

Statistical note on gender balance in politics: EU candidates and potential candidates

December 2020

Executive Summary

The persistent under-representation of women in politics remains a cause for concern. The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) monitors the latest situation and trends at all territorial levels in the EU Member States and also in the EU candidate and potential candidates from the Western Balkans and Turkey that benefit from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance – the so-called IPA beneficiaries. Data for key political decision-making bodies at national level are updated quarterly, while other data are mostly updated annually. The latest quarterly update and the annual update of regional data were completed in December 2020. Key findings in relation to IPA beneficiaries are:

➤ National level

- Women account for 26.5% of the members of national parliaments (single/lower house) across the 7 IPA beneficiaries compared to 32.7% in the 27 EU Member States. In the IPA beneficiaries, therefore, men still outnumber women by 3 to 1.
- The parliament in Serbia (39.4%) is virtually gender balanced (i.e. at least 40% of each gender) but women account for less than 1 in 5 members in Turkey (17.3%). Indeed, the Turkish parliament is large (584 members) and weighs (44%) heavily on the overall results for IPA beneficiaries. If Turkey is excluded, the proportion of women in parliaments in IPA beneficiaries rises to 33.8%, slightly ahead of the EU Member States (32.7%).
- At the current rate of change, it will take another 17 years to achieve gender balance in the combined parliaments of all seven IPA beneficiaries. This is, seven years behind the projected time to reach gender balance in the EU, where the rate of change is slightly slower.
- Less than one in ten major political parties in IPA beneficiaries (8.8%) has a woman leader, although there are slightly more women deputy leaders (14.0%). These results are much lower than in the EU where women account for 21.5% of party leaders and 34.0% of deputy leaders.
- Serbia is the only IPA beneficiary with a woman prime minister, joining Denmark, Germany and Finland in the EU. Women account for 27.3% of senior government ministers (members of the cabinet or equivalent) in the IPA beneficiaries compared to 31.9% in the EU. The cabinet in Albania has equal numbers of each gender and Serbia has 45.8% women and 54.2% men, but in all other IPA beneficiaries, men hold more than three-quarters (>75%) of ministerial positions.

➤ Regional level:

- The latest data from December 2020 show that women hold only 11.2% of seats in regional assemblies in IPA beneficiaries and comprise just 8.5% of the members of their executive

bodies. Both figures are well behind the EU, where women hold just over a third of such positions (34.1% of regional assemblies, 34.2% of executives).

➤ Local level:

- Women hold just over a third of seats in local/municipal assemblies in the EU (34.1%), but less than a fifth in IPA beneficiaries (18.8%). Albania is the only IPA beneficiary with at least 40% of each sex.
- Very few women lead local/municipal councils in IPA beneficiaries (3.8%). The figure in the EU is also low (17.2%), but much higher than in the IPA beneficiaries.

Introduction

The composition of political assemblies and executives at all territorial levels too often fail to reflect the gender diversity of the population they represent, with women significantly under-represented in many cases. Moreover, progress towards a better gender balance in political decision-making has proved to be extremely slow.

Monitoring progress towards gender equality in politics, as well as in other life domains, is key to support better informed policy-making and ensure its effectiveness and accountability. In this respect, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) routinely collects data on women and men in decision-making across a number of life domains, which are made publicly available through its [Gender Statistics Database](#).¹ The database represents an invaluable source of reliable and regularly updated statistics that can be used to monitor the current situation and trends through time. In relation to politics, it includes quarterly data at European and national levels (parliaments and governments) as well as annual data at regional, and local levels.²

Whilst data cover the EU Member States since 2003, the IPA beneficiaries have been progressively added to the regular data collection: Turkey since 2005; North Macedonia and Serbia since 2007; Montenegro since 2015; and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo³ since 2018. The collection of data for the IPA beneficiaries is undertaken through an on-going cooperation project (2018-2022) funded under the IPA by the European Commission (DG NEAR)⁴.

This note summarises the latest available data on the representation of women in politics at the national, regional, and local levels for the IPA beneficiaries compared with the 27 EU Member States, following the update completed in December 2020.

