



Funded by  
the European Union

# 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S  
PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION IN MONTENEGRO

FEBRUARY 2021



WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER  
CENTAR ZA ŽENSKA PRAVA



Funded by  
the European Union

“Action on Furthering Gender Equality through the EU Accession Process”

**This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of NGO Women’s Rights Center and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.**

**This publication was drafted by the NGO Women’s Rights Center as part of the project “Furthering Gender Equality through the EU Accession Process.”**

**Project implemented by:**

**REAC—OR**  
research in action



**KVINNA  
KVINNA**



**PRAVA  
ZASV=**



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER  
CENTAR ZA ŽENSKA PRAVA**



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Politics in Montenegro continue to be heavily dominated by men. At the 2020 parliamentary elections in Montenegro, only 18 women (22%) were elected to Parliament. The maximum percentage of women ever elected to the Parliament of Montenegro was 23%, at the 2016 parliamentary elections.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the introduction of the electoral gender quotas in Montenegro. The analysis below shows that even though women in Montenegro make more than 50% of the population they had never been elected to more than one quarter of the total number of seats in the Parliament.

The current quota system has systematically failed to ensure adequate women's parliamentary representation, which remains unacceptably low. With almost a decade of electoral gender quota implementation in Montenegro, women's parliamentary representation still lags behind the European average (30%), as well as the world average (25%).

Even the financial incentives offered to political subjects in proportion to the number of elected representatives of the less represented gender, introduced in the run-up to the latest national elections, failed to result in a higher number of elected female MPs. Moreover, fewer women were elected to the current convocation of the parliament than the previous one. There are currently no female leaders of the parliamentary political parties, nor women heads of parliamentary clubs.

The need to strengthen parliamentary representation of women is also recognised by relevant international bodies. Most recently, the OSCE/ODIHR 2020 election observation mission's Final Report on Montenegro includes a priority recommendation stipulating that additional measures should be considered to achieve balanced representation of women and men holding publicly elected positions.

Based on a careful analysis of evolution and effects of the electoral gender quotas in Montenegro, we strongly recommend the change of the current quota system. However, not just any increase will make a true difference. It is especially important to underline that simply increasing the percentage of female candidates on electoral lists does not guarantee a higher percentage of women in the Parliament. This lesson comes from the first attempt to introduce gender quotas in Montenegro in 2011, when the legal requirement for having at least 30% of women on electoral lists resulted only in a very slight increase in the percentage of female MPs. The reason for this lies in the fact that female candidates tend to be placed at the very bottom of the electoral list, with no viable chances of getting elected.

The analysis below clearly shows that ranking women higher on the electoral lists is fundamentally important for ensuring a higher number of women in Parliament. It was only with the introduction of the mandatory 'one-in-four' ranking formula for the candidates of the less represented gender that the percentage of women in the Parliament has become more notable, if still insufficient.

Therefore, a genuine political will to strengthen women's political participation would require that the current quota system be changed in a way that would ensure greater parliamentary representation of women. Based on the overwhelming evidence that the ranking of women on the electoral lists is the deciding factor on the overall number of women in Parliament, our key recommendation is that at least



one in every three candidates on the electoral list must be of the less represented gender, instead of the current one in every four.

While a lot more remains to be done in order to achieve equal political participation and representation of women and men in Montenegro, we make this and a number of other practical recommendations that would bring us closer to this objective.

author:

Ana Vukotić

Gender Equality Programme Manager



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction	6
2. Legal framework: Raising the stakes	6
3. Electoral lists: Is the minimum our maximum?	9
4. Election results: Why quotas?	11
5. Rethinking the gender quota: When three is more than four	14
6. Beyond the election results: Where are the women?	16
7. Recommendations	20
Sources	22



## WOMEN'S PARLIAMENTARY REPRESENTATION IN MONTENEGRO

# 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

FEBRUARY 2021

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This is a short analysis of women's participation in the 2020 general elections in Montenegro. It also includes an overview of hitherto implementation of the electoral gender quota and its effects on women's parliamentary representation.

The first part discusses the relevant legal framework, notably the existing quota legislation, and presents its hitherto impact on the election of women into the Parliament of Montenegro.

The second part provides an overview of women's participation in 2020 elections as candidates and elected representatives, as well as the participation of women in leadership roles within political parties and electoral commissions.

The third part discusses participation of women in important political processes following the 2020 parliamentary elections, as well as their position in the institutional setup of the new Parliament and the new Government.

The fourth part discusses some immediate effects and long-term repercussions of the unequal political participation of women and provides recommendations for strengthening women's parliamentary representation in Montenegro.

## 2. LEGAL FRAMEWORK: RAISING THE STAKES

Montenegro's Law on Election of Councillors and Members of Parliament (hereinafter Election Law) provides for special quotas for women. Article 39a introduces a formal requirement for the validation of electoral lists and stipulates that electoral lists need to have at least 30% of candidates of the less represented gender; as well as that within each group of four candidates, at least one candidate needs



to be of the less represented gender.<sup>1</sup> Article 104 introduced additional safeguards to maintain the achieved number of women in the Parliament/Local Assemblies stipulating that MPs/Councillors belonging to the less represented gender can only be replaced with a next-in-the-line candidate of the same gender.

The current quota system was introduced through the 2014 amendments to the Election Law. In the run up to its adoption, the Women's Rights Center initiated amendments that proposed that in each group of three candidates on the electoral lists, at least one candidate would be of the less represented gender. This proposal did not receive the necessary support from the parliamentary majority. Instead, the then-ruling party devised an alternative amendment proposing the quota system currently in place, whereby in each group of four candidates at least one candidate should be of the less represented gender.

