



Gender Mainstreaming

# Gender equality in the European Parliament and in national parliaments in the European Union: 2023 state of play



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# European Institute for Gender Equality

We are an independent centre and the primary source for information on gender equality in the European Union. We contribute to making the European Union become a Union of Equality, where women and men, girls and boys in all their diversity are free to pursue their chosen path in life, have equal opportunities to thrive, and can equally participate in and lead our societies.

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The report is available online through EIGE's Gender-sensitive parliaments toolkit on the Gender Mainstreaming Platform: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits>. EIGE created the online platform on gender mainstreaming to support EU institutions and governmental bodies with the integration of a gender perspective in their work. The platform provides insights on the relevance of gender in a variety of policy areas and offers online tools for gender mainstreaming.

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## Abbreviations

<b>BPFA</b>	Beijing Platform for Action
<b>CEDAW</b>	UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
<b>EIGE</b>	European Institute for Gender Equality
<b>EP GAP</b>	gender action plan of the European Parliament
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EU-27</b>	27 Member States of the European Union
<b>FEMM</b>	Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality
<b>GMN</b>	Gender Mainstreaming Network
<b>IPU</b>	Inter-Parliamentary Union
<b>MEP</b>	Member of the European Parliament
<b>MP</b>	member of parliament
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
<b>pp</b>	percentage points

## EU Member State codes

<b>BE</b>	Belgium	<b>LT</b>	Lithuania
<b>BG</b>	Bulgaria	<b>LU</b>	Luxembourg
<b>CZ</b>	Czechia	<b>HU</b>	Hungary
<b>DK</b>	Denmark	<b>MT</b>	Malta
<b>DE</b>	Germany	<b>NL</b>	Netherlands
<b>EE</b>	Estonia	<b>AT</b>	Austria
<b>IE</b>	Ireland	<b>PL</b>	Poland
<b>EL</b>	Greece	<b>PT</b>	Portugal
<b>ES</b>	Spain	<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>FR</b>	France	<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>HR</b>	Croatia	<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>IT</b>	Italy	<b>FI</b>	Finland
<b>CY</b>	Cyprus	<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>LV</b>	Latvia		

# Executive summary

This report assesses the state of gender equality in the European Parliament and in national parliaments in the European Union (EU). Achieving gender-sensitive parliaments requires prioritising gender equality as a social, political and economic objective and transforming parliaments' culture, processes, practices and outputs towards advancing gender equality (1). This involves ensuring that women and men in all their diversity are equally represented in parliament and can equally participate in parliamentary decision-making. It also requires measures to support members of parliament (MPs) and parliamentary employees in balancing their personal and professional responsibilities and fostering safe and inclusive working environments free from gender-based violence, sexual harassment and discrimination. In addition, it involves setting up structures and tools to ensure that a gender perspective is mainstreamed in all parliamentary work, processes and outputs.

The report presents the findings of the second European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments. Based on data collected between May and August 2023, primarily through desk research (and interviews with contact points from national parliaments when data were not publicly available), this report presents a comparative assessment of findings from the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the 27 EU Member States. It assesses their performance in five areas as outlined in EIGE's self-assessment framework for gender-sensitive parliaments.

Where possible, the report highlights progress or regress in comparison with the 2019 data collected as part of EIGE's first EU-wide assessment of parliaments' gender sensitivity and presents data highlighting gender and intersectional inequalities.

To ensure policy relevance and alignment with recent EU legislative and policy developments, the 2023 data collection was expanded and enhanced to better capture information related to violence against women in parliaments, work-life balance, equal pay and the use of gender mainstreaming tools in parliaments.

## Key findings

**Area 1: Opportunities to enter parliament. Gender balance has been achieved in the European Parliament. National parliaments are lagging behind as women still account for only one in three MPs.**

- The European Parliament achieved gender balance (41 % women, 59 % men) for the first time following the 2019 elections. Subsequent post-Brexit restructuring and other midterm changes saw the proportion of women Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) fall to 39 % at the end of 2022, but it has since recovered to sit right on the 40 % threshold.
- Despite ongoing debate about the potential introduction of EU-level legislation, the mode of electing MEPs remains under national control. Ten Member States have a legislative gender quota to ensure minimum proportions of women and men among candidates.
- The leaders of the seven political groups in the European Parliament are mostly men. Similarly, at the national level, the political parties that control the selection of candidates lack gender-equal representation in their leadership. Nearly three quarters of party leaders are men.

(1) Childs, S. and Palmieri, S. (2023), 'Gender sensitive parliaments: Feminizing formal political institutions', in Sawyer, M., Banaszak, L. A., True, J. and Kantola, J. (eds), *Handbook of Feminist Governance*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham.

- Progress towards gender-balanced representation in national parliaments is slow. Men account for two thirds of MPs and, at the current rate of change, it will take another 11 years to achieve at least 40 % of each gender. Only 4 % of MPs are aged under 30, and 37 % of these are young women.
- Women are less likely than men to be put forward as candidates for parliamentary elections, accounting for an average of 34 % of candidates for the most recent elections across 20 Member States.
- The European Parliament lacks internal regulations to foster a balanced work–life environment, especially for MEPs. Family leave provisions have been identified in half of the national parliaments in the EU. Where these provisions exist, they are often dependent on MPs having the status of public employee or civil servant. Few parliaments provide measures such as proxy and remote voting, or limitations to working hours and sitting schedules that could facilitate better reconciliation of caring and professional responsibilities.

**Area 2: Opportunities to influence parliament's work. Persistent vertical and horizontal segregation remains an issue at the EU and Member State levels. Provisions to ensure safe working conditions and work–life balance are mostly absent.**

- While women MEPs' presence and access to high-level decision-making positions within the European Parliament has improved during the current legislature, both vertical gender segregation (women less likely to chair committees) and horizontal gender segregation (women concentrated in specific committees) persist.
- Within national parliaments, the share of women MPs chairing parliamentary committees remains at 29 %, which means that they are under-represented compared with their share of MPs (33 %). There is also strong evidence of horizontal segregation, with women concentrated in sociocultural functions.
- Provisions to address harassment and sexual harassment are in place in the European Parliament, in contrast with the majority of national parliaments in the EU. Regulations to address other forms of violence against women in parliaments (e.g. cyber violence) are lacking both at the European Parliament level and within national parliaments.

**Area 3: Space on the parliamentary agenda. The European Parliament has made progress in advancing gender equality within its operational activities. Not all national parliaments have gender equality bodies; the use of gender mainstreaming tools is limited in national parliaments.**

- The European Parliament has remained one of the most active elected assemblies in developing, using and applying gender mainstreaming tools in its own activities and reports and supporting their use by the other EU institutions.
- The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) has been mandated as one of 20 European Parliament standing committees with legislative capacity and has a central role in promoting gender equality, women's rights and gender mainstreaming. Yet its impact in overseeing and influencing the work of other committees from a gender mainstreaming perspective is limited, as its amendments and suggestions are rarely incorporated into adopted legal texts. At the national level, most parliaments have a gender equality body, formal and/or informal, but four parliaments do not. In total, 20 national parliaments have parliamentary committees with responsibility for gender equality.
- The European Parliament has adopted a gender equality plan in the current legislature

(2019–2024), and FEMM has supported the development of gender equality action plans in all 20 permanent parliamentary committees, yet they lack monitoring and accountability mechanisms. At the national level, only about a fifth of national parliaments have a gender equality action plan.

- During the current legislative term, the European Parliament has taken important steps to make the EU budget more gender-responsive and introduce gender budgeting tools in the budgeting process. The European Parliament, however, still needs to work on applying gender budgeting within its own budget.
- A quarter of Member States have parliaments that report applying gender budgeting in the process of setting the national budget. The use of other gender mainstreaming tools such as gender impact assessment and gender-responsive public procurement is limited. Among national parliaments, very few use gender-responsive public procurement and gender-sensitive language.

**Area 4: Parliaments’ production of gender-sensitive legislation. The extent to which Member States have developed legislation dealing with gender equality in specific policy areas varies. Gender impact assessments of draft legislation are underused.**

- The European Parliament’s work on legislative issues related to gender equality has promoted gender equality standards across the EU and endorsed the European Commission’s gender equality strategy for 2020–2025 while highlighting the need to strengthen some areas of the strategy and improve accountability mechanisms.
- While all Member States have legislation in place to address and enhance gender equality, not all gender equality issues are equally covered by these laws. Aspects related to gender equality in the economy are the most addressed, while gender equality in the media is the least addressed in national legislation.

- The European Parliament has advocated for gender equality and women’s rights to be better integrated into legislative and policy proposals and continued its work to promote and combat violence against women. As of October 2023, the EU is a party to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Less than a third of national parliaments have binding rules that require gender impact assessment or gender analysis of draft legislation. Less than half of the gender equality parliamentary committees have oversight functions.

**Area 5: Parliaments’ compliance with their symbolic function. Few parliaments adequately recognise their symbolic function in relation to gender equality through policies to enhance the gender sensitivity of physical spaces and communication on gender equality.**

- The European Parliament has taken steps to implement policies that increase the gender sensitivity of its physical space, such as providing childcare facilities accessible to MEPs and parliamentary staff. Childcare facilities have been identified in less than half of national parliaments.
- The European Parliament promotes its work to address gender equality and women’s rights, granting public access to in-person or online events and debates, and making gender-related analyses and reports available on its website.
- Very few national parliaments have policies in place or have taken steps to improve the gender sensitivity of their physical spaces.
- Most national parliaments do not consistently or sufficiently raise awareness of their work on gender equality through their communication with the public. Less than half of national parliaments held at least one event on women’s rights from May 2022 to May 2023.

# Introduction

Ensuring the equal representation of women and men in decision-making has been a long-standing commitment of the EU and an integral part of its efforts to foster progress towards gender equality across its 27 Member States (EU-27). This commitment has been embedded in several EU and international <sup>(2)</sup> policy and legal instruments. It is a key component of the EU gender equality strategy for 2020–2025 (and more specifically of its objective of ‘leading equally throughout society’) and an integral part of the Commission’s priority ‘a new push for European democracy’ <sup>(3)</sup>. Despite some progress towards a more gender-balanced participation of women and men in decision-making throughout the EU <sup>(4)</sup>, women continue to be under-represented in public life, including in parliamentary assemblies <sup>(5)</sup>.

While ensuring the equal and inclusive representation of diverse groups of women and men is essential, achieving a gender-sensitive parliament also requires responding to ‘the needs and interests of both women and men in its composition, structure, operations, meth-

ods and work’ <sup>(6)</sup>. Parliaments are not only important sources of policy and legislation but are also places of employment with implicit cultures and routines <sup>(7)</sup> that have potentially varying consequences for women and men in all their diversity <sup>(8)</sup>. Therefore, gender-sensitive parliaments not only promote full participation of diverse groups of women and men, without ‘substantive, structural or cultural’ barriers <sup>(9)</sup>, but also serve as positive examples of women’s empowerment for wider society.

Acknowledging the role that parliaments, as key decision-making institutions, have in driving changes towards gender equality in all spheres of life, in 2018 EIGE developed a gender-sensitive parliaments self-assessment tool to help parliaments at the European, national and regional levels assess their gender sensitivity and monitor progress towards gender equality <sup>(10)</sup>. This is part of EIGE’s broader efforts to provide evidence and practical tools for parliaments to facilitate gender-responsive institutional change and contribute to more inclusive and better-functioning democratic institutions.

<sup>(2)</sup> Efforts to foster the equal representation of women in decision-making institutions are in line with international commitments to gender equality, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the targets linked to Area G ‘women in power and decision-making’; sustainable development goal (SDG) 5 ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, target 5.5 ‘ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life’; and SDG 16.7 on responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels; and the forthcoming Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women General Recommendation No 40 on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems.

<sup>(3)</sup> European Commission (n.d.), ‘A new push for European democracy’ ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/priorities-2019-2024/new-push-european-democracy_en)).

<sup>(4)</sup> European Parliament (2023), *Women in Politics in the EU – State of play*, briefing, update of a briefing from 2021 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)739383\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/739383/EPRS_BRI(2023)739383_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(5)</sup> See the EIGE Gender Statistics Database data collection on women and men in decision-making (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/wmidm>).

<sup>(6)</sup> EIGE (2018), ‘Gender-sensitive parliaments’, self-assessment tool (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-sensitive-parliaments/what-tool>).

<sup>(7)</sup> EIGE (2016), ‘Institutional transformation’ (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/methods-tools/institutional-transformation>).

<sup>(8)</sup> The phrase ‘women and men in all their diversity’ signifies recognition that gender is closely linked and interacts with age, socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, disability, rural or urban location, sexual orientation and gender identity and other characteristics, and that different groups of women and men may experience unique disadvantages because of these interactions. For example, the intersection of gender with age, race, ethnicity, disability and other characteristics can magnify the barriers to entry and influence the representativeness of parliaments. References to women and men in this report acknowledge the diversity among groups of women and men. Currently, however, there are few data available as evidence. The lack of data reflects the fact that these personal characteristics are considered ‘sensitive’ and subject to EU-level legislation regarding the collection and treatment of related data. Furthermore, parliaments rarely publish disaggregated data on the characteristics of MPs (see Section 1.3).

<sup>(9)</sup> See footnote 6.

<sup>(10)</sup> See footnote 6.

This report presents the findings of EIGE's second EU-wide assessment of the gender sensitivity of the European Parliament and national parliaments in the EU-27. It analyses the data collected on gender sensitivity in parliaments using EIGE's self-assessment framework. EIGE carried out the first assessment in 2019 using the general version of its self-assessment <sup>(11)</sup>. For this second data collection exercise, the general version was complemented by an ad hoc module. The aim of this ad hoc module was to reflect emerging concerns and align the data collection with the most recent legislative and policy developments (including those on work-life balance and care responsibilities, equal pay and pay transparency, and violence against women) <sup>(12)</sup>.

The collection of data on the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU-27 was carried out between May and August 2023 <sup>(13)</sup>, covering both houses (upper and lower) in countries with bicameral parliaments. As far as possible, information was retrieved from publicly available sources (websites and published reports), but national contacts within parliaments also provided information when relevant information could not be found online. To allow for intersectional analysis, available data disaggregated by sex and other variables related to gender-sensitive parliaments were mapped and the feasibility of including

these data in the study was assessed. The collected data were quality assured for completeness, compliance with guidelines and comparability across Member States. Data were also cross-checked against the 2019 data to identify changes and possible inconsistencies <sup>(14)</sup>.

To provide an overview of parliaments' gender sensitivity across the EU and identify areas where more action is needed, this report examines the five areas in EIGE's gender-sensitive parliaments self-assessment framework. **Area 1** (Chapter 1 of this report) addresses the extent to which women and men can enter parliament and take an active role in decision-making. **Area 2** (Chapter 2) focuses on the opportunities available to women and men to influence working procedures inside parliaments. **Area 3** (Chapter 3) analyses the extent to which women's interests and concerns are given adequate space on parliamentary agendas and are integrated into the parliaments' operational activities, while **Area 4** (Chapter 4) reports on the extent to which parliaments produce gender-sensitive legislation across all policy areas that affect and benefit women and men equally. **Area 5** (Chapter 5) examines the extent to which parliaments are aware of and attend to the symbolic meanings conveyed within and by the institution, particularly in its dealings with the public. Finally, conclusions are presented in Chapter 6.

<sup>(11)</sup> See EIGE (2019), *Gender equality in national parliaments across the EU and the European Parliament*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-national-parliaments-across-eu-and-european-parliament>); and EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (n.d.) '[https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genmain/genmain\\_eqpol/genmain\\_eqpol\\_gsp](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genmain/genmain_eqpol/genmain_eqpol_gsp)'.

<sup>(12)</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents>); Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>); European Commission (2022), Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence, COM(2022) 105 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105>).

<sup>(13)</sup> While data collection took place between May and August 2023, and covered May 2022 to May 2023, data for some questions were extracted from EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (e.g. number of women and men among MPs (national and European), leaders and members of parliamentary committees, leaders of major political parties). In these cases, to ensure the highest relevance of the findings, the most recent data available at the time of the analysis were used and specific reference dates are included alongside associated figures.

<sup>(14)</sup> For a comprehensive overview of the methodology for the 2023 assessment of the gender sensitivity of the European Parliament and national parliaments in the EU, see EIGE (2024), *2023 Data Collection on Gender-sensitive Parliaments – Methodological report* (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/2023-data-collection-gender-sensitive-parliaments-methodological-report>), and EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (n.d.), 'Gender-sensitive parliaments' ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genmain/genmain\\_eqpol/genmain\\_eqpol\\_gsp](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/genmain/genmain_eqpol/genmain_eqpol_gsp)).

# 1. Area 1: Women and men have equal opportunities to enter parliament

A fundamental principle of democracy, and so of gender equality, is that women and men should have equal rights to participate in politics and contribute to the decision-making processes that affect their daily lives. Area 1 examines the equality of opportunities for women and men to enter parliament, focusing on the following:

- whether the equal rights of women and men to participate in political life are enshrined in the constitution or legal framework of the country;
- the numbers of women and men among MPs;
- the numbers of women and men among candidates for election to parliament;
- whether gender quotas are applied to the electoral system to try to ensure a better gender balance among candidates and, if so, how;
- the numbers of women and men among the leaders of the major political parties that are responsible for selecting the candidates for election.

## 1.1. The European Parliament is already gender balanced; the next step is to achieve gender parity

**The last round of European elections, in May 2019, saw the European Parliament achieve gender balance for the first time,**

with women accounting for 304 out of the 747 elected Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) (41 %) <sup>(15)</sup>. In doing so, the parliament established itself as 'one of the world's most gender-balanced representative assemblies' <sup>(16)</sup>. Following the post-Brexit restructuring in January 2020, several countries were allocated additional seats in line with the principle of proportional representation. The selection of new MEPs to fill these seats, combined with some midterm changes in personnel, resulted in the share of women MEPs falling to 39 % in the second half of 2022. More recently, further midterm changes reversed this decline, restoring gender balance (40 % women in November 2023) <sup>(17)</sup>.

