



Political Participation of
Women in BiH:
The 2018 General Election

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Participation of politically engaged women in political processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been a subject of discussion in the public sphere of Bosnia and Herzegovina for many years. This issue is most frequently addressed by civil society representatives, both men and women, relevant institutions and individual female defenders of women's human rights. The current situation regarding representation of women in politics is not satisfactory. Yet, it is quite rarely in focus of discussions among representatives of political parties who are held responsible, informally and formally, for the lack of women's participation in government.

In order to make the context of the general status of women in the public sphere, with a special emphasis on politics, more comprehensible, the analysis provided below provides a brief overview of the historical development of women's movement in BiH, the women's rights in contemporary BiH, an overview of the current situation regarding women's participation in politics and the data on the women's share on the lists of candidates in the general election in 2018, the media presentation of women during election campaigns and, finally, an overview of results of the direct general election held in 2018.

1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT OF WOMEN'S MOVEMENT IN BIH

Social and political engagement of women in BiH began with the advancement of modernisation trends. As government systems changed in BiH, the status of women's public engagement changed as well. An overview of historical development of women's movement in BiH was most illustratively described by Zlatiborka Popov-Momčinović in her book *Ženski pokreti u BiH* [Women's Movement in BiH] focusing on three periods, or more specifically, on three political stages, each characterised by a different status of women in society.

The first period was the Ottoman Empire era, described as a rather conservative period for women as it did not give them an opportunity for societal, political and social engagement. Women were drawn into the fold of religion and hidden under the veil of tradition followed back then, so they did not have a chance to engage in activities outside the confines of their homes. The next period, after the Ottomans, was the era of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy which introduced a degree of modernisation and freedom to women's engagement in society and education. The third period covered the formation of the former Yugoslavia and two wars which encouraged women to more productive and active public engagement. It can be said that their involvement in the wars, formation of the Women's Anti-Fascist Front, etc. had a cathartic impact on their engagement.

1.2. THE INFLUENCE OF PATRIARCHY

Each of the three periods mentioned above is described in a long series of autobiographical stories. Those stories depict the facts of different periods and also the impact of patriarchy and men's activity on women's development and positioning in the public sphere. In order to illustrate and define patriarchy, several short autobiographical stories or segments of the lives of some heroines in those periods who fought against the patriarchal system in their own ways are given below.

The book *Women's Movements in BiH* portrays the life and literary works of Staka Skenderova who lived between two periods, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian, in which she was forced, for the purpose of assimilating into the society, to wear men's clothes to pass as a man. Immediately thereafter, Jelica Belović-Bernadžinska was forced to publish her books under a pseudonym as her liberal feminist works were not condoned. Nafija Sarajlić describes in her first piece *Rastanak [Parting]* a young woman leaving her post as a teacher after a reprimand from the school authorities for having instructed some of the older girls in ethics and reading outside of school hours. The literary pieces and lives of these three heroines, who share the fate of the gruelling public action, portray the societal and mental pattern of life in which women were evidently and publicly suppressed. However, each of them fought a battle in her own way and found new solutions contributing to her action. They leave readers with an impression that everything but cessation of their activism was possible.

The overview provided by Popov-Momčinović depicts a few more important characteristics of each of those periods. During its forty-year rule, the Austro-Hungarian Empire created a relatively modern administration, compared to the previous Ottoman era. That system was certainly relevant for the social and political life and set-up of BiH, including forms of public engagement but also non-engagement of local population. Bearing in mind Austria-Hungary's pretensions to be the so-called enlightened monarchy, numerous schools, libraries, cultural societies, theatres, museums, etc. were opened. Amid such efforts, women came to be the guardians, or cherishers, of the specificities of their cultural community, which was the reason why they engaged mostly in the fields of education and culture. Since it required public engagement, they became more proactive and visible. Examples of such women as Staka Skenderova (1821-1891) depict new forms of engagement and also represent the so-called form of national protofeminism, a split within "unbreakability". She is believed to be the first woman in BiH to have written a book,¹ reflecting the burden of unconventionality on the shoulders of women engaged in writing literary works and other out-of-home activities in the 19th century. Knowledge and skill acquired on their own initiative, outside formal education, and their self-control, which were typical of women writers in that period, most of whom were unmarried, including Staka Skenderova who wore men's clothes since childhood, gave them specific power of observation and sensibility transcending existing hierarchies, including the sexual binarity of dimorphism² with overlapping national emancipatory projects, making the previous ones complex and oftentimes pushing them into the background.³ Remarkably enough, Staka Skenderova opened a girls' school in Sarajevo. She received support from Topal-Osman pasha who sent both of his daughters to that school.

1 Gordana Stojaković, *Staka Skenderova ili prilog za istoriju autentičnosti*, Habitus, Srbija, 2002, pp. 177-190.

2 Joy Magnezis, *Ženske studije*, (master's thesis), Sarajevo, 2001, pp. 78-81.

3 Zlatiborka Popov-Momčinović, *Ženski pokret u BiH artikulacija jedne kontrakulture*, Sarajevo, 2013, p. 61.

It is obvious that although Staka was committed to Serb Orthodox tradition and her literary pieces were based on the collective memory of the Serb people,⁴ her activity reflected also the BiH spirit of togetherness under the ideal of education. Regarding women's associations, according to a record, there were five women's associations in Sarajevo which were involved in charitable activities and had 1,330 women members.⁵ Patriarchy, permeated with a strong tendency of religion, played an important role in women's education and their engagement in society in general. But the range of activities of some women at that time transcended those barriers. A striking example is the life of Jelica Belović-Bernadžinska, the principal of the Girls' School in Banja Luka until she was removed from office by the authorities in 1908.⁶ During her lifetime, she published more than 800 articles and 30 books. When she retired, the authorities banned her from publishing her books anywhere. However, she continued publishing her books under a pseudonym. Even then, many of her pieces were written in the spirit of moderate liberal feminism which put an emphasis on education of women, transformation of traditional concepts of gender roles and promotion of their social activism.⁷ This liberal feminist advocated, among other things, deeper relations between Serbs, Croats and Muslims,⁸ which proves that not all feminists and generally, all forms of women's activism are confined to one's own ethnic and religious tradition and norms of gender divide. Still, the role of tradition and acquired behaviour that women belong in the home and kitchen and that they should take care of the house and children left a strong impact on the social awareness and created a barrier to just any change. It is clearly stated in the 36th issue of the manual *Prilozi* [Contributions]:

Men were expected to provide for their families. If the husband was outside the place where his family lived, he had a duty to send money home to his family. Unlike their husbands, women took care of the house and children. After marriage and the birth of children, women-wives kept their routines the same until they died, focusing on raising and caring for their children. Their daily routines were interrupted sometimes by family celebrations.⁹

However, thanks to some individuals who looked at women's education and activism differently, women managed to be proactive and change firmly rooted habits and lifestyle. Nafija Sarajlić, whose father sent all of his daughters to the Girls' School in Sarajevo, left inspiring written traces in the magazines *Biser* and *Zeman*. This clearly shows the cleft resulting from rejection of women's education. Transition towards women's education was accepted in principle, however, only within minimum limits which were understood literally. As an additional proof, Popov-Momčinović¹⁰ says that any form of education beyond an approved level of instruction was unsanctioned and punishable, which was in contravention of the principle of equality and equal opportunities for women and men during that period. The last known essay by Nafija Sarajlić, entitled *Nekoliko stranica tebi* [A Few Pages for You] was written in a resigned tone over the situation in the society in which she lived and in which Muslim women did not have a chance to go out into the external world, which was the reason why they were doomed to self-dissatisfaction.

4 Sarita Vujković, *U građanskom ogledalu: identitet žena bosanskohercegovačke građanske kulture 1878-1941*, Muzej savremene umjetnosti Republike Srpske, Banja Luka, 2009, p. 121.

5 *Ibid*, p. 133.

6 *Ibid*, p. 128.

7 *Ibid*, p. 129.

8 *Ibid*, p. 129-130.

9 Husnija Kamberović, *Prilozi*, (Priručnik broj 36.), Institut za istoriju u Sarajevu, Sarajevo, 2007, p. 47.

10 *Ibid*, p. 66.

However, the facts were not laid bare before the next period and the emergence of civic associations and liberal currents in women's associations and women's movement in general which intensified with the formation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. However, they too succumbed to a beguiling call of radical egalitarianism of socialist provenance under the baton of the hierarchically organised communist party which was growing further away from the labour movement, and got carried away with the idea of revolution as a technique of conquering a state by the party nomenclature.¹¹

The above examples and descriptions of individual women, defenders, heroines who often risked their own lives for their own and collective purposefulness of existence, depict the patriarchal pattern. That model and its systemic operation are described precisely as such, through a number of life stories, in order to understand more clearly and compare the current status of women in the political life of BiH, which will be presented in the chapters below.

1.3. WOMEN'S ENTRY INTO POLITICS

After World War One, women used revolutionary methods to seek their rights in public life. They were encouraged by the fact that after the war, they took part, on an equal footing to men, in most activities in the public sphere and it was inconceivable for them to go back, in peace, after the war, to the role imposed on them earlier in history. In a new state, women sought a more precisely defined role in public life as they finally engaged in activities outside their homes, the only place where they had a role to play until then. As meticulous analyses show, forms of women's activism remained within the frame of three ideological matrices: civic feminism, leftist currents and various pro-patriarchal forms.¹² The first women's party that strongly promoted women's unity was created within civic feminism. The most important form of organised women's participation in the revolutionary war and the building of society was certainly the Women's Anti-Fascist Front – AFŽ – formed in Bosanski Petrovac in 1942 when the First Women's Anti-Fascist Front National Conference took place. The Conference, which lasted three days, brought together 166 women delegates from the ranks of party leaders, the pre-war women's movement, active young women and women partisans.¹³ At that time, out of 305,000 killed partisans, 25,000 were women and out of 405,000 injured partisans, 40,000 were women.¹⁴ This information shows that women made a significant contribution to the society, politics and the country in general. However, it was still believed that women belonged to the home and their education and social engagement were sabotaged. Nevertheless, women in Yugoslavia fought against fascism, as strongly as they do now, even before World War Two. But, be that as it may, the Women's Anti-Fascist Front was abolished as a separate women's organisation at its Fourth Congress, which clearly indicated that women were denied to engage socially and politically, despite their ability to be very proactive and the impressive results they had achieved. According to some women activists, the Women's Anti-Fascist Front was abolished because it had become too politically powerful with a strong influence of female population (emancipation had been "too fast"). The other reason was, as

¹¹ Ibid, p. 67.

¹² Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau i Slavoj Žižek, *Kontigencija, hegemonija, univerzalnost*, Jesenski i Turk, 2007, p. 215.

¹³ Ivana Pantelić, *Partizanke i antifašistički front žene Jugoslavije (1945-1953)*, ProFemina, Srbija, 2011, p. 81.

¹⁴ Women's Antifascist Front,

https://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/AntifapostoC5postoA1istipostoC4posto8Dki_front_postoC5postoBEena (24.04.2016.)

stated, an insufficient number of jobs. As the Women's Anti-Fascist Front became too influential, it was "on its way" to start causing problems.¹⁵ A particular trend of withdrawing women from public life was recorded and criticised in 1950. Introduction of child benefit, which demotivated women to engage in public sphere was stated as the main cause. Many women activists of that time blamed petty bourgeois mentality and the remaining influence of patriarchy and opposed them through their activism.