This was the second time that the Parliament had intentionally disregarded the attempts to introduce higher quotas for women, the first time being when the quotas for women were first introduced in 2011. At the time, the initiative to introduce a combined requirement of one woman in every three candidates and at least 30% of women on the electoral lists did not receive the necessary political support. Instead, the parliamentary majority opted for adopting an amendment which only asked for the minimum of 30% of women on the electoral lists. Despite the warnings that such a measure would not ensure the minimum of 30% of women in the Parliament/Local Assemblies – because there was no obligatory requirement concerning the order of candidates of the less represented gender on the electoral lists – there was no political will to introduce the necessary safeguards which would grant female candidates a plausible chance of getting elected. As expected, that quota system failed to yield considerable effects as the majority of female candidates were placed at the very bottom of the electoral lists with no realistic chances of getting elected.

The reasons behind low political and parliamentary representation of women are many and go well beyond the scope of this overview. It is certain that Montenegro needs to invest considerable efforts and implement effective measures which would ensure and encourage women's political leadership. Even though it may take some time before we successfully tackle the causes for low political participation of women, we already have at our disposal the tools we need to increase the parliamentary representation of women. A step in the right direction has been made with the recent introduction of financial incentives for political entities which are distributed in proportion to the number of elected representatives of the less represented gender.<sup>2</sup> However, for now, the financial incentives did not seem to have yielded very significant effects, as the number of women elected into the Parliament at the 2020 parliamentary elections has actually decreased compared to the number of women elected at the 2016 parliamentary elections, when no such incentives were provided.

The table below presents how the number of women in the Parliament of Montenegro has changed over time since the introduction of the first and then the second quota system for women.

---

<sup>1</sup> Law on election of councillors and MPs.

<sup>2</sup> The new Law on financing of political entities and election campaigns, adopted in December 2019, envisaged that 20% of public funds allocated for the financing of regular work of political parties/entities which have won seats in the Parliament and Local Assemblies shall be distributed to them in proportion to the number of elected representatives of the less represented gender (Article 13, Paragraph 4).



*Table 1. Introduction of election quotas for women and the number of female MPs in Montenegro*

Year of elections	Gender quota	Number of women MPs <sup>3</sup>	Percentage of women MPs
2006	No gender quota	7 out of 81	8.64%
2009	No gender quota	7 out of 81	8.64%
2012	2011 gender quota introducing the requirement of at least 30% of women on electoral lists first time applied	11 out of 81	13.58%
2016	2014 gender quota introducing the combined requirement of one in every four candidates and at least 30% of women on electoral lists first applied	19 out of 81	23.45%
2020	2014 gender quota that combines the requirement of one in every four candidates and at least 30% of women on electoral lists applied for the second time	18 <sup>4</sup> out of 81	22.22%

The solution is simple. To have more women in the Parliament, Montenegro needs to introduce higher quotas for women. Almost ten years since they were first introduced, quotas for women consistently failed to ensure more than 23.45% of female MPs to be elected in the Parliament of Montenegro. Even though they make more than 50% of the population, women have only made less than one quarter of Members of Parliament. Women's Rights Center considers these numbers unacceptably low and will continue to advocate for the increase of quotas that would aim for at least 30% of women in the Parliament and Local Assemblies.

The new parliamentary majority has announced changes of the election legislation. On 29 December 2020, the Parliament established a committee for comprehensive electoral reform which has a mandate to develop draft legislative proposals for the change of relevant pieces of legislation. In January 2021, Women's Rights Center sent to the Parliament a proposal for amending the aforementioned Article 39a of the Election Law to increase the existing gender quota, with the accompanying rationale. The proposal reads that, instead of one in every four, there shall be one in every three candidates of the less represented gender on the electoral list; as well as that at, instead of at least 30%, there shall be at least

<sup>3</sup> The figures correspond to the number of female MPs appointed immediately after the elections, based on the election results published by the State Election Commission. N.B. The number of women within each Parliament term of office kept changing depending on MPs leaving their posts due to resignation (including for reasons of getting appointed for cabinet member positions), or death. Vacant MP positions are filled by next-in-line candidates from the respective electoral lists. In this way, a certain number of female candidates would get appointed as MPs, which would bring up the overall percentage of women in Parliament. The number of female MPs was record-high towards the end of the previous convocation's term of office, in 2019, when women held 24 MP seats (29.6%)

<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile the number of women increased from 18 to 20 (24.69%). The increase in the number of women in the Parliament is the result of two male MP being replaced by next-in-line female MPs from the respective electoral lists, upon their resignation. As a result of the safeguards introduced by Article 104 of the Election Law, according to which a woman can only be replaced by another woman, the minimum number of women achieved in elections is guaranteed, while the overall number of women in the Parliament may increase as a result of male MPs leaving their posts and being replaced by next-in-line candidates who happen to be women.





40% of the candidates of the less represented gender on the electoral lists.<sup>5</sup> This increase in quota will not bring about equal parliamentary representation of women and men, but it is a step in the right direction which will bring us closer to the EU average (30%).

The increase of quota is necessary because the hitherto experience has shown that keeping the same quota system, or simply increasing the percent of female candidates on electoral lists without pairing it with the appropriate requirement for the order of candidates on the electoral list, cannot ensure the increase of women's parliamentary representation.