The next challenge is for the European Parliament to achieve gender parity (50 % women, 50 % men) and the forthcoming elections in June 2024 <sup>(18)</sup> represent a crucial opportunity to advance towards this target. However, since the elections are organised in each Member State according to national electoral rules, this challenge will have to be met at the national level.

The key to getting more women elected to parliament is to ensure that they are adequately represented among the candidates for election, not just numerically compared with men, but also in terms of visibility to voters, as this influences their chances of being elected. Equal visibility can be assured, for example, by using 'zipper' lists, in which women and men's names alternate in the list. This responsibility primarily lies with political parties, which both select the candidates and determine how and where they are presented for election.

<sup>(15)</sup> Situation at the time of the constitutive session of the new parliament in July 2019.

<sup>(16)</sup> European Parliament (2023), *Towards Gender Balance in the European Elections*, briefing ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751447/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)751447\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751447/EPRS_BRI(2023)751447_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(17)</sup> EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2023), 'European Parliament: President and members' ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_parl\\_wmid\\_eurparl/line](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl_wmid_eurparl/line)).

<sup>(18)</sup> European Parliament (n.d.), 'European elections – 6–9 June 2024' (<https://elections.europa.eu/en/>).

Political parties across the EU have internal rules or procedures, including voluntary gender quotas<sup>(19)</sup>, that aim to ensure gender balance in the selection and presentation of candidates. For example, in Cyprus – one of the Member States with the lowest shares of women in both the national parliament (14 % in Q3 2023)<sup>(20)</sup> and the European Parliament (17 % in November 2023)<sup>(21)</sup> – two of the six major parties have a gender quota (both at 30 %) that applies to candidates for election<sup>(22)</sup>. The difficulties in ensuring the equal representation of women and men are exacerbated by the fact that there are different electoral systems in each country. Even if many have similar characteristics (e.g. proportional representation versus first past the post; single-seat versus multi-seat constituencies), there are also detailed rules specific to each country and house of parliament<sup>(23)</sup>.

There is an ongoing debate about the possibility of introducing overarching EU-level legislation that would ensure a uniform approach across countries for the election of MEPs and facilitate the inclusion of gender equality provisions.

In 2022, the European Parliament adopted a proposal for a Council regulation on the election of the Members of the European Parliament, to set up common rules for European Parliament elections in the Member States, including through quotas and zipper lists<sup>(24)</sup>. These changes, however, require unanimous support from Member States and to date the changes have not been agreed<sup>(25)</sup>.

**Ten Member States already have legislative gender quotas applicable to European elections:** Belgium, France and Italy require 50 % representation of each gender; Greece, Spain, Croatia, Luxembourg, Portugal and Slovenia at least 40 %; and Poland at least 35 % (Figure 1). In most cases the quota threshold is the same for both European and national elections but the threshold for European elections is higher in Italy (50 % versus 40 %) and Slovenia (40 % versus 35 %). Meanwhile, Ireland has a 40 % quota for national elections but none for European elections<sup>(26)</sup>.

<sup>(19)</sup> International IDEA (n.d.), 'Gender Quotas Database – Voluntary political party quotas' (<https://www.idea.int/data-tools/data/gender-quotas-database/voluntary-overview>).

<sup>(20)</sup> EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2023), 'National parliaments: Presidents and members' ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_parl\\_wmid\\_natparl/bar/year:2023-Q3/geo:EU28,EU27\\_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,EE,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,IS,LI,NO,UK,ME,MK,AL,RS,TR,BA,XK/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:MEMB\\_PARL/EGROUP:PARL\\_SINGLOW](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl_wmid_natparl/bar/year:2023-Q3/geo:EU28,EU27_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,EE,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,IS,LI,NO,UK,ME,MK,AL,RS,TR,BA,XK/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:MEMB_PARL/EGROUP:PARL_SINGLOW)).

<sup>(21)</sup> EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2023), 'European Parliament: President and members' ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_parl\\_wmid\\_eurparl](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl_wmid_eurparl)).

<sup>(22)</sup> The six major parties (i.e. those with at least 5 % of seats in the national parliament) are listed in the 2023 EIGE data collection on major political parties ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wmid\\_mapping\\_polpart.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/wmid_mapping_polpart.pdf)). Information on the quotas is provided by International IDEA (see footnote 19). The 20 % quota mentioned for the Democratic Party appears to refer to its own internal structures rather than to electoral candidates.

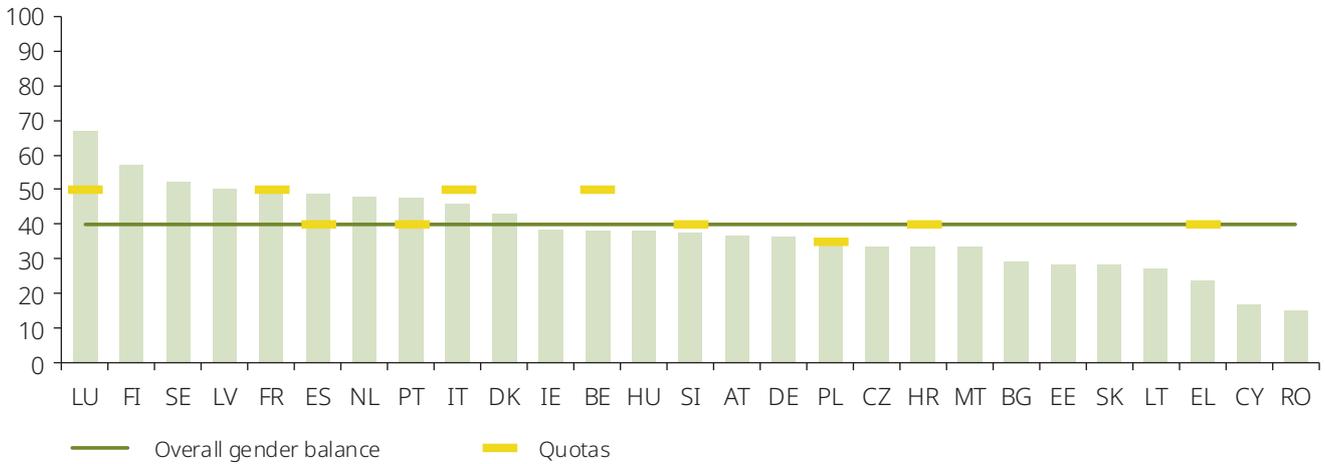
<sup>(23)</sup> See IPU Parline (n.d.), 'Parliamentary elections' (<https://data.ipu.org/elections>).

<sup>(24)</sup> Council of the European Union (2022), Proposal for a Council regulation on the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom and the act concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that decision, interinstitutional file 2022/0902(APP), Brussels ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST\\_9333\\_2022\\_INIT](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9333_2022_INIT)).

<sup>(25)</sup> For more information about this debate, see European Parliament (2023), *Towards Gender Balance in the European Elections*, briefing ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751447/EPRS\\_BRI\(2023\)751447\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2023/751447/EPRS_BRI(2023)751447_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(26)</sup> Note that, although not a candidate quota, MT has a post-election corrective mechanism that allocates additional seats to the under-represented sex in the case that less than 40 % is elected to the national parliament. This approach cannot be applied to the Maltese European elections.

**Figure 1. Share of women MEPs by Member State and legislated gender quotas, November 2023 (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE's Gender Statistics Database.

In addition to the countries with formal quotas, legislation in Romania mandates that party lists for European elections include both women and men <sup>(27)</sup>. Although this means that the proportion of either gender cannot be zero (all-men or all-women lists can be rejected), it is not a formal quota in terms of applying fixed minimum threshold and the rules are yet to produce a positive effect – currently just 5 out of 33 Romanian MEPs are women (15 %).

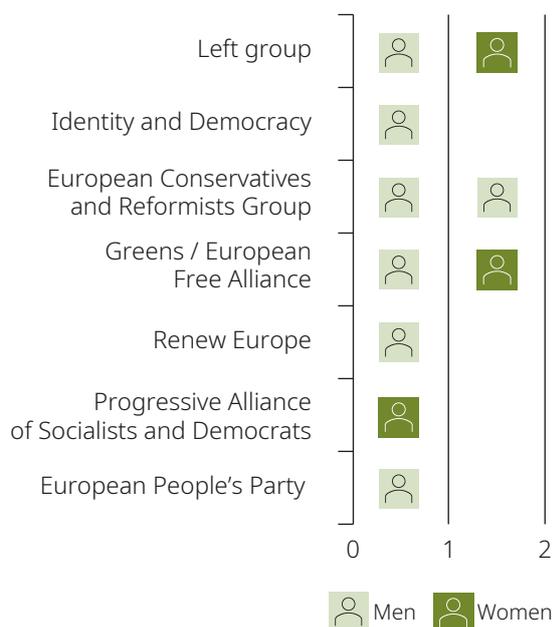
Quotas are effective mechanisms to boost the representation of women. Of the 10 Member States that had at least 40 % of each gender among their MEPs in November 2023 (DK, ES, FR, IT, LV, LU, NL, PT, FI, SE), 5 have a legislative quota in place (ES, FR, IT, LU, PT). In contrast, of the seven Member States in which women account for less than 30 % of MEPs (BG, EE, EL, CY, LT, RO, SK), only Greece currently has a quota. To be sure that the quota is reached, there must be provisions to ensure that non-compliant lists are automatically and irrevocably rejected, and rules must exist to ensure that women and men candidates are given equal visibility in candidate lists (e.g. through

zippering, where women and men alternate on the list) or placed equally in winnable seats. The Greek quota is purely numerical (requiring a minimum of 40 % of women or men candidates) and has no associated rules to ensure visibility and fair placement of candidates. The limited success of the quota to date, with 24 % women MEPs, serves as a clear reminder of the need for these rules.

**The leaders of political groups in the European Parliament are still mostly men.** Political activities within the European Parliament are coordinated by seven political groups, which bring together MEPs from across the EU based on their political affiliations. Although 3 of the 7 groups have a woman leader or co-leader, overall, men hold 7 of the 10 leadership positions (Figure 2). The Greens / European Free Alliance has two co-leaders, which must be a woman and a man. The Left group also has a man and a woman as co-leaders, while the European Conservatives and Reformists Group have two men. Among the four groups with a single leader, only the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats currently has a woman as its leader.

<sup>(27)</sup> Law No 33/2007 on the organisation of the elections for the European Parliament (<https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/78622>) requires that candidate lists 'ensure the representation of both sexes' (Article 16(8)) and provides that the Central Electoral Bureau can refuse to accept any list that does not comply with this requirement (Article 16(11)).

**Figure 2. Leaders of political groups in the European Parliament by sex, 2023**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on the website of each political group, last accessed in December 2023.

## 1.2. Slow progress has been made towards gender-balanced representation in national parliaments

Just over half of Member States have a legal framework that explicitly gives women and men equal access to parliament (BE, BG, CZ, DE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LU, PL, PT, RO, SI). These Member States have an explicit reference to gender equality in their constitutions or equivalent legal frameworks as the foundation for ensuring that women and men have equal rights to participate in political

life. In some cases, the reference to gender equality is directly made in relation to politics and/or public life. For example, Article 16 of the Constitution of Ireland <sup>(28)</sup> provides that anyone aged at least 21, and explicitly 'without distinction of sex', is eligible for membership of the lower house of parliament (Dáil Éireann). The upper house (Seanad Éireann) is not directly elected but candidates have to be eligible for membership of the lower house, for which the principle of equal access for women and men is already established. In other cases, the reference to gender is made first as one of universal equality for citizens, all of whom are then given equal right to participate in politics. For example, the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia affirms gender equality as one of its highest constitutional values (Article 3) and includes specific reference to gender in making all citizens equal (Article 14) <sup>(29)</sup>. Articles 44 and 45 then give all citizens equal right to participate in public life and to vote. These rights are reaffirmed in Articles 5 and 6 of the 2003 Gender Equality Act <sup>(30)</sup>, which define gender equality and discrimination on the grounds of sex and make specific reference to equal participation in all spheres of public and private life.

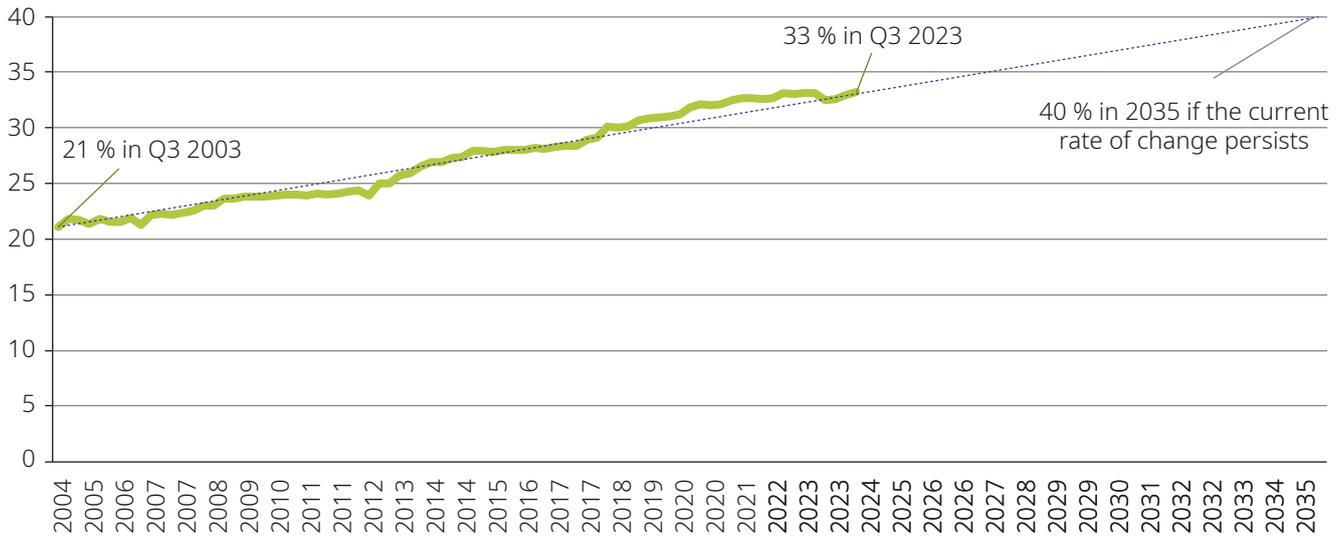
Over the past two decades, the proportion of women among members of national parliaments (all houses) in the EU has risen from 21 % to 33 % (Figure 3), which means that two thirds of MPs are men. The increase of 12 percentage points (pp) in 20 years represents an average increase of 0.6 pp/year. At this rate of change, it will take another 11 years to achieve gender balance (at least 40 % of each gender) and 28 years to achieve gender parity (50 % of each gender).

<sup>(28)</sup> Office of the Attorney General (2020), Constitution of Ireland (<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html>).

<sup>(29)</sup> Committee on the Constitution, Standing Orders and Political System of the Croatian Parliament (2010), Constitution of the Republic of Croatia ([https://www.sabor.hr/sites/default/files/uploads/inline-files/CONSTITUTION\\_CROATIA.pdf](https://www.sabor.hr/sites/default/files/uploads/inline-files/CONSTITUTION_CROATIA.pdf)).

<sup>(30)</sup> Republic of Croatia (2003), Gender Equality Act (<https://www.wex.ilo.org/dyn/natlex2/natlex2/files/download/64728/HRV64728%20English.pdf>).

**Figure 3. Share of women among members of national parliaments (all houses) in the EU, 2003-Q3 to 2023-Q3 (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#).

While steady progress has been achieved since 2003, there have been challenges along the way, including democratic backsliding and the backlash against women's rights, which are key impediments to gender equality and women's representation in politics <sup>(31)</sup>. In particular, the shift in Europe towards more right-wing populist politics and the rise of anti-gender movements promoting the traditional family model, which positions women primarily as mothers and homemakers, risk not only slowing progress but even undoing some of the gains that have been made <sup>(32)</sup>. In the 4 years since EIGE's first collection of data on gender-sensitive parliaments in 2019, progress has been slower than the 20-year average (1.3 pp from 31.8 % to 33.1 %, or an average of 0.3 pp/year) because of a dip at the end of 2022, which largely reflected

the outcome of the snap election held in Italy in September 2022 <sup>(33)</sup>.

Figure 4 shows the proportion of women in every house of parliament in the EU in 2019 and 2023, working clockwise from the lowest share (in 2023) in the unicameral parliament of Hungary (14 %) to the highest share in the upper house of Austria (48 %). In most cases, the share of women in 2023 (orange line) is higher than in 2019 (blue line), although there are exceptions (e.g. lower houses in ES and IT, upper house in BE). In countries with bicameral parliaments, some show a similar gender balance in both houses, which therefore follow in quick succession round the radar chart (e.g. BE, DE, ES, RO). In others, there is a significant gap between the two

<sup>(31)</sup> UN (2020), *Democratic Backsliding and the Backlash against Women's Rights: Understanding the current challenges for feminist politics*, New York (<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Discussion-paper-Democratic-backsliding-and-the-backlash-against-womens-rights-en.pdf>). Further examples of discussion on the issue include Celis, K. and Childs, S. (2020), *Feminist Democratic Representation*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (<https://www.research.ed.ac.uk/en/publications/feminist-democratic-representation>); and Mostov, J. (2021), 'Populism is always gendered and dangerous', *Frontiers in Sociology*, Vol. 5 (<https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2020.625385/full>).