National parliaments

In November 2020, only one of the seven single/lower houses of national parliaments across IPA beneficiaries was led by a woman⁵, and their combined members comprised 73.5% men and 26.5% women (Figure 1). Men therefore outnumber women by 3 to 1. This compares to 67.3% men and 32.7% women members across the single/lower houses of national parliaments of the 27 EU Member States (ratio of 2 to 1). Women are also better represented as leaders (speakers), leading 8⁶ out of 27 of these parliaments (29.6% compared to 14.3% in the IPA beneficiaries).

There is, however, considerable variation between the IPA beneficiaries. The parliament in Serbia is virtually gender balanced (i.e. at least 40% of each gender) with 39.4% women and 60.6% men. Women account for more than a third of members in North Macedonia (35.8%) but are outnumbered by at least 2 to 1 in Kosovo (32.5%), Albania (29.8%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (26.2%) and Montenegro (25.6%) and strikingly hold less than a fifth of the seats in Turkey (17.3%). Indeed, the situation in the IPA beneficiaries as a whole is significantly influenced by the large parliament (584 members) in

¹ Including politics, public administration, judiciary, business and finance, social partners and NGOs, environment and climate change, media, education, science and research, and sports.

² Regional data are updated as a whole on an annual basis but additional collections for affected regions are made in the quarter following any regional elections. Data at the local level were collected on a biennial basis from 2011 to 2019 but annually thereafter.

³ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

⁴ "Increased capacity of EU candidate countries and potential candidates to measure and monitor the impact of gender equality policies"

⁵ Kosovo

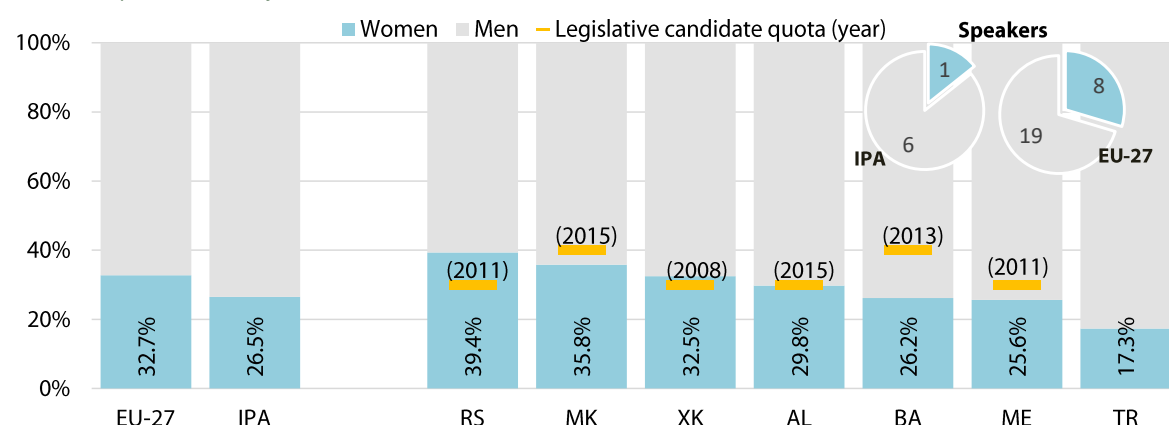
⁶ BE, BG, ES, LV, LT, NL, PL, FI

Turkey. If Turkey is excluded, the share of women in the remaining IPA beneficiaries rises to 33.8%, slightly ahead of that in the EU Member States (32.7%).

Notably, all of the IPA beneficiaries except Turkey have taken legislative action aimed at increasing the presence of women in their parliaments by passing laws requiring the candidate lists presented by parties to have a minimum share of each gender, with sanctions in case of non-compliance. The quota is set at 30% in Albania, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia and at 40% in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (see Table 1 in the Annex).

