

Statistical note on gender balance in politics: EU candidate countries and potential candidates in Western Balkans and Turkey

Based on November 2021 data



This project is funded by
the European Union

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 in the seven EU candidate countries and potential candidates from the Western Balkans and Turkey that benefit from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance. The so-called IPA beneficiaries are Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Kosovo^{*1}, Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey.

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 November 2021. Key findings in relation to IPA beneficiaries are:

➤ National level

- Women account for 27.8 % of the members of the single/lower houses of national parliaments across the seven IPA beneficiaries compared to 33.2 % in the 27 EU Member States. In the IPA beneficiaries, therefore, men still outnumber women by nearly three to one.
- The Parliament of Montenegro (40.2 %) is gender balanced (i.e. at least 40 % of each gender) and that of Serbia is close behind (39.6 %), but women account for less than one in five members in that of Turkey (17.3 %). The Turkish parliament is large (583 members) and weighs heavily (44 %) on the overall results for IPA beneficiaries. Without Turkey, the remaining IPA beneficiaries have 36.0 % women in parliaments, more than in the EU Member States (33.2 %).
- At the current rate of change, it will take another 14 years to achieve gender balance in the combined parliaments of all seven IPA beneficiaries. This is four years later than the projected time to reach gender balance in the EU (10 years), where the rate of change is slightly slower.
- Less than one in ten major political parties in IPA beneficiaries (9.1 %) has a woman leader, although there are slightly more women deputy leaders (17.3 %). In contrast, women account for 26.1 % of party leaders and 33.8 % of deputy leaders across the 27 EU Member States.
- Serbia is the only IPA beneficiary with a woman prime minister, along with Denmark, Germany, Finland, Lithuania, and Estonia in the EU.
- Women account for 33.1 % of senior government ministers (members of the cabinet or equivalent) in the IPA beneficiaries, marginally higher than the EU Member States (32.3 %). The Albanian cabinet is unique, with 70.8 % of cabinet members being women. The cabinet in Serbia is gender-balanced (at least 40 % of each gender) but, in all remaining IPA beneficiaries, men hold two-thirds or more of senior ministerial positions.

➤ Regional level:

- The latest data from November 2021 shows that women hold only 11.4 % of seats in regional assemblies in IPA beneficiaries and account for just 8.3 % of the members of their executive bodies. However, these figures are heavily weighted by the low levels of representation in Turkey. In the six remaining IPA beneficiaries, women hold 30.8 % of seats in regional assemblies and 24.4 % in regional executives, compared to EU average where women hold over a third of such positions - 34.6 % of regional assemblies and 35 % of executives.

➤ Local level:

- Women hold just over a third of seats in local/municipal assemblies in the EU (34.4 %), but only a fifth in IPA beneficiaries (19.9 %). Albania is the only IPA beneficiary with at least 40 % of each

¹ *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.

gender. Excluding Turkey (which accounts for almost 60 % of the total recorded members), women represent 32.6 % of local/municipal council members, a figure much closer to the EU.

- Very few women lead local/municipal councils in IPA beneficiaries (4.2 %). The figure in the EU is also low (17.4 %), but much higher than in the IPA beneficiaries.

All data used in this note are based on data by country published on EIGE's Gender Statistics Database and can be accessed [here](#). Comprehensive information about the basis for the sample and specifications of the data can be found on the metadata tab of each indicator (e.g. [here](#)).

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. Gender-balance is considered to have been achieved when at least 40 % of each gender is represented in the respective decision-making body.

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](#).² The database represents an invaluable source of reliable and regularly updated statistics that can be used to monitor the current situation and the 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.³

Whilst data cover the EU Member States since 2003, the EU candidate countries and potential candidates in the Western Balkans and Turkey (hereafter referred to as the “IPA beneficiaries”) have been progressively added to the regular data collection: Turkey since 2005; North Macedonia and Serbia since 2007; Montenegro since 2015; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo since 2018. The collection of data for the IPA beneficiaries is undertaken through an on-going cooperation project (2018-2022⁴) funded under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) by the European Commission (Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations).

This note summarises the latest available data on the representation of women in politics at the national (parliaments, governments, and major political parties), regional (assemblies and executives), and local levels (local/municipal councils) for the IPA beneficiaries, compared with the 27 EU Member States, following the update completed in November 2021.