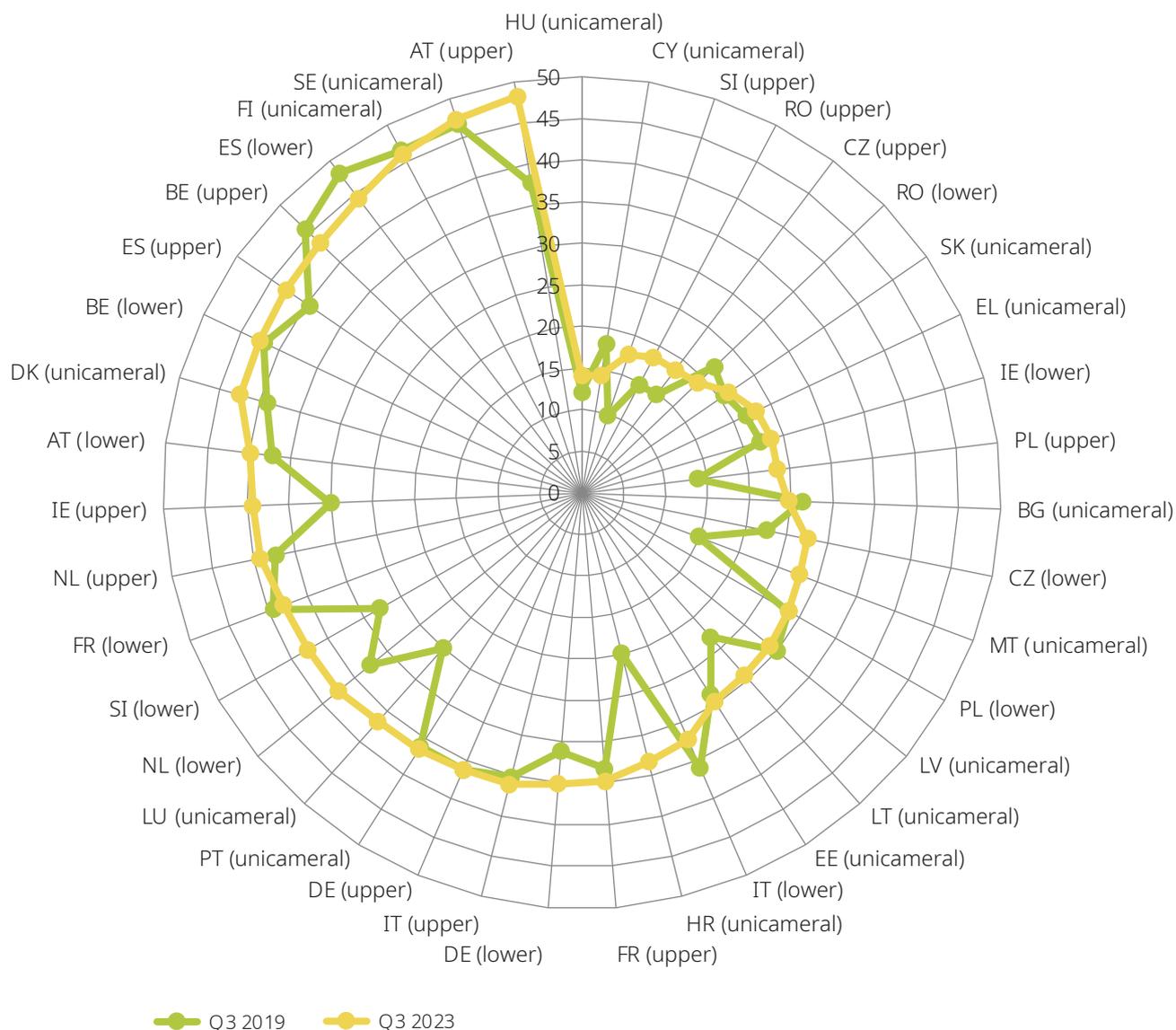
<sup>(32)</sup> EIGE (2022), *The EU's evolving legal and policy approaches to gender equality*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/eus-evolving-legal-and-policy-approaches-gender-equality>).

<sup>(33)</sup> The change observed at the EU level derived from two factors. Firstly, as it was the first election in IT since a constitutional reform made in 2020, the number of MPs was reduced by more than a third from 945 (630 in the Chamber of Deputies and 315 in the Senate) to 600 (400 and 200, respectively). This change reduced the weight of IT in the aggregate number of MPs in EU national parliaments. Since IT had an above average share of women MPs prior to the election (36 %), this will have reduced the share at the EU level. Secondly, the proportion of women elected fell from 36 % to 33 %, thus compounding the drag on the EU-level figure.

houses, most notably Slovenia (38 % in the lower house versus 18 % in the upper house)

and Ireland (39 % in the upper house versus 23 % in the lower house).

**Figure 4. Share of women amongst MPs in all houses of national parliaments in the EU, 2019-Q3 and 2023-Q3**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE’s Gender Statistics Database.

The most pronounced improvements since 2019 (10 pp or more) are seen in the unicameral parliaments of Croatia, Luxembourg and Malta and in the upper house of Austria, but the way in which these changes have come about are quite different.

**Croatia** has a legislative quota requiring at least 40 % of each gender among candidates. However, there are no effective sanctions in the case of non-compliance and no rules regarding the placement order of candidate lists. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) election monitoring

report<sup>(34)</sup> indicates that 20 % of party lists for the 2020 election failed to meet the minimum requirement, including all 11 lists put forward by the governing party (Croatian Democratic Union), and that women were placed first in just 12 of 50 candidate lists. Although women accounted for 42 % of the 2 500 candidates overall<sup>(35)</sup>, they won just 35 out of 151 seats (23 %), only a small improvement on the previous legislature (19 %), leading OSCE to call for stronger enforcement of the quota and the addition of rules to alternate candidates<sup>(36)</sup>. The sudden improvement in the level of women's representation occurred only later when the new government was appointed<sup>(37)</sup>, after which the share of women members increased to 31 %<sup>(38)</sup>.

In **Malta**, the 2022 election saw just four women directly elected to the 65 mandatory seats in parliament<sup>(39)</sup>. However, the corrective mechanism introduced into the constitution in April 2021<sup>(40)</sup> allowed for up to 12 additional seats to be created if either sex represented less than 40 % of members. The combination of this adjustment with some casual elections resulted in the number of women members increasing from 10 out of 67 (15 %) prior to the election to 22 out of 79 (28 %) afterwards.

In contrast, the changes seen in **Luxembourg** and **Austria** are the result of progressive changes in elected representatives during

the term of a parliament. In both cases, the parliaments are relatively small so that just a few cases of a man being replaced by a woman (or vice versa) can make a significant difference to the gender balance. The Federal Council in Austria (the upper house of the parliament), for example, is not directly elected and has 61 members elected separately from the state parliaments (*Landtage*) so that changes occur each time there is a state election. The number of women members increased from 23 in 2019 (38 %) to 29 in 2023 (48 %). Luxembourg did not have an election in the period covered by the data (up to Q3 2023), but the number of women members still increased from 15 out of 60 (25 %) in Q3 2019 to 22 out of 60 in Q3 2023 (37 %).

### 1.3. The gender gap in national parliaments increases with age

In 11 national parliaments, at least one chamber publishes some information about the age of its members (BE, HR, IT, LT, HU, NL, AT, PL, PT, FI, SE) but this is often in isolation (age only) rather than combined with gender (disaggregated by both sex and age). A small number of parliaments provide biographical information about the level/field of education of members (e.g. EE, HR, NL) but information on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or disability is almost non-existent, despite widespread

<sup>(34)</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2020), *Republic of Croatia – Parliamentary elections 5 July 2020: ODIHR election assessment mission final report*, Warsaw ([https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/4/465120\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/4/465120_0.pdf)).

<sup>(35)</sup> IPU Parline (2020), 'Croatia – Croatian parliament: Election results' ([https://data.ipu.org/node/42/elections?chamber\\_id=13374&election\\_id=70453](https://data.ipu.org/node/42/elections?chamber_id=13374&election_id=70453)).

<sup>(36)</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2020), *Republic of Croatia – Parliamentary elections 5 July 2020: ODIHR election assessment mission final report*, Warsaw ([https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/4/465120\\_0.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/4/465120_0.pdf)).

<sup>(37)</sup> IPU (2021), *Women in Parliament in 2020 – The year in review*, Geneva ([https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/2020-women\\_in\\_parliament\\_en.pdf](https://www.iknowpolitics.org/sites/default/files/2020-women_in_parliament_en.pdf)).

<sup>(38)</sup> EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2023), 'National parliaments: Presidents and members', data for Q3 2020 ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_parl\\_wmid\\_natparl/bar/year:2020-Q3/geo:EU28,EU27\\_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,E,E,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,IS,LI,NO,UK,ME,MK,AL,RS,TR,BA,XX/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:MEMB\\_PARL/EGROUP:PARL\\_SINGLOW](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_parl_wmid_natparl/bar/year:2020-Q3/geo:EU28,EU27_2020,IPA,EEA,BE,BG,CZ,DK,DE,E,E,IE,EL,ES,FR,HR,IT,CY,LV,LT,LU,HU,MT,NL,AT,PL,PT,RO,SI,SK,FI,SE,IS,LI,NO,UK,ME,MK,AL,RS,TR,BA,XX/sex:M,W/UNIT:PC/POSITION:MEMB_PARL/EGROUP:PARL_SINGLOW)).

<sup>(39)</sup> IPU Parline (2022), 'Malta – House of Representatives: Data on women' ([https://data.ipu.org/node/106/data-on-women?chamber\\_id=13459](https://data.ipu.org/node/106/data-on-women?chamber_id=13459)).

<sup>(40)</sup> Parliament of Malta (2021), An act to amend the Constitution of Malta and the General Elections Act to ensure de facto equality between men and women in politics, Act No XX of 2021, *Government Gazette of Malta*, No 20 610–20.04.2021, 20 April 2021, new Article 52A (<https://legislation.mt/eli/act/2021/20>).

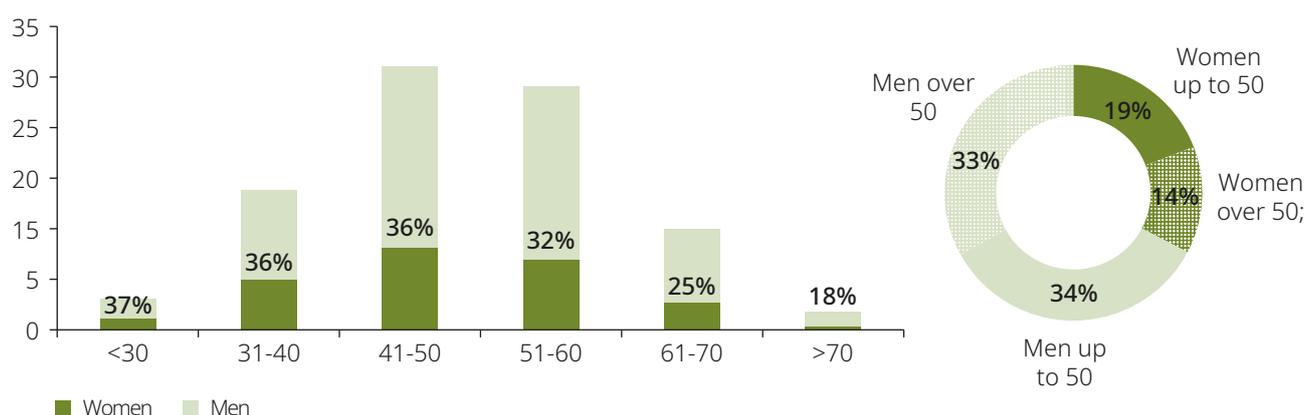
under-representation of groups such as Roma women <sup>(41)</sup> and women with disabilities <sup>(42)</sup>. As an example, however, estimates made after the 2019 European elections indicate that racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 10 % of the EU's population but only 5 % of MEPs, a figure that fell to 4 % after Brexit because the United Kingdom had better than average minority representation <sup>(43)</sup>.

When broken down by age group, the proportion of women elected to national parliaments in the EU remains more or less consistent up to the age of 50 (36–37 %) but decreases thereafter, particularly after age 60 (Figure 5). Women account for one in four MPs aged between 61 and 70 (25 %) and less than one in five MPs aged over 70. Strikingly, there are slightly more

men MPs in each of the under-50 and over-50 age groups than there are women MPs in total.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) has highlighted the lack of young people in parliament, noting that – globally – people aged under 30 account for less than 3 % of parliamentarians compared to 18 % of the population being aged 20–29 <sup>(44)</sup>. The EU does marginally better, with 4 % of MPs aged under 30 (out of which 37 % are women). The highest level of representation achieved for this age-group is just 10 % (upper house in Belgium and unicameral parliament of Malta), and there are six bicameral parliaments in which the upper house has no members in this age-group (CZ, DE, FR, IT, PL, RO).

**Figure 5. Share of women and men elected to national parliaments in the EU by age, 2023**



NB: Data reflect the sum of elected members of 34 of the 39 houses of the 27 national parliaments in the EU (15 of which are unicameral and 12 bicameral). Data are not available for the unicameral parliaments of Greece and Croatia or for the upper houses of Ireland, France and the Netherlands. Data are based on the most recent election results (where relevant) and were updated by the IPU on 1 August 2023.

Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on IPU Parline data on age.

<sup>(41)</sup> See, for example, OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2017), *Summary report of the workshop strengthening diverse leadership, participation and representation of Roma and Sinti, including women and youth, in public and political life*, European Parliament, Brussels (<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/f/342211.pdf>); and Reljić, M. (2023), 'Whose decision is it anyway? Romani women as leaders and decision makers', European Roma Rights Centre, 6 June (<https://www.errc.org/news/whose-decision-is-it-anyway-romani-women-as-leaders-and-decision-makers>).

<sup>(42)</sup> See, for example, UN Women (2019), *Leadership and Political Participation of Women with Disabilities*, New York (<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2019/Brief-Leadership-and-political-participation-of-women-with-disabilities-en.pdf>).

<sup>(43)</sup> European Network against Racism (2019), *ENAR's Election Analysis: Ethnic minorities in the new European Parliament 2019–2025* ([https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019\\_06-Racial-diversity-EU-Parliament-elected-MEPs.pdf](https://www.enar-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019_06-Racial-diversity-EU-Parliament-elected-MEPs.pdf)). Of the 36 racial or ethnic minority MEPs elected in 2019, 19 were men and 17 were women.

<sup>(44)</sup> IPU (2023), *Youth Participation in National Parliaments: 2023*, Geneva (<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/reports/2023-10/youth-participation-in-national-parliaments-2023>).

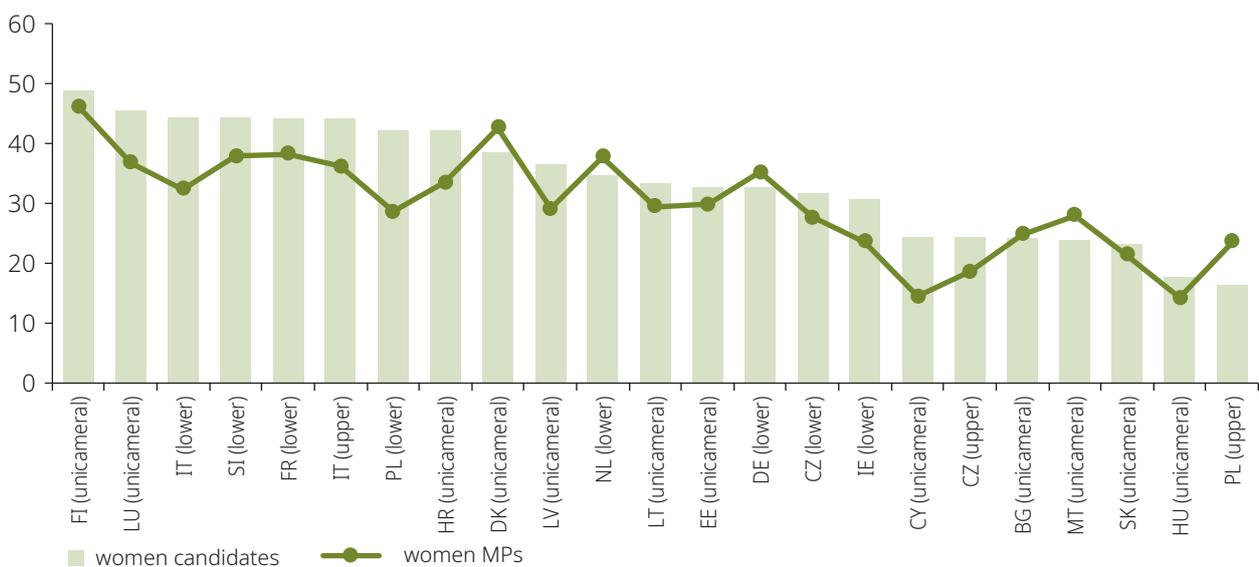
### 1.4. Women account for a third of parliamentary candidates – higher quota levels are needed

A crucial first step in improving the representation of women in parliament is to increase the number of women standing for election. Yet women account for an average of just a third (34 %) of candidates <sup>(45)</sup> across the 20 Member States (23 houses of parliament) for which data on the numbers of women and men candidates are available for the most recent parliamentary election <sup>(46)</sup>. This represents no change from 2019 data, although it should be recognised that for some countries the data could be the same because there has been no further election in the intervening period. Statistical data showing the gender balance among candidates for elections to the national parliament is not readily available in all countries. Even if lists of candidates – either overall or by constituency – are published, the lack of readily available statistics represents an important information gap in the pursuit of gender equality. For example, Spain publishes the full list of candidates after checking

that the legal obligation to have at least 40 % of women and men for every five seats has been met, but there are no readily available data on the overall numbers of women and men candidates.

To achieve any given target for the proportion of women in parliament (e.g. 40 %), it is necessary to have a higher quota level for candidates (e.g. 50 %). While the relationship is not perfect, a comparison of the share of women among candidates and among elected MPs (Figure 6) clearly shows that, the more women candidates there are, the greater the chances of getting more women elected. This suggests that, currently, not enough women are being put forward for election. This immediately reduces the chance of achieving a good gender balance in parliament. In addition, the data shows that in most cases (17 of 23 houses) the proportion of women MPs elected is smaller than the proportion of women candidates. For example, in the October 2023 parliamentary elections in Luxembourg, where there is a 40 % quota, women made up 43 % of candidates but only 30 % of those directly elected as MPs (18 out of 60). This evidence offers strong support for gender parity quotas.

**Figure 6. Share of women among candidates for the most recent election and among elected MPs in Q3 2023 (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023; data on candidates from IPU Parline; data on MPs from EIGE’s Gender Statistics Database.