1.4. CONCLUSION

A historical overview of the development of women's movement and an illustrative description of the systemic operation of patriarchy and the description of the status and lives of women in public and political spheres can be compared with the current struggle of women in a huge men-dominated system which is called politics. In contemporary BiH, in the 21st century, activities, work and significant success of women in political life largely depend first on the legislation which regulates the number of women in different positions, on how the "male machinery" grasp mentally the existence of women and their achievement of a highly set goal and only then on efforts, work and dedication of women in a political party and their pursuit of that goal. This graphically described fight of women to hold decision-making positions in political processes is reminiscent, in a modern, more perfidious and indirect way, of the world in which heroines Staka Skenderova, Nafija Sarajlić, Jelica Belović-Bernadžinska and many others lived and were sabotaged.

A historical overview of the development of women's movement in BiH provides an overview of the status of women in BiH in the past, along with an original description of their fight in public life which is related to both their political engagement and participation in political processes. A strong desire of women to participate and change political processes and male mechanisms of sabotage, obstruction and constant prevention of equal participation of women are described. The influence of patriarchy, tradition and stereotypical interpretations of public life left a deep imprint on the contemporary era. The problems which women faced in the public sphere, particularly in politics, are identical at present time, the only difference being that some of them are rather hidden and not presented as so obviously masculine. The chapters below explain problems which women are facing nowadays, which are in focus of action and also mechanisms of protection which exist but are not respected or utilized as much as they should.

¹⁵ Women's Antifascist Front, https://sh.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antifašistički_front_žena (24 April 2016)

2. RIGHTS OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY BIH

During the post-war period, progress meant to lead up to the full gender equality in BiH, has been made. First of all, various mechanisms were established at the levels of legislative and executive branches of government, including constitutional and legal guarantees of gender equality, different strategies and action plans were adopted and a whole series of legislative and executive authorities were established at all levels of government. Moreover, BiH became party to numerous international conventions and agreements dealing with gender equality, thereby committing itself to fulfilling certain obligations with a view to creating and implementing mechanisms which ensure equal participation of women in public and private spheres.

2.1. OVERVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The constitutional set-up of BiH is fundamentally defined by the Dayton Peace Accords from 1995. Under the Accords, BiH is a state which consists of the two entities (Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina) and a third administrative unit established after 1995, the Brčko District of BiH. The division of responsibilities among administrative units is very complicated and the basic structure gives great power to the entities of which the Republika Srpska (RS) is extremely centralised, and the BiH Federation (FBiH) shares responsibilities with 10 cantons. The responsibilities of various legislative and executive authorities for gender equality are summarised in the Table below¹⁶:

¹⁶ It is important to mention that gender equality committees at the cantonal level are virtually non-existent because, as it is stated in the publication *Towards Achieving Gender Equality in the Cantons of the BiH Federation: Rules, Institutions, Politics* (Ka ostvarivanju ravnopravnosti polova u kantonima Federacije BiH Pravila, institucije, politike): "...only the Coordination Board for Gender Equality in the Una-Sana Canton remains active, which implies that there is no gender equality mechanism/body/institution or even a coordination board". The publication retrieved on 11 February 2019: http://soc.ba/site/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Vodic-rodna-rav_01_28.11.2016_web.pdf

ILLUSTRATION 1: DIVISION OF GENDER EQUALITY RESPONSIBILITIES IN BIH

Level/type of government	LEGISLATIVE	EXECUTIVE
STATE	Gender Equality Committee of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly	Council of Ministers; Ministry for Human Rights and Refugees; BiH Gender Equality Agency
ENTITY	Committees on gender equality /equal opportunities /gender issues of the FBiH Parliament, RS National Assembly and the Brčko District of BiH	FBiH Government; RS-a Government; FBiH Gender Centre; RS Gender Centre
CANTONAL	Gender equality committees of the cantonal assemblies in FBiH	Cantonal governments in FBiH; Coordination Committees for Gender Issues
MUNICIPAL	City and municipal councils; committees on gender issues	Offices of mayors/heads of municipalities; gender equality committees

Source: Babić-Svetlin, K 2009:7

The BiH Constitution, as the supreme law, does not contain specific provisions but does prohibit discrimination¹⁷ on any ground, including sex, regarding the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms provided for in the Constitution. The specific feature of the BiH legal system is that the BiH Constitution contains in its Annexes a long list of international conventions for the protection of human rights, while the rights and freedoms set forth in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms apply directly in the BiH legal system.¹⁸ In this way, international standards which ensure gender equality became a part of the domestic legislation.

Particularly relevant convention which deals solely with the protection of women's human rights is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW),¹⁹ also known as Women's Convention, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979, as the first comprehensive internationally recognised instrument on women's rights. The states which ratified the Convention have a duty to submit periodic country reports to the CEDAW Committee. The UN General Assembly adopted the Optional Protocol (1999) which Bosnia and Herzegovina signed and ratified.²⁰

17 The Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article II. 4.

18 Sevim Sali-Terzić, *Evropska konvencija kroz praksu Ustavnog suda BiH*, u: M. Halilović/A. Džihana (ur), *Medijsko pravo u Bosni i Hercegovini*, Sarajevo 2012, p. 60.

19 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Konvencija o ukidanju svih oblika diskriminacije žena), Agency for Gender Equality of BiH, Sarajevo http://arsbih.gov.ba/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/CEDAW_za-web.pdf (24 April 2016)

20 Maida Zagorac, Oblast regulacije CEDAW-a, <http://zenskamreza.ba/oblast-regulacije-cedaw/> (24 April 2016)

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women aims at achieving equality and justice and contains specific measures to overcome poverty, discrimination and exclusion of women. Article 1 of the Convention emphasizes that the term “discrimination against women” means any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

The entity Constitutions²¹ and the Statute of the Brčko District of BiH²² contain in their chapters on human rights the provisions which prohibit discrimination. Annex I to the FBiH Constitution contains the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women from 1979 with effect as a constitutional provision.

At the level of laws, the most important law is certainly the Law on Gender Equality, passed in 2003²³ and amended in 2009.²⁴ A consolidated version of this Law was published in 2010.²⁵ This Law regulates, promotes and protects gender equality, guarantees equal opportunities to all citizens, men and women, in private and public spheres, and prevents discrimination based on the ground of sex.

Discrimination based on the ground of sex, as defined by the Law, means any legal or factual distinction, preference or restriction based on sex which results in preventing or denying human rights and freedoms. The Law recognizes that discrimination does not necessarily manifest itself in direct forms but, rather, in subtle, indirect forms. Direct discrimination is present in a situation in which a person is, or can be, treated in a less favourable manner, compared to another person in the same or similar situation, on the basis of sexual differences. On the other hand, indirect discrimination means the existence of seemingly neutral norms, criteria or practices which are equal for all but in practice, they place certain individuals in a less favourable position, compared to persons of a different sex. The aim of the Law is to establish the full gender equality in all social spheres and it particularly emphasizes the areas in which women are traditionally discriminated against, such as education, economy, employment and labour, social protection and health care, sports, culture, public life and media. Apart from discrimination, the Law treats issues of violence and harassment based on sexual differences. The Law makes it incumbent upon authorities to ensure the existence of instruments which will eliminate and prevent gender-based violence in private and public spheres. This includes measures of prevention, legal protection and assistance to victims. A particular emphasis is placed on education, training and raising awareness in order to eliminate prejudices and practices based on ideas of inferiority and superiority of either sex.

A very important legal provision refers to the introduction of gender categories in national statistical data. The statistical data which is collected, registered and processed at all levels

21 The Constitution of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Article II. D, “Official Gazette of the FBiH”, 1/94; The Constitution of the Republika Srpska, Article II, “Official Gazette of the Republika Srpska”, 28/94.

22 Statute of the Brčko District of BiH, “Official Gazette of the Brčko District of BiH”, 17/08, Article 13.

23 The Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Official Gazette of BiH”, 16/03.

24 The Law on Amendments to the Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Official Gazette of BiH”, 112/09.

25 The Law on Gender Equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina, “Official Gazette of BiH”, 16/03.

of government has to be segregated by gender and publicly available. This is a very important precondition for any meaningful care for gender equality because without having an insight into the current situation, it will not be possible to identify difficulties and problems or define direction of future public policies in this area.

This framework Law, which establishes the basis of gender equality in BiH, defines responsibilities of governments at the state, entity and cantonal levels, down to the level of local authorities and legal entities with public authority and those with the majority stock owned by government. Different government institutions have a duty to undertake all appropriate and necessary measures to implement the provisions of this Law and the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The BiH Agency for Gender Equality is established under this Law. The Law also provides for the framework of the entity-level Gender Centres. Within its basic activities, the Agency:

- Monitors and analyses the gender equality situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of the reports developed by the Agency and the reports from entity-level Gender Centres and reports annually to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina. On the basis of results of analyses and monitoring, the Agency produces special reports, opinions, suggestions and recommendations for the relevant authorities at the state level;
- Determines the methodology of developing reports on gender equality in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Initiates and coordinates the development of a Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina in cooperation with the entity-level Gender Centres, which needs to be approved by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- Monitors the implementation and coordinates activities with all relevant stakeholders in the process of implementing the Gender Action Plan of Bosnia and Herzegovina from Article 24 (2) of the Law;
- Cooperates with institutional gender equality mechanisms at the state-level institutions;
- While preparing legal drafts and proposals for primary and secondary legislation and other norms, strategies, plans and programmes, before they are submitted to the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Agency provides an opinion on compliance of those drafts with the Law and international gender equality standards;
- Gives an initiative and participates in preparation of pieces of primary and secondary legislation, other acts, strategies, plans and programmes at the level of Bosnia and Herzegovina, for the purpose of determining measures for achieving gender equality in all spheres of social life;
- Gives an initiative to initiate a procedure for changing regulations if they are not in compliance with the provisions of this Law, domestic and international standards of

gender equality;

- Receives and addresses petitions, appeals and grievances from citizens alleging a violation of a right guaranteed under the Law;
- Issues Unified Rules for receipt and consideration of petitions, appeals and grievances filed by individuals and groups from sub-paragraph (i) of this Article;
- Presents and coordinates activities, within its jurisdiction, at international and regional levels;
- Monitors the implementation of the Law and, in cooperation with the Gender Centre of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Gender Centre of the Republika Srpska, prepares reports on the fulfilment of international obligations regarding gender equality;
- Cooperates within its jurisdiction with non-governmental organizations dealing with the protection of human rights and freedoms;
- Carries out other activities related to the promotion of gender equality.

The BiH Gender Equality Law²⁶ prescribes punishments for violations of the legal provisions. Under the law, the person guilty of gender-based violence, harassment or sexual harassment affecting peace, mental health and physical integrity will be punished by imprisonment for a term of six months to five years. The fines for legal entities found guilty of violations of legal provisions range between BAM 1,000 and BAM 30,000 and the fines for the responsible persons in legal entities and individuals engaged in activities funded from the government budgets range between BAM 100 and BAM 1,000.