National parliaments

In November 2021, only one of the seven single/lower houses of national parliaments across IPA beneficiaries was led by a woman (Albania), and their combined members comprised 72.2 % men and 27.8 % women (Figure 1). Men therefore outnumbered women by nearly three to one. The corresponding figures across the single/lower houses of national parliaments of the 27 EU Member States were 66.8 % men and 33.2 % women members (ratio of two to one). In the EU, nine⁵ of the single/lower houses of parliament have a woman leader (speaker) (33.3 %) compared to one in the IPA beneficiaries (14.3 %).

There is, however, considerable variation among the IPA beneficiaries. The parliament in North Macedonia is gender-balanced (i.e., at least 40 % of each gender) and that in Serbia is almost at this level too (39.6 % women and 60.4 % men). Elsewhere, women account for more than a third of

² Including politics, public administration, judiciary, business and finance, social partners and NGOs, environment and climate change, media, education, science and research, sports, and transport.

³ 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 every two years between 2011 to 2019 but annually thereafter.

⁴ “Increased capacity of EU candidate countries and potential candidates to measure and monitor the impact of gender equality policies” <https://eige.europa.eu/about-ipa-project>

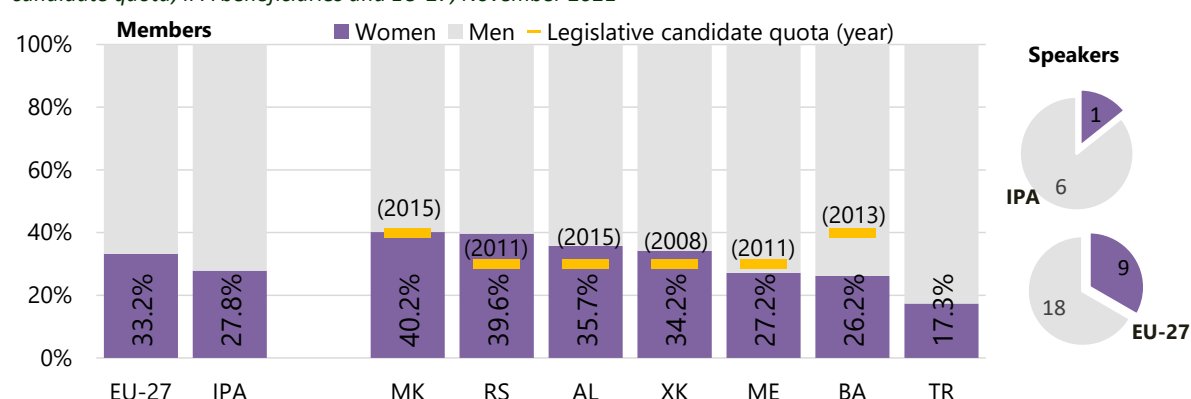
⁵ BE, BG, CY, FI, LV, LT, NL, PL, ES.

members in the parliament of Albania (35.7 %) and Kosovo (34.2 %), but only just over a quarter in that of Montenegro (27.2 %) and of Bosnia and Herzegovina (26.2 %), and, strikingly, less than a fifth in that of Turkey (17.3 %). Indeed, the situation in the IPA beneficiaries as a whole is significantly influenced by the large parliament (583 members) in Turkey. Without Turkey, the share of women in parliament in the remaining IPA beneficiaries rises to 36.0 %, slightly higher than the level of representation seen in the EU Member States (33.2 %).

Notably, six of the IPA beneficiaries 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). The exception is Turkey, in which there is currently no such action taken.

Although quotas apply to candidate lists and do not necessarily translate into election results, the November 2021 data show that the parliaments in North Macedonia, Serbia, Albania⁶, and Kosovo exceeded the quota threshold (Figure 1). Amongst the remaining two IPA beneficiaries with legislative candidate quotas, the gap between the quota threshold and the actual share of women in parliament is less than 3 percentage points (pp) in Montenegro, but still over 10 pp in Bosnia and Herzegovina (currently 26.2 % compared to 40 % quota threshold). In Montenegro (27.2 %), the level of women's representation in parliament was previously at or very close to its quota threshold (30 %) but declined - by around 4 pp - 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 2021



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national parliaments](#). Legislative candidate quota targets: 30% in Montenegro (ME), Albania (AL), Serbia (RS), Kosovo (XK) and 40% in North Macedonia (MK) and Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA).