<sup>(45)</sup> The dataset compiled for EIGE’s latest assessment of gender-sensitive parliaments is missing data on candidates for nine houses of parliament in seven Member States (BE, EL, ES, AT, PT, RO, SE). In addition, data on candidates are not relevant for seven upper houses of parliament in which members are either indirectly elected (BE, IE, FR, NL, AT, SI) or appointed (DE).

<sup>(46)</sup> Data are available for BG, CZ (both houses), DK, DE (lower house), EE, IE (lower house), FR (lower house), HR, IT (both houses), CY, LV, LT, LU, HU, MT, NL (lower house), PL (both houses), SI (lower house), SK and FI. Data sourced from the IPU Parline website, supplemented by national sources where possible.

Well-designed and enforced legislative gender quotas are powerful drivers of change. They work best when they include provisions for placement and/or sanctions for non-compliance<sup>(47)</sup>. In 2023, 11 Member States had some form of legislative candidate quota in place (BE, IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, IT, LU, PL, PT, SI)<sup>(48)</sup>, all of which specify some form of sanction for non-application of quotas: invalidation of the candidate list (BE, EL, ES, PL, SI), direct financial penalties (IT, HR, LU), or cuts in funding (FR, IE, PT). Voluntary party quotas can also help but need to be widely used (i.e. by all political parties putting candidates forward for election) and accompanied by a supportive institutional framework<sup>(49)</sup>. There is evidence that a long history of widespread use of voluntary party quotas across the political spectrum (e.g. SE in the EU, but also Iceland and Norway) has contributed to a sustained gender balance in parliament (at least 40 % women) while countries in which only isolated parties have quotas still have a gender-imbalanced parliament (e.g. HU, RO)<sup>(50)</sup>. It's also worth noting that, of the 11 Member States that have at least 35 % women in parliament (including both houses for bicameral systems), six (DK, DE, NL, AT, FI, SE) have reached this position without any need for recourse to quota legislation<sup>(51)</sup>.

**There are no 'nested' quotas that address gender and minority status together**<sup>(52)</sup>. While there are a few cases (within the EU) of countries that have specific measures to promote political participation of minority

groups (e.g. HR, CY, HU, SE), the rules do not have any specific provisions addressing the participation of women from the targeted groups<sup>(53)</sup>. This may derive from a tendency for differential treatment, with quotas being used to tackle gender disparities while minorities get reserved seats (e.g. HR) or even an independent parliament (e.g. the Sámi parliament in SE). The intersecting effects of being both a woman and a member of an under-represented group are thus being overlooked and this represents an important gap in current provisions to promote gender-balanced representation.

**In May 2023, women accounted for 27 % of the leaders of major political parties in the EU**<sup>(54)</sup>, a noticeable increase from 16 % in 2019.

Despite a clear improvement across the EU as a whole, three out of every four political parties in Member States are still led by men. Political parties are considered the gatekeepers of gender equality among selected candidates and elected representatives and, ultimately, in parliament as a whole<sup>(55)</sup>. This is because political parties have primary responsibility for the selection of candidates and how they are presented to voters in terms of how they are distributed on candidate lists or around winnable constituencies. The adoption of internal gender policies that address candidate selection and positioning are extremely important in that respect. Another key test of a party's commitment to gender equality is the extent to which it promotes gender equality in leadership, and the evidence is clear that there is still a significant shortfall in this area.

<sup>(47)</sup> See, for example, IPU (2023), *Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) written submission in view of a future CEDAW general recommendation on equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems (GR 40)*, Geneva (<https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/general-discussion/2023/gr40-ipu.pdf>).

<sup>(48)</sup> Note the exceptional case (in the EU) of MT, where there is no quota for candidates but instead a post-election corrective mechanism that allocates extra seats to the under-represented gender.

<sup>(49)</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Kotevska, B. and Pavlou, V. (2023), *Promotion of Gender Balance in Political Decision-making*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/749712>).

<sup>(50)</sup> See footnote 49.

<sup>(51)</sup> Statista, Dyvik, E. H. (2023), 'Women in the Nordic countries – Statistics & facts' (<https://www.statista.com/topics/9893/women-in-the-nordic-countries/#topicOverview>).

<sup>(52)</sup> See footnote 49.

<sup>(53)</sup> See footnote 49.

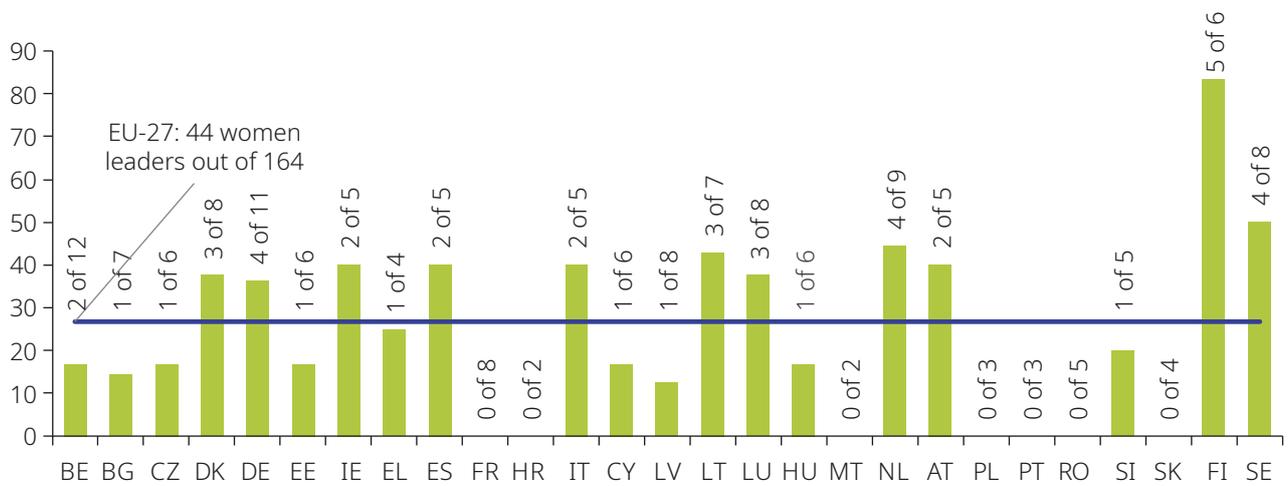
<sup>(54)</sup> 'Major political parties' are political parties with at least 5 % of seats in the national parliament (of either house in the case of a bicameral system) at the time of observation. EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (2023), 'Major political parties: Leader and deputy leaders' ([https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm\\_pol\\_part\\_\\_wmid\\_polpart/metadata](https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/indicator/wmidm_pol_part__wmid_polpart/metadata)).

<sup>(55)</sup> See, for example, Maguire, S. (2018), 'Barriers to women entering parliament and local government', *Institute for Policy Research Report* (<https://www.bath.ac.uk/publications/barriers-to-women-entering-parliament-and-local-government/attachments/barriers-to-women.pdf>).

In seven Member States, there are no women leading any major political party (FR, HR, MT, PL, PT, RO, SK), and in eight just one party is led by a woman (BG, CZ, EE, EL, CY, LV, HU, SI). The list of countries with no women leaders does, however, include the four countries with the smallest number of major parties (two in HR and MT, and three in PL and PT). Sweden is the only country in which there is parity, with women and men each leading four of the

eight major political parties (Figure 7). The most notable changes occurred in Finland, where women led five of the six major parties in 2023, compared with just one in 2019, and in Lithuania, where the seven major parties had no women leaders in 2019 but three in 2023. The number of women party leaders fell only in Belgium (from 3 out of 12 to 2 out of 12)<sup>(56)</sup> and Portugal (from 2 out of 5 to 0 out of 3).

**Figure 7. Proportion of women leading major political parties in the EU, 2023 (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE's Gender Statistics Database. The list of parties covered in each country as of May 2023 is available as a [mapping table](#).

<sup>(56)</sup> The count includes co-leaders equally. In May 2023, Ecolo and the Green Party (Groen) both had co-leaders, each having one woman and one man.

## 2. Area 2: Women and men have equal opportunities to influence parliament's working procedures

A gender-sensitive parliament allows all elected MPs equal access and opportunities to contribute to and influence the legislative process. The development of policy and legislation benefits from diverse inputs that ensure a gender perspective in representing the concerns, perspectives and needs of diverse groups of women and men. Area 2 assesses the extent to which women and men have equal opportunities to participate in and influence the day-to-day work of the parliament. It considers the:

- gender balance among the leaders of parliamentary committees, which have a critical role in shaping the policies and legislation produced by parliaments;
- existence and strength of rules, policies and operating procedures allowing women MPs and parliamentary staff to work and share their opinions alongside their men colleagues without fear of gender-based violence, sex-based discrimination, and harassment, including sexual harassment;
- extent to which parliamentary working practices and rules support MPs and staff in balancing work and caring/family responsibilities;
- procedures in place to ensure the principle of equal pay for equal work, through addressing the issue of the gender pay gap

and the implementation of pay transparency measures.

### 2.1. The access of women MEPs to top leadership positions has improved, but gender segregation in committees remains

**The Bureau of the European Parliament has seen an increase in women's representation.** Since January 2022, Roberta Metsola has been the President of the European Parliament, and she is the third woman ever to hold this position<sup>(57)</sup>. Overall, 8 of the 14 vice-presidents are women, up from 5 in the previous term<sup>(58)</sup>. Three of the five members of the College of Quaestors are women<sup>(59)</sup>. Thus, women MEPs constitute the majority of the members of the current Bureau of the European Parliament, with women holding the position of President, 57 % of the vice-president positions and 60 % of the quaestors positions (Figure 8). The Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament state that 'when electing the President, Vice-Presidents and Quaestors, account should be taken of the need to ensure an overall fair representation of the political views, as well as gender and geographical balance'<sup>(60)</sup>. This rule should also be applied when it comes to election of the leadership of committees.

<sup>(57)</sup> European Parliament (2019), 'Women in the European Parliament (infographics)' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/topics/en/article/20190226STO28804/women-in-the-european-parliament-infographics>).

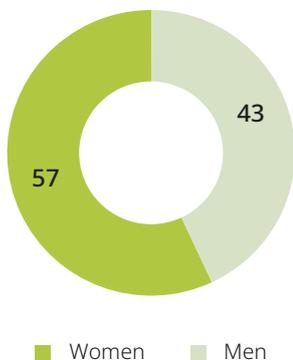
<sup>(58)</sup> See footnote 57.

<sup>(59)</sup> Body in charge of administrative and financial matters related to MEPs and their working conditions. See the section on the College of Quaestors in European Parliament (n.d.), 'The political bodies of the European Parliament' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/organisation-and-rules/organisation/political-bodies>).

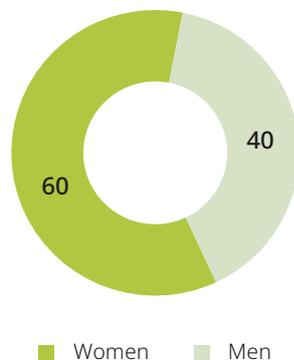
<sup>(60)</sup> European Parliament (2023), Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, Title I: Members, parliamentary bodies and political groups, Chapter 2: Officers of parliament, rule 15 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-015\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-015_EN.html)).

**Figure 8. Share of women and men in the top leadership positions of the European Parliament, 2023 (%)**

**Vice Presidents of the European Parliament**



**Quaestors of the European Parliament**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on [European Parliament information on structures and committees](#) (last accessed December 2023).

**Gender balance has not yet been achieved in the leadership positions of the European Parliament’s parliamentary committees.**

Of the current 20 standing parliamentary committees and four subcommittees, seven are chaired by a woman MEP <sup>(61)</sup>. This is the lowest share of women leaders among the decision-making positions within the European Parliament, at just 29 %, a proportion that is 11 pp below the overall proportion of women MEPs (40 %). Each parliamentary committee has four vice-chairs, and the proportion of women among vice-chairs of the parliamentary committees is higher. Women MEPs hold 44 % of the vice-chair positions, thus reaching gender-balanced representation (see [Figure 9](#)).

**Horizontal segregation in parliamentary committees persists.**

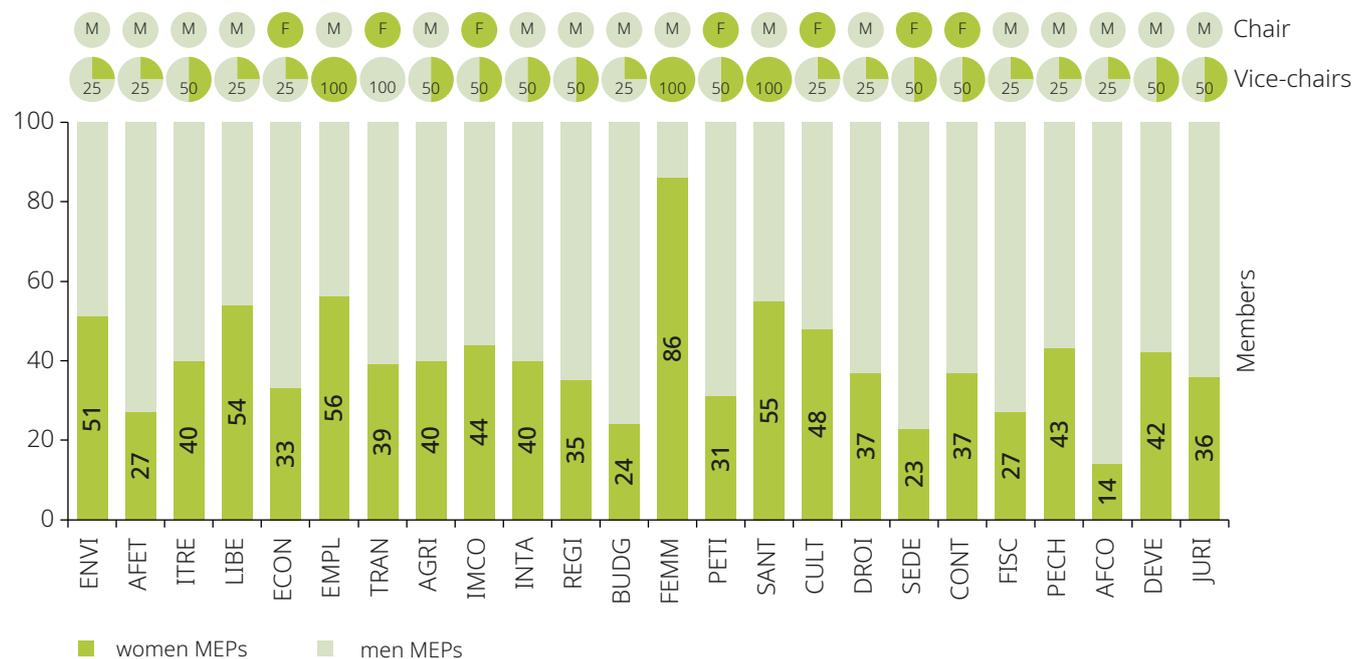
The highest presence of women MEPs (86 %) is in FEMM. Women MEPs tend to have a higher share, over 50 %, in (sub) committees dealing with employment and social

affairs (Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, 56 %), health (Subcommittee on Public Health, 55 %), liberties and rights (Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, 54 %) (see [Figure 9](#)). At the other end, women MEPs are least present in (sub)committees focused on constitutional affairs (Committee on Constitutional Affairs, 14 %), security and defence (Subcommittee on Security and Defence, 23 %), budget (Committee on Budgets (BUDG), 24 %) and foreign affairs (Committee on Foreign Affairs, 27 %). In its own resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (March 2022), the European Parliament acknowledged the advancements made towards a gender-balanced leadership but also called for ‘measures to tackle horizontal segregation [to] be put in place to ensure gender balance in different committees and put an end to the gendered concentration of portfolios, whereby areas with a higher proportion of women are less valued’ <sup>(62)</sup>.

<sup>(61)</sup> European Parliament (n.d.), ‘MEPs – European Parliament: Advanced search – Conference of Committee Chairs’ (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meps/en/search/advanced?name=&euPoliticalGroupBodyRefNum=&countryCode=&bodyType=OTH&bodyReferenceNum=186>).

<sup>(62)</sup> European Parliament (2020), *Gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – Annual report 2020: European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – annual report 2020 (2021/2039(INI))*, P9\_TA(2022)0072 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072_EN.pdf)).

**Figure 9. Share of women among members and chairs of standing parliamentary committees of the European Parliament, 2023 (%)**



NB: AFCO, Committee on Constitutional Affairs; AFET, Committee on Foreign Affairs; AGRI, Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development; CONT, Committee on Budgetary Control; CULT, Committee on Culture and Education; DEVE, Committee on Development; DROI, Subcommittee on Human Rights; ECON, Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs; EMPL, Committee on Employment and Social Affairs; ENVI, Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety; F, female; FISC, Subcommittee on Tax Matters; IMCO, Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection; INTA, Committee on International Trade; ITRE, Committee on Industry, Research and Energy; JURI, Committee on Legal Affairs; LIBE, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs; M, male; PECH, Committee on Fisheries; PETI, Committee on Petitions; REGI, Committee on Regional Development; SANT, Subcommittee on Public Health; SEDE, Subcommittee on Security and Defence; TRAN, Committee on Transport and Tourism. The European Parliament's 20 standing committees and their 4 subcommittees are presented in order of number of members, starting with the biggest committee (ENVI), which has 88 members. Substitutes were not included. The level for chairs shows if a committee has a woman or a man as the chair. The level for vice-chairs shows the percentage of women MEPs out of the total number of vice-chairs (four) for each committee. The level for members shows the percentage of members of the committee who are women MEPs.

Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on [European Parliament information on structures and committees](#).

## 2.2. Better protection against sexual harassment and violence against women in the European Parliament is needed, along with improved access to work-life balance provisions for Members of the European Parliament

### The European Parliament addresses discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment

**within its internal rules and regulations.** The Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, including the Code of Appropriate Behaviour for Members of the European Parliament in Exercising Their Duties, reaffirm the principle of non-discrimination, prohibit and condemn discriminatory practices and call on MEPs to abide by these rules when they appear in parliament <sup>(63)</sup>.