Finally, knowing the specific nature of this Law which aims at establishing gender equality in all spheres, the final provision requesting that all state and entity-level laws and other regulations be harmonised with the provision of this Law is logical. The Anti-Discrimination Law²⁷ was passed in 2009 and it establishes a framework for the exercise of the same rights and opportunities by all persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina and defines the system of protection against discrimination. Discrimination, for the purpose of this Law, means every different treatment, including every exclusion, restriction or preference based on real or assumed features towards any person or group of persons on the grounds of their race, skin colour, language, religion, ethnicity, national or social origin, belonging to a national minority, political or another conviction, property, membership in a trade union or another association, education, social status or sex, sexual expression or sexual orientation, and every other circumstance the purpose or consequence of which is to prevent or affect the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of the rights and freedoms in all spheres of public life on an equal footing. Prohibition of discrimination applies to all public authorities and to all individuals and legal entities in both the public and private sectors, in all areas, and in particular in the areas of employment, membership in professional organisations, education, training, housing, health care, social protection, goods and services intended for the

²⁶ The BiH Law on Gender Equality, "Official gazette of BiH", 102/09

²⁷ Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination, "Official Gazette of BiH", 59/09

public and public places and economic activities and public services. Article 4 (Other Forms of Discrimination) clearly defines other forms of discrimination, including: harassment, sexual harassment, mobbing, segregation, instruction to discriminate and incitement to discrimination. This Law applies to all public authorities at the state, entity and cantonal levels, the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the municipal institutions and authorities and legal entities with public authority as well as to all legal entities and individuals in all spheres of life, in particular in: employment, education, social protection, health care, training, including initial training and continuing professional development training, the judiciary and administration, housing, public information and media, membership in professional organisations, goods and services intended for the public and public spaces, economic activities, participation in cultural and artistic creativity, equal participation in public life of all citizens, families, where spouses enjoy fully equal rights and responsibilities in marriage, and respect for the rights of the child. The central institution responsible for the protection against discrimination is the Ombudsman for Human Rights of Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: The Ombudsman of Bosnia and Herzegovina). Every perpetrator of a violation of the provisions of the Law will be fined BAM 1,500-5,000.

As we can see, many laws, documents and conventions have been adopted in BiH for the purpose of having as regulated a legislative framework for the protection of human rights in BiH as possible. It can be said that the legal framework is largely harmonised with international standards and that the BiH authorities are willing to harmonise the laws fully with international standards.

However, numerous studies and reports indicate a completely different situation in practice. For example, a number of non-governmental organisations (Initiative and Civil Action, New Generation, Rights for All, Viva žene and the Association “Land of Children”, Tuzla) wrote a report within the project “Fighting Discrimination Against Women in BiH Together”, entitled “Are Women in BiH Protected against Discrimination?”.²⁸ The report shows that women’s rights are violated in all areas (education, labour and employment, health care and social protection, political activity, decision making and management), while there is no tendency to improve the situation so many years after the plans and protection mechanisms were created. The established legal framework and institutional mechanisms for the protection of women against discrimination are ineffective in protection, which is reflected in the following:

- absence of political and financial decisions and actions by government, primarily entity and canton governments which would ensure the implementation of laws and equal status of women in the BiH society;
- absence of the system of responsibility in the executive branch for the implementation of the Federation laws at the canton level;
- ineffective operation of institutional protection mechanisms (ineffective implementation of court rulings, lack of respect for recommendations of the Institution of Ombudsman,

²⁸ Izvještaj *Da li su žene u BiH zaštićene od diskriminacije?* (*Are Women in BiH Protected against Discrimination?*), retrieved on 05 November 2018.:

<http://icva-bh.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Da-li-su-zene-u-BiH-zasticene-od-diskriminacije.pdf>

insufficient influence of the BiH Agency for Gender Equality and entity-level Gender Centres on the implementation of policies and laws);

- failure of the state to adopt, and particularly to monitor the implementation of positive discrimination measures;
- absence of efficient and continuous dissemination of information to women and the public about women's rights, protection mechanisms, promotion of equality, non-discrimination and fight against stereotypes;
- insufficient number of civil actions filed by women for violations of rights and discrimination in all areas of work and life, partly because of lack of knowledge of the possibility of receiving protection and partly because of lack of trust in the judicial system.

As we can see, discrimination against women happens in different spheres, through various mechanisms.

2.2. WOMEN AND POLITICS

Politics is a complex set of activities which requests numerous sacrifices and strong commitment. When they decide to enter politics, initially, men and women are not treated equally. Oftentimes, by reason of earlier accepted/unaccepted duties and responsibilities, men have more time for political action and seem to be more committed than women. After they have decided to engage in politics, women never give up their earlier commitments which include: household chores, motherhood, responsibilities in the family, etc. Traditionally, men's household responsibilities are fewer and less demanding as a result of patriarchally defined home roles of men and women and aggrandizement of men in the sphere of private and family responsibilities. For these reasons, the status of men and women in politics is not the same in the beginning due to obstacles and restrictions imposed earlier on women, which are implied as such. Further, expectations from women, which are upheld by tradition and patriarchy, are just the same in the political world no matter whether or not we are aware of them. Privately, it is the man who requests, who is served and whose demands are met. He is used to having a privileged role which he instinctively transfers to the workplace, especially when he works with women. Women most often, knowingly or unknowingly, accept such roles since they consented to them in their private lives. Blagojević-Hughson²⁹ believes that the reason for this is that many women fail to observe the specific restrictions they faced, or still face, in achieving their professional goals and they are not sensitised enough to perceive the mechanisms for their exclusion (sex discrimination) in some professions which are based on patriarchal principles. The main type of obstacles which are alluded to are family responsibilities but also character differences between male and female which women accepted or were taught and which they believe really exist, like women are less physically strong than men, they are less competitive than men, women cannot be as creative as men, women's abilities in the workplace are belittled, women's professional achievements are

²⁹ Marina Blagojević-Hughson, *Sutra je bilo juče: prilog društvenoj istoriji žena u drugoj polovini 20. veka u Jugoslaviji*, Zavod za ravnopravnost polova, Novi Sad, 2015, pp. 113-114.

undervalued, etc.

On the other hand, Pateman³⁰ explains this problem through “women’s” consent to the distinct roles of men and women, as described above. She explains that the authors who are writing about consent find it quite helpful that there is a consensus of opinion that women and gender relations are not very important for the political theory. In this way, women are easily ignored since consent in daily life concerns particularly women. It is believed that the closest and most intimate relationship between a man and a woman is based precisely on consent; women agree to marry men and a sexual intercourse without a woman’s consent amounts to a criminal offence – rape. The point here is that the male power is perceived through the manner in which men obtain consent. Men demonstrate their power, Pateman explains, by presenting women as those who always give their consent, while interpreting their explicit dissent as irrelevant or reinterpreting it as “consent”. In conclusion, it can be observed in liberal democracy of today that women and men have equal civil rights and hence, greater difficulties regarding women’s consent must be history. In this way, the author wanted to emphasize an illusion of equality of men and women in public sphere, which is presented to public as such.

Finally, it could be concluded that women are facing the numerous obstacles after they have decided to engage in politics. Sometimes women are not even aware of their inequality since the problem of an unequal status exists in all spheres of life and, as such, it is necessarily implied in politics. If we are to describe all obstacles mentioned above at one place, we can do that in a table which Shvedova presented as a list of obstacles to women’s participation in politics, explaining what each obstacle means for a woman.

30 Carole Pateman, *Ženski nered (The Disorder of Women)*, Nacionalna i sveučilišna knjižnica, Zagreb, 1998., pp. 72-73.

ILLUSTRATION 2: THE MAIN OBSTACLES FOR WOMEN’S PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS

OBSTACLES	EXPLANATION
The prevalence of the “masculine model” of political life and of elected government bodies	Political life is organised according to male norms and values and lifestyles and working patters;
Lack of party support for women	Women are rarely decision-makers in political parties, even though they play important roles in campaigning;
Lack of sustained contact and cooperation with public organisations, such as trade market, labour unions and women’s groups	Although women’s organisations can help women overcome barriers, there is a less contact between politicians and these groups, compared to other interest groups;
The nature of the electoral system	Different systems have different numbers of women parliamentarians. The PR system (public relations) is most conducive to high numbers of elected women;
Socio-economic obstacles	Low socio-economic status of women, compared to men means that women have less opportunities and resources to support their move into politics;
Linked to socio-economic obstacles: women’s lack of time resources	Women carry a disproportionate share of domestic work, despite high numbers of women in paid employment. Women’s additional work burden prevents them from having time necessary to engage in politics;
Women’s socialisation	Men dominate politics in many countries, and women’s roles are culturally viewed as being in the home rather than in politics. This impacts on women’s confidence to engage in politics, attitudinal prejudice against women and women’s lack of trust and confidence in politics.

The role of the mass media, linked to the above said

Women politicians are covered less by the mass media than their male counterparts and events and issues of importance to women are not covered as much as other social issues. This largely reduces women's interest in politics. Mass media also reinforces gender stereotypes about the role of women which prevent women from engaging in politics.

³¹Source: *Analysis by N. Shvedova of obstacles to women's participation in politics, shown in the study Women in decision-making: The role of the new media for increased political participation*

On the other hand, Čekrljija defines differently the decisive factors affecting women's engagement in politics, stating that unlike developed democratic electoral systems, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the list of decisive factors which determine women's engagement in politics is turned upside down. The first on the list of factors is party loyalty, proximity to decision-making centres of the parties and utility of, and belonging to, intra-party groups which control the electorate. Professional and educational status, political competences and knowledge of political institutions and their functioning are at the bottom of the list. Women's solidarity comes at the very end. Then, he concludes, it is possible to promote the need for engaging women in political life in BiH on an equal footing to men. Women's participation in an electoral process does not mean their election and participation in political life. Encouragement of individuals, both men and women, is an important segment of efforts to improve democratic principles and modernise political life, while strong support to women is imperative which political parties have to understand as they are moving along the path of social transition in general.³² In the final part of this chapter we come to the same conclusion that the removal of the above-mentioned obstacles and/or restrictions, depending on how they are referred to by different authors, is of extreme importance for more affirmative and more equal participation of women in politics. An important role is played by political party leaders who oftentimes are not responsive to the obstacles faced by the women who want to participate actively and make their own contribution to political processes.

The future promotion of politically engaged women is slowed down by looking at women through a prism of numbers and by fulfilling quotas in party politics, in which case a glass ceiling that can only be cracked, not broken, will be encountered very often.

A systemic change within political parties and openness to cooperation with other informal or individual groups as well as with women's civil society organisations which are willing to make their educational and encouraging contribution to improving the status of women in politics as regards the obstacles listed in N. Shvedova's Table are necessary.

31 Erika Schulze - OpCit Research (KMRC Ltd), *Women in decision – making: The role of the new media for increased political participation*, the European Parliament, Brussels, 2013, p. 34.

32 Čekrljija, Saša, *Značaj procesa edukacije žena u politici u Bosni i Hercegovini*, ur. Đorđe Čekrljija, *Ličnost i društvo: Poželjne osobine i društvene vrijednosti*, 2016, Banja Luka, p. 52.

2.3. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: THE WAY THE MEDIA TREAT WOMEN

Political communication is a special form of communication. McNair explains in his book *An Introduction to Political Communication* that political communication is primarily mediated communication carried out by the use of print or electronic media.

Political reality can be divided into three categories:³³

- 1) Objective political reality comprising political events as they actually occur;
- 2) Subjective political reality, the reality of political events as they are perceived by actors and citizens;
- 3) Constructed reality, which is crucial for shaping other categories, that is, subjective realities, meaning events as covered by the media, in which case the situation they present, not their relevance, is analysed.