Unlike the profound societal changes required for the achievement of full equality between men and women in Montenegro, that may take generations, all it takes to achieve equal parliamentary representation of men and women is a sincere political resolution to aim towards having a Parliament that would be truly representative of the country's population, also in terms of its gender structure. To guarantee the increase of women in Parliament and Local Assemblies, new quotas would need to aim for 30% of MPs of the less represented gender, by introducing the requirement to have at least one woman among every three candidates, instead of the current one in four.

To achieve this, the political determination required for the introduction of the new quota system needs to be shared by at least two thirds of MPs, which is necessary for amending the electoral legislation. In this sense, the upcoming revision of the electoral legislation is going to be a good opportunity to test the democratic capacity and gender sensitiveness of both the parliamentary majority and the opposition MPs of the new convocation of the Parliament.

### 3. ELECTORAL LISTS: IS THE MINIMUM OUR MAXIMUM?

In line with the Election Law, the State Election Commission is responsible for determining if the lists meet the legal requirements, including compliance with the gender quota. At the 2020 parliamentary elections, eleven out of twelve electoral lists had been validated by the State Election Commission. Initially, three lists were returned for corrections, due to incomplete supporting documentation or non-compliance with the gender quota requirements.<sup>6</sup>

Most of the validated electoral lists complied exclusively with the minimum requirements in term of gender equality, while only one candidate list was led by a woman (SDP). Out of the 778 candidates on 11 electoral lists, a total of 267 (34.31%) were women. The table below provides information on the number and percentage of female candidates for MPs at the 2020 parliamentary elections in Montenegro:

<sup>5</sup> For more information see the Women's Rights Center's Press Preleaze containing information on the contents of the draft amendment and the accompanying rationale: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/wrc-proposals-for-amendments-to-the-law-on-the-election-of-councilors-and-deputies/>.

<sup>6</sup> Source: ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission to Montenegro, Interim Report: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/b/460846.pdf>.



Table 2: Female candidates on validated electoral lists<sup>7</sup>

Validated electoral lists	Number of candidates on electoral list	Number of female candidates	Percentage of female candidates
SD	81	33	40.74%
BS	81	28	34.56%
HGI	52	19	36.53%
SDP	81	27	33.33%
HRS	29	20	68.96%
URA-led coalition 'Black on White'	81	26	32.09%
Albanian coalition 'Unanimously'	49	15	30.61%
DPS/LP	81	25	30.86%
DF-led coalition 'For the Future of Montenegro'	81	25	30.86%
Albanian Coalition 'Albanian List'	81	25	30.86%
Democratic Montenegro-led coalition 'Peace is Our Nation'	81	25	30.86%
<b>Total</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>34.44%</b>

As required by law, each of the electoral lists had at least 30% of female candidates. However, owing to the tendency to rank the female candidates lower than the male candidates, the 30% of women on the electoral lists did not translate into the same percentage of women MPs. This is why the overall percentage of women on the electoral lists is not a good indicator of a gender-balanced candidate structure, as will be discussed in the section below.

As regards the electoral administration, at the time of 2020 national elections, only one out of 10 members of the State Election Commission was a woman. Out of the 24 municipal election chairpersons, only five were women.<sup>8</sup>

The election management bodies did not comply with relevant provisions of the Gender Equality Law which requires all state organs to assess and evaluate the impact of their decisions and actions on the position of women and men in all phases of their planning, development and implementation.

<sup>7</sup> Source: State Election Commission: List of candidates for Members of Parliament of Montenegro: <https://dik.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/zbirna-izborna-lista-2020-2.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Source: OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission to Montenegro, Interim Report: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/b/460846.pdf>.



In order to strengthen political participation of women and the overall integrity of the electoral process, State Election Commission needs to integrate gender perspective in its day-to-day work and ensure compliance with relevant gender equality provisions of national legislation, as well as relevant international recommendations and standards, including those of OSCE/ODIHR, CEDAW, and the Venice Commission.

## 4. ELECTION RESULTS: WHY QUOTAS?

At the 2020 parliamentary elections, women won a total of 18 out of 81 seats (22.22%) in the Parliament of Montenegro, one less than in the 2016 elections. This makes it the first Parliamentary convocation since the 2006 renewal of Montenegrin independence which has seen less women elected as Members of Parliament than the previous one.

Meanwhile, two male MPs who resigned were replaced by women who in these two cases were the next-in-line candidates from their respective electoral lists, bringing up the total number of women in the Parliament of Montenegro to 20 out of 81 (24.69%). Even taking into account this recent increase, the percentage of women MPs in Montenegro is still only around the world average (25%)<sup>9</sup>, and continues to dwell well below the European average (30%).<sup>10</sup>

The table below provides information on the number and percentage of seats won by women in the 2020 parliamentary elections in Montenegro, per parliamentary entity.

*Table 3. Seats won by female MPs at the 2020 parliamentary elections*

MP SEATS WON BY WOMEN AT THE 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS			
Electoral lists that won seats in the Parliament	NUMBER OF MP SEATS	NUMBER OF FEMALE MPs	PERCENT OF FEMALE MPs
SD	3	0	0%
BS	3	1	33%
SDP	2	1	50%
URA-led Coalition 'Black on White'	4	1	25%
Albanian Coalition 'Unanimously'	1	0	0%
DPS/LP	30	7	23%
DF-led Coalition 'For the Future of Montenegro'	27	6	22%

<sup>9</sup> IPU, Global averages: <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>

<sup>10</sup> IPU, Regional averages: Europe: Ibidem.