These documents also prohibit psychological and sexual harassment (treated as discrimination based on gender) against MEPs and against

<sup>(63)</sup> European Parliament (2019), Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament – Annex II: Code of Appropriate Behaviour for Members of the European Parliament in Exercising Their Duties ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2019-07-02-TOC\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2019-07-02-TOC_EN.html)).

parliamentary staff – including accredited assistants to MEPs working in Brussels, Luxembourg or Strasbourg – and set out sanctions in the case of non-compliance. Furthermore, MEPs must sign a declaration when they take office in parliament, in which they commit to complying with the code; this declaration is published on the European Parliament's website. If they do not sign the declaration, MEPs cannot be appointed as rapporteurs or participate in official delegations.

The European Parliament's institutional response to dealing with sexual harassment includes the work of two committees. The Advisory committee on harassment and its prevention at the workplace addresses cases of harassment among all staff members, including trainees and accredited parliamentary assistants<sup>(64)</sup>. Its responsibilities include preventing and resolving harassment, offering mediation, providing training and information, and participating in the parliament's health promotion network. The committee lacks the authority to enforce administrative or disciplinary actions<sup>(65)</sup>. It did not handle a single case of sexual harassment before 2019<sup>(66)</sup>.

The Advisory committee dealing with harassment complaints concerning Members of the European Parliament, on the other hand, exclusively handles harassment complaints involving MEPs. Its role is to prevent and address harassment among members, providing recommendations to the President of the European Parliament on sanctions against the perpetrator MEP and any follow-up measures<sup>(67)</sup>.

In 2023, following a review of the functioning of the anti-harassment complaint system, the European Parliament introduced a new mediation service and agreed to review the rules on the functioning of the Advisory committee dealing with harassment complaints concerning Members of the European Parliament, including increased protection and shorter procedures<sup>(68)</sup>. The European Parliament also made training sessions mandatory for MEPs at the start of each mandate, and established sanctions for the non-completion of this training<sup>(69)</sup>.

The MeTooEP movement played an important role in breaking the silence and highlighted the significance of implementing better anti-harassment policies<sup>(70)</sup>. Despite progress, the European Parliament noted that cases remain under-reported, and victims require more support and protection. It underlined the need for constant and systematic raising of awareness of the existing reporting procedures and the support system made available to victims, and for strengthening sanctions against offenders and developing faster procedures<sup>(71)</sup>.

**Other forms of violence against women MEPs and parliamentary staff, including in online spaces, are yet to be addressed in the European Parliament's administrative procedures.** The widespread online and offline sexism and violence against women in parliaments, including hate speech and harassment, is a major barrier for women's equal participation to run for election, to hold positions of power,

<sup>(64)</sup> Bureau of the European Parliament (2014), Bureau decision of 14 April 2014 – 2.3.4 internal rules on harassment and its prevention at the workplace and on harassment complaints involving accredited parliamentary assistants and Members of the European Parliament, PE422.616/BUR ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/reg/2014/0004/EP-PE\\_REG\(2014\)422616\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/publications/reg/2014/0004/EP-PE_REG(2014)422616_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(65)</sup> European Parliament (2021), Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of Play, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(66)</sup> Berthet, V. and Kantola, J. (2021), 'Gender, violence, and political institutions: Struggles over sexual harassment in the European Parliament', *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society*, Vol. 28, No 1, pp. 143–167 (<https://academic.oup.com/sp/article/28/1/143/5900431>).

<sup>(67)</sup> Bureau of the European Parliament (2018), Bureau Decision of 2 July 2018 - decision on the functioning of the Advisory Committee dealing with harassment complaints concerning members of the European Parliament and its procedures for dealing with complaints. (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/resources/library/media/20181003RES14909/20181003RES14909.pdf>).

<sup>(68)</sup> European Parliament (2023), 'Parliament strengthens its anti-harassment policy', press release, 10 July (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230710IPR02607/parliament-strengthens-its-anti-harassment-policy>).

<sup>(69)</sup> See footnote 68.

<sup>(70)</sup> European Parliament (2023), European Parliament resolution of 1 June 2023 on sexual harassment in the EU and MeToo evaluation (2022/2138(INI)), 1 June, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0217\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0217_EN.html)).

<sup>(71)</sup> See footnote 70.

to take political decisions, to be politically active and to voice their opinions<sup>(72)</sup>. The specific 'cost of doing politics' for women undermines the foundations of democracy<sup>(73)</sup>.

**There are no EU provisions for maternity, paternity or parental leave for MEPs.** Although the European Parliament has emerged as a strong promoter and advocate of progress towards more gender equality across the EU, its internal policies need to be updated to allow MEPs to better reconcile their roles as legislators and carers. Neither the 1976 European Electoral Act nor the Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament includes references to family leave provisions<sup>(74)</sup>. For women MEPs, maternity is recognised as a valid motive for 'leave of absence' in the context of rule 156 on the attendance of members at sittings<sup>(75)</sup>. The European Parliament's 2022 proposal to repeal the Electoral Act and replace it with a new Council regulation on the election of MEPs provides for temporary replacement – for a renewable period of 16 weeks – in the cases of maternity, paternity or parental leave, or severe illness<sup>(76)</sup>. However, the proposal has not been adopted by the Council. In June 2023, the issue was put on

the agenda by a group of four pregnant women MEPs, and a manifesto was recently put forward asking the European Parliament to 're-examine Parliament's role as an advocate for gender equality in the labour market'. The manifesto was signed by the President of the European Parliament<sup>(77)</sup>. European Parliament employees' leave entitlements, on the other hand, are well regulated<sup>(78)</sup>.

The Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament do not allow the temporary substitution of MEPs, and replacement by a substitute is only possible in committee meetings. To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Bureau of the European Parliament agreed to changes to the rules of procedure that allow for remote participation and electronic voting by MEPs and committee members. Remote working conditions are set out as extraordinary measures in cases of 'exceptional and unforeseeable circumstances beyond Parliament's control' or when the 'political balance in Parliament is severely impaired because a significant number of Members or a political group cannot take part in Parliament's proceedings' under its usual procedures<sup>(79)</sup>.

<sup>(72)</sup> Bardall, G., Bjarnegård, E. and Piscopo, J. M. (2019), 'How is political violence gendered? Disentangling motives, forms, and impacts', *Political Studies*, Vol. 68, No 4, pp. 916–935 (<https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321719881812>).

<sup>(73)</sup> See footnote 72.

<sup>(74)</sup> European Parliament (2016), *Preparing a harmonized maternity leave for Members of the European Parliament – Legal analysis*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/556937/IPOL\\_IDA%282016%29556937\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/IDAN/2016/556937/IPOL_IDA%282016%29556937_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(75)</sup> European Parliament (2023), Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, Title VII: Sessions, Chapter 1: Sessions of Parliament, rule 156 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-156\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-156_EN.html)).

<sup>(76)</sup> Council of the European Union (2022), Proposal for a Council regulation on the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage, repealing Council Decision 76/787/ECSC, EEC, Euratom and the act concerning the election of the Members of the European Parliament by direct universal suffrage annexed to that decision, interinstitutional file 2022/0902(APP), Brussels ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST\\_9333\\_2022\\_INIT](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CONSIL:ST_9333_2022_INIT)).

<sup>(77)</sup> See, for example, Politico (2023), "'Sexist and undemocratic': Pregnant MEPs demand ability to vote on maternity leave", 16 June (<https://www.politico.eu/article/sexist-and-undemocratic-pregnant-meps-demand-maternity-leave-and-remote-voting/>).

<sup>(78)</sup> An employee of the European Parliament is entitled to up to 20 weeks of fully paid maternity leave and up to 6 months of unpaid parental leave; the parent taking parental leave receives a monthly allowance and is not allowed to seek other means of income. Social protection is paid by the employment institution. See Regulation No 31 (EEC), 11 (EAEC), laying down the staff regulations of officials and the conditions of employment of other servants of the European Economic Community and the European Atomic Energy Community (OJ 45, 14.6.1962, p. 1385), Article 58 of staff regulations (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:01962R0031-20210101>).

<sup>(79)</sup> European Parliament (2020), *Remote voting in the European Parliament and national parliaments* ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/649348/EPRS\\_ATA\(2020\)649348\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2020/649348/EPRS_ATA(2020)649348_EN.pdf)).

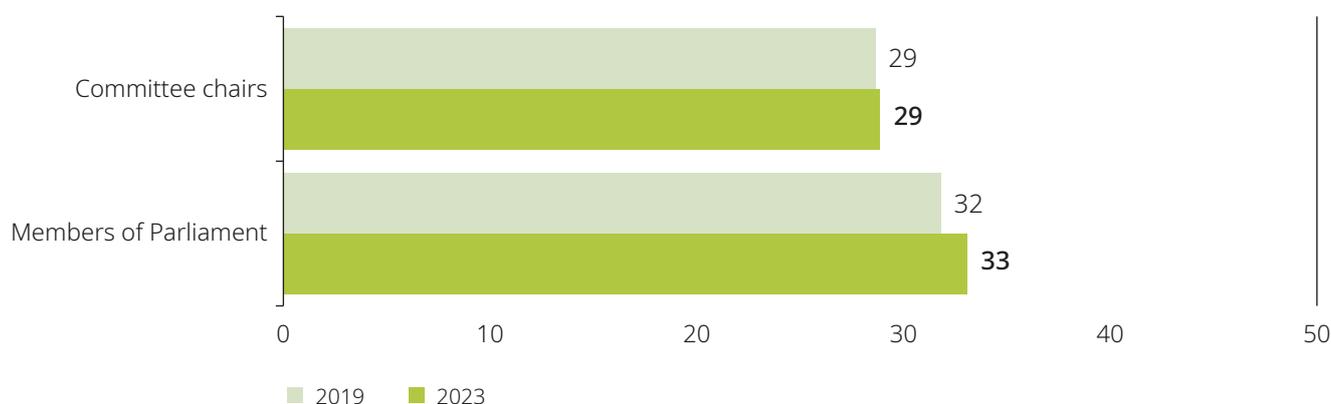
### 2.3. Vertical and horizontal segregation persist in national parliamentary committees

In 2023, women accounted for 29 % of committee chairs compared with 33 % of MPs (no changes since EIGE’s previous assessment in 2019 (see Figure 10)). Parliamentary committees have a key role in the functioning of parliaments and their leaders (or chairs) have significant power. They drive the legislative processes in national parliaments by assessing, amending and reporting (to parliament as a whole) on legislative proposals put forward by government departments. They may also have a role in the oversight of government action.

Yet women remain under-represented among committee chairs, even when compared with their low share among MPs (who comprise the pool from which committee members and their leaders are selected).

To achieve a level of women’s leadership representation on a par with their overall level of representation in parliament would require an immediate uplift of 15 % in the number of women chairing committees<sup>(80)</sup>. However, institutional, organisational and cultural barriers hinder women’s ability to reach ‘the epicentres of decision-making power’<sup>(81)</sup> in national parliaments. Committee chair positions are often distributed among political parties, which opens the door for nomination and selection processes to be influenced by party leadership, which remains dominated by men (see Section 1.4).

**Figure 10. Proportion of women among chairs of parliamentary committees and members of national parliaments, EU-27, 2019 and 2023 (%)**



NB: Data cover only standing/permanent committees, established for the duration of a legislature, in all houses of national parliaments, including joint committees where relevant. Data collected in Q3 2023 and Q3 2019.

Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE’s [Gender Statistics Database](#).

Data at the national level show that women are substantially under-represented as committee chairs compared with their share among MPs in 12 Member States (CZ, IE, FR, IT, LT, HU, MT, AT, PL, PT, SK, SE)<sup>(82)</sup>. The most pronounced

‘leadership deficits’ can be seen in Italy and Malta, where the shares of women committee chairs are 26 pp and 21 pp, respectively, lower than the shares of women MPs. Women hold just 2 of 24 committee chairs in Italy despite

<sup>(80)</sup> Although there is a deficit of only 4 pp, the number of women chairs would have to increase by 15 % to match their share of MPs: the data cover 741 committee chairs, of whom 214 are women (29 %) compared with 33 % of MPs. To achieve the same share among committee chairs would require 245 women chairs, an increase of just under 15 %.

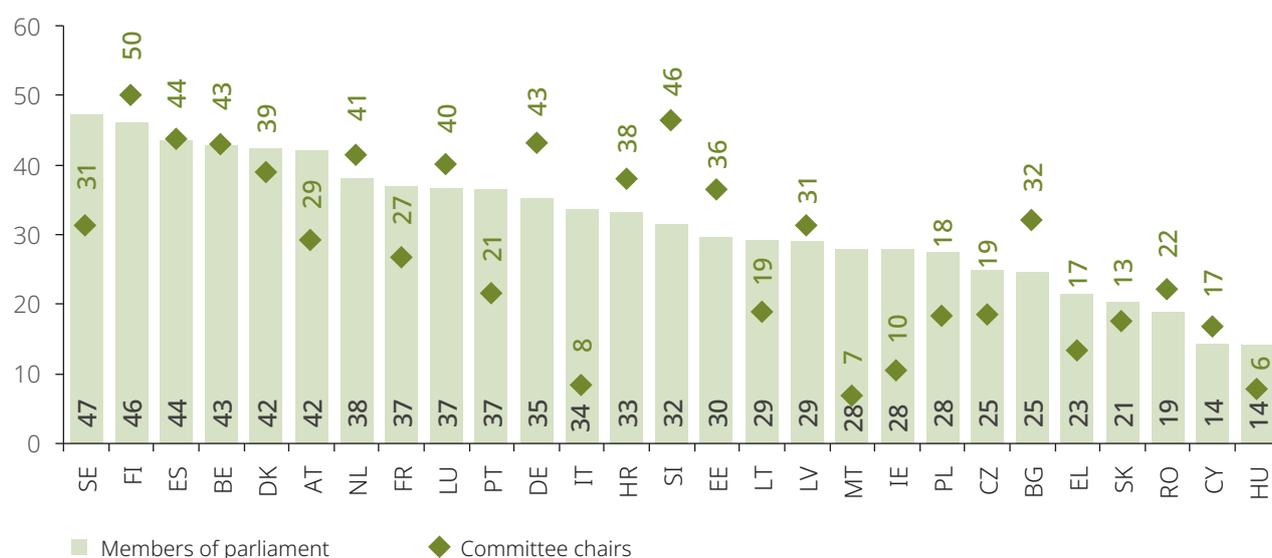
<sup>(81)</sup> Murray, R. and Sénac, R. (2018), ‘Explaining gender gaps in legislative committees’, *Journal of Women, Politics and Policy*, Vol. 39, No 3, pp. 310–335.

<sup>(82)</sup> On average, there are 27 committees per national parliament, so that each chair contributes 4 pp to the total. Levels of over- or under-representation are therefore assessed on the basis of being more than one chair over/under the expected number (i.e. ± 4 pp compared with the share of MPs).

accounting for 34 % of MPs and only 1 of 15 in Malta (28 % of MPs). There are also significant deficits of more than 15 pp in Ireland, Portugal and Sweden (Figure 11). When compared with the share of women among MPs, the share

of women as committee chairs is close to the expected number in nine Member States (BE, DK, EL, ES, CY, LV, LU, NL, RO), and women are over-represented in six Member states (BG, DE, EE, HR, SI, FI).

**Figure 11. Proportion of women among committee chairs and members of national parliaments in the EU, 2023 (%)**



NB: Data on MPs cover all houses of parliament. Data on committees cover permanent/standing committees in all houses of national parliaments, including joint committees where relevant. Data were collected in Q3 2023.

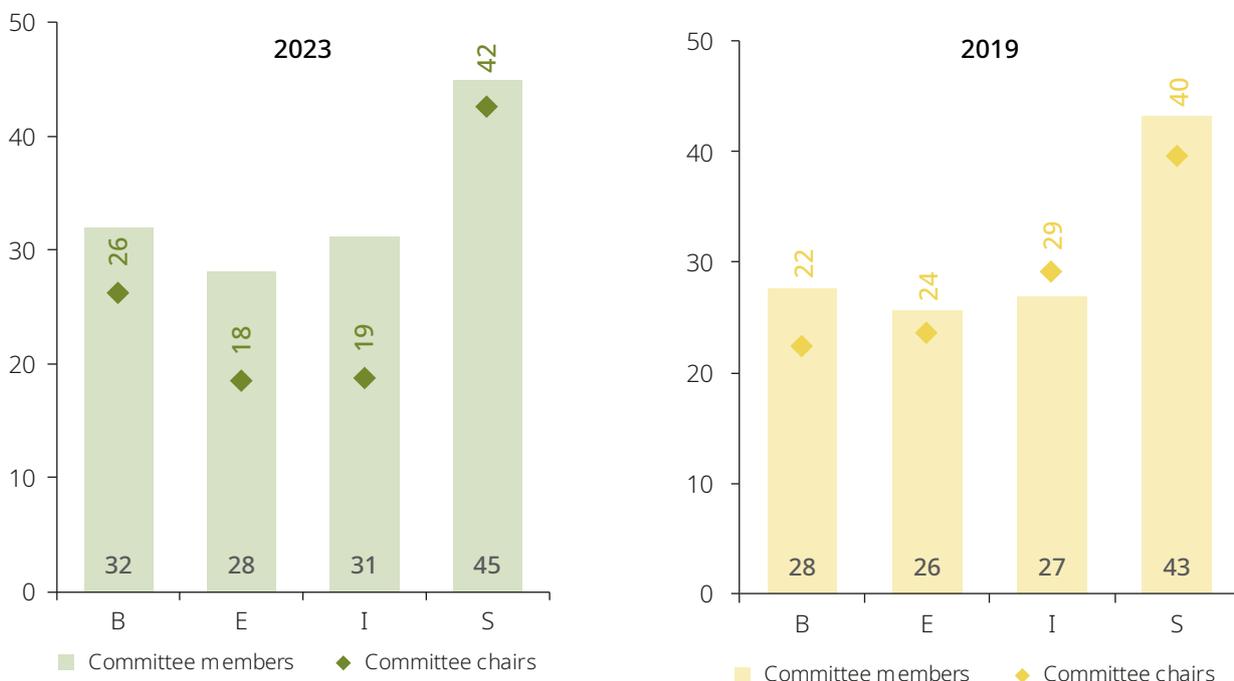
Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on EIGE's [Gender Statistics Database](#).