In political processes, the media may be reporters of events and commentators of political developments. In fact, it can be said that the media not only have an observer role but represent political actors who participate in political processes. The plain message is that political communication has a clear goal, which is to convey a clearly defined message from the political parties/politicians to the end user – the audience. The media outlets are the transmission channel through which a message travels from a sender to a receiver. In other words, they are message transmitters. A message, when transmitted or repeated/rewritten, may get different connotations, sometimes a different meaning. In this regard, the media represent political actors since the way in which they formulate and communicate a message impacts the meaning of political communication.

Regarding the relationships between the media and politicians, a positive politician-media relationship has to be maintained, acknowledging the needs which each has of the other, while exploiting the institutional characteristics of both sets of actors for maximum advantage.

For the politicians, this requires giving the media organisation what it wants, in terms of news or entertainment, while exerting some influence over how that something is mediated and presented to the audience.³⁴ The media function as transmitters of political communication.

Political actors have to use the media if their messages are to be transmitted to the desired audience. Political programmes, agendas, reports, appeals and campaigns have political relevance and potential for communication effectiveness only to the extent at which they are reported and received by the media audience as messages. Images and presentation of social groups are never naïve reflections of reality, void of prejudices or ideologies, just as the media are never a neutral channel of transmission of messages, which means that presentation of social ideologies is always a social construction. More specifically, the power of the media lies in their ability to create and control the images and information which they present to the public.

³³ Lee Kaid prema Brian McNair, *Uvod u političku komunikaciju (An Introduction to Political Communication)*, Zagreb, 2003, p 19.

³⁴ Brian McNair, *Uvod u političku komunikaciju (An Introduction to Political Communication)*, Zagreb, 2003., p. 130.

All political communicators have to gain access to the media either through law or by showing respect for the manner in which the media function to the extent at which the transmission of a message is ensured. This means that the role of the media is immensely important and that the media has an impact on the formation and dissemination of political messages to the public.

On the other hand, the world of politics is important for the media and their daily operations in multiple ways. Politics, in fact, represents the central field with journalistic activities taking place around it. The study conducted by Hanitzsch and other authors³⁵ in 18 countries to examine journalistic perceptions shows that ensuring political information and monitoring government activities are the essential journalistic functions across the world. Moreover, the world of politics, primarily the activities of government and its agencies, represent the main source of information for the media. Herman and Chomsky³⁶ call this the third filter of their propaganda model which indicates the media's strong reliance on government agencies and big business. The media rely on the sources of information which are considered a priori as accurate and reliable as the media care about being seen as objective reporters of the social world. This is beneficial for the media in multiple ways – it contributes to building their image as credible media, it protects them from potential libel suits and eventually, it saves their time and money as they do not have to cross-check credibility of the source of information. On the other hand, the government and business invest huge moneys only to maintain their privileged status. This includes not only communication through official channels which allow them to gain favour with the media and develop informal, clientelist links with the media owners, editors and journalists. This is precisely the reason why media reports are neutral and unbiased about what is actually happening on the political scene, although they often try to convince us, the journalists, otherwise. There are too many examples which show that media reports of political events are burdened with value judgements, subjectivity, bias, sometimes focusing on one's own party, supporter or leader. The media bias plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Since the media convey political messages, they give political parties unequal airtime slots, showing bias in the favour of some candidates and parties to the detriment of others.

Media's presentation of women has long been a concern to the numerous organisations struggling to improve women's position in society. The media are often accused of reinforcing gender stereotypes and discriminatory perceptions in society about real gender roles or of misrepresenting women in the world of politics.

There is a long list of complaints about media reporting on women, particularly on political engagement of women. Shvedova³⁷ says that the media restrict women's political activism and presence by minimising the coverage of events and organisations of interest to women; cultivate gender biases and promote a stereotype about a woman's place in society, including putting the blame on women for the failure in family policy and reinforcing the idea that women are responsible for social problems; and treat women as objects and define them according to their beauty and attractiveness.

35 Thomas Hanitzsch, Folker Hanusch, Claudia Mellado, Maria Anikina, Rosa Berganza, Incilay Cangoz, Mihai Coman, Basyouni Hamada, María Elena Hernández, Christopher D. Karadjov, Sonia Virginia Moreira, Peter G. Mwesige, Patrick Lee Plaisance, Zvi Reich, Josef Seethaler, Elizabeth A. Skewes, Dani Vardiandiyah Noor & Edgar Kee Wang Yuen, *Mapping Journalism Cultures across Nations: A Comparative Study of 18 Countries*, *Journalism Studies*, 2011, N 12, pp. 273-293.

36 Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, London: Vintage, 1994.

37 Nadezhda Shvedova, *Obstacles to Women's Participation in Parliament*, N. 47.

Restriction is imposed on women's political activism and presence by inadequate media reporting on women's rights and roles in society and failure to promote measures which would reinforce women's role in society. The fact that women are largely alienated from the political decision-making processes is of no concern to the mass media. Women are the first victims in most inadequate social and economic changes and reforms. Yet, the media do not pay enough attention.

Cultivation of gender biases against, and promotion of stereotypes about, women can be done through the media, helping conservative governments and societies to put the blame on women for the failure in family policy and to reinforce the idea that women are responsible for social problems, such as divorce and an increase in juvenile offending.

Another widespread trend in the mainstream media is to depict women as beautiful objects. Women are identified and objectified according to their sex and are made to internalize certain notions of beauty and attractiveness which relate more to a woman's physical capacities than to her mental faculties. Such an approach encourages the long-standing patriarchal stereotype of the weaker sex, where women are sexual objects and second-class citizens. Admittedly, the mass media also tell stories about women politicians and about businesswomen and their successes, but this kind of coverage is rare and infrequent. The presentation of topics, such as fashion competitions, movie stars, art and the secrets of eternal youth, is more typical. Not surprisingly, such views hardly promote women's sense of self-worth and self-respect or encourage them to run for office. The role of the media in an election process cannot be emphasized enough. If there is lack of proper coverage of women, politically engaged women and the activities of women parliamentarians, this contributes to a lack of public awareness about the importance of equal participation of women in politics, which in turn translates into a lack of constituency for women parliamentarians.

2.4. CONCLUSION

Differences between men and women in public and private activities are influenced by patriarchy, wrapped up in stereotypes, lack of media interest in changing such a situation, which represents a deeply rooted system of functioning of the social and political scene in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It is often argued that women are absent from decision-making positions in government only because they are more sensitive and less rational than men or more subjective and less reliable in the execution of the tasks assigned to men. These positions are undoubtedly present in society. However, the reason for this stereotypical and patriarchal conviction is an unequal treatment and inability to participate in public, particularly political, sphere. The male power exists in all public spheres since they are male spheres which are hardly accessible to women by reason of traditional beliefs and patriarchal gender norms regarding domestic duties falling exclusively within the female sphere (unpaid domestic labour, taking care of children).

The media role in forming such perceptions is not explicated. It is only said that the media participate in such creations through various already formed ideologies. The media are mediators in shaping social perceptions. They are the conveyor of information but the way in which they

transmit the information and formation – framing of their substantial meaning – plays a crucial role in forming public perceptions.

All these factors play an important role in politics since political developments are channelled through the media. The creation of media messages is heavily influenced by a political discourse, which, in turn, can often have hidden meanings.

3. POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTION

3.1. THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTION IN BIH

The general election was held in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 7 October, 2018. The citizens, depending on a place of residence (entity), elected three members of the BiH Presidency, members of the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly (42) of whom 28 were elected from the territory of the Federation and 14 from the territory of the Republika Srpska, members of the House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament (98) and members of the Republika Srpska National Assembly (38), president and two vice presidents of the Republika Srpska and members of 10 canton assemblies (289).

General election campaigning lasted from 5 September to 6 October, when an election silence began and lasted until all polling stations across BiH were closed on October 7. Campaigns were not very much different from those in the previous electoral cycles. Most of the time, they focused on an empty rhetoric of political candidates who talked about general issues, while ignoring specific problems of the BiH citizens and without proposing concrete solutions to accumulated problems. The political race during the campaign season involved more or less the same individuals, known to the BiH public for many years. The percentage of invalid ballots was around 7 per cent – just like in the previous elections in which it varied between 6 and 7 per cent, and there was a similar level of abstention – around 47 per cent of the eligible population abstained from the vote.

The 2018 general election was held for three levels of government – state, entity and canton levels. Members of the BiH Presidency, which is the highest authority in BiH, are elected in such a way that the candidate (one Bosniak and one Croat) who has received the largest share of the total vote among the candidates from the same constituent people in the Federation is elected to the BiH Presidency. A third member of the BiH Presidency, who has to be a Serb, is elected directly from the territory of the Republika Srpska. The Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina consists of the House of Peoples comprising 15 delegates and the House of Representatives comprising 42 representatives. Out of the total of 42 members of the House of Representatives, two thirds, 28, are elected from the territory of the Federation, of whom 21 are elected from multi-member constituencies under the proportional representation formula, and 7 are elected on the basis of allocation of compensatory seats. One third, 14, is elected directly from the territory of the Republika Srpska, of whom 9 members are elected from multi-member constituencies under the proportional representation formula and 5 on the basis of allocation of compensatory seats. The House of Peoples of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly comprises 15 delegates, of whom 10 (5 Bosniaks and 5 Croats), are elected from the territory of the Federation and 5 Serbs are elected from the territory of the Republika Srpska. They are elected indirectly. More precisely, Bosniak and Croat delegates in the Federation are elected by Bosniak and Croat delegates respectively in the House of Peoples of the Federation and delegates from the Republika Srpska are elected by the Republika Srpska National Assembly. An election requires

a quorum which comprises nine members of the House of Peoples, provided that at least three Bosniak, three Croat and three Serb delegates are present. After members of the Parliamentary Assembly are elected, the parties nominate candidates for the House of Peoples on the basis of election results. A majority of all members elected to the Parliamentary Assembly approves the Council of Ministers (BiH government) nominated by the Presidency and after a nominated chair (prime minister-designate) has proposed new ministers. The Federation Parliament consists of the House of Representatives and the House of Peoples. The House of Representatives consists of 98 members who are elected in a democratic election within the territory of the Federation, under the Federation Constitution and the BiH Election Law. More precisely, the majority of seats (around 70 per cent) are filled by candidates elected in 12 multi-member constituencies and the remaining seats are filled by candidates from the lists of candidates for compensatory seats. The House of Peoples of the Federation consists of 58 delegates, of whom 17 are elected from each constituent people and 7 from the rank of others. Members are elected from 10 cantons of the Federation. A president and vice presidents of the Federation are elected indirectly by the Federation Parliament.

In the Republika Srpska, the structure of government is much simpler. The Republika Srpska National Assembly is the legislative branch of government of the Republika Srpska. The National Assembly comprises 83 members elected directly and the Republika Srpska Council of Peoples comprises 28 members, 8 from each constituent people and 4 from the rank of others. The members are not elected directly; they are elected indirectly, after an election. A president and two vice presidents of the Republika Srpska are elected directly from the territory of the Republika Srpska as part of the executive branch.

