas for Legislatures and Corporate Boards. *Annual Review of Sociology*. 43. 10.1146/annurev-soc-060116-053324.

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circumstances, to ensure the equal presence of women in politics, the numerical representation of women in the general population should also be reflected in their representation in politics, and actions such as amendment of electoral laws are a necessity.⁵

In Kosovo, women and men have different opportunities to participate in public life. This is due to a number of factors contributing to existing gender inequalities, starting from the rigid patriarchal culture and traditions that the consequently conservative constituency produces with preconceived ideas about the gender roles of women and men in the public sphere, as well as a lack of political will and support within the political entities to support the political empowerment of women. An important factor in maintaining the existing gender gap in politics is the lack of funding for women politicians, especially in the times of the election campaign.

The term political finance means the use of money or other material resources for the purpose of political activities. According to the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), transparent and accountable political financing systems play a key role in

the integrity of the political process and provide a level playing field for political parties and election candidates. Clearly defined and properly implemented regulations in practice can reduce the competitive advantages of richer candidates, quell vote buying as well as abuse of state resources, and increase citizens' trust in the political system.⁶ Moreover, it is precisely the political finances during campaign and ensuring equal allocation of these resources between women and men that also determine the success or electability of candidates in the elections in which they run.

In Kosovo, there is a great lack of studies, and treatment in general, of the issue of election campaign financing, through a gender lens. While the problem of lack of equal gender funding within political entities for women and men candidates is discussed in more detail in public debates, there is a lack of empirical studies primarily due to closed and generally non-transparent practices of political entities, in managing political financing during election campaign times. To contribute to this topic, this study takes into account the experience of women candidates from the major political entities in

⁵ Ibid

⁶ IFES. *Political Finance*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ifes.org/issues/political-finance>

Kosovo, in order to see the link between political funding and their electability as Members of the Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo.

The study is organized as follows: the first chapter examines the methodological approach of the analysis, explaining the methods and instruments used in data extraction and analysis. The second chapter

METHODOLOGY

This report delves into the impact of the election campaign funding and the support of political entities provided to women candidates for MPs in the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo, in terms of their electability for seats in the Assembly. To achieve this goal, the report extracts data through a combination of research methods, which were generated and analyzed between March-April 2021.

The first data are based on desk research, namely the analysis of the legal framework governing the funding of political entities and election campaigns in Kosovo, the gender equality legal framework in public institutions, and data from the Central Election Commission on the level of representation of women MPs in the Assembly of Kosovo. Furthermore, to better understand the impact that election

provides an overview of the legislation governing political funding in Kosovo that ensures the equal participation of women in politics. The third chapter presents and deals with the results of interviews with women candidates for MPs, and the fourth chapter provides the conclusions of the paper and recommendations for further research and the necessary policy measures for a change.

campaign financing has on the level of women's political representation, the research uses relevant academic and practical secondary resources of the relevant subject-matter.

The second set of data was generated through primary research, conducted first through structured interviews with women candidates for MPs from six parties represented in the Assembly of Kosovo over the years, respectively from the political entity Self-Determination Movement, Democratic League of Kosovo, Democratic Party of Kosovo, Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, Social Democratic Party, and Social Democratic Initiative (NISMA). A total of eight women were interviewed to understand their experience and the costs of conducting the election campaign - both successful and unsuccessful candidates in the race for seats

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in the Assembly of Kosovo. Secondly, in order to understand the organization and operating practice, as well as to assess to what extent are the issues of women candidates in the focus of the above mentioned political entities, financial officers of these entities were interviewed. Finally, the data were validated through a focus group

discussion with relevant experts from the ranks of civil society in Kosovo. The limitation of this study is the small sample of women candidates interviewed, so the results are indicative but were validated by interviews with finance officers of political parties and focus group with relevant experts.

HOW ARE ELECTION CAMPAIGNS FUNDED?