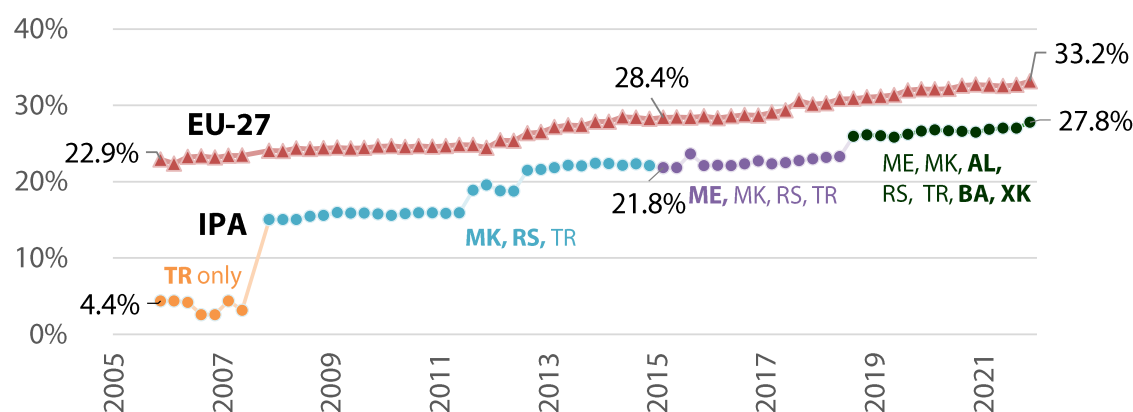
IPA beneficiaries have been added to the women and men in decision-making data collection progressively so that it is not possible to create a consistent time-series covering all seven beneficiaries starting before the second half of 2018. The IPA aggregate takes into account all beneficiaries covered 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. Figure 2 shows that the share of women in parliaments in IPA beneficiaries has increased by 6.0 percentage points (pp) at an average rate of 0.9 pp/year. Over the same period, a

⁶ Following elections held on 25 April 2021, share of women increased from 29.9% (2021Q1-Q3) to 35.7% in November 2021. Note data on composition of parliament following elections only made available on official website during the last quarter of 2021.

⁷ 30% threshold: elections held on 30 August 2020. Share of women 29.6% in 2020Q3 but dropped to 25.6% in 2020Q4.

similar increase is observed for the EU (up by 4.8 pp from 28.4 % in the first quarter of 2015 to the current 33.2 %). At this pace (i.e. taking into account the changes over the last six years in IPA and EU), it would take around 14 more years (until 2036) to reach gender balance in the IPA beneficiaries as a group. It is four years more than for the EU Member States, where, although the share of women members in single/lower houses of parliaments is currently higher (33.2 %), there is a 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, 2005-2021



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

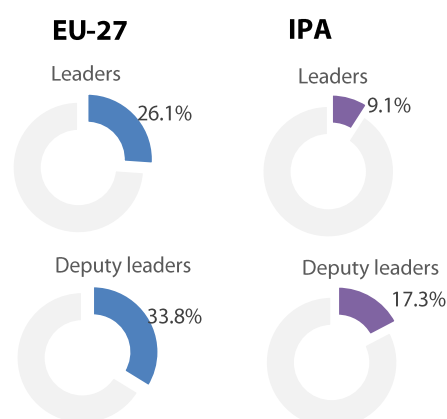
Major political parties

Political parties are the gatekeepers of gender equality as they set party policy and select the candidates for election. In 2021, women accounted for less than one in ten (9.1 %) leaders of major political parties (i.e. those with at least 5 % of seats in parliament) across the IPA beneficiaries, and for one in six deputy leaders (17.3 %) (Figure 3). This compares to 26.1 % and 33.8 % women leaders and deputy leaders (respectively) of major political parties in the 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 Annex). Similarly, there

have been no women deputy leaders in Albania or Kosovo (since 2018) (Table 3 in Annex).

Figure 3 Share of women and men leaders and deputy leaders of major political parties, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2021