Albanian Coalition 'Albanian List'	1	0	0%
Democratic Montenegro-led coalition 'Peace is Our Nation'	10	2	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>18<sup>11</sup></b>	<b>22%</b>

If we compare the percentage of women on individual electoral lists with the number of seats won by women, it becomes clear that the ranking of these women on the candidate lists is the deciding factor on how many women will enter the Parliament.

For example, the Social Democrats (SD), who had not only complied with the legal requirement but had in fact had the highest percentage of female candidates among the electoral lists that passed the election threshold, ended up having no women MPs. This is because this political party won a total of three MP seats, while their first female candidate had only been ranked fourth. This example demonstrates why simply increasing the percentage of women on electoral lists does not guarantee more MP seats for women in the Parliament and clearly illustrates the limitations of the current quota system.

The widespread practice of political parties placing women fourth among each four candidates in the candidate list order results in a fewer number of female MPs, especially among the candidates who are most likely to get elected. This further exacerbates the distortion in the proportion of women and men in Parliament.

Such distortions are especially exacerbated in situations akin to the one of the 2020 parliamentary elections, where five out of nine electoral lists won three MP seats or less, which means that they were virtually unaffected by gender quota. On SDP and BS electoral lists, female candidates were ranked first and third, respectively, which helped secure places in the Parliament for the top-ranked women from those lists. However, the other three electoral lists who won three seats or fewer, notably two ethnic Albanian lists and SD, had placed their respective top-ranked female candidates fourth, thus bringing zero women to Parliament.

To sum, the inadequacy of the current quota system is the most obvious when looking at the example of electoral lists that won three or less MP seats, which was most of the electoral lists that had passed the census. In these cases, the ranking of the female candidates makes all the difference on whether or not they will have any women among their MPs. However, the electoral lists which had won a higher number of seats are also plagued by the same shortcomings. This is the case because they had only one woman in every group of four candidates most likely to get elected, and in most cases women were ranked last in those groups. For example, the electoral list of DPS/LP, which won the largest number of seats, systematically ranked women fourth in each group of four candidates that won MP seats.

---

<sup>11</sup> The table shows the number of seats won by women at the 2020 elections, which is 18. Meanwhile, as already pointed out, the number of women increased to 20, due to resignation of two male MP who were succeeded by women. One female MP who had also resigned was replaced by another female MP, which rendered the overall number of women in Parliament unchanged. Resignations of several other MPs also did not result in changes of the number of female MPs in the Parliament of Montenegro.



As discussed above, the parties essentially only paid lip service to the legal requirement to have at least 30% of female candidates on the electoral list, by ranking women in such a way that they had no realistic chances of getting elected to 30% of seats.

To illustrate just how critical the order of female candidates on the electoral lists has been for their election to Parliament, it is useful to compare the percentage of women *on the electoral lists* with the percentage of women from those lists who end up *in parliamentary seats*, which is the key measure of success of any gender quota.

The table below provides a comparison between the percentage of women on the electoral lists and the percentage of female MPs per parliamentary entity.<sup>12</sup>

Table 4. Percentage of women on electoral lists vs the percentage of women in Parliament<sup>13</sup>

Electoral lists that won seats in the Parliament	Percentage of female candidates on electoral lists	Percentage of female MPs
SD	40.74%	0%
BS	34.56%	33%
SDP	33.33%	50%
URA-led Coalition 'Black on White'	32.09%	25%
Albanian Coalition 'Unanimously'	30.61%	0%
DPS/LP	30.86%	23%
DF-led Coalition 'For the Future of Montenegro'	30.86%	22%
Albanian Coalition 'Albanian List'	30.86%	0%
Democratic Montenegro-led coalition 'Peace is Our Nation'	30.86	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>34.44%</b>	<b>22%</b>

The table above clearly shows that the higher percentage of women on electoral lists does not equal a higher percentage of elected female MPs. As we have seen on the example already discussed above, the electoral list with the highest percentage of female candidates (SD: 40.74%) ended up having 0% of female MPs, because their top-ranked female candidate was fourth on the list. At the same time, another electoral list that only slightly more female candidates than required by law (SDP: 33.33%) won two seats in the Parliament and ended up with 50% of female MPs. This means that, at least for the electoral lists which had won three MP seats or less, the difference between potentially winning 0% and 50% of

<sup>12</sup> Even though some parliamentary entities broke off their formal political alliances and established separate parliamentary clubs, for the sake of easier comparison they will be considered as part of the electoral lists which enabled them to win MP seats.

<sup>13</sup> Source: State Election Commission Reports on Parliamentary Election Results for the year 2020: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={A51E46E1-86E3-44DA-9D3F-6A4D8D5B6ADA}#>.



MP seats for women depends on their ranking of the female candidates and not on the overall percentage of female candidates on the electoral list.

Virtually the same principles apply to electoral lists which had won four or more MP seats. The more MP seats they had won, the higher the chances of women getting elected. The closer the women were to the top of the list, the easier it became to get into Parliament. This means that the overall percentage of female MPs ultimately depends on the percentage and ranking of women among the candidates that have a plausible chance of getting elected, and not on the overall percentage of women on the electoral lists.

The analysis above highlights the main limitations of the current quota system, which clearly exhausted its potential to increase the parliamentary representation of women and needs to be further improved. In the chapter below we will outline the Women's Rights Centre's proposal as to how this could be done.