Under the BiH Election Law, compensatory seats mean the seats which are allocated to the lists of political parties or coalitions according to the number of received valid votes and which serve to compensate for insufficient proportionality at the entity level after the ballots cast in individual multi-member constituencies in the entity have been counted. Only the political parties and coalitions which won more than 3 per cent of the vote in the region of the entity for which a compensatory list was drawn up may participate in the allocation of compensatory seats because the electoral threshold for participation in the legislative branch is 3 per cent. The number of seats won by a political party or a coalition is deducted from the number of seats won by the list of that political party or coalition. The remaining number is the number of compensatory seats won by the list. Under the Election Law, each candidate list for compensatory seats includes male and female candidates who are equally represented. An equal representation of men and women exists when one gender accounts for at least 40 per cent of the total number of candidates on the list. Candidates of the less represented sex are placed on the candidate list for compensatory seats: at least one candidate of a less represented sex among the first two candidates, two candidates of a less represented sex among the first five candidates, three candidates of a less represented sex among the first eight candidates, etc. However, political party members fight most strongly for a place on the compensatory lists since they secure, in a certain way, participation in government. This system is very complicated. This is an assessment by the numerous election experts across the globe. The compensatory lists make it possible for the parties which have won a large share of the vote but have not crossed the 3 per cent electoral threshold, to participate in government, making sure that the votes received are not “wasted”.

Women's participation in political processes is increased thanks to the quotas which were initially called female quotas. They allow more women to engage in politics. Before the quotas were introduced, the number of women in politics was insufficient and reflected gender inequality as it was below the 40 per cent threshold set in the Law on Gender Equality for the less represented sex in political processes. Under Article 10 of the Law, "...Equal representation of women and men shall exist when one of the sexes accounts for at least 40% of all members of the bodies listed in paragraph 1 of this Article" and under paragraph 1, "State bodies at all levels of government and local authorities, including legislative, executive and judicial authorities, political parties, legal persons with public authority, legal persons owned or controlled by the state, entities, cantons, cities or municipalities or those whose operations are controlled by a public body, shall ensure and promote equal gender representation in management, decision-making processes and representation. This obligation shall exist also for all authorized proponents when appointing representatives and delegations to international organisations and bodies."³⁸

The idea of introducing quotas, its development and implementation are explained in detail in the book "1995-2015: Women and Political Life in a Post-Dayton Bosnia and Herzegovina" which covers the developments since 1998 and explains the importance of having quotas. After the so-called female quota was introduced in BiH in 1998, which meant that every political party had to include at least three women amongst the first ten candidates, and after the BiH Election Law was passed in 2001, under which the BiH Central Election Commission was formed, the legislative and executive branches of government in BiH did not do much to include more women in the political processes in BiH. Even after the Law on Gender Equality was passed in 2003, under which equal representation of men and women exists if there is a 40 percent gender parity in all state bodies, BiH did not move towards harmonising the BiH Election Law with the provisions of the Gender Equality Law. It took the BiH Parliamentary Assembly as many as 10 years to put the initiative to harmonise the laws on its agenda. The amendments to the Election Law of Bosnia and Herzegovina were proposed by member of parliament Ismeta Dervoz in 2012. The amendments passed the House of Representatives on 22 November 2012, and the House of Peoples on 26 February 2013. Additions to the Law concerned the provisions regulating the work of the institutions responsible for conducting an election and certification and nomination of candidates and the modification of the Law concerned the 40 per cent threshold for a less represented sex on the lists. This was how progress was made to improve the position of women on candidate lists by increasing the men-women ratio from 30 to 40 per cent.

According to the results of the 2013 census of population and households, women are in the majority in BiH, accounting for 50.09 per cent of the total population. Under the 1991 census, the structure of the population by sex was almost the same: women accounted for 50.10 percent of the total population. However, women are treated as a less represented sex and account for 40 per cent of all candidates on the lists.

The Gender Equality Law and a 40 percent parity are respected during a certain period of a year. After an election is held and a new government formed, they are no longer respected as women are not represented in decision-making positions in the numbers required by the Law and do not account 40 per percent of all members of the state bodies.

³⁸ The Law on Gender Equality, "Official Gazette of BiH", 102/09

The experiences from the past years show that women usually account for around 20 per cent of all members of government bodies.

3.2. SHARE OF WOMEN ON CERTIFIED LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTION

The share of women on certified lists of candidates, as stated above, is defined by the Law and should be at least 40 per cent of all candidates. The practice so far shows that after an election in which male and female candidates are elected from certified lists of candidates, the 40 per cent parity is no longer respected in the government formation processes. Instead, the legally defined 40 per cent parity is reduced by half, to only 20 per cent of women among those elected.

The share of women on the party lists of a total of 23 political parties in the Federation for the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly was 42.60 per cent. It can be concluded from the illustration below that women accounted for around 71 per cent of all candidates of A-SDA for European BiH – Together – there were 15 women and 6 men – while out of a total of 5 candidates listed first, only one candidate was a woman. The Democratic People’s Union had only one male candidate who was placed top of the party’s list and no women candidates.

ILLUSTRATION 3: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ON THE LISTS OF CANDIDATES FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BIH PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly/BiH Federation					
POLITICAL PARTY	%	F	M	TOTAL	Top position on the ballot - F/M
Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS) -Sefer Halilovic	47.36	18	20	38	0/5
Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.74	11	16	27	(0) (5)
SDP – Social Democratic Part of BiH	43.47	20	26	46	(0) (6)
Croat Party of Rights	44.44	4	5	9	(0) (1)
BOSS-Bosnian Party-Mirnes Ajanović	66.66	6	3	9	(3) (2)
SDA-Party of Democratic Action	40.00	16	24	40	(0) (5)
Croat Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.00	2	3	5	(0) (1)
DNS-Democratic People's Union	0.00	0	1	1	(0) (1)
Party of Pensions of BiH	42.85	9	12	21	(1) (3)
Union on Independent Social Democrats-SNSD	16.66	1	5	6	(0) (5)
Our Party	48.14	13	14	27	(2) (3)
Alliance for a Better Future (SBB)-Fahrudin Radončić	44,68	21	26	47	(0) (5)
Labour Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	50.00	1	1	2	(1) (0)
Union for New Politics	16.66	1	5	6	(0) (5)
Independent Bloc	38.09	8	13	21	(0) (5)
People and Justice	46.15	6	7	13	(1) (3)
Movement of Democratic Action PDA	40.00	8	12	20	(0) (3)
Left Wing	20.00	1	4	5	(1) (4)
Independent List of Bosnia and Herzegovina	35.294	6	11	17	(0) (3)
A-SDA for a European Bosnia and Herzegovina-Together	71.428	15	6	21	(1) (4)
Democratic Front-Civic Alliance (DF-GS) Željko Komšić: BiH Wins!	42.857	18	24	42	(0) (5)
HDZ BiH, HSS, HKDU BiH, HSP-HNS, HS PDR AS BiH, HDU BiH	37.50	18	30	48	(2) (5)
Croat Unity HDZ 1990-HSP BiH	36.66	11	19	30	(0) (5)
LDS for Prosperity	33.33	2	4	6	(0) (2)
		216	291	507	

Source: Based on the data from the Central Election Commission (2018). Certified lists of candidates for the general

In the other entity, the Republika Srpska, the share of women on the lists of candidates for the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly was around 40 per cent. A-SDA for a European BiH – Together alone had around 66 per cent of women among its candidates, of whom 2 women were first listed. On the other hand, SBB had one candidate who was placed top of the list, while there were no women candidates for this level from the RS.

The share of women on the party lists for the House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament was 43.09 per cent. The illustration below clearly shows a fully equal gender participation in the Communist Party which nominated one woman and one man and both were first listed. The BiH Democratic Party did not have any women among its candidates. It nominated only one man who was at the top of the list.

ILLUSTRATION 4: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ON THE LISTS FOR THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FEDERATION PARLIAMENT

House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament					
POLITICAL PARTY	%	F	M	TOTAL	Top position on the ballot-F/M
Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS) -Sefer Halilovic	43.33	39	51	90	(1) (10)
Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina	44.31	39	49	88	(0) (11)
SDP – Social Democratic Part of BiH	42.40	53	72	125	(1) (11)
BOSS-Bosnian Party-Mirnes Ajanović	41.66	10	14	24	(5) (5)
SDA-Party of Democratic Action	45.37	54	65	119	(2) (11)
Croat Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.00	6	9	15	(1) (1)
Party of Pensions of BiH	42.30	22	30	52	(1) (6)
Our Party	44.87	35	43	78	(9) (3)
Alliance for a Better Future (SBB)-Fahrudin Radončić	43.47	50	65	115	(2) (8)
Serb Progressive Party	40.00	2	3	5	(1) (0)
Communist Party	100.00	1	1	2	(1) (1)
First Party	40.00	2	3	5	(2) (2)
Labour Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	40.00	2	3	5	(1) (0)
Croat Republican Party	44.44	4	5	9	(0) (3)
Union for New Politics	50.00	1	1	2	(1) (1)
Union for Old Town	16.66	2	10	12	(2) (10)
Independent Bloc	44.92	31	38	69	(0) (10)
People and Justice	43.75	14	18	32	(1) (5)
Movement of Democratic Action PDA	46.55	27	31	58	(1) (5)
Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina	0.00	0	1	1	(0) (1)
Independent List of Bosnia and Herzegovina	43.48	20	26	46	(2) (5)

Serb List	37.50	6	10	16	(2) (3)
A-SDA for a European Bosnia and Herzegovina-Together	46.15	24	28	52	(1) (8)
Democratic Front-Civic Alliance (DF-GS) Željko Komšić: BiH Wins!	42.30	44	60	104	(3) (8)
HDZ BiH, HSS, HKDU BiH, HSP-HNS, HS PDR AS BiH, HDU BiH	40.90	36	52	88	(2) (10)
Croat Unity HDZ 1990-HSP BiH	42.37	25	34	59	(1) (8)
LDS for Prosperity	30.00	3	7	10	(0) (6)
		552	729	1281	

Source: Based on the data from the Central Election Commission (2018). Certified lists of candidates for the general election to be held on 7 October 2018. Available at: <http://www.izbori.ba/>

The share of women on the party lists for the Republika Srpska National Assembly is 42 per cent. If we disregard individual candidates of political parties or coalitions, the Alliance for Democratic Srpska had the smallest share of women's participation: women accounted for 20 per cent of a total of 10 candidates, of whom one woman was at the top of the list out of a total of 2 women, and 7 men at the top of the list out of a total of 8 men from this party. The Left Wing party had the biggest percentage of women on the lists, 66.6 per cent, but none was first listed.