**In 2023, women accounted for 45 % of the members of committees dealing with sociocultural issues but only 28 % of those dealing with economic functions and 31–32 % for basic and infrastructure-related portfolios** <sup>(83)</sup>. In all of these cases, women are less well represented among committee chairs and the degree of horizontal segregation is even greater, with 42 % women chairs for sociocultural committees but just 18 % for economic committees (Figure 12). Compared with 2019, there has been little change in the level of horizontal segregation among committee members (a gap of 17 pp

between the highest and lowest shares by function) but an increase among committee chairs (the gap increased from 18 pp to 24 pp). This shows that, in addition to the general under-representation of women among committee chairs (vertical segregation), there is also evidence of their unequal distribution across policy areas (horizontal segregation). Committees dealing with economic or international affairs tend to be considered more powerful, prestigious and influential than, for example, committees dealing with social issues, and women are more likely to be found in the latter.

<sup>(83)</sup> EIGE's regularly updated data on the members and chairs of parliamentary committees in its Gender Statistics Database include a breakdown by portfolio using the basic, economic, infrastructure and sociocultural typology. This typology includes four types of state functions: B, basic (foreign and internal affairs, defence, justice, etc.); E, economic (finance, trade, industry, agriculture, etc.); I, infrastructure (transport, communication, environment, etc.); and S, sociocultural functions (social affairs, health, children, family, youth, elderly people, education, science, culture, labour, sports, etc.). For more information, see EIGE's Gender Statistics Database (n.d.), 'Women and men in decision-making' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-statistics/dgs/browse/wmidm>).

**Figure 12. Share of women members and chairs of parliamentary committees by type of portfolio (basic (B), economic (E), infrastructure (I) and sociocultural (S) typology), EU-27, 2023 and 2019 (%)**



NB: Data cover standing/permanent committees in all houses of national parliaments, including joint committees where relevant. Data collected in Q3 2023 and Q3 2019. Source: EIGE’s Gender Statistics Database.

**Limited efforts towards gender-balanced leadership have been noted.** Measures to reduce the vertical gender segregation in leadership positions have been identified in three national parliaments (FR, HR, RO). For example, in Croatia, the Standing Orders of the Croatian Parliament establish that the President, vice-presidents and MPs’ working bodies should be elected considering a balanced representation of both women and men <sup>(84)</sup>. In France, the Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly state that the elected leadership positions of the Bureau (including vice-presidents, quaestors and secretaries) should strive to reproduce the political configuration of the assembly and to respect parity between women and men <sup>(85)</sup>. However, these measures are typically not binding and are rather incentives to foster

greater a gender balance in the decision-making process. Thus, the difficulties women MPs face in accessing the leadership of ‘central areas of decision-making’ prevent them from influencing the political process and policy developments, affect their political careers and undermine their contributions.

### 2.4. Most national parliaments are yet to provide a working environment safe from gender-related inappropriate behaviour

**Few parliaments have policies in place to ensure working conditions free from any**

<sup>(84)</sup> Croatian parliament (2023), Standing Orders of the Croatian Parliament, *Official Gazette*, Nos 81/2013, 113/2016, 69/2017, 29/2018, 53/2020, 119/2020, 123/2020 and 86/2023 (<https://www.sabor.hr/hr/pristup-informacijama/vazniji-propisi/poslovnik-hrvatskoga-sabora-narodne-novine-broj-81/2013-113>).

<sup>(85)</sup> French National Assembly (2022), Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, Article 10 ([https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/divers/texte\\_reference/02\\_reglement\\_assemblee\\_nationale](https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/15/divers/texte_reference/02_reglement_assemblee_nationale)).

**form of discrimination, harassment or violence based on gender.** Parliaments remain men-dominated workplaces, where social and behaviour practices tend to favour men, especially as leaders <sup>(86)</sup>. Women MPs can be at risk of discrimination, for example being perceived as 'unsuitable' for a traditionally men-dominated role if they do not exhibit what is seen as the correct 'masculine' behaviour when trying to adapt to a masculine environment <sup>(87)</sup>. This is compounded by the intersecting effects of gender with characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, disability, socioeconomic status and sexual orientation. This study identified three national parliaments (IE, LU, FI) that prohibit direct or indirect sex-based discrimination against MPs in their codes of conduct or standing orders. For example, in Luxembourg, the anti-discrimination policy explicitly refers to sex-based discrimination in online spaces <sup>(88)</sup>; the standing orders prohibit direct and indirect discrimination on the grounds of sex and set out sanctions (warning, reprimand with an entry in the minutes or reprimand with temporary exclusion) in the case of non-compliance <sup>(89)</sup>.

Four parliaments (IE, FR, LU, FI) address sexual harassment in their internal anti-harassment policy addressed to MPs and include sanctions for non-compliant behaviour. For example, in Ireland, the parliament's dignity and respect statement of principles and policy focuses on bullying, harassment and sexual harassment. The statement affirms that harassment on certain grounds, including sex, is a form of discrimination. The statement applies to everyone in the parliament – Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas, the staff employed by members and by political parties, interns

and those on work placements, political correspondents working in the houses and the staff of the Houses of the Oireachtas Service. All political parties have formally adopted the policy since its publication in 2019 <sup>(90)</sup>.

In France, Article 6 of the Code of Deontology of the National Assembly prohibits sexual harassment and sets out sanctions for the breach of the duty to set an example; these sanctions include complete withholding of the perpetrator's parliamentary allowance for 1 month <sup>(91)</sup>.

In Finland, guidelines for the prevention of harassment and inappropriate behaviour have been in place since 2017. In 2022, a new set of measures against inappropriate behaviour and harassment were adopted, which cover both parliamentarians and parliamentary employees <sup>(92)</sup>. The measures state that the parliament does not tolerate any form of discrimination, including on the grounds of sex, or any form of harassment, including sexual harassment. The measures further state that the parliament can unilaterally decide on the measures it will take to end inappropriate behaviour and harassment and also decide on disciplinary actions, if the involved parties are not able to settle the issue or jointly agreed measures did not resolve the situation.

**Violence against women MPs, including in online spaces, is still to be tackled.** A 2018 study carried out by the IPU and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe found that close to 82 % of women MPs had been victims of psychological violence, 22 % of women MPs had faced sexual violence and 58 % of women

<sup>(86)</sup> Erikson, J. and Josefsson, C. (2022), 'The parliament as a gendered workplace: How to research legislators' (un)equal opportunities to represent', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 75, No 1, pp. 20–38 (<https://academic.oup.com/pa/article/75/1/20/5917170>), citing Kanter (1977).

<sup>(87)</sup> See footnote 86.

<sup>(88)</sup> *Measures against inappropriate behaviour and harassment (14.3.2022 Dnro 4/10/2022)*, internal document.

<sup>(89)</sup> Chambre des Députés (2023), *Règlement de la Chambre des Députés*, Luxembourg ([https://www.chd.lu/sites/default/files/2023-03/R%C3%A8glement%20CHD-22032023\\_0.pdf](https://www.chd.lu/sites/default/files/2023-03/R%C3%A8glement%20CHD-22032023_0.pdf)).

<sup>(90)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas Commission (2022), *Dignity and Respect Statement of Principles and Policy*, Dublin (2022-11-10\_houses-of-the-oireachtas-commission-dignity-and-respect-statement-of-principles-and-policy\_en.pdf).

<sup>(91)</sup> French National Assembly (2022), Code of Ethics in Force (<https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/qui/deontologie-a-l-assemblee-nationale/textes-de-reference/code-de-deontologie-en-vigueur>).

<sup>(92)</sup> *Measures against inappropriate behaviour and harassment (14.3.2022 Dnro 4/10/2022)*, internal document.

MPs had been the target of online sexist attacks on social networks<sup>(93)</sup>. Cyber violence against women, which includes cyber harassment, cyberbullying and online hate speech, has been increasing worldwide and EU-wide<sup>(94)</sup>. EIGE's report on combating violence against women and girls confirms the impact of cyber violence, including on women in politics, with adverse effects such as reducing participation in public life, not standing for re-election or staying in their current role<sup>(95)</sup>. Adopting an intersectional approach is crucial for the understanding of the unique challenges and abuse different groups of women MPs face. For example, the IPU and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe study found that women under the age of 40 are more frequently subjected to psychological and sexual harassment<sup>(96)</sup>. A 2018 study on online violence against British women MPs examined the Twitter activity of all women MPs in the 6 months leading up to the 2017 elections. The study not only uncovered the significant quantity of abusive tweets directed towards women MPs, but also shed light on the intersecting effects of gender and race, unveiling that Britain's women MPs of colour were more likely than white women colleagues to be targets of abusive behaviours on social media<sup>(97)</sup>.

**Parliamentary staff enjoy stronger protection due to their employment status** as public employees. This ensures protection through national legislation that regulates combating and protecting against discrimination and harassment, including sexual harassment<sup>(98)</sup>. Nonetheless, the available evidence shows that a high number of women parliamentary staff experience sexual and psychological harassment and bullying. IPU's 2018 study found that 40 % of the respondents had suffered acts of sexual harassment at their work and 50 % had received comments of a sexual nature. The reporting rates of those acts were very low: 23 % of women MPs had reported the incident(s), but only 6 % of women parliamentary staff had done so.

Some national parliaments (DK, IE, ES, CY, AT, SI, FI, SE) have strengthened this level of protection with more specific measures, particularly for parliamentary staff or staff working with MPs or for political parties<sup>(99)</sup>. For example, in Ireland, the 2020 scheme for the provision of secretarial assistance for Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and qualifying parties reiterates that the 2019 dignity and respect statement of principles and policy is applicable to 'those working in the Parliamentary Workplace'<sup>(100)</sup>. In Austria, the 2021–2026 women's advancement

<sup>(93)</sup> 123 women MPs and parliamentary staff in Council of Europe member States were surveyed. See IPU and Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (2018), *Sexism, harassment, and violence against women in parliaments in Europe*, issues brief, Geneva (<https://www.ipu.org/resources/publications/issue-briefs/2018-10/sexism-harassment-and-violence-against-women-in-parliaments-in-europe>).

<sup>(94)</sup> For data on cyber forms of violence, including online hate speech, see EIGE (2022), *Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/combating-cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls>); and FRA (2023), *Online Content Moderation – Current challenges in detecting hate speech*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://fra.europa.eu/en/publication/2023/online-content-moderation>).

<sup>(95)</sup> EIGE (2022), *Combating Cyber Violence against Women and Girls*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/combating-cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls>).

<sup>(96)</sup> See footnote 95.

<sup>(97)</sup> The study, conducted by Amnesty International, found that Diane Abbott, Britain's first black woman MP, was the target of slightly over 45 % of tweets categorised as 'abusive'. Even when excluding Abbott from the analysis, black and Asian MPs received 35 % more abusive tweets than white women MPs did. Amnesty International UK (n.d.), 'Black and Asian women MPs abused more online' (<https://www.amnesty.org.uk/online-violence-women-mps>).

<sup>(98)</sup> All Member States have legislation that prohibits harassment and sexual harassment and provides compensation or reparation options. For further information, see European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers, Kotevska, B. and Pavlou, V. (2023), *Promotion of Gender Balance in Political Decision-making*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, p. 75 (<https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2838/749712>).

<sup>(99)</sup> In LT, a policy on the prevention of violence and harassment has been drafted by the Office of the Seimas; adoption was still pending at the cut-off date for this study.

<sup>(100)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2020), *(Scheme for Secretarial Assistance) – Scheme for the provision of secretarial assistance for Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and qualifying parties*, Dublin ([https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/humanResources/policies/2021/2021-04-19\\_scheme-for-secretarial-assistance\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/humanResources/policies/2021/2021-04-19_scheme-for-secretarial-assistance_en.pdf)).

plan for the Parliamentary Directorate sets out awareness-raising measures, including providing comprehensive information to staff about their legal rights and avenues for protection from bullying, gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace <sup>(101)</sup>.

In Spain, the 2020–2024 gender equality plan of the national parliament, which focuses on parliamentary staff, has a dedicated section (axis 7) on health at work and the prevention of sexual harassment and gender-based violence <sup>(102)</sup>. Axis 7 presents the protocol for action against sexual harassment, harassment based on sex and all forms of harassment and violence <sup>(103)</sup>. The protocol outlines several measures in relation to sexual harassment, including (1) the provision of training and information sessions on gender-based violence and harassment, including sexual harassment; (2) the setting up of specialised units in the parliamentary administration to deal with cases of harassment and gender-based violence; and (3) the revision of the internal regulation establishing sanctions for non-permanent staff so that it classifies sexual harassment as a very serious offence.

Existing policies or codes of conduct rarely cover all the categories of personnel who work inside the parliamentary institution (e.g. those employed by the parliament, by an MP or under a private employment contract). The employment situation may affect the capacity to report sexual harassment. Other challenges include imprecise definitions of punishable misconduct, relatively soft sanctions for perpetrators (with parliaments often relying on political parties to self-police their representatives or staff members) and difficulties for victims to access reparation measures <sup>(104)</sup>.

## 2.5. Measures to reconcile the caring and professional responsibilities of members of parliament are lacking

**MPs' access to family leave provisions greatly varies across national parliaments.** Where these provisions exist, they are often dependent on MPs having the status of public employee or civil servant and being covered by existing labour law and other relevant legislation applying to public employees. For example, in Portugal, MPs have the same leave entitlement as any other public employee. The Statute Governing Members of the Assembleia da República clarifies that MPs shall enjoy 'rights provided for in the legislation governing the protection of maternity and paternity' (Article 15, paragraph 3) <sup>(105)</sup>.

In addition, access to family leave provisions can be regulated through specific provisions in documents governing the status of MPs / functioning of the chambers (e.g. rules of procedure, statutes of members) that give them access to these rights (e.g. Denmark's rules of procedure entitle MPs to family leave for 12 months and to the right of maintaining pay and seniority during this leave).

There are also cases where the pre-existing status of MPs may have an impact on their access to these provisions. For example, in Slovenia's National Council (upper house), members are not employed by the institution and therefore cannot access social rights on the basis of their MP status. However, all members of the National Council are representatives of social and economic sectors and can therefore be employed elsewhere. Therefore, they can

<sup>(101)</sup> Austrian Federal Chancellery (2021), *Women's Advancement Plan for the Parliamentary Directorate 2021–2026* (<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbl/II/2021/168/20210414>).

<sup>(102)</sup> Spain, Congress of Deputies (2020), 'Equality plan of the Cortes Generales', *Official Gazette of the Cortes Generales*, No 1, pp. 2–43 ([https://www.congreso.es/public\\_oficiales/L14/CORT/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-CG-B-11.PDF](https://www.congreso.es/public_oficiales/L14/CORT/BOCG/B/BOCG-14-CG-B-11.PDF)).

<sup>(103)</sup> Spain, Congress of Deputies (n.d.), 'Axis 7. Occupational health, prevention of harassment and gender violence' ([https://www.congreso.es/es/web/guest/cem/salud\\_laboral](https://www.congreso.es/es/web/guest/cem/salud_laboral)).

<sup>(104)</sup> Verge, T. (2022), 'Too few, too little: Parliaments' response to sexism and sexual harassment', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 75, No 1, pp. 94–112 (<https://academic.oup.com/pa/article-abstract/75/1/94/5917165>).

<sup>(105)</sup> <https://www.parlamento.pt/sites/EN/Parliament/Documents/StatuteofMembers.pdf>.

use their social rights and benefits from these other employment statuses.

Based on a review of national parliaments' rules of procedure or standing orders, maternity leave and paternity leave provisions for MPs have been identified in 14 national parliaments (BE (lower), DK, DE, EE, HR, IT, LV, HU, NL, PT, RO, SI (lower), FI, SE) (Figure 13). Parental leave is accessible to MPs in 13 national parliaments (DK, DE, EE, HR, IT, LV, HU, NL, PT, RO, SI (lower), FI, SE). Carers' leave is provided for MPs in 10 national parliaments (DK, DE, HR, IT, HU, NL, PT, RO, SI (lower), FI) (see Annex 2 for an overview). However, the list is not exhaustive, as a more comprehensive legal analysis is required to identify family leave provisions for MPs included in relevant national legislation. For example, in

Croatia, at the start of their mandate, MPs have to fill in a questionnaire indicating whether they want to use their right to a salary as an MP<sup>(106)</sup>. Then they conclude an employment contract with the parliament and are registered with this status in the relevant health and pension insurance registries. This entitles them to all the rights arising from this status, including maternity and parental benefits<sup>(107)</sup>, as stated in the Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits<sup>(108)</sup>.

Where available, family leave options for MPs are either in line with or more generous than (e.g. extend for more months and/or are financially better covered) the minimum requirements set out in EU law<sup>(109)</sup>. By contrast, parliamentary staff, if civil servants, have access to family leave options in all countries of the EU-27.