## 5. RETHINKING THE GENDER QUOTA: WHEN THREE IS MORE THAN FOUR

To ensure full gender equality, candidates of the less represented gender should have a guaranteed place among every two candidates on the electoral lists. This solution is not unheard of, even in the Western Balkans region, and it has notably been introduced as a legal requirement in Albania for the election of councillors into Local Assemblies.<sup>14</sup>

However, with a view to focusing on the solutions that are more realistically achievable in the short run, the Women's Rights Centre has for the time being opted to recommend the gender quota requiring at least one woman among each three candidates, instead of the current formula of one in four.

The table below shows how the 'one in three' formula could have affected the gender composition of the current convocation of the Parliament, all other things being equal.

*Table 5. Gender composition of the current parliamentary convocation with the 'one in three' formula applied*

MP SEATS THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN FILLED BY WOMEN AT THE 2020 PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IF THE 'ONE-IN-THREE' FORMULA WERE APPLIED					
Electoral lists that won seats in the Parliament	NUMBER OF MP SEATS	NUMBER OF WOMEN MPs		PERCENT OF WOMEN MPs	
		ONE-IN-FOUR current quota	ONE-IN-THREE proposed quota	ONE-IN-FOUR current quota	ONE-IN-THREE proposed quota
SD	3	0	1	0%	33%
BS	3	1	1	33%	33%

<sup>14</sup> Article 67, paragraph 6, and Article 175 of the Electoral Code of Albania.



SDP	2	1	1	50%	50%
URA-led Coalition 'Black on White'	4	1	1	25%	25%
Albanian Coalition 'Unanimously'	1	0	0	0%	0%
DPS/LP	30	7	10	23%	33%
DF-led Coalition 'For the Future of Montenegro'	27	6	9	22%	33%
Albanian Coalition 'Albanian List'	1	0	0	0%	0%
Democratic Montenegro-led coalition 'Peace is Our Nation'	10	2	3	20%	30%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>32%</b>

The table above shows that, based on the number of seats won by each of the electoral lists at the 2020 parliamentary elections, the 'one-in-three' formula would have increased the overall parliamentary representation of women by 10%. In other words, instead of the 22% of women elected to the Parliament of Montenegro, with the implementation of this quota system there would have been 32% of the representatives of the less represented gender.

The current 'one-in-four' quota did not have any effect on most electoral lists that had won three seats or less, as the majority of them had ranked women fourth in each consecutive group of four candidates. This means that the quota mainly affects only those lists that have won *four* candidates or more (minority of lists at the 2020 elections). The proposed 'one-in-three' requirement, however, would ensure that all political entities who win at least *three* seats (majority of lists in the 2020 elections) would have at least one woman among them.

At the same time, in absolute numbers, for larger electoral lists this would translate into a notably higher number of female candidates being elected into Parliament. At the 2020 parliamentary elections, the 'one-in-three' requirement would have yielded a 10% to 11% increase of women MPs for the three electoral lists which had won the highest number of MP seats, notably DPS/LP (an increase of 10%), 'For the future of Montenegro' (an increase of 11%), and 'Peace is our nation' (an increase of 10%).

The 'one-in-three' requirement could additionally be paired with the requirement for an increased percentage of candidates of the less represented gender, for example going from 30% to 40%, which would be a sign of political parties' commitment to strengthening women's political participation.

However, it is important to keep in mind that whereas the 'one-in-three' formula could guarantee both the higher percentage of female candidates and the higher percentage of elected female MPs, increasing only the percentage of women on the electoral lists without introducing the 'one-in-three' formula would likely not result in a higher number of women in Parliament, as was discussed above.





## 6. BEYOND THE ELECTION RESULTS: WHERE ARE THE WOMEN?

Political parties in Montenegro continue to be dominated by men. This gender misbalance goes far beyond the decreasing trend in the parliamentary representation of women discussed above.

Following the resignation of the only female parliamentary party leader in October 2020,<sup>15</sup> there are no longer any women among the leaders of the 31 political entities represented by the nine electoral lists which had won seats in the Parliament of Montenegro.<sup>16</sup> The lack of female party leadership in Montenegro goes hand in hand with gender imbalances of party structures in general, where there are hardly any women in high-ranking positions.

As a result, women were completely excluded from party negotiations on the composition of the new Government. The absence of women from such important political processes sends a strong message across the board that women have no seat at the table where important decisions are being made and no say in the political decision-making in Montenegro. Such messages have a profound effect on the future of gender equality in the country and demonstrate an outright disregard for women's participation in public and political life.

Owing to the lack of political will within the parliamentary parties to address the enduring problem of low political representation of women, the persisting gender inequalities in the political life of the country have continuously translated into structural gender misbalances of elected state institutions.

It is very telling that in the Parliament there are no women among the heads of parliamentary clubs. Symbolism aside, this threatened to turn into a situation where there would be no women represented at the Collegium of the Parliament Speaker – the most senior parliamentary body setting the overall Parliament agenda.

When the parliamentary clubs were established, in October 2020, the Women's Rights Center wrote to the newly appointed Parliament Speaker to draw his attention to this problem. We have since received strong assurances that the Parliament will work towards strengthening gender equality and women's political representation. In this letter, the Women's Rights Center also invited the Parliament to ensure a more gender-balanced composition of the parliamentary bodies. We requested that women make up at least 30% of appointed members, as well as at least 30% of the management. We believed such quotas would ensure that women have a seat at every table where issues of importance for the Montenegrin society are being discussed. Furthermore, they would serve to demonstrate the political

---

<sup>15</sup> Former SDP leader Draginja Vuksanović resigned in the aftermath of the parliamentary elections, stating reasons of professional accountability for the less-than-expected electoral performance of this political party.