Although quotas apply to candidate lists and are not necessarily translated into election results, the November 2020 data show that the parliaments in Serbia and Kosovo have already met or exceeded the quota threshold and Albania is almost there too (Figure 1). Amongst the remaining 3 IPA beneficiaries with legislative candidate quotas, the gap between the quota threshold and the actual share of women in parliament is less than 5 percentage points (pp) in North Macedonia and Montenegro but still over 10 pp in Bosnia and Herzegovina (currently 26.2% compared to 40% quota threshold). In Montenegro (25.6%) and North Macedonia (35.8%), the level of women's representation in parliament was previously at or very close to their respective quota thresholds but declined - by around 4 pp in both cases - following elections during 2020.⁷

Figure 1 Share of women and men speakers and members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments and legislative candidate quota, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, November 2020



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national parliaments](#). Legislative candidate quota targets: 30% in ME, AL, RS, XK and 40% in MK and BA.

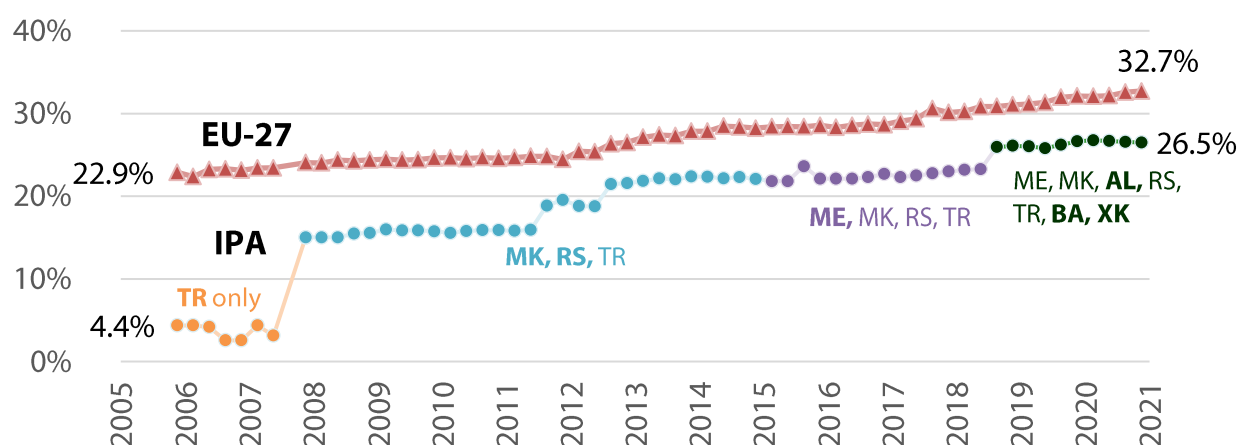
IPA beneficiaries have been added to the women and men in decision-making data collection progressively so that it is not possible to create a consistent time-series covering all 7 beneficiaries starting before the second half of 2018. However, an IPA aggregate that takes into account all beneficiaries covered at each observation point, starting from the first quarter of 2015, when four of the seven IPA beneficiaries were covered (Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey), and including the others progressively, shows that the share of women in parliaments in IPA beneficiaries has increased by 4.7 percentage points (pp) at an average rate of 0.8 pp/year. Over the same period, a similar increase is observed for the EU (up by 4.3 pp from 28.4% in the first quarter of 2015 to the current 32.7%). At this pace (i.e. taking into account the changes over the last 5 years in IPA and EU), it would take 17 more years (until 2038) to reach gender balance at IPA level, seven years more than

⁷ North Macedonia: elections held 15 July 2020. Share of women 40.0% in 2020Q2 but dropped to 35.8% in 2020Q3.

Montenegro: elections held 30 August 2020. Share of women 29.6% in 2020Q3 but dropped to 25.6% in 2020Q4.

for EU Member States, where, although the share of women members in single/lower houses of parliaments is currently higher (32.7%), there is a slightly slower pace of change (0.7 pp/year).