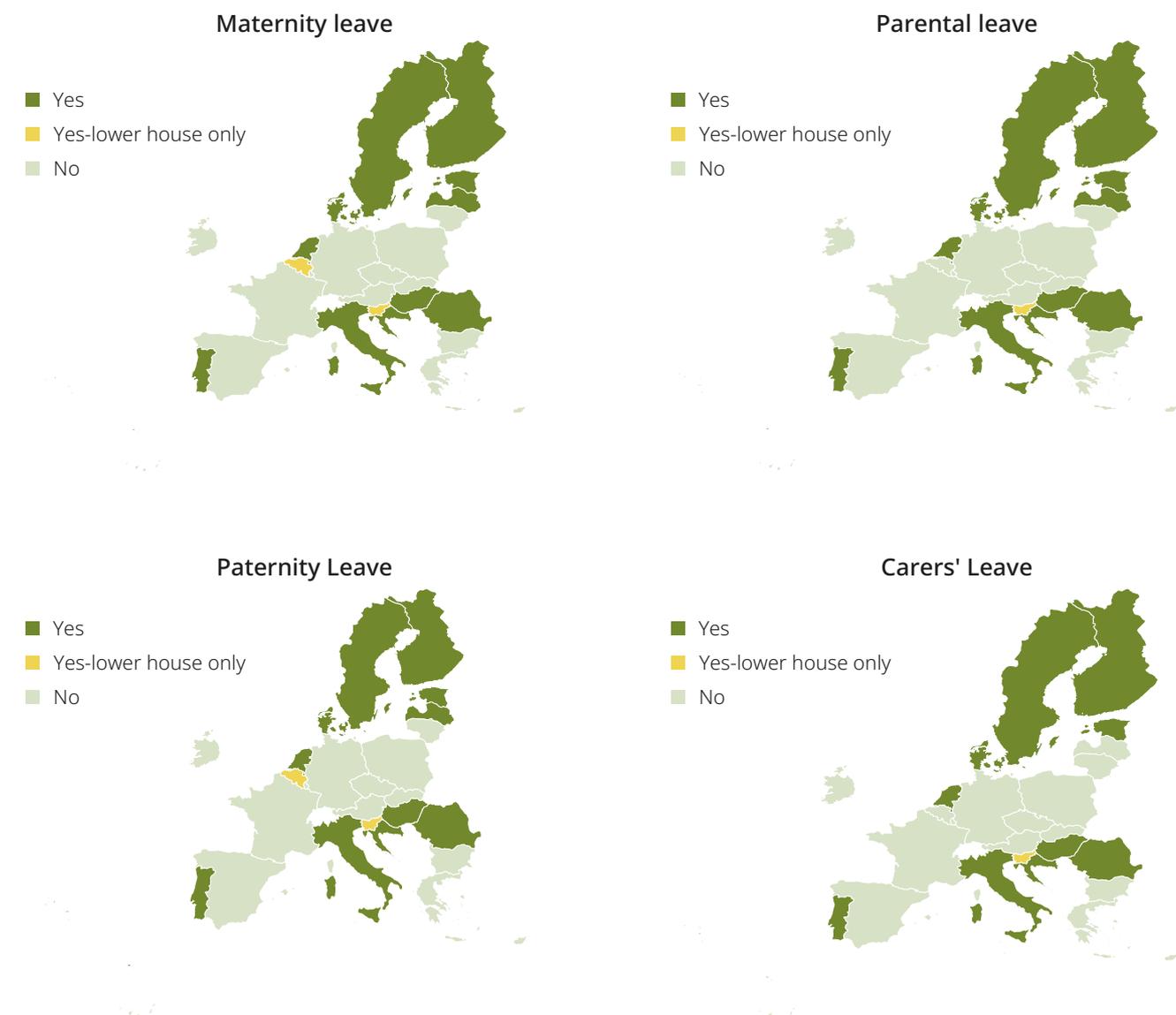
<sup>(106)</sup> Croatian parliament (2023), Standing Orders of the Croatian Parliament, *Official Gazette*, Nos 81/2013, 113/2016, 69/2017, 29/2018, 53/2020, 119/2020, 123/2020 and 86/2023, Article 22 (<https://www.sabor.hr/hr/pristup-informacijama/vazniji-propisi/poslovnik-hrvatskoga-sabora-narodne-novine-broj-81/2013-113>).

<sup>(107)</sup> The procedure is also explained in the informative instructions for the MPs prepared by the Croatian parliament ([https://www.sabor.hr/sites/default/files/uploads/dokumenti/2020-07/PRAVNI\\_IZVORI\\_ZASTUPNICKIH\\_PRAVA\\_I\\_DUZNOSTI\\_svibanj%202020\\_1.pdf](https://www.sabor.hr/sites/default/files/uploads/dokumenti/2020-07/PRAVNI_IZVORI_ZASTUPNICKIH_PRAVA_I_DUZNOSTI_svibanj%202020_1.pdf)).

<sup>(108)</sup> Arts 8(2)(1), 9(1)(1), 15 and 32(1) of the Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits cover the right to paid maternity leave for employed parents ([https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022\\_12\\_152\\_2372.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2022_12_152_2372.html)).

<sup>(109)</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents>).

**Figure 13. Access to care leave for MPs in national parliaments of the EU-27 (as stipulated in parliamentary procedures) by type of leave, 2023**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023.

**There is limited availability of other work-life balance measures that could support MPs in the effective exercise of their parliamentary mandates.** Specific modes of parliamentary participation (e.g. substitution / proxy voting, the practice of allowing one MP (or equivalent) to vote on behalf of another) can contribute to improving the work-life balance of MPs. However, in most national parliaments, substitution or proxy voting is not permitted or not a regular practice. This study identified six national parliaments that allowed substitution

or proxy voting in May 2022 to May 2023 (DK, EE, FR, LU, NL (lower), SE). Similarly, remote voting (a practice that allows MPs to vote with digital tools while not attending physically) has been observed only in Greece, Spain (both houses) and Romania (lower). In Greece and Spain, women MPs can use remote voting while pregnant or after childbirth. In Greece, the Rules of Procedure of the Parliament allow remote voting for MPs who are abroad for work and for MPs in the last 4 weeks of pregnancy or first 4 weeks after childbirth (Article 70) <sup>(110)</sup>.

<sup>(110)</sup> Hellenic Parliament (2021), Rules of Procedure (<https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/Kanonismos-tis-Voulis/>).

In Spain, remote voting is allowed only for the full Senate meeting (not committees) and only for pregnancy, maternity or paternity leave and extraordinary situations, after being authorised by the Bureau of the Senate <sup>(111)</sup>. A similar provision exists in the lower house, where remote voting is allowed only for the plenary sessions of the Congress of Deputies and in the cases mentioned above.

The online participation of MPs in parliamentary activities, such as attending committee meetings or even plenary sessions, is rare across the national parliaments. For May 2022 to May 2023, four national parliaments were identified that allowed this practice (EL, FR (lower), IT (lower), RO (lower)). For example, in France, participating in parliamentary debates online has only been observed in the lower house and is only permitted in committees (not in plenary sessions) <sup>(112)</sup>. In Italy, participation via videoconferencing is allowed in the lower house for all hearings and committee meetings, if voting is not expected. This working modality was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and remained in use afterwards <sup>(113)</sup>.

**MPs are expected to carry out their functions at any time of the day, as official regulation of working hours have not been found in any national parliament.** MPs often face gender-biased institutional structures and customs in

their parliamentary work, as many rules, practices and behaviours are modelled on traditional, patriarchal norms that can make it difficult for any MP to have a balance between parliamentary work and family life <sup>(114)</sup>. For instance, (the lack of) rules regulating working hours and parliamentary sittings modelled around the (traditional, masculine) 'full-time dedication norm' <sup>(115)</sup> require MPs (and some parliamentary staff) to serve long working days and to be free from (unpaid) care responsibilities.

In Ireland, for example, the standing orders of both the upper and the lower houses set starting times for sessions and meetings, but do not limit their length, and thus these cannot be considered regulations aiming to support work-life balance <sup>(116)</sup>. In most Member States' parliaments, there is an official regulation of working hours for parliamentary staff due to their status of public employees. However, some groups of parliamentary staff (especially those who are employed by an MP or a political party under a private employment contract) may not be covered by those regulations. In addition, in some parliaments – as is the case in France, for example – parliamentary staff must be available at any time to assist parliamentary sessions <sup>(117)</sup>.

<sup>(111)</sup> Spain, Cortes Generales (1994), Senate Regulations, Article 92(3) (<https://www.boe.es/buscar/pdf/1994/BOE-A-1994-10830-consolidado.pdf>).

<sup>(112)</sup> See, for example, French National Assembly (2023), 'APFA office meeting on 4 May 2023 by videoconference' (<https://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/dyn/16/organes/europe-international/apfa/actualites/reunion-du-bureau-de-l-apfa-le-4-mai-2023-en-visioconference>).

<sup>(113)</sup> [https://www.camera.it/leg19/1099?submit1=invia&slAnnoMese=202308&slGiorno=3&shadow\\_organo\\_parlamentare=3511](https://www.camera.it/leg19/1099?submit1=invia&slAnnoMese=202308&slGiorno=3&shadow_organo_parlamentare=3511).

<sup>(114)</sup> Erikson, J. and Josefsson, C. (2022), 'The parliament as a gendered workplace: How to research legislators' (un)equal opportunities to represent', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 75, No 1, pp. 20–38 (<https://academic.oup.com/pa/article/75/1/20/5917170>), citing Kanter (1977).

<sup>(115)</sup> Verge, T. and de la Fuente, M. (2014), 'Playing with different cards: Party politics, gender quotas and women's empowerment', XI Congreso AECPA, 18–20 September 2013, Seville (<https://aecpa.es/files/view/pdf/congress-papers/11-0/635/>); Kantola J. and Rolandsen Agustín L. (2019), 'Gendering the representative work of the European Parliament: A political analysis of women MEP's perceptions of gender equality in party groups', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 57, No 4, pp. 768–786 (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6686708/pdf/JCMS-57-768.pdf>).

<sup>(116)</sup> Seanad Éireann (upper house of the Oireachtas) (2020), *Standing Orders Relative to Public Business*, Standing Order No 22, Dublin ([https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBusiness/standingOrders/seanad/2020/2020-04-15\\_seanad-eireann-standing-orders-relative-to-public-business-2020\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBusiness/standingOrders/seanad/2020/2020-04-15_seanad-eireann-standing-orders-relative-to-public-business-2020_en.pdf)); Dáil Éireann (lower house of the Oireachtas) (2020), *Standing Orders Relative to Public Business*, Standing Orders Nos 23 and 24, Dublin ([https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBusiness/standingOrders/dail/2020/2020-02-17\\_dail-eireann-standing-orders-relative-to-public-business-2020\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBusiness/standingOrders/dail/2020/2020-02-17_dail-eireann-standing-orders-relative-to-public-business-2020_en.pdf)).

<sup>(117)</sup> French National Assembly (2023), 'Fact sheet No 23: Status and career of civil servants of the National Assembly' (<https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/decouvrir-l-assemblee/role-et-pouvoirs-de-l-assemblee-nationale/l-administration-de-l-assemblee-nationale/statut-et-carriere-des-fonctionnaires-de-l-assemblee-nationale>).

## 3. Area 3: Women's interests and concerns have adequate space on parliamentary agendas

Area 3 considers the extent to which gender equality considerations are integrated into the operational activities of the parliament and whether these are set up to adequately address the needs and concerns of women. It assesses:

- the existence of one or more bodies dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and its capacity to engage with external stakeholders;
- whether or not the parliament has a dedicated gender equality action plan or policy and/or a strategic plan for its own development that addresses gender equality issues;
- the use of gender mainstreaming tools, including gender budgeting, gender equality training and the application of gender-sensitive language in parliamentary documents.

The European Parliament and national parliaments have crucial functions of proposing, debating and adopting legislation. Within these functions, considering women's and men's interests and concerns during the entire legislative process is crucial for promoting gender equality and implementing its principles. To realise this, parliaments need to apply gender mainstreaming in and along all their legislative and policy processes.

### 3.1. The Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality helps the European Parliament promote gender mainstreaming, but has limited influence on other committees

**FEMM plays a key role in the promotion of gender equality and the application of gender mainstreaming in the work of the European Parliament.** FEMM is the main body in charge of promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming in all the European Parliament's policy and legislative processes. It carries out its role by participating in legislative and non-legislative acts, influencing the work of the other committees and being involved in the preparation and follow-up of oral questions and plenary resolutions, the commissioning of studies and the organisation of public events, hearings, workshops and press releases <sup>(118)</sup>.

FEMM incorporates a gender perspective into the European Parliament's legislative and non-legislative procedures across all policy fields through:

- drafting the European Parliament's position on new Commission proposals for legislation in the field of gender equality and women's rights (rule 51 of the rules of procedure);

<sup>(118)</sup> See rule 206 'Setting-up of standing committees' ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-206\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-RULE-206_EN.html)) in European Parliament (2023), Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament, Title VIII: Committees and delegations, Chapter 1: Committees; and Annex VI 'Powers and responsibilities of standing committees', as adopted by the parliament on 15 January 2014 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-ANN-06\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-ANN-06_EN.html)).

- issuing opinions and positions in the form of amendments to support the introduction of a gender perspective in the work of other committees (rule 56 of the rules of procedure);
- drafting non-legislative and own-initiative reports to raise awareness of and stimulate debate on gender equality issues that are either new or less considered, to highlight the gender dimension of different policy areas (e.g. taxation, trade, climate change, green jobs, artificial intelligence) and to collaborate with other committees (rules 53, 54 and 58 of the rules of procedure) <sup>(119)</sup>.

It has been noted that FEMM is rarely in charge of legislative procedures, as legislation directly focused on women's rights and gender equality is rather limited <sup>(120)</sup>. However, in the last 2 years of the 2019–2024 parliamentary term, two legislative processes were co-led by FEMM as a competent committee (gender balance on company boards <sup>(121)</sup> and equal pay for equal work and binding pay transparency measures <sup>(122)</sup>), with two more expected to be completed in spring 2024 (combating violence against women and domestic violence <sup>(123)</sup> and standards for equality bodies in the field

of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation <sup>(124)</sup>). FEMM was also responsible for the Council directive for the role of equality bodies across the EU in combating discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, to which the European Parliament provided consent <sup>(125)</sup>.

**Even though there are gender mainstreaming mechanisms for FEMM to oversee and influence the work of other committees, the impact is rather limited.** FEMM assesses gender mainstreaming in the work of the other European Parliament's committees and delegations, including by identifying where gender equality perspectives are missing or are not sufficiently addressed. All these activities are part of a non-legislative own-initiative report, which it submits bi-annually to the plenary <sup>(126)</sup>. However, between 2019 and 2022, less than a quarter (24 %, 106 out of 452) of all amendments and suggestions were in some way incorporated into the committees' final legislative reports, with 9 % being totally included and 15 % partially incorporated. Of these, 70 % (46 out of 66) of the FEMM amendments and suggestions incorporated by the committees

<sup>(119)</sup> European Parliament (2023), Rules of Procedure of the European Parliament ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-TOC\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RULES-9-2023-11-01-TOC_EN.html)).

<sup>(120)</sup> [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/608850/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)608850\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/608850/IPOL_STU(2018)608850_EN.pdf).

<sup>(121)</sup> Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures (OJ L 315, 7.12.2022, p. 44) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj>).

<sup>(122)</sup> Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>).

<sup>(123)</sup> European Commission (2022), Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence, COM(2022) 105 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105>).

<sup>(124)</sup> European Commission (2022), Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and deleting Article 20 of Directive 2006/54/EC and Article 11 of Directive 2010/41/EU, COM(2022) 688 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0688>).

<sup>(125)</sup> European Commission (2022), Proposal for a Council directive on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin, equal treatment in the field of employment and occupation between persons irrespective of their religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation, equal treatment between women and men in matters of social security and in the access to and supply of goods and services, and deleting Article 13 of Directive 2000/43/EC and Article 12 of Directive 2004/113/EC, COM(2022) 689 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52022PC0689&qid=1686061002261>).

<sup>(126)</sup> European Parliament (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of play*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

were included in the European Parliament's final report<sup>(127)</sup>. This means that, effectively, just over 16 % of FEMM's proposed amendments and suggestions ended up being incorporated into legal texts adopted in the European Parliament (46 out of 287 amendments and suggestions for procedures for which the European Parliament has adopted a final report). Ultimately, it is the committees responsible for each policy area and the political groups that determine whether and how a gender perspective is integrated into European Parliament policies<sup>(128)</sup>. Furthermore, FEMM's status of a 'neutralised committee' has been perceived as a limitation because it means that being a member of FEMM is voluntary and it is taken up by MEPs on top of other responsibilities; this also indicates its limited power and status in the European Parliament<sup>(129)</sup>.

FEMM also organises hearings where it invites experts to inform its work. Between May 2022 and May 2023, nine public hearings were held<sup>(130)</sup>, the most recent of which focused on gender aspects of peace and security. A variety of external stakeholders are invited to these hearings – from university professors to academic scholars, experts from think tanks, leaders of non-governmental organisations, journalists, trade union representatives and many others – depending on the topic addressed and the political interests of the committee's members.

There are two other political bodies with responsibilities related to gender mainstreaming.

- The Gender Mainstreaming Network (GMN) of the European Parliament is made up of MEPs (one from each committee), who are in charge of implementing gender mainstreaming in the work of their committees/delegations. It is supported by a network of gender mainstreaming administrators in the committee secretariats. Both networks are coordinated by FEMM.
- The High-Level Group on Gender Equality and Diversity promotes and implements gender mainstreaming within the European Parliament structures and bodies, without having a direct role in the legislative process. Its role is to promote gender-balanced representation at all levels in the European Parliament and to provide safety and support to the MEPs and their staff<sup>(131)</sup>. The group cooperates closely with FEMM and the Conference of Delegation Chairs<sup>(132)</sup>.

**The European Parliament has made notable efforts to ensure that gender equality action plans are adopted throughout the institution, yet they require stronger monitoring and accountability mechanisms.** Since its initial resolution on gender mainstreaming in 2003 and the subsequent six resolutions that monitor the state of gender mainstreaming in

<sup>(127)</sup> Final reports have not been adopted for procedure 2021/0104(COD) on corporate sustainability reporting, procedure 2020/0310(COD) on minimum wages and procedure 2021/0203(COD) on energy efficiency, so the 66 FEMM amendments and suggestions considered for incorporation into the European Parliament's final report do not include the suggestions/amendments in these reports. European Parliament, Samek Ludovici, M., Pesce, F., Loi, D., Ferrari, E., Charry Camargo, J. and Crippa, A. (2023), *Developing gender mainstreaming indicators measuring the input from the FEMM Committee in EP's final position*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/744857/IPOL\\_STU\(2023\)744857\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/744857/IPOL_STU(2023)744857_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(128)</sup> Elomäki, A. and Ahrens, P. (2022), 'Contested gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament: Political groups and committees as gatekeepers', *European Journal of Politics and Gender*, Vol. 5, No 3, pp. 320–344 ([https://trepo.tuni.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142835/Contested\\_gender\\_mainstream.pdf?sequence=1](https://trepo.tuni.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/142835/Contested_gender_mainstream.pdf?sequence=1)).

<sup>(129)</sup> Ahrens, P. (2016), 'The committee on women's rights and gender equality in the European Parliament: taking advantage of institutional power play', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 69, No 4, pp. 778–793.