ILLUSTRATION 5: PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN ON THE LISTS FOR THE RS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

RS National Assembly					
POLITICAL PARTY	%	F	M	TOTAL	Top position on the ballot-F/M
BOSS-Bosnian Party-Mirnes Ajanović	25.00	1	3	4	(1) (3)
Home-country Social Democrats Mile Marčeta	40.00	10	15	25	(2) (7)
Socialist Party	44.44	48	60	108	(0) (9)
DNS-Democratic People's Union	43.51	47	61	108	(1) (9)
Union of Independent Social Democrats – SNSD	43.51	47	61	108	(0) (9)
Croat Democratic Union 1990-HDZ 1990	25.00	2	6	8	(2) (8)
Environmental Party of the Republika Srpska	33.00	3	6	9	(3) (6)
Alliance for Democratic Srpska	20.00	2	8	10	(1) (7)
Serb Progressive Party	41.42	29	41	70	(0) (9)
Communist Party	45.00	9	11	20	(3) (9)
First Party	42.30	11	15	26	(1) (7)
Union for New Politics	40.81	20	29	49	(0) (9)
Movement Successful Srpska Dr. Zlatko Maksimović	45.07	32	39	71	(1) (9)
United Srpska	42.59	46	62	108	(1) (8)
Nikolić Mladen	0.00	0	1	1	(0) (1)

Civic Alliance	0.00	0	3	3	(0) (3)
First Serb Democratic Party First SDS	41.18	35	50	85	(0) (9)
Movement of Democratic Action PDA	41.66	10	14	24	(1) (1)
SMS-Alliance of Young Forces	44.44	4	5	9	(4) (5)
Left Wing	200.00	2	1	3	(0) (1)
Independent List of Bosnia and Herzegovina	22.22	2	7	9	(1) (6)
Alliance Remain	36.96	17	29	46	(1) (7)
Bubić Ivana	100.00	1	0	1	(1) (0)
Era Bojan	0.00	0	1	1	(0) (1)
Todić Borislav	0.00	0	1	1	(0) (1)
PDP RS – Mladen Ivanić	43.51	47	61	108	(0) (9)
Serb Democratic Party – (SDS-SRSRS-SRS)	42.59	46	62	108	(2) (7)
NDP Dragan Čavić-NS-SNS-Freedom	40.74	44	64	108	(2) (7)
Pro-European Bloc	41.86	36	50	86	(0) (9)
HDZ BiH, HSS, HKDU BiH, HSP-HNS	45.00	9	11	20	(1) (4)
Together for BiH	43.61	41	53	94	(0) (9)
		601	830	1431	

Source: Based on the data from the Central Election Commission (2018). Certified lists of candidates for the general election to be held on 7 October 2018. Available at: <http://www.izbori.ba/>

There were 1,646 women, who accounted for 41.26 per cent of all candidates, and 2,343 men on certified lists of candidates for canton assemblies.³⁹

3.3. REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN IN THE MEDIA DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNS IN 2018

The Centre for Election Studies (CES) analysed within the project Media Monitoring of Election Campaigning for the General Election in 2018 the share of women in media appearances during campaigns. For the purpose of this research, the CES representatives shared their information and data from the database showing the media share of politically engaged women in campaigning.

During the campaign season, a total of 5,204 media statements made by political officials to 28 media outlets were analysed. Of that number, 5 were daily newspapers (Oslobođenje, Dnevni avaz, Nezavisne novine, Večernji list and Dnevni list), another 5 were TV stations (BHT, BN, FTV, N1 and RTRS), 2 were web portals (Bljesak info, Buka Magazin and Klix.ba), 2 news agencies (FENA and SRNA) and the rest were web pages of selected parties (SZP, DF-GS, DNS, DNZ, Croat Unity, NDP, NS, SBB, SDA, SDP BiH, SNSD and SP, HNS coalition). The media statements by politicians were classified as relevant and irrelevant. Relevant media statements

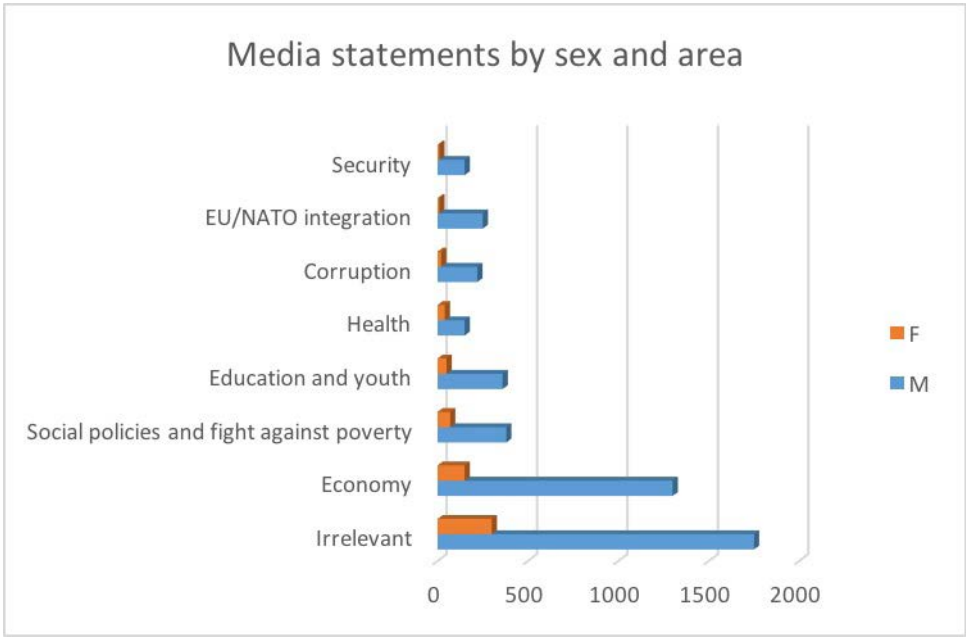
³⁹ Statistical data on the share of women and men on the lists of candidates for all levels of government were obtained through “manual” counting of male and female candidates on those lists. The Central Election Commission and other institutions do not offer segregated statistical data for the share of women and men on the lists of candidates or on elected lists. In this regard, the author emphasizes that minimum deviations are possible. The sex structure was determined by the author by distinguishing between the usual male and female names in the BiH peoples, along with additional checks where it was necessary and possible.

included all statements made by politicians focusing on 7 thematic areas observed (economy, social policies and fight against poverty, health, education and youth, corruption, security, EU integration and NATO). During the public opinion poll, these thematic areas were assessed by citizens as important and requiring solution. Then, the relevant media statements were classified as concrete – those which offered concrete solutions in one of more thematic areas – and incorrect – those which were related to one of more thematic areas but did not offer a concrete solution. Of the total 5,204 analysed media statements, it was not possible to identify gender for 8 as they had not been made by individual politicians – they had been issued in the form of a press release by political parties. As a result, 5,196 media statements were further analysed.

Of this number, 4,395 statements were made by men, accounting for 85 per cent of all media statements analysed, while the remaining 801 media statements, or 15 per cent, were made by women. It is clear that women accounted for only 15 per cent of gender representations in the media during the campaign season.

Although women were far less represented in the media, they took part in all thematic areas and their statements were more correct (22 per cent) and more relevant (60 per cent), compared to the statements made by men whose correctness in media reporting was 18 per cent and relevance 57 per cent.

ILLUSTRATION 6: MEDIA STATEMENTS DURING ELECTION CAMPAIGNING BY SEX AND THEMATIC AREA



The role of the media in reporting on women in political processes is crucial for the positioning of women in political processes. Miftari⁴⁰ says that by reporting on women stereotypically or insufficiently, the media miss an opportunity to deal with the real problems facing women. She says that it is not wrong to say that the political culture of Bosnia and Herzegovina is

40 Miftari, E. (2015) *Politička participacija žena u Bosni i Hercegovini: Analiza učešća žena na stranačkim listama i konačnih rezultata Općih izbora 2014.*

male-dominated and that it will take long time, much effort and many initiatives to change such a concept in favour of the majority of population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Women, she says, who are politically engaged, are presented by the media in stereotypical ways and they are invisible in election campaigns, which was the case during the election campaigning in 2018. Women were invisible and insufficiently represented in the media. Political television programmes and TV debates featured predominantly men who were representatives of political parties or party leaders. This phenomenon of underrepresentation of women in the media, when it comes to issues of social relevance such as politics, economy, health and other issues, has persisted over many years. Unfortunately, women appear on the very last pages of newspapers, mainly in entertainment and festivity sections.

The CES analysed the media presentation of women's participation in the 2016 local election campaigning. The result of the study of the local election held in 2016 shows that the media participation of politically engaged women is 10 per cent, while the media participation of politically engaged men is 90 per cent. These percentages clearly indicate that women are neglected by the media or that political parties do not favour women enough nor do they allow women to have access to public space through their political parties. Visibility of politically engaged women in the media is extremely low, compared to the politically engaged men whose access to the media space is secured in advance as their participation in politics is anticipated.⁴¹

Media reporting on women in general, and particularly in politics, requires a more serious engagement of media representatives with a focus on equal representation of men and women in the media. Only when equal opportunities are provided to all will it be possible to talk about a democratic state in which all citizens, men and women, will have equal rights and opportunities to meet their needs, particularly equal rights and opportunities in social and political engagement which has to be equally visible for all participants.

3.4. WORK OF NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS TOWARDS INCREASING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN

The data indicates an alarming situation regarding inequality of women in the BiH society, particularly in political processes, which affects all other segments and spheres of life. It arises clear from the above that representatives of political parties, or government, or the media, contribute to improving the status of women in political processes. This problem is addressed by the civil society and individuals committed to improving the status of women in society and also by the institutions whose core activity is the advancement of women. The changes which have been made over the past several years represent progress toward better understanding and addressing the issue of stigma against women, particularly in politics. It is civil society that is credited most with those changes. Over the past several years, focusing on the election campaigning, a number of non-governmental organisations and representatives of institutions committed to achieving gender equality launched a whole series of actions and campaigns to increase the visibility of politically active women and also to raise awareness about the importance of their equal participation in political decision-making processes.

41 Centar za izborne studije (CIS) *Učešće politički angažiranih žena u predizbornoj kampanji za lokalne izbore 2016*, retrieved on 15 November 2018: <http://cisbih.ba/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/2017/06/linku.pdf>

During the election year 2018 and general election campaigning, a number of non-governmental organisations dealing with the protection of women's rights (CURE Foundation, Infohouse Foundation, Centre for Women's Rights, Zenica and the Association of Citizens of Grahovo) organised a campaign entitled Remove the Fake Face of Politics, within which they offered pro bono legal aid to women candidates in the 2018 election in case they noticed or sensed any form of discrimination, violations of their rights or provisions of the BiH Election Law. In addition to pro bono legal aid services provided to them, women candidates undertook a number of training sessions about their legal rights, building an image, public appearance and other important issues with a view to facilitating their political engagement.

Those organisations provided the training which is rarely offered by political parties, although it would be necessary for every person who has joined the party ranks. More than 64 women candidates for different levels of government completed the training successfully. During the training, they concluded that they were facing the numerous irregularities generally and particularly within their respective parties. Men expect politically active women to be obedient, not to make decisions on their own initiative regardless of the level of their office. But this rule does not apply to men. Some of them said that they had learned about some party decisions or actions only after they had been made since a group of men from their respective parties had discussed and made decisions without consulting them. Mobbing and misogyny, along with stereotypical and patriarchal norms of behaviour, represent forms of discrimination that women often experience. Many of them were on the lists for certain levels of government but never had an opportunity to talk to the media, develop their own campaigns or be promoted. They never received any form of training on public appearance, building an image, presentation of their own ideas which they promoted within a political party, etc. They learned most of these issues during the training provided by those non-governmental organisations, which was still insufficient. They recognised the work and commitment of the civil society which wanted to provide them support and training, but they believed that those activities should be continuously implemented, throughout a year, and intensified during an election year, because it was the only way for them to receive training, to get empowered, etc.