Figure 2 Share of women members in the single/lower houses of national parliaments, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2005-2020



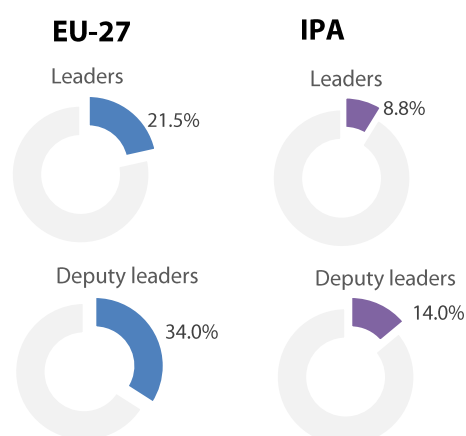
Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national parliaments](#). Data for IPA refer to TR only up to 2007Q2 with others added progressively: MK and RS in 2007Q4, ME in 2015Q1 and all 7 IPA beneficiaries from 2018Q3 (with AL, BA and XK added).

Major political parties

Political parties are the gatekeepers of gender equality as they set party policy and select the candidates for election. In 2020, women accounted for less than one in ten (8.8%) leaders of major political parties (i.e. those with at least 5% of seats in parliament) across the IPA beneficiaries and for just one in seven deputy leaders (14.0%) (Figure 3). This compares to 21.5% and 34.0% women leaders and deputy leaders (respectively) of major political parties in the 27 EU Member States.

It is striking that several of the IPA beneficiaries have not had a single woman leading a major political party since data were first collected. This applies to North Macedonia and Serbia (covered since 2011), Montenegro (since 2015), Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo (since 2018) (see Table 2 in the Annex). Similarly, there have been no women deputy leaders in Albania or Kosovo (since 2018) (Table 3).

Figure 3 Share of women and men leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2020



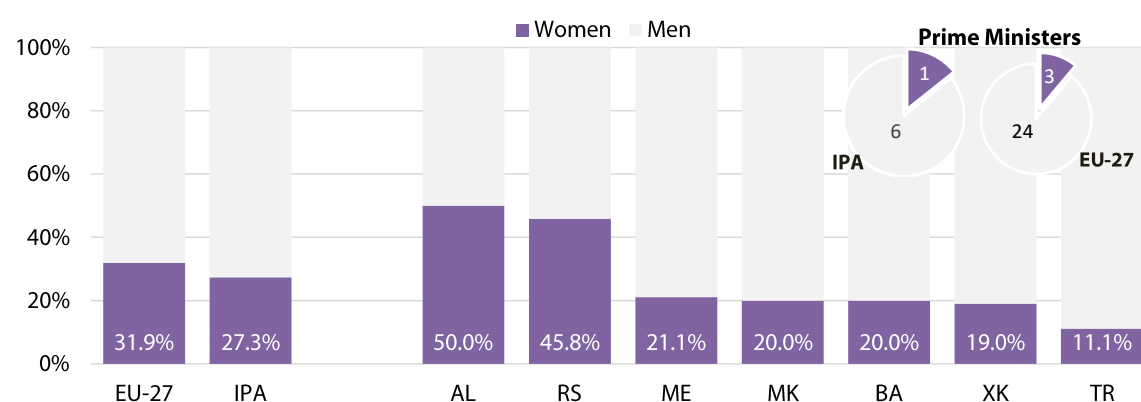
Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [major political parties](#). "Major political parties" are those with at least 5% of seats in the single/lower or the upper houses of national parliaments.

Governments: prime ministers and senior ministers

In November 2020, the vast majority of national governments were led by men in the IPA beneficiaries (6 of 7 or 85.7%) and in the EU (24 of 27 or 88.9%). Exceptions with a woman prime minister were Serbia, Denmark, Germany and Finland. Men also accounted for the large majority (72.7%) of senior ministers (i.e. those with a seat in the cabinet), with women holding only 27.3% of positions in the IPA beneficiaries, compared to 31.9% in the EU Member States (Figure 4). The 16-member cabinet of Albania has gender parity (i.e. 50.0% of each sex) and Serbia (45.8%) is the only other IPA beneficiary

with more than 40% women. In the remaining IPA beneficiaries, women hold around one in five cabinet seats except in Turkey, where they account for just one in nine positions (11.1%) (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Share of women and men in national governments (senior ministers) and prime ministers, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, November 2020