The funding of political party election campaigns is seen as a precondition for the regular and effective functioning of the electoral process. The lack of party funds dedicated to the election campaign makes it impossible for political parties to articulate their electoral ideas and programs to their voters, and consequently makes it impossible for citizens with suffrage to make informed choices. Although the legal framework in Kosovo, adequately covers the financing of political parties, election campaign funding is considered a non-transparent and generally closed practice.

According to the Law on Financing of Political Entities in Kosovo, the main financial and material sources of political entities in Kosovo

include membership fees, contributions and funding from the budget of the Republic of Kosovo.⁷

When it comes to the financing of political entities from the contributions, they are allowed to receive contributions from natural persons in the amount of maximum 2000 Euros per year, as well as from legal persons for up to 10,000 Euros per year.⁸ Whereas, in respect of the state budget, political entities benefit from the Political Entity Support Fund, operational within the Central Election Commission. Through this support, which includes a budget of no more than 0.17% of the budget of the Republic of Kosovo and is proportionally allocated between the political entities represented in the Assembly, based

⁷ Official Gazette. (2010). Law no. 03/I-174 on financing of political entities. Article 4. Retrieved from: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2705>

⁸ Ibid. Article 5

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on the number of seats won in the specific term of office, political entities finance their pre-election and election activities for local and central elections, they fund the work of their caucuses, as well as the regular activities of political entities (including funding of political entity branches).⁹ The Law 04/L-058/2021, amending and supplementing the Basic Law on Financing of Political Entities 03/L-174, provides that the fund can also be used to finance women and youth organizational units of political entities.¹⁰

While the Law on Financing of Political Entities prohibits direct donations to candidates for local and central elections, requiring that funds go through the political entity,¹¹ private donations remain among the most common forms of candidates' election campaign funding, as the law does not

provide for the obligation to declare direct contributions of political candidates, but only obliges parties to declare the receipt of contributions. This is in fact considered to be one of the major red flags of this law, since although private funding is considered a legitimate and necessary tool for the scope of political parties and political candidates, it creates a space for misuse of funds and the possibility of receiving funds from illegal activity, by groups with certain political goals.

Another serious shortcoming of this law is the lack of gender approach in regulating the funding of the election campaigns of political entities. The lack of access to the ways political parties are funded, and budget allocation, especially during election campaigns, present difficulties in producing an analytical overview.

⁹ Ibid. Article 6

¹⁰ Official Gazette. (2012). Law no. 04/l-058 on amending and supplementing Law no. 03/l-174 on the financing of political entities. Article 3, Paragraph 1.3. Retrieved from: <https://gzk.rks.gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2795>

¹¹ Official Gazette. (2013). Law no. 04/l-212 on amending and supplementing Law no. 03/l-174 on the financing of political entities, amended and supplemented by Law no. 04/l-058. Article 11, Paragraph 4. Retrieved from: <https://gzk.rks.gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8866>

ELECTION CAMPAIGN FUNDING AND ELECTABILITY OF WOMEN CANDIDATES

Despite marginal progress in some areas, women in Kosovo, remain underrepresented in politics and decision-making. Despite the existence of constitutional and legal guarantees regarding gender equality in electoral rights and women's participation in decision-making, their implementation in practice remains minimal.

In brief, women make up only 35% of municipal assemblies in Kosovo, 36% of parliament, 20% of senior decision-making positions at the municipal level and 33% at the ministerial level. Currently there are only five women ministers out of a total of 15 ministries, while there are no women mayors in any of the 38 municipalities (CEC, 2017).

In the legal sphere, since 2000, through the Law on General Elections, Kosovo has been applying a 30% legislative gender quota for the under-represented gender in Parliament. On the other hand, the Law on Gender Equality, adopted in 2015, provides that "Equal gender representation in all legislative, executive and judicial bodies and other public institutions is achieved when a minimum representation of fifty percent (50%) is provided for each gender, including

their governing and decision-making bodies". In practical terms, political entities running on elections refer to the minimum standards of representation provided by the Law on General Elections in Kosovo, including only the minimum requirement of 30% of women represented on candidates' lists. Consequently, the participation of women in Parliament has never been equal to that of male MPs.