The Association of Citizens was also involved in research of women's status in political parties and campaign rallies of all political parties in BiH within the project "Legal Support to Women Candidates in the October 2018 Election". The results of the analysis will be used in activities which continue within the project "Empowerment of Women in Public and Political Life 2018-2020". The preliminary results which have not yet been released portray a misogynistic picture of the BiH public. Men, as the participants who habitually appear in political rallies, often sent misogynistic, sexist and stigmatizing messages to women candidates, discouraging them and quite often making it clear to them that they are not ready or able to deal with politics the way men do. Below you can read a number of authentic statements by which men addressed their female party colleagues and the voters attending the rallies:

Vote for me. I, as a man, shall give you those women's rights that you claim, and the party is advocating them as well. Women will not vote for women, they will vote for me, they envy women on lists and this is why they will not vote for them. – a campaign rally in Ključ.

Women at the top of political parties are worse only because their parties do not have a real man to lead them. - a campaign rally in Livno.

Women are fearful, it's better that this arduous job is done by men because polling station committees are too complicated. - a campaign rally in Tomislavgrad.

Party observers can be women, but only during daylight, until 19:00 hours, and not during the night, men will do it at night because that's when vote counting happens. They should go home, there can be a fight and their safety may be at risk – a campaign rally in Bihac.

A campaign rally moderator comes up on stage and announces a woman who should address the audience and says: Please, take the microphone, it looks nicer in your hand. - a campaign rally in Drvar.

This rhetoric is used every day but there is no punishment. It has a discouraging effect on women. Most women do not feel comfortable. They fear party leaders, their voice is not heard inside their parties, they are not involved in making plans, creating ideas, etc. Their role is unenviable and many of them, as soon as they have joined a party, realize that and fine themselves in a firmly rooted system which, sadly, still goes unpunished.

The BiH Agency for Gender Equality is one of the institutions which recognizes the problem of women's underrepresentation in politics in BiH. Accordingly, it launched a campaign We Represent Women Candidates, You Choose before the 2018 general election, aimed at increasing media promotion of women candidates. The aim of the campaign was to present women candidates on the lists for the 2018 general election, to give them more space in the media and to promote equality of women and men in government and public life in BiH. The director of the Agency for Gender Equality, Samra Filipović-Hadžiabdić, said:

Equality of men and women is the value guaranteed under the BiH Constitution and defined and protected under the laws. Despite that, women in our society continue to be unequal to men. One example of their inequality is an insufficient number of women involved in an electoral process in BiH. During campaign season, women candidates get less media space, which results in women's underrepresentation in the legislative authorities and government at all levels. Currently, women in the legislatures at all levels in BiH still account for less than 20 per cent of all members. Representative bodies of political government should represent the society as a whole. If women account for one half of the total population, it would be correct, logical and natural to see an increased participation and influence of women. It is a matter of respect for the laws – the BiH Law on Gender Equality, the Election Law and other laws. At the same time, it is a matter of administration of justice, respect for human rights and good governance.⁴²

In the previous years, the above-mentioned non-governmental organisations and the Agency for Gender Equality implemented many activities to draw the attention of the public, government and political party leaders to the system which they maintain, but which does not provide equality

42 Campaign conducted by the BiH Agency for Gender Equality: We Present Female Candidates, You Choose! Retrieved on 09 January 2019: <https://www.oslobodjenje.ba/vijesti/bih/kampanja-agencija-za-ravnopravnost-spolova-bih-mi-predstavljamo-kandidatkinje-vi-birate-393091>

nor is it ethical. Still, these organisations, in most cases, thanks to empowering women who have “survived” in political parties, team up with them to create new policies, new provisions and new legal arrangements. This path is difficult and slow but if BiH wants to become a member of the European Union, this will have to change.

Besides, if we aspire to achieving equal rights and opportunities in the public sphere, division and gender divided spheres and sectors will certainly not contribute to attaining that goal but, rather, to maintaining the status quo or creating a new form of retraditionalization.

3.5. CONCLUSION

The above chapters bring to mind several facts that we should be aware of.

The share of women on certified lists of candidates for the general election in 2018:

House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly/ FBiH – women comprise 42.60 % of members

House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly/RS - women comprise 40% of members

House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament – women comprise 43.09 % of members

RS National Assembly – women comprise 42% of members

During election campaigning, women account for only 15 per cent of all media representations of candidates.

On the basis of the above, it is possible to draw several conclusions relevant for political party and media representatives. Political party representatives should work towards raising gender awareness of their members making it clear that women should not be used solely as the décor of political parties only to meet the quota requirement for the purpose of having the lists of candidates verified. Such an approach to women is not motivating nor does it contribute to the party’s progress or long-term success.

The Law on Gender Equality has to be respected throughout a year, not only during certain periods of the year. It is important to introduce punishment for violations of legal provisions so that the creation and existence of the laws in BiH are justified and that the laws are implemented effectively.

Equal involvement of women in political processes for the purpose of building a democratic society is important in all spheres of life. Women, as a majority of population, should be involved in all social processes, particularly in political processes, because all changes begin with the creation of new policies.

4. DIRECT RESULTS OF THE 2018 GENERAL ELECTION

A few months after the general election in 2018, Bosnia and Herzegovina faced a harsh race for government positions. Representatives of political parties discussed post-electoral coalitions over many months, trying to work together in partnership with opponents and unlike-minded politicians. The entire process went into 2019. In a race for government positions, women are often disregarded and nobody reports on them any longer or mention them as potentially equal participants of the government formation process. All topics discussed now have much deeper political connotations. In an attempt to attain higher goals, the Constitution, the Election Law, the implementation of election results and the use of census results in the context of indirect elections in BiH, etc. are all challenged.

As an overview of the situation, several previous electoral cycles, including the composition of the electorate by sex, are shown below. As we can see, women account for over 50 per cent of the electorate and thus should hold 50 per cent of government positions. However, the BiH political scene did not reach that level in the last year's election either.

ILLUSTRATION 7: SEX STRUCTURE OF THE ELECTORATE 2002-2014

	ELECTION YEAR	ELECTORATE					
		F	%	M	%	Σ	%
1	2002	1,201,519	51.3	1,140,622	48.7	2,342,141	100
2	2004	1,193,861	51.4	1,128,826	48.6	2,322,687	100
3	2006	1,374,646	50.28	1,359,641	49.72	2,734,287	100
4	2008	1,513,836	50.05	1,510,291	49.95	3,024,127	100
5	2010	1,571,132	50.16	1,561,099	49.84	3,132,231	100
6	2012	1,577,894	50.11	1,571,386	49.89	3,149,280	100
7	2014	1,645,928	50.14	1,636,653	49.86	3,282,581	100

Source: Central Election Commission, election indicators 2002-2014

Official results of direct elections for the parliaments at all levels in BiH, as released by the Central Election Commission (CEC), are given below. Indirect results of the election are not official yet and will not be shown in this research paper.

4.1. Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina

Members of the BiH Presidency are elected from the three constituent peoples, which means that one member is a Croat, one is a Serb and one is a Bosniak. The Presidency members were elected from among 15 candidates, of whom 2 were women (a Croat and a Serb) and 13 were men. Three members of the Presidency were elected.

4.2. House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly

507 candidates ran for the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly. Of that number, 216, or 52.60 per cent, were women, of whom 12 women were placed top of the total number of 98 lists of candidates for the BiH Parliamentary Assembly. In other words, women made up slightly less than 14 per cent of all candidates at the top of lists. This was an increase compared to the previous electoral cycle, when the share of women candidates at the top of lists was 10.57 per cent.

The results of the 2018 general election, which were confirmed and released by the Central Election Commission, show that one woman per 20 men was elected in a direct election for the BiH Parliamentary Assembly in the territory of the Federation, while a total of 4 women and 3 men were elected by way of compensatory lists. A total of 5 women, or close to 18 per cent, were elected in the territory of the Federation.

Regarding the result of the election for the BiH Parliamentary Assembly in the territory of the Republika Srpska, no seat was won by women, while 2 women were elected to compensatory seats, totalling 14 per cent of women, exclusively thanks to the compensatory lists.

No party in either entity had a significant number of women elected, hence no woman is mentioned as a positive or negative example.

Seven women, or 16.6 per cent of the total number of elected representatives, were elected to the House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly, compared to the previous general election, when a total of 10 women were elected (23.81 per cent)⁴³, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of elected women in 2018.⁴⁴

	2014	2018
BiH Parliamentary Assembly	23.81%	16.6%

43 Miftari, E. (2015) *Politička participacija žena u Bosni i Hercegovini: Analiza učešća žena na stranačkim listama i konačnih rezultata općih izbora 2014.*

44 This research was conducted before the executive branch of government was formed (BiH Council of Ministers, entity and canton governments). Compared results of the 2014 elections provided below include final results after both the legislative and executive branches were formed. Some deviations in the results for 2018 are possible because political parties sometimes appoint their representatives from among members of legislatures to the executive branch or to the House of Peoples of BiH. In that case, the vacant seat is filled by the second-best candidate from the list, either man or woman, in which case there will be deviations from the number of women presented in the research paper.

4.3. House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament

A total of 1,281 candidates ran for the House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament, of whom 552, or 43 per cent, were women. The situation was the same in the previous electoral cycle. However, there was an increase in regard to verified lists of candidates, compared to four years before, with 43 women candidates – or 22 per cent - of the total number of 195 women at the top of the lists for the Federation Parliament, while in the previous general election, 16.04 per cent⁴⁵ of women were at the top of verified lists of candidates.

The results of the direct election in 2018, confirmed and released by the Central Election Commission, for the House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament show that the share of women is 38 per cent, of whom 16 women were elected directly and 11 women from the compensatory lists. In the previous electoral cycle, 21 women were elected, making up 21.43 per cent of all elected members.⁴⁶ When it comes to women elected at this level of government, there is a noticeable decreasing trend. The Party of Democratic Action (SDA)⁴⁷ has the largest number of representatives – a total of 22 elected directly, of whom 5 are women, and 2 women were elected from the compensatory lists. Candidates of other parties won a significantly lower number of seats (3 women candidates of SDP; 2 women candidates of HSP; 2 women candidates of DF-SG; 2 women candidates of SBB; and 1 woman candidate of PDA).

	2014	2018
Federation Parliament	21.43%	38%

4.4. President of the Republika Srpska

A total of 37 candidates ran for president of the Republika Srpska, of whom 4 were women. A woman candidate was elected president of the Republika Srpska and two male candidates were elected vice-presidents.

⁴⁵ Miftari, E. (2015) *Politička participacija žena u Bosni i Hercegovini: Analiza učešća žena na stranačkim listama i konačnih rezultata Općih izbora 2014.*

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ A note for all other parties: abbreviations will be used in the rest of the paper, such as DF for the Democratic Front, NS for Our Party, SDP for Social Democratic Party, SBB for the Alliance for a Better Future, etc. Abbreviations will be used only if they are officially recognised as abbreviations of party names.

4.5. National Assembly of the Republika Srpska

A total of 1,431 candidates ran for the Republika Srpska National Assembly, of whom 601, or 42 per cent, were women. There were a total of 29 women at the top of certified lists of candidates, out of 218 lists, comprising 13.3 per cent.

Under the confirmed results of direct elections for the Republika Srpska National Assembly, 14 women, or 17 per cent, were elected directly or from the compensatory lists. Seven women and 56 men were elected directly. Women accounted for 12.5 per cent. Another 7 women, or 54 percent, and 13 men were elected from the compensatory lists.

It can be concluded that the situation is similar to the situation from four years ago when 13 women were elected to the Republika Srpska National Assembly and women accounted for 15.66 per cent of all elected members.⁴⁸ It is important to emphasize that only the results of the direct election are shown for the 2018 electoral cycle.