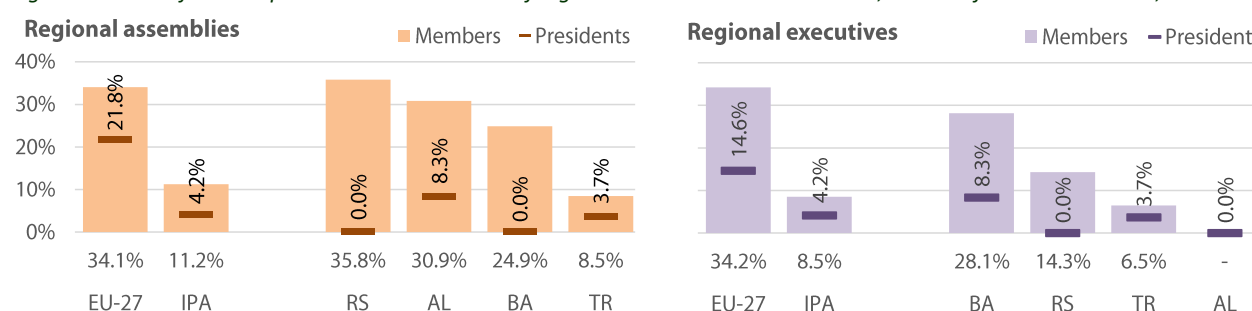
Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national governments](#)

Regional assemblies and executives: presidents and members

The latest data from December 2020 show that women preside over just 4.2% of regional assemblies across the IPA beneficiaries and account for 11.2% of their combined members compared to 21.8% and 34.1% (respectively) across the 27 EU Member States (Figure 5)⁸. The situation is similar in regional executives, with women accounting for only 4.2% of presidents and 8.5% of members in IPA beneficiaries compared to 14.6% and 34.2% in the EU.

None of the IPA beneficiaries have balanced regional assemblies or executives. Regional assemblies in Serbia and Albania have at least 3 women members for every 7 men (35.8% and 30.9%, respectively). In Turkey, however, women are outnumbered by more than 10 to 1 in regional assemblies (8.5%) and their executive bodies (6.5%).

Figure 5 - Share of women presidents and members of regional executives and assemblies, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2020



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [regional assemblies](#) and [regional executives](#). Key: “-” not applicable: no separate executive body in AL. Notes: No regions endowed with powers of self-government in ME, MK, XK in IPA and BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI in the EU.

Local assemblies

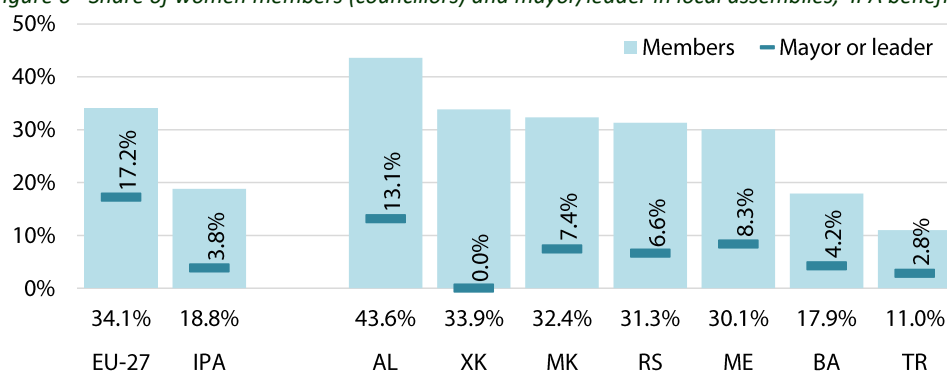
Data for the local level were updated every other year from 2011 to 2019 and on annual basis thereafter. The latest data from 2020 show that women accounted for just over a third (34.1%) of members of local assemblies across the 27 EU Member States, but for less than a fifth in IPA beneficiaries (18.8%, Figure 6). In practice, however, women accounted for at least 30% of members

⁸ Note only 4 of the 7 IPA beneficiaries and 19 of the 27 EU Member States have regions endowed with powers of self-government. The exceptions are ME, MK, XK and BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI.

in all cases except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey. Indeed, the combined figure for IPA beneficiaries is heavily influenced by Turkey (where women account for just 11.0% of the 20,745 councillors), which contributes for nearly 60% of the councillors recorded. If Turkey is excluded, women account for 29.9% of councillors across the Western Balkans, not so far behind the EU figure (34.1%).

Across IPA beneficiaries, very few women lead local/municipal councils (3.8% of mayors or equivalent council leaders). The figure is also low in the EU (17.2%), but much higher than in the IPA beneficiaries. Albania has the highest proportion of women mayors/leaders (13.1%), whilst in Kosovo all 38 local assemblies are led by a man. Again, the proportion of women mayors or leaders in the IPA beneficiaries increases if Turkey (2.8% of mayors/leaders) is excluded, but only up to 6.4%.

Figure 6 - Share of women members (councillors) and mayor/leader in local assemblies, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2020



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [local/municipal councils](#)

Annex

Table 1 IPA beneficiaries with legislated candidate quotas applied to the single/lower house of parliament

IPA	Year	Provisions	Required % of under-represented sex	Sanctions
ME	2011	Candidate lists must include at least 30% of the under-represented gender.	30%	Yes - in case of non-compliance, the Central Electoral Committee asks parties to remove the shortcomings of the list and also shall refuse to publish the candidate list in case these shortcomings are not removed.
MK	2015	All candidate lists submitted for parliamentary elections must include at least 40% of the under-represented gender. These candidates must be equally distributed throughout the list - on every three positions on the list, one must belong to the less represented gender, plus at least one additional position reserved for the less represented gender on every ten positions on candidates' list.	40%	Yes - list rejected in case non-compliance.
AL	2015	For each electoral zone, at least 30% of the multi-member list and/or one of the first three names on the multi-member list must be from each gender.	30%	Yes - Central Electoral Commission (CEC) poses a fine in case of non-compliance. Furthermore, the CEC replaces each candidate with the next candidate in the list belonging to the least represented gender, until the gender quota is reached.
RS	2011	Candidate lists must include at least 30% of each sex. 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).	30%	Yes - Central Electoral Commission (CEC) requests parties to revise the list in case of non-compliance. If list is not revised, CEC rejects the list.
TR	None	-	-	-
BA	2013	Each list of candidates shall include both male and female candidates, who are equally represented. Equal gender representation exists when one of the sexes is represented by at least 40% of the total number of candidates in the list. The candidates of the underrepresented gender shall be distributed on the candidates list in the following manner: At least 1 candidate of the	40%	Yes - Central Electoral Commission approves the list up to the point where the requirements are met and requires parties to revise the list within 5 days and resubmit.

IPA	Year	Provisions	Required % of under-represented sex	Sanctions
		underrepresented gender amongst the first 2 candidates, 2 candidates of the underrepresented gender amongst the first 5 candidates, and 3 candidates of the underrepresented gender amongst the first 8 candidates etc		
XK	2008	Candidate lists must include at least 30% of each sex, with 1 candidate from each gender included at least once in each group of 3 candidates, counting from the first candidate in the list.	30%	Yes - list reordered by replacing the last elected candidate of the overrepresented gender with the next candidate of the opposite gender until the total number of seats allocated to the underrepresented gender reached at least 30%.

Table 2 Number of women leaders of major political parties, IPA beneficiaries, 2011-2020

Party Leader	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	No. years with at least one woman leader
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	3
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	8
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0

“-“ Country not covered in the data collection.

Table 3 Number of women deputy leaders of major political parties, IPA beneficiaries, 2011-2020

Deputy Leader	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	No. years with at least one woman leader
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	1	0	1	1	1	1	5
North Macedonia	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	7
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0
Serbia	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	10
Turkey	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	3
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0

“-“ Country not covered in the data collection.