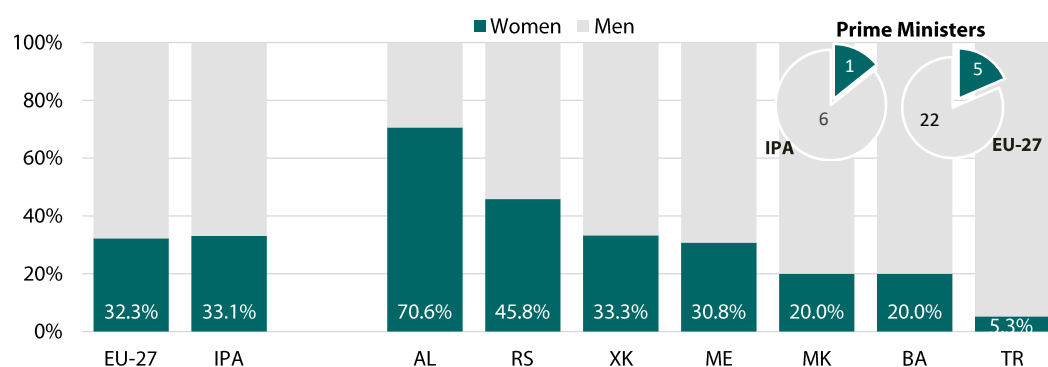


Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [major political parties](#). "Major political parties" are those with at least 5 % of seats in the single/lower or the upper houses of national parliaments.

Governments: prime ministers and senior ministers

In November 2021, the vast majority of national governments were led by men in the IPA beneficiaries (6 of 7 or 85.7 %) and in the EU (22 of 27 or 81.5 %). Exceptions with a woman prime minister were Serbia, Denmark, Germany, Finland, Lithuania, and Estonia. Men also accounted for the large majority (66.9 %) of senior ministers (i.e. members of government with a seat in the cabinet) in the IPA beneficiaries, with women holding 33.1 % of positions. This is marginally higher than the level of representation seen in the EU Member States (32.3 % women) (Figure 4). There is considerable variation between IPA beneficiaries. The 17-member cabinet of Albania is uniquely imbalanced in favour of women (12 of 17, or 70.6 %). Serbia (45.8 %) is the only IPA beneficiary with a gender-balanced cabinet (i.e. at least 40% of each gender). In the remaining IPA beneficiaries, women hold at least three in ten cabinet seats in Kosovo (33.3 %) and Montenegro (30.8 %), but only two in five (20.0 %) in North Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most strikingly, the 19-member cabinet in Turkey includes just a single woman (5.3 %) (Figure 4).

Figure 4 - Share of women and men in national governments (senior ministers) and prime ministers, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, November 2021



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [national governments \(ministers\)](#), [national governments \(prime minister\)](#)

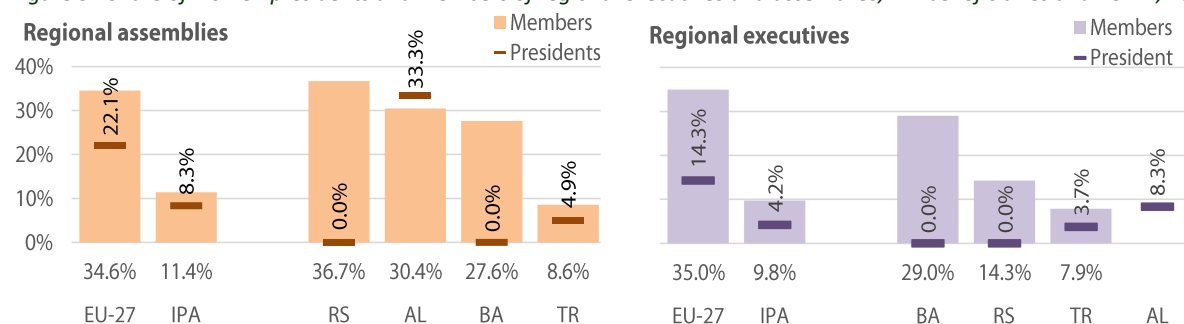
Regional assemblies and executives: presidents and members

The latest data from November 2021 show that women preside over 8.3 % of regional assemblies across the IPA beneficiaries, and account for 11.4 % of their members, compared to 22.1 % and 34.6 % (respectively) across the EU Member States (Figure 5).⁸ The situation is similar in regional executives, with women accounting for only 4.2 % of presidents and 9.8 % of members in IPA beneficiaries compared to 14.3 % and 35.0 % respectively in the EU Member States. However, the figures for IPA beneficiaries are heavily influenced by Turkey (8.6 % in regional assemblies and 7.9 % executives are women). The 3,970 regional assembly members and 355 regional executive members account for over 85 % of all those recorded across the IPA beneficiaries. If Turkey is excluded, women account for 30.8 % of assembly members and 24.4 % of regional executives across the remaining IPA beneficiaries.