<sup>(130)</sup> European Parliament (n.d.), 'Committees – FEMM: Hearings' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/events/events-hearings>).

<sup>(131)</sup> European Parliament (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of play*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(132)</sup> There are also four administrative structures that support gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament; these include the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit in the Directorate-General for Personnel, the Group of Equality and Diversity Coordinators (made up of the equality and diversity coordinators of each directorate-general and the Equality, Inclusion and Diversity Unit) and the Committee on Equal Opportunities and Diversity.

the institution <sup>(133)</sup>, the European Parliament has consistently demonstrated commitment to integrating a gender perspective into its operations <sup>(134)</sup>. The 2020 adoption of the first gender action plan of the European Parliament (EP GAP), which covers both the political and the administrative sides of the parliament, was an important milestone in the European Parliament's commitment to gender mainstreaming. The EP GAP emphasises the use of gender mainstreaming tools and achieving gender balance in its governing structures, including at the levels of committees and delegations.

A roadmap for the implementation of the EP GAP was adopted in April 2021, outlining concrete actions and timelines for monitoring progress. Some of the actions, for example, focus on strengthening gender impact assessments in the legislative and non-legislative processes and enhancing capacities to evaluate the European Commission's actions (expenditure, administration and policies) related to gender equality. Other actions focus on implementing gender budgeting, including a roadmap on how the European Parliament, through FEMM, BUDG and the Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT), should apply gender budgeting, with clearly defined actions, deadlines and indicators. Actions include the development of a guide on how to implement gender budgeting and the distribution of the guide to rapporteurs and other staff dealing with budgets; the production of an annual gender impact assessment to inform the draft report on the budget; and the organisation of meetings and discussions with relevant parties <sup>(135)</sup>. In 2022,

for example, BUDG held a workshop on 'Gender budgeting: From theory to practice' <sup>(136)</sup>.

At the committee level, with the support of FEMM, all 20 standing committees (and most subcommittees) of the European Parliament have adopted gender mainstreaming action plans. These plans are listed and accessible on the gender mainstreaming web page of FEMM <sup>(137)</sup>. Still, as noted in the latest resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament, there is a 'lack of monitoring and implementation of these plans' and there is a need for 'the committees to monitor their gender action plans in order to measure progress and ensure their implementation' <sup>(138)</sup>.

In terms of the use of other gender mainstreaming tools, the European Parliament has adopted formal rules to foster gender-sensitive language in its activities and communications. In 2018, those guidelines were updated to reflect linguistic and cultural developments <sup>(139)</sup>.

**Further efforts are needed to implement gender budgeting.** Over the past two decades, the European Parliament has been advocating for the adoption of gender budgeting, in both the EU budget and its own budgetary processes. Despite efforts, a 2019 study by BUDG highlighted shortcomings in the gender budgeting implementation and recommended inclusion of gender-specific indicators in project selection, improved transparency of data and political commitment to gender equality <sup>(140)</sup>.

<sup>(133)</sup> European Parliament (2003), European Parliament resolution on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament (2002/2025(INI)), Strasbourg ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-5-2003-0098\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-5-2003-0098_EN.html)).

<sup>(134)</sup> European Parliament (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of play*, Brussels, pp. 22–23 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(135)</sup> European Parliament (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of play*, Brussels, p. 32 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(136)</sup> European Parliament (2022), 'Committees – Workshop on gender budgeting: From theory to practice' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/ro/workshop-on-gender-balance-from-theory-t/product-details/20220120WKS04021>).

<sup>(137)</sup> European Parliament (2023), 'Committees – Gender mainstreaming' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/gender-mainstreaming/product-details/20160602CDT00721>). The FEMM web page refers to its work on the gender mainstreaming of the European Parliament in the 2019–2024 legislative mandate.

<sup>(138)</sup> European Parliament (2022), *European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – Annual report 2020 (2021/2039(INI))*, point 6 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072_EN.html)).

<sup>(139)</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/fr/gender-mainstreaming/product-details/20160602CDT00721>.

<sup>(140)</sup> European Parliament (2019), *Gender-responsive EU budgeting update of the study 'The EU budget for gender equality' and review of its conclusions and recommendations*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/621801/IPOL\\_STU\(2019\)621801\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2019/621801/IPOL_STU(2019)621801_EN.pdf)).

The current multiannual financial framework for 2021–2027, accompanied by an interinstitutional agreement <sup>(141)</sup>, gives the European Commission the mandate to develop a methodology for measuring gender-equality-related expenditure at the programme level; this was applied for the first time in the 2024 EU budget. The European Parliament has urged for the extension of this methodology to all multiannual financial framework programmes and for the systematic collection of sex-disaggregated data <sup>(142)</sup>. Following the publication in May 2021 of the European Court of Auditors report on the gender mainstreaming of the EU budget <sup>(143)</sup>, these efforts were reinforced to include and further develop the methodology to apply gender budgeting in the EU budget <sup>(144)</sup>. The European Parliament's efforts in relation to further improvement of the methodology focused on conducting studies and organising hearings, meetings and workshops. In 2023, for example, an exchange of views was held in the European Parliament (FEMM, BUDG and CONT together) on how to better incorporate gender mainstreaming into the EU budget <sup>(145)</sup>. In addition, the European Parliament looked to the national parliaments

of the EU-27 for knowledge support, analysis and benchmarking regarding how to better include and implement gender budgeting <sup>(146)</sup>.

**There is no publicly available information to confirm whether gender pay gap assessments have been carried out in the European Parliament to date.** All MEPs are entitled to a fixed amount as a monthly payment, which is made public by the European Parliament. This is laid down in the single statute for MEPs, which has been in force since July 2009. Thus, there should be no disparity in the base payment that women and men MEPs receive. Nevertheless, MEPs receive other allowances and supplements to their pay, depending on their seniority (number of mandates held), position within a parliamentary or political group, administrative position in committees and other entitlements (spouse, children, travel allowance, housing allowance and others). The combination of all of these could account for disparities in pay between MEPs. The recently adopted Directive 2023/970 on pay transparency <sup>(147)</sup>, which aims to reduce the gender pay gap, sets the basis for conducting gender pay gap assessments for both MEPs and staff employed under all types of contracts <sup>(148)</sup>.

<sup>(141)</sup> Interinstitutional agreement of 16 December between the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission on budgetary discipline, on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management, as well as on new own resources, including a roadmap towards the introduction of new own resources (OJ L 433I, 22.12.2020, p. 28) ([https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree\\_interinstit/2020/1222/oj](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/agree_interinstit/2020/1222/oj)).

<sup>(142)</sup> European Parliament resolution of 18 October 2023 on the Council position on the draft general budget of the European Union for the financial year 2024 (2023/0264(BUDG)).

<sup>(143)</sup> European Court of Auditors (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Budget: Time to turn words into action*, Special Report 10/2021, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg ([https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR21\\_10/SR\\_Gender\\_mainstreaming\\_EN.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/Lists/ECADocuments/SR21_10/SR_Gender_mainstreaming_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(144)</sup> See European Commission (2023), 'Gender equality mainstreaming' ([https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/horizontal-priorities/gender-equality-mainstreaming_en)). See also European Court of Auditors (2022), *Report on the Performance of the EU Budget – Status at the end of 2021*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg ([https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/annualreport-performance-2021/annualreport-performance-2021\\_en.pdf](https://www.eca.europa.eu/lists/ecadocuments/annualreport-performance-2021/annualreport-performance-2021_en.pdf)).

<sup>(145)</sup> European Parliament (2023), 'Committees – Gender mainstreaming in the EU budget – Joint exchange of views' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/product/product-details/20231018CHE12305>).

<sup>(146)</sup> See a recent study published by the Research Service of the European Parliament: European Parliament (2023), *Gender Responsive Budgeting: Implications for the budget of the European Parliament*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/754565/EPRS\\_STU\(2023\)754565\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2023/754565/EPRS_STU(2023)754565_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(147)</sup> Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms (OJ L 132, 17.5.2023, p. 21) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2023/970/oj>).

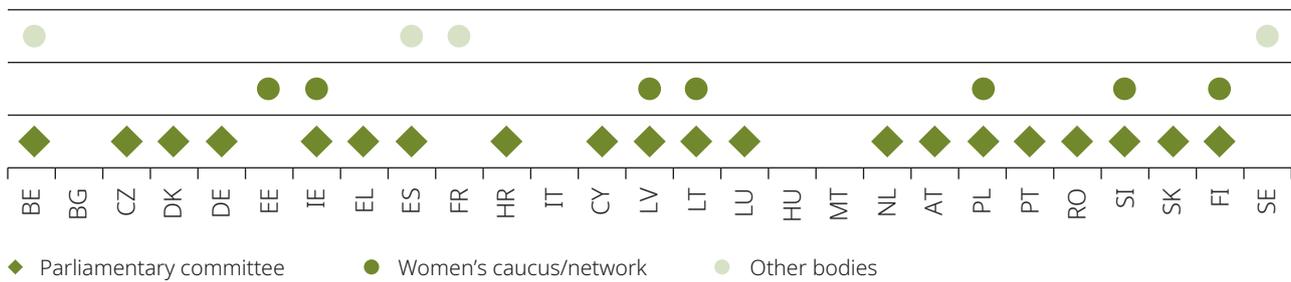
<sup>(148)</sup> European Parliament (2023), 'Gender pay gap: Parliament adopts new rules on binding pay-transparency measures', press release, 30 March (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20230327IPR78545/gender-pay-gap-parliament-adopts-new-rules-on-binding-pay-transparency-measures>).

### 3.2. Most national parliaments have a gender equality body, but their legislative powers vary

In 2023, all national parliaments except those of Bulgaria, Italy, Hungary and Malta had some type of gender equality body. There had been no changes in the national parliament of Malta since 2019 (still no gender

equality body), while in Bulgaria, Hungary and Italy the bodies that existed in the 2019 data collection were dissolved (Figure 14). The absence of a gender equality body may imply a shortage of adequate space for gender equality and women's empowerment issues within the parliamentary agenda. It also means that no specific parliamentary body is tasked with and equipped for holding the government accountable regarding its commitments on gender equality<sup>(149)</sup>.

Figure 14. Type of gender equality bodies and structures in national parliaments by Member State



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on the IPU Parline database and parliamentary websites.

Twenty national parliaments (BE, CZ, DK, DE, IE, EL, ES, HR, CY, LV, LT, LU, NL, AT, PL, PT, RO, SI, SK, FI) had a standing parliamentary committee on gender equality or equality between women and men and women's rights (either as a dedicated focus or as part of a combined portfolio; in total 31 committees, see Table 1 in Annex 3). As formal structures within the parliament whose functions are defined in the rules of procedure of parliaments, these committees are typically in charge of legislative proposals, discussions and oversight of the application of international commitments, all activities that provide them with full legislative capacity (see Annex 3 for a full list of gender equality bodies). The existence of a standing parliamentary committee – with full legislative capacity to debate, propose and amend legislation on gender equality or from a gender equality perspective – demonstrates

the importance and priority given to the area. It also ensures that gender equality concerns are mainstreamed in parliamentary work. However, to be effective, gender equality bodies within parliaments need to be provided with agency, funding and prerogatives<sup>(150)</sup>.

Of the 31 parliamentary committees identified as having responsibility for gender equality, just five committees in four Member States (DK and HR (unicameral), AT (both houses) and RO (lower house)) are focused exclusively on gender equality (Figure 15; see also Table 1 in Annex 3). Four committees in three Member States (ES, LV, PT) cover equality in a broader sense (i.e. including other grounds for discrimination), while in one case (one of the two committees identified in the unicameral parliament of Lithuania) gender equality falls under a committee dealing with human

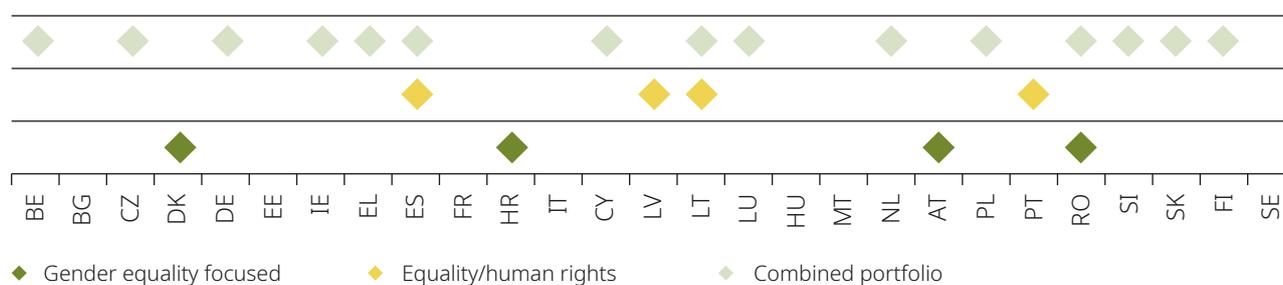
<sup>(149)</sup> Grace, J. and Sawyer, M. (2016), 'Representing gender equality: Specialised parliamentary bodies', *Parliamentary Affairs*, Vol. 69, No 4, 745–747.

<sup>(150)</sup> OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (2021), *Realizing Gender Equality in Parliament – A guide for parliaments in the OSCE region*, Warsaw ([https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/b/506885\\_2.pdf](https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/b/506885_2.pdf)).

rights. The majority (21 out of 31), however, are committees with a combined portfolio including other areas such as health, children, young people, elderly people, disability, human rights (as an area listed separately from gender

equality), social affairs, employment, culture, science or education. In only four of these cases (DE (both houses), CY, LU), the title of the committee specifically mentions gender/women (see Table 1 in Annex 3).

**Figure 15. Portfolios of parliamentary committees with responsibilities for gender equality, EU-27**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on parliamentary websites.

**Seven national parliaments have women's caucuses** (EE, IE, LV, LT, PL, SI, FI), and four of these women's caucuses (IE, LT, SI, FI) function alongside the parliamentary committees. For example, in the Irish parliament, there is an informal body (the Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus) and a cross-party forum for women MPs to discuss and campaign on issues predominantly affecting women. Similar to in 2019, in 2023, in the national parliaments of Estonia and Latvia, a women's caucus and/or a women's network among MPs existed, but there was no permanent committee. As more informal bodies within parliament, women's caucuses aim to influence the parliamentary agenda to include gender equality / women's issues in political and legislative discussions. Unlike parliamentary committees, they do not have a permanent status or a clear mandate, and they cannot discuss or adopt legislation.

Some Member States have other gender equality committees with advisory and monitoring roles,

but without legislative functions (see Table 3 in Annex 3). For example, the Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women in the Belgian Senate (upper house) has an advisory and informative role. In Spain, there is a special committee that focuses on monitoring the national pact against gender-based violence, and a joint committee that monitors the implementation of the national strategy on sustainable development goals. There are also other structures that are neither parliamentary committees nor women's caucuses; for example, in Sweden there is the Working Group for Gender Equality, which primarily looks at gender equality within the internal processes of the parliament. In France, there is the Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women; its role is to inform the national parliament of the policy proposed and promoted by the French Government regarding its consequences on women's rights and equal opportunities for women and men <sup>(151)</sup>.

<sup>(151)</sup> French National Assembly (n.d.), 'Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women' ([https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/15/les-delegations-comite-et-office-parlementaire/delegation-aux-droits-des-femmes/\(block\)/41834](https://www2.assemblee-nationale.fr/15/les-delegations-comite-et-office-parlementaire/delegation-aux-droits-des-femmes/(block)/41834)).

### 3.3. Gender mainstreaming tools are underused in most national parliaments

**Six national parliaments have adopted gender equality action plans** (DE, ES, IT, AT, FI, SE). The existence of gender equality action plans demonstrates the parliament's commitment to gender equality. As gender mainstreaming tools, these plans facilitate gender-responsive institutional transformation and outline overarching goals for advancing gender equality within a specified time frame, along with specific measures to address identified gender inequalities and intersecting inequalities<sup>(152)</sup>. They also include provisions for monitoring and evaluating the plans' implementation to ensure progress towards achieving the stated goals and to hold parliaments responsible for their gender equality commitments<sup>(153)</sup>. In Germany, Spain, Austria and Finland, the gender equality action plans are mandated by legislation and target parliamentary staff<sup>(154)</sup>. In Sweden, in 2006, the Swedish parliament decided to conduct continuous work to improve gender equality in the institution and established that the Riksdag Board would oversee this work<sup>(155)</sup>. The board established a working group on gender equality with representatives from all of the political parties of the Riksdag; the group drafts the gender equality action and works on its implementation once it has been ratified by the board. Since 2006, the board has

adopted gender equality action plans for four election periods. The last action programme, that for 2022–2026, includes measures focusing on both internal (e.g. how women and men MPs are treated in debates) and external (e.g. hate speech, including online) treatment and measures for combining the professional and personal responsibilities of MPs<sup>(156)</sup>.

**Nine national parliaments** (BE, IE, EL, ES, IT, AT, PT, FI, SE) **have binding legislation on gender budgeting**. Overall, gender budgeting is mostly carried out through regular gender impact assessment of the budget or through the usual processes of scrutiny related to the national budget. The national budget is drafted and prepared by the relevant government department(s) and the national parliament, through its budgetary committee. The budget committee then discusses and proposes the form for adoption that needs to be voted on by the parliament in plenary. For example, Ireland, Austria and Sweden carry out both *ex ante* and *ex post* gender impact assessments of the national budgets, while Spain and Portugal report carrying out only *ex ante* gender impact assessments<sup>(157)</sup>. In 2023, seven out of these nine national parliaments reported that they were implementing gender budgeting in their national budgets (BE, IE, EL, ES, IT, AT, FI). In Ireland, for example, the parliamentary debates on the 2023 budget statement included gender equality and women's rights considerations<sup>(158)</sup>.

<sup>(152)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Gender Equality Action Plans*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-equality-action-plans>).

<sup>(153)</sup> EIGE (2024), *Gender Equality Action Plans for Parliaments: Step-by-step tool*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/gender-equality-action-plans-for-parliaments.pdf>).

<sup>(154)</sup> DE: Germany, