



The EU Mutual Learning Programme in Gender Equality

**Women in political
decision-making**
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Women in political decision-making in Luxembourg

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1. Introduction

Luxembourg is a constitutional monarchy with unicameral system. There are three levels of elections, the European level, the national level and the local level. Elections are direct and the vote is compulsory.

Luxembourg is one of the first countries of the European Union which introduced the voting right for women. In 1919, in the context of the introduction of the universal voting right, women got both active and passive voting right.

Unlike what happened in other countries, the voting right was granted to women without any claim made by women for this right. This maybe explains the low rate of women standing for elections and getting elected until the beginning of the sixties. In fact, one single woman had been elected in 1919 just like in 1925. After this, it took until 1968 until the Luxemburg parliament counted a woman again within it. Since then the progress slowly set off.

2. Country context

2.1. National level

Luxembourg is divided into four constituencies. The elections take place every five years.

On national level, the electoral system is proportional. Voters can either vote for a list in its entirety, or distribute their votes among various candidates, even on various lists. One can attribute 1 or 2 votes to single candidates and electors don't have to use all their votes. This way the voters have a direct influence on the individual success of the candidates by giving them one or two votes or by attributing only a part of their votes.

Latest national elections took place in 2013. The proportion of female candidates was 34.4 % with variations among political parties. The evolution of the rate of female candidates knew progressed fast in the seventies and eighties in passing from 8.2 % in 1974 to 25.1 % in 1989. The evolution then slowed down and seems to stagnate since 2004.

The proportion of direct elected women in Parliament was 23.3 %. The government counts 72.3 % of men. The report on the evolution of the directly elected women is identical to that made for the candidates. An almost stagnation is to be noted since 2004.

2.2. Local level

Luxembourg counts 105 municipalities. Every municipality forms a constituency. In the municipalities counting less than 3,000 inhabitants the elections are made according to the system of the relative majority. In the municipalities counting more than 3,000 inhabitants, elections are made according to the proportional list system.

Latest local elections took place in 2011. The proportion of female candidates was 32.09 % in global. There is a difference to notice depending on the election system. There were 36.3 % of women in the municipalities with proportional system and 20.1% in the municipalities with relative majority system.

The proportion of directly elected women was 21.5 % in global. This proportion was 22.7 % in the proportional system and 19.1 % in the majority system.

In 2016, 13 out of 105 municipalities have a female major.

2.3. European level

Luxembourg counts 6 Members of the European Parliament. European elections take place in a unique constituency and lists consist of six candidates.

Latest European elections took place in 2014. The proportion of female candidates was 42.6 %. The proportion of female direct elected women was 33.3 %.

3. Policy debate

In October, 2015, the Minister of equal opportunities brought in a bill¹ which intends to introduce legal gender quotas on the lists of candidates for the European and the national elections.

According to the bill, political parties will have to assure a 40 % gender quota on lists of candidates for the national elections and of 50 % for European elections. The sanction will consist in a shortage of the public financial support accorded to political parties for the pre-electoral campaign. This sanction will increase the more the proportion of one sex is predominant.

By now, some political parties do have internal gender quotas. The public debate on the gender quotas lasts for years in Luxembourg. While the majority of non-governmental organisations in the field of the promotion of gender equality advocate for the institution of gender quotas matched with strong penalties, the political parties just like a part of the public opinion, were, until now, rather against the gender quotas. The main arguments put forward against quotas are the absence of interest of the women for politics and the cancellation of the criterion of competence by quotas.

If the law is adopted by Parliament, the quotas will however not be applicable for the local level given that no financial support is granted to the political parties for election campaigns at that level. To compensate for this lack, the Ministry of equal

¹ For a link to the bill [click here](#), accessed 25 May 2016.

opportunities has launched a campaign which aims at motivating women to run for candidate to the local elections of 2017. The main elements of the campaign are the organisation of a series of information sessions and the creation of a hotline.

The information sessions are meetings where politicians are meeting people who are interested in engaging into politics. The hotline is an information desk where people who are interested in engaging into politics can get information about the procedures. Both (sessions and hotline) aim to motivate women to run for elections.

4. Transferability aspects

Both best practices have a transferability potential for Luxembourg. As indicated in section 3, a bill on gender quotas in elections is under discussion in Luxembourg.

4.1 Slovenia

Slovenia and Luxembourg do have similar election systems regarding direct elections. The Slovenian good practice also has similarities with the Luxembourg bill which has been deposited. There are for sure some elements of the Slovenian good practice which could be transferred in addition. This is true for the introduction of gender quotas at the local level for the elections by list system. The current Luxembourg bill plans no gender quotas at the local level, either for the elections in the list system or for the elections in the majority system. To transfer this aspect of the good practice in Luxembourg would however involve envisaging another penalty than that planned at the national and European level by the bill which consists in a reduction of financial aid to political parties who don't comply with the law. This brings us to take into account another element susceptible to be applied in Luxembourg. It is about the penalty in case of non-compliance with the law. The Slovenian good practice foresees the rejection of the list when it's not in compliance with the law. This is a much stronger penalty than the Luxembourgish financial penalty and it presents the advantage, for Luxembourg, to be also able to apply to the local level for the list system. Finally the principle of candidates alternating by sex in the upper half of the list could be an important symbolic measure to implement into Luxembourgish legislation. As lists are not blocked in Luxembourg elections, this wouldn't however guarantee women to collect more votes.

4.2 France

The Luxembourg project is partially inspired by the French good practice. So, the penalty planned in case of non-compliance with the gender quotas regulations in the list system is identical in both cases.

The French good practice is interesting as it includes a part of the executives. The transferability of this measure would have to be analysed in detail regarding its compliance with national regulations but such a measure would probably fail to pass in Luxembourg. The binominal system is another element than would be interesting to transfer in Luxembourg. A Luxembourg political party has a similar practice by presenting two tops of the list, a man and a woman.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

For the electoral list system, the gender quotas have less influence in Slovenia and in Luxembourg than in France, given that both countries do not have blocked lists. However, we notice an important progress of elected women in Slovenia since the introduction of the gender quotas. This is encouraging. One has to agree with the reporter of the Slovenian good practice of who insisted on the necessity of raising awareness to gender issues (mainly addressed to political parties).

It can be useful to remind their international commitments to governments. Both the Convention on the elimination of all forms of discriminations against women (CEDAW) as the platform of action of Beijing is a precious instruments for doing this.

Gender quotas are an important instrument. Not only by the direct effect which they lead to, but also because of the strong political signal which they convey. To accompany gender quotas, it can be useful to envisage other measures such as:

- Conduct periodical scientific analysis;
- Develop a culture of the parity;
- Apply the gender mainstreaming in a systematic way;
- Adapt the electoral system so that it favours equality between women and men;
- Implement specific actions for regional elections which show biggest disparity;
- Attack the problem of the glass ceiling;
- Support women's sections of the political parties;
- Develop the fame of the candidates;
- Develop the consciousness of the elected women for the role which they can play to promote parity;
- Analyse systematically the presence of women in all the decision-making bodies.