<sup>16</sup> Coalition 'For the Future of Montenegro' alone represents 11 political parties, Coalition 'Peace is Our Nation' 4, Coalition 'Black on White' 4 (two political parties and two groups of citizens), DPS-LP 2, SD 1, BS 1, SDP 1, Albanian coalition 'Unanimously' 3, and Albanian coalition 'Albanian List' 4.





will of parliamentary entities to respect the spirit of the electoral law which intended for the minimum representation of 30% of women in the Parliament.<sup>17</sup>

In December, the first woman ever got appointed to the position of one of the three Deputy Parliament Speakers (33.33%).<sup>18</sup> As regards gender structure of parliamentary bodies,<sup>19</sup> the overall percentage of women is higher than that in the plenary. From among 169 members of the standing parliamentary committees, 49 (28.99%) are women.

However, gender imbalances of the plenary structure are faithfully mirrored in the gender composition of the chairmanship structure of the parliamentary working bodies, which continues to be dominated by men. From among the total number of chairpersons of the parliamentary standing committees, women make up 23% (three out of a total of 13 standing committees). Chairpersons of the remaining two parliamentary working bodies – the Commission for monitoring and control of privatisation process and the Working group for drafting amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure – are men, which brings the overall percentage of women chairing parliamentary working bodies down to 20% (three out of a total of 15 working bodies).

In addition to this, the membership structure of several parliamentary working bodies reveals serious gender imbalances, where women are represented in an even lower percentage than the already unacceptably low percentage in the plenary. The anti-corruption parliamentary committee has only 1 female member (7.69%); the human rights committee and the international relations committee have two each (15.38% respectively); while the defence and security committee does not have a single female committee member (0%).

With nine out of 13 women (69.23%), the gender equality committee has the highest percentage of female members. Much like other parliamentary working bodies, it too suffers from the same structural gender imbalances, only in this committee the less represented gender is male. The parliamentary working body with the most gender-balanced structure is the legislative committee, with five out of 13 female members (38.46%).

Table 6. Gender composition of parliamentary working bodies<sup>20</sup>

Standing committees	Chairperson's gender	No. of female members	Percentage of female members
Administrative committee	Man	3 out of 13	23.07%
Constitutional committee	Woman	4 out of 13	30.76%
Legislative committee	Man	5 out of 13	38.46%

<sup>17</sup> For more information on the content of our correspondence with the Parliament Speaker, please see the Women's Rights Centre's Open Letter to Parliament Speaker, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/open-letter-to-the-president-of-the-parliament/>; The Parliament Speaker's Reply to the Women Rights Centre's Open Letter, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/the-president-of-the-parliaments-response-to-wrc-open-letter/>; and the Women's Rights Centre's response to Parliament Speaker's Reply, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/letter-to-the-president-of-the-parliament-involvement-of-women-in-the-work-of-the-collegium/>.

<sup>18</sup> The highest-ranking position in Parliament of Montenegro ever occupied by a woman was the position of Parliament Speaker, held by Vesna Perović from 2001 to 2002. Since then, for the next twenty years there have been no women in the most senior positions in Parliament, up until this appointment of Branka Bošnjak to the position of Deputy Parliament Speaker.

<sup>19</sup> See Table 5. below.

<sup>20</sup> Source: Official Website of the Parliament of Montenegro.



Committee for political system, judiciary, and public administration	Man		4 out of 13	30.76%
Security and Defence Committee	Man		0	0%
International relations committee	Man		2 out of 13	15.38%
European Integration Committee	Man		4 out of 13	30.76%
Economy, Finance, and Budget Committee	Man		4 out of 13	30.76%
Human Rights Committee	Man		2 out of 13	15.38%
Gender equality committee	Woman		9 out of 13	69.23%
Committee for tourism, ecology, and spatial planning	Man		4 out of 13	30.76%
Committee for education, culture, and sport	Man		3 out of 13	23.07%
Health, labour, and social welfare committee	Man		4 out of 13	30.76%
Anti-corruption committee	Woman		1 out of 13	7.69%
TOTAL FOR STANDING COMMITTEES	3 out of 13 WOMEN (23%)	10 out of 13 MEN (77%)	49 od 169	28.99%
Working group for drafting amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure	Man		2 out of 9	22.22%
Commission for monitoring and control of privatization process	Man		3 out of 14	21.42%
TOTAL CHAIRS OF PARLIAMENTARY WORKING BODIES	3 out of 15 WOMEN (20%)	12 out of 15 MEN (80%)	54 out of 192	27%

Immediately upon parliamentary committee appointments, in December 2020, Women's Rights Center presented the Parliament with a proposal for amending the Parliament Rules of Procedure,<sup>21</sup> which inter alia called for introducing the minimum percentage of representatives of the less represented gender in high-level positions, notably among the Deputy Parliament Speakers, as well as in the structure of parliament working bodies and delegations. Similar initiatives came also from other relevant stakeholders, notably the female Deputy Parliament Speaker who is a member of the Working group for drafting amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure, as well as the Women's Political Network.

<sup>21</sup> Please see the Press Release 'Women's Rights Centre's proposal for amending the Parliament Rules of Procedure', from 21 December 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/prijedlozi-czp-za-izmjene-poslovnika-o-radu-skupstine/>.



Finally, the working group agreed on a draft amendment to the Parliament Rules of Procedure which introduced the requirement that one out of three Deputy Parliament Speakers shall be of the less represented gender, which got adopted by Parliament. Although this is a major step in the right direction from the perspective of women's representation at the highest-level positions in Parliament, recent amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure unfortunately do not also guarantee a more gender-balanced structure of parliamentary working bodies and delegations.

In our written proposal, which was addressed to the Collegium of the President of the Parliament and the working group that has been developing draft amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure, Women's Rights Center reminded the decision-makers that the Parliament has a legal obligation to comply with the principle of gender equality in all election and appointment procedures.<sup>22</sup>

To comply with the relevant legal requirements and ensure that women have a seat at every table where decisions are being made in the Parliament, as proposed by the Women's Rights Centre, the working group's draft amendments to the Parliament Rules of Procedure should have also envisaged the minimum percentage of Chairwomen of parliamentary working bodies. In addition to this, the draft amendments should have introduced a clear requirement for the gender composition of parliamentary working bodies and delegations which would guarantee that the number of female members does not constitute less than the minimum percentage of women elected in Parliament. Unfortunately, these proposals have not been taken on board.

It is our strong conviction that establishing parliamentary working bodies and delegations without female members, as well as the appointment of a fewer percentage of female members than is their percentage in the plenary, is discriminatory towards women. For this reason, the Women's Rights Center will continue to advocate for the introduction of necessary safeguards that would ensure more gender-balanced parliamentary structures.

Apart from our initiatives directed at the Parliament, in the aftermath of the latest parliamentary elections, the Women's Rights Center wrote to the leaders of the three winning coalitions, as well as a personal letter to the then Prime-Minister-designate. In these letters, we conveyed concerns about the lack of women in the political consultations on the establishment of the new government, and virtually no mention of female candidates for ministerial positions. With these letters, we attempted to draw their attention to the issue of low political participation of women in important political processes in the country and the reluctance of political parties to propose female candidates for highest political functions.<sup>23</sup>

Although we received no reply from the political leaders, we did receive strong support from a number of heads of diplomatic representations in the country, including a letter of support from the EU Ambassador to Montenegro Oana Christina Popa.<sup>24</sup>

---

<sup>22</sup> Article 10 of the Gender Equality Law.

<sup>23</sup> Please see Press Release: 'Participation of Women in the Political Processes', from 17 September 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/ucisce-zena-u-politickim-procesima/>; as well as Press Release: 'Women's Rights Centre's Letter to the Prime Minister Designate', from 27 October 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/4416-2/>.

<sup>24</sup> The EU Ambassador's letter of support to the Women's Rights Centre is available online at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/eu-ambassador-in-montenegros-letter-of-support-to-wrc/>.



The new government was appointed on 4 December, with four women ministers. Due to a decrease in the overall number of the ministries, this amounts to one third of women in the Government, which is the most Montenegro has seen thus far. The female ministers received some of the sectors which would have traditionally been considered 'non-female', which is a particularly welcome development. Still, it being a government largely composed of non-partisan individuals, this was a missed opportunity to ensure full gender parity among the cabinet members.

It is important to mention that, in recent months, there have been a number of cases of politically motivated gender-based violence against female politicians and appointees. This worrying trend affects women belonging to different political options who have fallen victim to public smear campaigns, ad hominem and sexist insults, verbal and, in some instances, even physical violence.

Such behaviour is unacceptable, and Centre for Women's Rights has repeatedly strongly condemned acts of violence against women on all grounds and invited the competent authorities to approach this issue with great priority and care. When committed against female politicians, these incidents additionally contribute to the low political representation of women for fear of politically motivated violence against them or their family members. Therefore, we invite all political parties to nurture the culture of political pluralism and invite their supporters to refrain from acts of politically motivated violence against women or anyone else who may think differently.

## 7. RECOMMENDATIONS

To adhere to national gender equality provisions and international recommendations for the strengthening of parliamentary representation and participation of women in political and public life, relevant institutions should consider the following in particular:

1. Parliament should amend the Election Law so as to introduce a legal requirement that one in every three candidates on electoral lists must be of the less represented gender, instead of the current one in every four candidates;
2. The State Election Commission should integrate the gender perspective into the analysis, planning and implementation of all their activities and define the minimum gender equality standards for the monitoring of the electoral process;
3. Political parties should report on how the financial resources they received for the strengthening of women's political participation have been employed to achieve this goal;
4. The Parliament should amend its Rules of Procedure so as to introduce a minimum percentage of Chairwomen of parliamentary working bodies; as well as a minimum requirement for the percentage of female members of parliamentary working bodies and delegations. These percentages should not be lower than the percentage of women elected in Parliament;
5. Political parties should introduce internal measures to promote women to senior positions within party structure and to increase visibility of female candidates;



6. The Government and the Parliament should introduce additional legislative and policy measures to promote women's participation in public and political life of the country;
7. Political parties should publicly express their commitment to respect for political pluralism and condemn smear campaigns and acts of physical and verbal violence against female politicians and public officials, as well anyone else who may have different political beliefs;
8. The state should strive to achieve gender balance in all legislative, judicial, and executive bodies;
9. The state should support non-governmental and research bodies in producing targeted studies and awareness-raising initiatives for identifying specific challenges to women's participation in political and public life, and in promoting equality of opportunities between women and men;
10. The state should encourage shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men to facilitate women's equal opportunities to participate effectively in political and public life.