	2014	2018
RS National Assembly RS	15.66%	17%

4.6. Canton Assemblies

There were 3,989 candidates for the canton assemblies, of whom 1,646 were women, accounting for 41.26 per cent of the total number of candidates. 16.6 per cent of women were at the top of verified lists of candidates, or 38 women of the total of 191 women on the verified lists of candidates for the canton assemblies in all 10 cantons.

In the Una-Sana Canton Assembly – Canton 1 – nine women candidates of a total of 8 parties that won seats were elected. On other words, according to the Central Election Commission's data, women accounted for 30 per cent of all elected members. In 2014, women accounted for 6.6 per cent of elected members or out of 30 members, 2 were women.⁴⁹ The SDA party had the biggest number of elected women in this Canton – 3 women – while no woman candidate of DF and the Independent Bloc was elected. One woman candidate was elected from SDP, the Labour Party of BiH, NS and SBB each and 2 women candidates of the Party of Democratic Activity (A-SDA) were elected.

Posavina Canton – Canton 2 - under the official data, women accounted for 20 per cent of all elected members, thanks to the coalition of HDZ BIH, HKDU BIH, HSP-HNS, HSP DR AS BIH, HDU BIH with four women candidates elected to the canton assembly out of 11 seats won by the coalition of the total 21 seats in the Canton. The remaining six parties (Croat Unity, SDA, Posavina Party, SDP, SBB, Movement of Democratic Action – PDA) won seats but no woman candidate was elected. In the previous electoral cycle, this Canton was the third largest canton by the share of women, 23.81 per cent, or 5 seats, out of a total of 21, were held by women.⁵⁰

In the Tuzla Canton – Canton 3 - under official data, women will hold 13 seats, out of a total of 35 seats won by 7 political parties, or women account for 37 per cent of all elected members. SDP party has four women in the Canton Assembly and other parties have fewer women, like SDA, with three female candidates elected, PDA with two, and DF, SBB, NS and SBiH each

48 Miftari, E. (2015) Politička participacija žena u Bosni i Hercegovini:

Analiza učešća žena na stranačkim listama i konačnih rezultata Općih izbora 2014.

49 Ibid.

50 Ibid.

with one woman. In 2014, women members of the Canton Assembly accounted for 22.85 per cent of all members and held 8 seats out of a total of 35 seats.⁵¹

The Zenica-Doboj Canton – Canton 4 - nine parties won 35 seats in the direct election, of which 14 were won by female candidates. The seats won by women account for 40 percent of all seats. SDA won the largest number of seats, a total of 11, and has the biggest number of elected female candidates, a total of 5, while other parties won a smaller number of seats and have fewer elected female candidates. SDP and the Independent Bloc have 2 female members each, while SBB, HDZ, DF, ASDA, SBIH and NS have one female representative each. In the previous elections, women accounted for 20 per cent of all elected members – a total of 20 women.⁵²

In the Bosnia-Podrinje Canton – Canton 5 – 11 parties won a total of 25 seats in the direct elections. A total number of women elected directly in this Canton is 5, or women account for 20 per cent of all seats won. Two female candidates of SDA and DF each were elected, and LS BiH had one female candidate elected. No female candidate of other parties (the Independent List of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Party for Bosnia and Herzegovina, SBB, SDP, Gorazde Story, NB and NS) which won seats in this Canton were elected. In the previous election, women held 16 per cent of all seats in the canton – a total of 4 women.⁵³

The Central Bosnia Canton – Canton 6 – a total of 7 parties won 30 seats. A total number of elected women in this Canton is 12 – they account for 40 percent of all elected members. SDA and HDZ BiH each has four elected women, SDP has 2, and SBB and DF one each. No female candidate of the Croat Movement for Central Bosnia HDZ 1990 – HSP BiH – HS BiH and Independent Bloc was elected in this Canton. According to the final results of the 2014 general election, there were 5 female members in this Canton who accounted for 16.6 per cent of all members of the Canton Assembly.⁵⁴

The Herzegovina-Neretva Canton – Canton 7 – is a positive example. In this Canton, 7 parties won 30 seats and women – a total of 14 - account for 47 per cent of all elected members. This is a positive example, compared to other cantons. The Coalition HDZ BIH, HSS, HKDU BIH, HSP-HNS, HSP DR AS BIH, HDU BIH, HSS SR won 13 seats, of which 8 were won by women. Three elected women were candidates of SDA, and SDP, the Croat Unity and DF each has 1 woman candidate elected. In the previous election cycle, women – a total of 8 - accounted for 26.66 per cent of all members of the Canton Assembly.⁵⁵

The West Herzegovina Canton – Canton 8 – has 23 seats held by 5 political parties. The number of elected women in this Canton is 7, which is 30 per cent of the total number of seats. HDZ BiH won 16 seats of which 6 were won by female candidates, while no female candidate of the Croat Unity HDZ 1990-HS, HKDU-HRAST-HNL, the Croat Republican Party, the Croat Party of Rights dr. Ante Starčević BiH, the Croat Democratic Union of BiH and the Croat Party of Rights of BiH was elected. In 2014, 7 women were elected in this Canton and they accounted for 30.43 per cent of all members of the Canton Assembly.⁵⁶

51 Ibid.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 Ibid.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

The Sarajevo Canton – Canton 9 – has the largest number of seats – 35 – and seats were won by 8 parties. The number of elected women in the Sarajevo Canton is 12, accounting for 34 per cent of all members, while four years ago, there were 7 women who accounted for 20 per cent of all members.⁵⁷ In the previous electoral cycle, SDA did not have a female representative in the Sarajevo Canton Assembly, although it won the largest number of seats – 10. In 2018, SDA had the largest number of elected female candidates – 4. The parties with the second-largest number of female candidates elected are People and Justice and NS each with 2 women elected, followed by SDP, SBB, DF and the Independent List of Bosnia and Herzegovina–NBL each with 1 woman elected, while no female candidate of BOSS – Bosnian Party – Mirnes Ajanović was elected in this Canton.

The smallest number of elected women is in the Livno Canton – Canton 10 – a total of 3 women who won 3 out of 25 seats, accounting for 12 per cent of all members elected. HDZ BiH, HDZ 1990 and the Serb List each had one woman elected, while other parties (SDA, SDP, the Croat Independent List, Serb Progressive Party, People’s Party Working for Prosperity, the Croat Republican Party and the Cantonal Independent List) had no women elected. This Canton had the smallest share of women in the previous election and women accounted for 4 per cent of all members of the Canton Assembly.⁵⁸

4.7. SUMMARY

On the basis of the results of the direct general election held in 2018, it is an undeniable fact that an insufficient number of women were elected to the legislative branch. For the sake of comparison, in ten canton assemblies, women won 93 out of 289 seats, accounting for 32 percent of all members elected. A general overview of the results will be provided below, under conclusions.

Although the illustration of the gender composition of the electorate at the beginning of this chapter shows that there are more women than men, and that women are a majority population, which both censuses showed, their participation in the legislative branch does not reflect the population sex ratio. In the executive branch, the share of women was 17 per cent in the past, therefore, it is assumed that their share will be similar in a new government.

Changes which imply an increased participation of women in the executive and legislative branches of government are slowed down and/or almost invisible. An example of such a change are the amendments to the Electoral Law of BiH,⁵⁹ passed in April 2016, which concern the allocation of seats, where the percentage was increased from 5 per cent to 20 per cent, which had a positive impact on the number of women elected to the Canton Assemblies, while the situation

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Explanation: the seats won by a list are first distributed among the candidates on that list who individually received at least 20 per cent of the total valid votes received by that list, these seats being awarded in the order of the highest number of votes to the lowest number of votes. If there are still seats to be distributed, and the candidates remaining are those who received less than 20 per cent of the total valid votes received by that list, the distribution of the seats among the remaining candidates from the list will be done according to their order on the list – Article 9.8, paragraph (2) of the BiH Election Law.

remains the same or is even worse than it was at the state and entity levels, which is also related to the 20 per cent share of the vote threshold.

It is important that women are represented like men, in accordance with their population share, also in the process of drawing up lists, that they are members of the legislative and executive branches and that they are equally visible in media programmes during and after campaigns because their absence metaphorically means that one half of the BiH population is rarely, if ever, heard or seen.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Out of 518 seats in the legislatures at all levels, women won 142 in the general election in 2018 and accounted for 27 per cent of all elected members. Since government at the state, entity and cantonal levels has not yet been formed, it is not possible to analyse overall election results or compare them with the previous electoral cycles. The women's share in the overall results of the general election held in 2018 is as follows:

Level of government	2014	2018
House of Representatives of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly	23.81%	16.6%
House of Representatives of the Federation Parliament	21.43%	38%
RS National Assembly	15.66%	17%
Canton Assemblies of 10 cantons	18.71%	32%

However, what is evident and true for the previous electoral cycles is that the women's share goes down from an initial 40 per cent on certified lists of candidates, to lower percentages on the election day and later, during government appointments. We can assume that the current women's share of 27 per cent will have gone down to below 20 per cent at the end of the government formation process, in the indirect results of an election.

Although civil society organisations are making huge efforts to empower and train politically engaged women, while at the same working with political parties and lobbying for legal amendments, women continue to be underrepresented in the executive and legislative branches. Regardless of a broad range of activities of the civil society organisations, the following are required: an intra-party change, respect for legislation and support for the media as a creator of reality, which, through their reporting, encourage a certain situation and affect the shaping of collective awareness in society about a certain social phenomenon. Political parties should demonstrate more interest in women as their members. It is not enough to bring women to the party ranks, issue them membership cards and guarantee them a position on the list for a certain level of government. This satisfaction is not enough. Indeed, it is motivating in the beginning but training of new female members and equal advancing in the ranks of political parties and promotion of women's ideas in the media and within a party are also necessary. Paying lip service to gender equality, demonstrated through the imposed 40 per cent representation on the lists of candidates, is not sufficient nor is sustainable in the long run because women usually get disappointed after the first or second electoral cycle as they have not achieved the desired goal for which they worked and decide to leave the party, which is no solution at all, much less promotion of an intra-party gender equality.

Important issues which concern development and progress in certain areas have reached an impasse as political parties have not reached an agreement on the formation of a new government within the set deadlines. A complicated electoral legislation contributes to it as it slows down the formation of a new government, the executive branch in particular, and the House of Peoples at the Federation and BiH levels. Attempts were made to change the Election Law in terms of a mandatory percentage of women in the executive branch but there was lack of political will to pass such proposals.

There was a huge polemic in BiH about an indirect election, triggered by an instruction issued by the Central Election Commission (CEC) regarding the application of the result of the 2013 census in the allocation of seats in the House of Peoples of the Federation Parliament. The decision of the Central Election Commission was considered unconstitutional and an application seeking the assessment of constitutionality was filed, since the BiH Constitution requires the implementation of the 1991 census pending the full implementation of Annex VII, i.e. the completion of the return process. However, the BiH Constitutional Court declared itself *forum non conveniens* to hear the case since the Central Election Commission's instruction, not a law, was challenged. This is why, it is expected that a new House of Peoples of the Federation will be formed in compliance with the Central Election Commission's proposal.

Due to the above problems, we can expect that the entire process of government formation after the elections will take some more time. Once the government is formed, we shall know how the government at all levels, including the legislative and executive branches, will look like as well as the exact number of women in government.

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