None of the IPA beneficiaries have gender-balanced regional assemblies or executives. Regional assemblies in Serbia and Albania come closest (36.7 % and 30.4 %, respectively), but in Turkey, women are outnumbered by more than ten to one in regional assemblies (8.6 %) and their executive bodies (7.9 %).

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 (IPA beneficiaries) and BG, EE, IE, CY, LT, LU, MT, SI (EU Member States).

Figure 5 - Share of women presidents and members of regional executives and assemblies, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2021



Source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database: [regional assemblies](#) and [regional executives](#). **Key:** “-” not applicable: no separate executive body in Albania (AL). **Notes:** No regions endowed with powers of self-government in Montenegro (ME), North Macedonia (MK), Kosovo (XK) in IPA and Bulgaria (BG), Estonia (EE), Ireland (IE), Cyprus (CY), Lithuania (LT), Luxembourg (LU), Malta (MT), Slovenia (SI) in the EU.

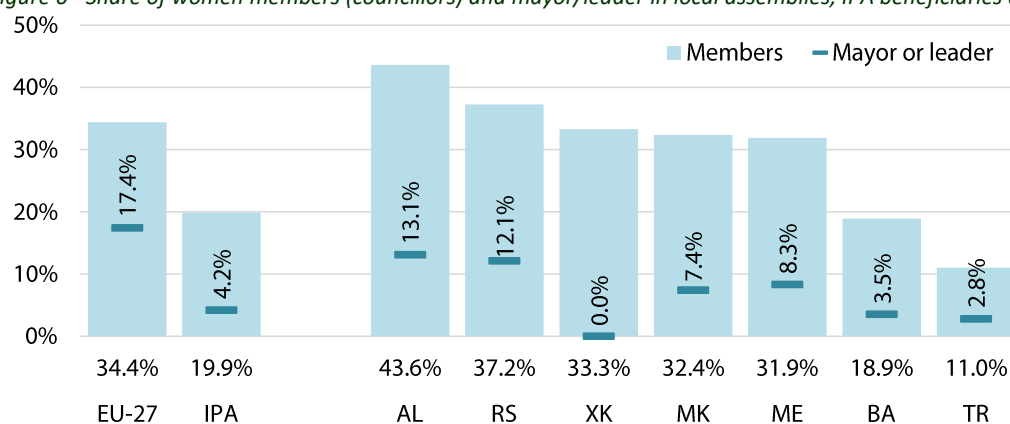
Local assemblies

Data for the local level were updated every other year from 2011 to 2019 and on annual basis thereafter. The latest data from 2021 show that women accounted for over a third (34.4 %) of members of local assemblies across the EU Member States, but only a fifth in IPA beneficiaries (19.9 %, [Figure 6](#)). Indeed, the combined figure for IPA beneficiaries is heavily influenced by Turkey (11 % women), where 20,745 local councillors account for nearly 60 % of all those recorded in all IPA beneficiaries. If Turkey is excluded, women account for 32.6 % of local councillors across the remaining IPA beneficiaries, not so far behind the EU figure (34.4 %).

Indeed, the local/municipal councils in Albania (43.6 % women and 56.4 % men) were gender balanced and women accounted for at least three in ten members in all IPA beneficiaries except Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.

Across IPA beneficiaries, very few women lead local/municipal councils (4.2 % of mayors or equivalent council leaders). The figure is also low in the EU (17.4 %), but four times 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 8.0 %.

Figure 6 - Share of women members (councillors) and mayor/leader in local assemblies, IPA beneficiaries and EU-27, 2021



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
Montenegro (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.
North Macedonia (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.
Albania (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.
Serbia (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.
Turkey (TR)	None	-	-	-
Bosnia and Herzegovina (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 underrepresented gender amongst the first 2 candidates, 2 candidates of the underrepresented gender amongst the first 5 candidates, and 3	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
		candidates of the underrepresented gender amongst the first 8 candidates etc		
Kosovo (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, 2011-2021

Party Leader	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	No. years with at least one woman leader
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
North Macedonia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	4
Serbia	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Turkey	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	9
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0

“-“ Country not covered in the data collection.

Table 3 Number of women deputy leaders of major political parties, IPA beneficiaries, 2011-2021

Deputy Leader	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	No. years with at least one woman leader
Montenegro	-	-	-	-	1	0	1	1	1	1	3	6
North Macedonia	0	0	0	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	8
Albania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0
Serbia	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	1	11
Turkey	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	3	3	4	4
Kosovo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0

“-“ Country not covered in the data collection.