## SOURCES

1. IPU, 2021, 'Data on women in the Parliament of Montenegro': [https://data.ipu.org/node/114/data-on-women?chamber\\_id=13577](https://data.ipu.org/node/114/data-on-women?chamber_id=13577).
2. IPU, 2021, 'Global and regional averages of women in national parliaments,' available at: <https://data.ipu.org/women-averages>.
3. IPU, 2021, 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments,' available at: <https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking?month=10&year=2020>.
4. Kvinna till Kvinna, 2020, 'Women's Rights in Western Balkans: Women in Politics, Gender-Based Violence, and Security for Women Human Rights Defenders in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia 2020,' available at: [https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-KvinnatillKvinna-Foundation-report-WRWB\\_2020.pdf](https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-KvinnatillKvinna-Foundation-report-WRWB_2020.pdf).
5. Law on election of councillors and MPs, available at: <https://dik.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/1.-Zakon-o-izboru-odbornika-i-poslanika.pdf>.
6. Law on financing of political entities and electoral campaigns, available at: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={3B343703-6C98-4539-9E3E-7D24858BD681}>.
7. OSCE, 2020, 'OSCE/ODIHR Limited Election Observation Mission to Montenegro, Interim Report,' available at: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/b/460846.pdf>.
8. Report on the work of the Parliament of Montenegro for 2009, available at: [http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/izvjestaji-o-radu/GIS-2009%20MNE%2020\\_09\\_2010%20gotovo.pdf](http://www.skupstina.me/images/dokumenti/izvjestaji-o-radu/GIS-2009%20MNE%2020_09_2010%20gotovo.pdf).
9. State Election Commission Report for 2009: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={8FB2528B-D6BA-466B-94F6-699E794B7DC4}>.
10. State Election Commission Reports on Parliamentary Election Results for the year 2006, available at: <https://dik.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Izvjestaj-o-rezultatima-izbora-za-poslanike-u-Skupstinu-CG.pdf>.
11. State Election Commission Reports on Parliamentary Election Results for the Year 2016, Official Gazette of Montenegro.
12. State Election Commission Reports on Parliamentary Election Results for the year 2020: <http://www.sluzbenilist.me/pregled-dokumenta-2/?id={A51E46E1-86E3-44DA-9D3F-6A4D8D5B6ADA}#>.



13. State Election Commission Reports on Parliamentary Election Results for the year 2012, Official Gazette of Montenegro.
14. State Election Commission: List of candidates for Members of Parliament of Montenegro: <https://dik.co.me/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/zbirna-izborna-lista-2020-2.pdf>.
15. Women's Rights Center, 2020(a), 'Participation of Women in the Political Processes', from 17 September 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/ucesce-zena-u-politickim-procesima/>.
16. Women's Rights Center, 2020(b), 'Open Letter to Parliament Speaker,' from 29 September 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/open-letter-to-the-president-of-the-parliament/>.
17. Women's Rights Center, 2020(c), 'Response to Parliament Speaker's Reply,' from 2 October 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/letter-to-the-president-of-the-parliament-involvement-of-women-in-the-work-of-the-collegium/>.
18. Women's Rights Center, 2020(d), 'The EU Ambassador's letter of support to the Women's Rights Centre,' from 26 October 2020, available online at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/eu-ambassador-in-montenegros-letter-of-support-to-wrc/>.
19. Women's Rights Center, 2020(e), 'The Parliament Speaker's Reply to the Women Rights Centre's Open Letter,' from 26 October 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/the-president-of-the-parliaments-response-to-wrc-open-letter/>.
20. Women's Rights Center, 2020(f), 'Women's Rights Centre's Letter to the Prime Minister Designate', from 27 October 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/4416-2/>.
21. Women's Rights Center, 2020(g), 'Women's Rights Centre's proposal for amending the Parliament Rules of Procedure,' from 21 December 2020, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/prijedlozi-czp-za-izmjene-poslovnika-o-radu-skupstine/>.
22. Women's Rights Center, 2021(a), 'Press Prelease containing information on the contents of the draft amendment and the accompanying rationale' from 25 January 2021, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/en/wrc-proposals-for-amendments-to-the-law-on-the-election-of-councilors-and-deputies/>.
23. Women's Rights Center, 2021(b), 'Political violence in Montenegro is intended to limit their social and political power,' 28 February 2021, available at: <https://womensrightscenter.org/politicko-nasilje-nad-zenama-ima-cilj-da-umanji-njihovu-drustvenu-i-politicku-moc/>.



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER**  
**CENTAR ZA ŽENSKA PRAVA**

---

**NVO Centar za ženska prava / NGO Women's Rights Center © 2021**





## ABOUT THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS CENTER

### ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

NGO 'Women's Rights Center' (WRC), based in Podgorica, was founded in 2012, on the basis of the founders' long-term experience in providing support to women victims of domestic violence and other violations of women's human rights.

The basic objectives of the establishment and functioning of the Organization are:

- Promotion of women's human rights and gender equality;
- Empowering women survivors of family violence / partner violence through counselling, psychological and legal support;
- Connecting with other organizations / institutions dealing with protection and promotion of women's human rights.

Goals of the Organization are implemented through three programs:

1. Advocacy and monitoring implementation of policies in the field of gender equality and women's human rights;
2. Support services for victims of family violence:
  - Initial counselling and support of the women's advocates;
  - Representation before institutions and free legal support;
  - Psychological counselling.
3. Culture Program

Promotion of women's creativity, cultural and educational programs and economic empowerment of our clients through participation in creative workshops.

### MISSION

*Women's Rights Center* is a non-profit, non-party aligned, non-religious organization that fights for the suppression of all forms of violence against women and their access to justice, developing gender equitable democratic practices and cooperation with all relevant domestic and international actors in Montenegro.

### VISION

**GENDER EQUALITY, ACCESS TO JUSTICE AND SOCIETY WITHOUT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN – OUR REALITY**