Since the 2007 parliamentary elections, when women MPs made exactly 30% of the Parliament, the representation of women in this institution has marked a slight positive trend over the years. The highest participation of women MPs in the Parliament of Kosovo is observed in 2021, with a total of 36%, or 43 women MPs.

The lack of empirical data makes it impossible to establish the correct correlation and assessment of how much funding affects the selection of candidates by political entities. However, it is well known that funding is in positive correlation with elections, and thus represents one of the main tools that best reflects the attitudes of parties towards equal gender representation.

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The observed lack of transparency makes this paper contribute even more to advocating for increased transparency about the political party finances, and also to presenting the

perspective of women within political parties on the impact of (un)equal budget allocation during campaigns.

Women MPs (without a quota)

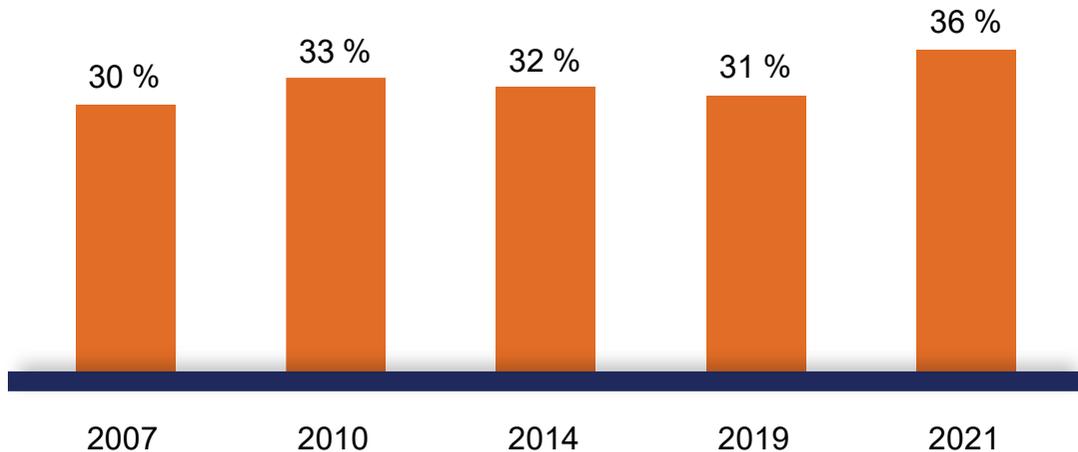


Figure 1: Women Members of Parliament (in percentage) compared to the total number of MPs in Kosovo¹²

With the increase in women's representation in the Assembly, the need to apply the 30% legislative quota for women MPs has been steadily declining over the years. Since 2007,

when out of 37 women MPs, 26 received their office through the gender quota, in 2021, only 12 out of a total of 41 women MPs got their office through the quota.

¹² Source: Calculated from the website of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo: www.kuvendiikosoves.org

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Total number of women MPs

Women MPs (with quota)

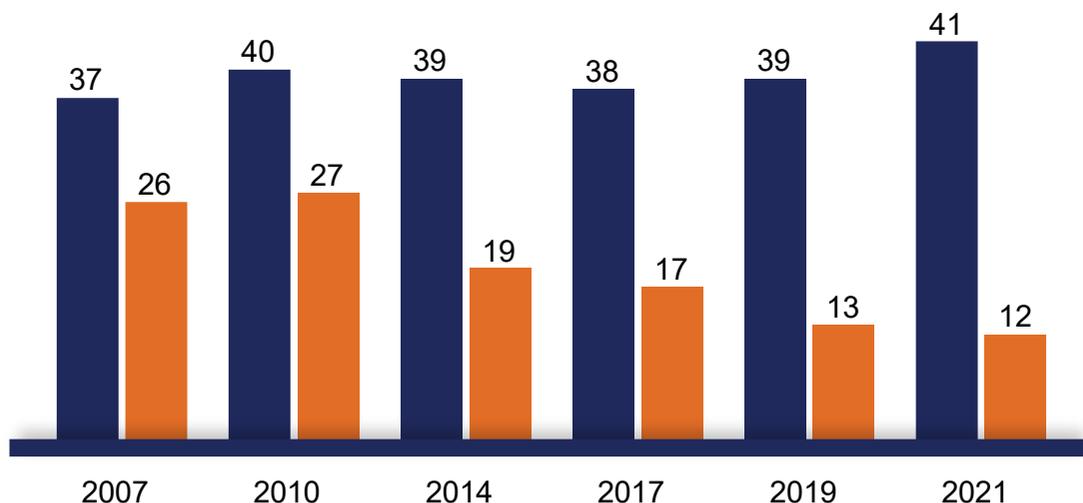


Figure 2: Women MPs (number) elected through gender quota compared to the total number of women MPs in Kosovo.¹³

WOMEN'S ELECTABILITY AND PARTY FINANCES

Women from all political parties in Kosovo invariably express their concerns on how the lack of financial support from their political parties during election campaigns turns into a burden against their private finances and as such hinders their ability to conduct close communication campaigns with the public

and often prevents them from engaging in politics. Gender responsive budgeting is a requirement that stems from the Law on Gender Equality and also applies to political parties. However, it does not translate into

¹³ Source: Calculated from the website of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo: www.kuvendiikosoves.org

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practice, thus affecting democracy and intra-party inclusion.

To understand the relationship between the political party funding and the political empowerment of women, starting from the premise that the political party funding should take into account the issue of gender, especially given the challenges that women

candidates for MPs in the Assembly of Kosovo experience in the face of the elections, due to the lack of funding for the election campaign, semi-structured interviews with women candidates for seats in the Assembly of Kosovo, from the major political entities, were conducted between March-April 2021.

WOMEN MP'S ELECTION JOURNEY

All women responded anonymously to the survey, while the representation of political entities was mixed, including parliamentary entities that make up the eighth legislature after the most recent elections of 2021, and those of the previous legislature, respectively

the seventh legislature of the Assembly of Kosovo. All women respondents have run for a seat in the Assembly of Kosovo at least once, while only 3 out of a total of 8 women, or 37,5% of women respondents, managed to be elected as MPs.

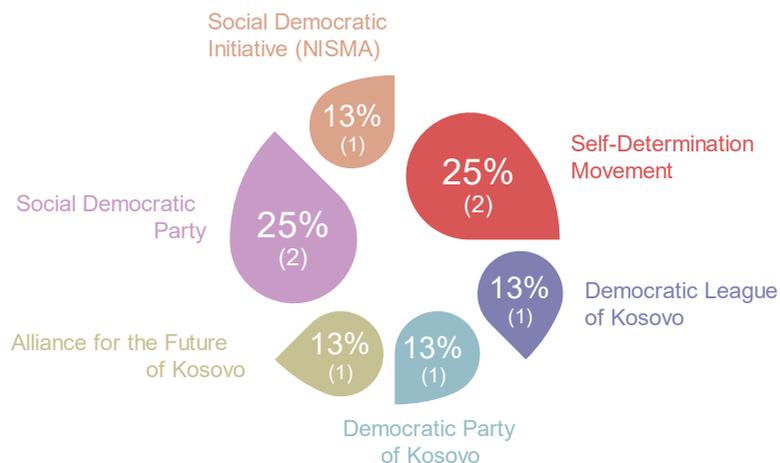


Figure 3: Party representation of women respondents

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Out of 5 women who managed to be elected as MPs, only 2 of them were elected through the gender quota applied in the Assembly of

Kosovo, while the other 3 were elected by electorate's votes.

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One of the main concerns that women in Kosovo politics generally express relates to the lack of proper funding of the election campaign, as well as the high cost of undertaking a genuine campaign that enables them to maintain close political communication with their constituency, and to provide platforms for presenting their political and programmatic ideas to the broad electoral masses. According to data obtained from interviews with women candidates among political entities in Kosovo, the approximate cost of an election campaign in Kosovo ranges from 1000 to over 5000 euros. In fact, 50% of women respondents say that their expenses for running an election campaign to be elected as an MP in the Assembly of Kosovo, reaches 2000-5000 euros. Another 25% say they spend 1,000 to 2,000 euros per campaign, and 25% say the financial cost of their election campaigns goes beyond 5,000 euros.

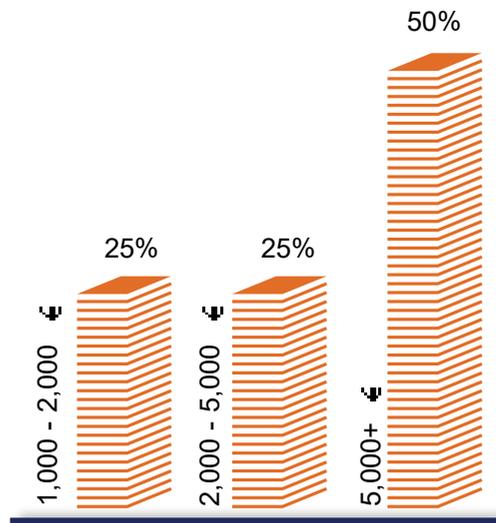


Figure 4: Financial cost of the election campaign

While the Law on Financing of Political Entities prohibits direct donations to candidates for local and central elections, requiring that funds go through the political

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entity,¹⁴ private donations remain among the most common forms of financing candidates' election campaigns as the law does not provide for the obligation to declare direct contributions of political candidates, but only obliges parties to declare the receipt of contributions. This is supported by the women respondents of this research, with the fact that most of them claim that financing of their election campaigns undertaken so far is covered 50% in combination between self-financing and the political entity funds, while the other 50% were entirely self-financed. None of the women respondents covered the expenses of the election campaign solely with the funds received from the political entities they belonged to.

None of the women respondents covered the expenses of the election campaign solely with the funds received from the political entities they belonged to.

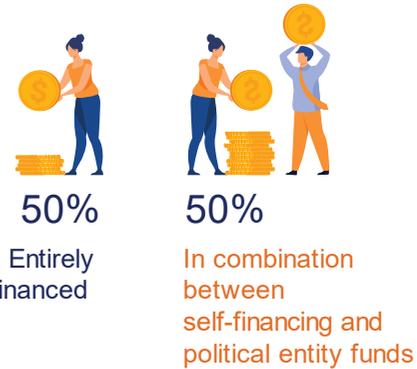


Figure 5: Allocation of the election campaign financial cost

The parliamentary election campaign is a very costly undertaking in Kosovo. A successful election campaign, in addition to providing a strong substantial programming base, also includes a host of financial and human resources dedicated to this purpose. The most common expenses of election campaigns in Kosovo include expenses for fuel and vehicle use, expenses for use of public spaces - usually restaurants - for holding meetings and rallies with the constituency, expenses for media promotion and social media, as well as expenses for

¹⁴ Official Gazette. (2013). Law no. 04/l-212 on amending and supplementing Law no. 03/l-174 on the financing of political entities, amended and supplemented by Law no. 04/l-058. Article 11,

Paragraph 4. Retrieved from: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=8866>

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logistical coordination of the whole campaign.

While 50% of women interviewed claim that their expenses are covered by a combination of their own funds and those of the political entity, the following questions seek to understand further how women's campaigns are supported by their political entities.

Asked if they had access to funds from their political entity to cover for fuel for trips within the election campaign, 75% of women said they had had no access. Only 25% of women respondents state that they have benefited from the political entity funds to cover fuel expenses for their activities during the election campaign.



Figure 6: Did you have access to political party funds for fuel for your trips within the election campaign?

Women candidates on the lists of political entities in Kosovo share a similar experience in terms of their ability to access the vehicles of political entities to participate in electoral rallies during the election campaign. Only 25% of women candidates claim to have had

access to vehicles used by political entities for such needs - access to various points within Kosovo to meet and communicate with their constituents.



Figure 7: Did you have access to party vehicles for trips to election rallies during the election campaign?

Another very important aspect of the development of election campaigns is also the organization and coordination of election activities. While a large portion of rallies with citizens are organized by political entities for the entire list of candidates for MPs, it is the will of the candidates themselves to organize meetings and rallies with citizens within their individual campaign. However, in order to achieve the widest and most organized outreach, candidates usually need the logistical assistance provided by the political entity. Asked if they had access to volunteers or logistics workers from their political entities to conduct their election campaigns, 38% of women candidates said they had had no access to such human resources, while 63% of them said that such assistance had been

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provided to them by the entities to which they belong.



Figure 8: Did you have access to political party volunteers / logistics staff during the election campaign, to assist you during the campaign?

Organizing meetings and rallies of candidates for MPs usually primarily requires rented public spaces. In terms of the cost of booking public spaces (restaurants, conference rooms, premises, etc.), only 13% of cases were covered by the political entities. 50% of the bookings for these public spaces were paid by the women candidates for MPs themselves, while in 38% of the cases the costs were covered by private donors of the women respondents.

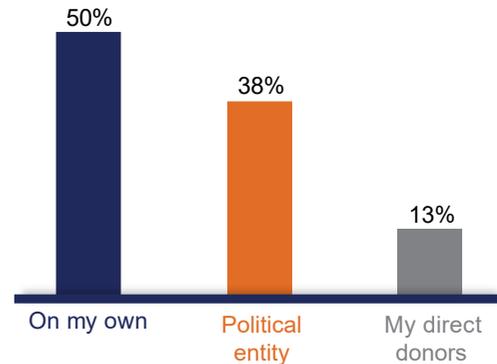


Figure 9: Payment of public spaces for meetings and gatherings with citizens

However, when asked if in general the women candidates responding to that interview felt discriminated against by political entities on whose candidates' lists they ran on the election, in terms of human and financial resources allocated for the purposes of the election campaign, it is found that most women candidates considered to be discriminated against in these aspects, respectively 25% of them stated that they felt discriminated, and 38% of them considered to have been somewhat discriminated against in the distribution of funds and human resources within the party, during the election campaign.

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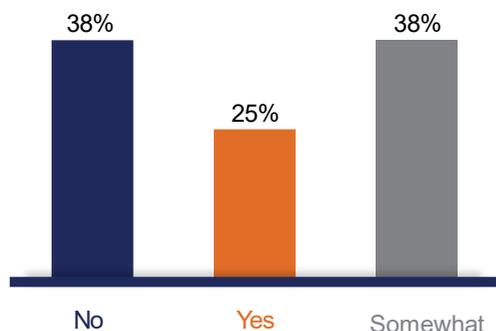


Figure 10: In general, do you feel discriminated against in terms of human (i.e. PR, communication, driver, security) and financial resources allocation for the purposes of the election campaign?

Given the importance of social media in promoting ideas and opinions in general, and especially in maintaining constant and interactive communication with the constituency, they are an almost irreplaceable tool of politicians throughout election campaigns. Considering the high cost of in-person meetings with voters, and the inability to reach all locations Kosovo-wide, social media play a vital role in enabling virtual meetings with citizens. Developing and transmitting messages on these platforms is costly. Only 38% of women candidates received financial support for the promotion of political posts on social networks by their political entities. Only 1 in

3 women claims to have been supported by the political entity to promote her election messages, thus targeting more followers.



Figure 11: Did you enjoy the financial support of your political entity to promote your posts (Post boosts) on social networks during the election campaign?

Election headquarters within political entities play a key role in organizing the electoral campaign of the political entity. In most political entities, election headquarters create internal arrangements and certain strategies for media coverage of the candidates' list. Asked whether the internal regulation of political entities regarding the media appearances of candidates for MPs offers equal opportunities for women and men, 50% of women respondents consider that the internal regulation of this issue within their political entity provides somewhat equal opportunities, while 13% consider that the regulation of the entities they belong to discriminates excessively against women.

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Figure 12: (Un)equal opportunities for access to media appearances

Further, when asked whether the support of political entities around the media appearances of women candidates plays a role in their electability, only 38% of women saw the connection in this regard, while 63% of them were of the opinion that their electability also depended on the support of their political entity, by providing them more opportunities for media coverage.

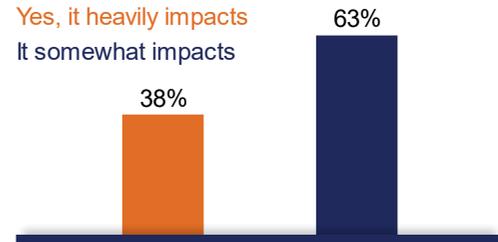


Figure 13: Do you think that the support of the political entity in terms of media appearances, has an impact on the electability of candidates?

On the other hand, most women respondents consider that in fact women's media appearances, or lack thereof in the media, play a role in their electability as MPs. As the media have great and transformational power in socializing the masses, regarding the importance of equal participation of women and men in all decision-making and policy-making processes and fora, the absence of women in these media directly affects their electability as MPs.

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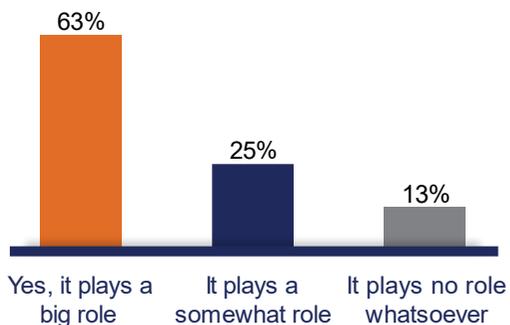


Figure 14: Do you think that women's media appearances, or lack thereof, play a role in their (un)electability as MPs?

To assess whether a political entity applies discriminatory practices against women in the allocation of financial resources dedicated to the election campaign, it is important that political entities are transparent in terms of the management and allocation of the resources they possess. Only 1 in 4 women respondents (25%) states that there is transparency within their political entities in the management of financial resources, by providing full access to financial management, and another 25% state that financial management is only somewhat transparent. The other 25% claim that their entities are not transparent, 13% thereof saying that access to financial management of the political entity is impossible.

Finally, women respondents are divided when it comes to their opinion on how much women's issues are taken into account in the management and allocation of financial resources for women candidates and whether they feel discriminated against in the process.



Figure 15: Do you think that the support of the political entity in terms of media appearances, has an impact on the electability of women candidates?

25% of women consider that women's issues are not addressed at all in this process, while 50% of them claim that these issues are addressed to some extent in their political entities during the election campaign. Only

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25% of women respondents say that, for their entities, women's issues are fundamental and women are part of the whole process of managing and allocating financial resources.

The main challenges on the road to becoming a woman MP

All women candidates for MPs, women respondents to this interview, consider that in addition to the cultural and traditional challenges of a largely patriarchal constituency, support from the political entity and the financing of the election campaign remain among their main barriers on their path to be elected to the parliament. According to one women respondent, "Finances remain the main challenge, and therefore each party should have a separate fund for women candidates." Asked about the main challenges encountered during the campaign, the other woman respondent also stated that "funding is the main topic that determines the candidate's motivation." One woman respondent considers that "Funding does have an effect, however is not crucial." The gender preference of the somewhat conservative constituency remains the challenge in its own right." For some women respondents, the lack of financial support directly translates into the lack of political

entity support for their race as women candidates. Specifically, one woman respondent stated that her main challenges on the road to achieving a seat in the legislature include "lack of resources, as well as the insufficient support by party structures."

Funding does have an effect, however it is not crucial. The gender preference of the somewhat conservative constituency remains the challenge in its own right

Election campaign financing in the eyes of the political entities

To understand the approach of political entities in the allocation of political financing for election campaigns, finance officers were interviewed within the five entities participating in this report.

According to them, in general, political entities are faced with insufficient means to support women and men candidates on candidates' lists. With this in mind, according to financial officers, political entities ensure that the funds allocated for the election campaign go equally to all candidates. The same approach applies, according to them,

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to the distribution of human resources in campaign time, the use of official vehicles, sponsorships and media appearances, as well as other necessary tools in the time of campaign.

Although aware that women candidates face more funding shortages, political entities consider it impossible to create separate funds for them, or to provide greater support for funding women candidates' election campaigns.

Most political entities ensure that promotional brochures, professional campaign photographs are printed equally, and that the costs of joint candidate rallies are covered equally. It is up to the candidates to provide funding for all other expenses related to individual meetings with citizens. Consequently, political entities maintain the practice of self-financing or financing through candidates' private donors, without requiring financial reports for those donations.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo as well as other applicable laws. According to the Constitution, both genders have equal rights to participate in political, social, economic and other walks of life. However, practice reveals a somewhat different picture. Women remain under-represented in all public spheres, especially in politics. This is due to the rigid patriarchal culture and traditions that a quite conservative constituency produces, with preconceived ideas about the gender roles of women and men in the public sphere, as well as a lack of political will and support within political entities to help the political empowerment of women. An important factor in maintaining the existing gender gap in politics is the lack of funding for women politicians, especially during the election campaign.

Political financing of election campaigns is a solution, however when it is done in a non-transparent and non-inclusive way, it also turns into a problem. The lack of a gender approach in regulating the political funding of political entities - while prioritizing intra-party support for the empowerment of women on candidates' lists - creates room for maintaining the existing gender gap in Kosovo politics. The unequal distribution of financial and human resources dedicated to the conduct of election campaigns of political entities in Kosovo, is conducive to producing discrimination against women from the very outset, by reducing their opportunities to be elected for parliamentary seats. Consequently, the lack of political funding of women candidates' election campaigns, in the worst case, discourages their participation in electoral processes, but also forces women who run in the election to carry a heavy financial burden of campaigning and maintaining communication with their constituency.

The lack of equal support for men and women in media appearances during the election campaign significantly affects their unelectability as MPs. Depriving them of the opportunity to use the space and media platforms for mass communication of ideas and programs to voters, plays a role in the under-representation of women in politics.

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In order to face and overcome the challenges imposed to women in these conditions during the election campaigns, the paper makes the following main recommendations:

To Political Entities

- ~ *Increase willingness within the entities for substantial participation of women in electoral processes, providing appropriate conditions to women candidates to develop their election campaign, by increasing campaign funding, and creating space for their increased media coverage.*
- ~ *Ensure the financing of women's organizational units within political entities, in accordance with the Law on Financing of Political Entities. The funds allocated to these forums can be used for training on women's political empowerment, political communication, as well as for the campaign needs of women candidates.*
- ~ *Political entities to conduct qualitative studies on the main obstacles in the political path of women candidates on elections. Understanding the main needs, priorities, and demands of women in electoral processes, and creating the conditions for improving the situation, increases the motivation of women for political participation and has an impact on their electability in the electoral process.*
- ~ *Establish internal mechanisms and regulations that ensure the allocation of budget and resources, with a particular focus on supporting equitable media coverage of the political entity, for both women and men.*
- ~ *Detailed and timely publication of election campaign financial statements.*

THE COST OF INEQUALITY:

To Policymakers

- ~ Conduct a gender analysis of the Law on Financing of Political Entities, ensuring that the legal provisions of this law are not gender neutral, and take into account the needs and requirements of women in electoral processes.
- ~ Consider new legal norms for the financing of women candidates on general and local elections, in order to overcome the financial challenges of women to participate in electoral processes.
- ~ Undertake the harmonization of the Law on General Elections, the Law on Local Elections, and the Law on Financing of Political Entities, with the Law on Gender Equality to guarantee equal participation of women in politics. Create legal norms that sanction non-compliance with the Law on Gender Equality in other normative instances.

To Civil Society

- ~ It is important to conduct gender empirical studies on political funding in Kosovo, through which the practices of political entities in the allocation of finances to women and men are accurately understood, encouraging thereby transparent and accountable political entity practice related to the way the political funds are obtained and allocated.
- ~ Guide the efforts of civil society organizations in education of male and female voters, regarding the importance of women's participation in politics, and their support in elections.
- ~ Provide more media space for media coverage of women candidates in televised debates and ensure they face their opposing candidates on various political topics.

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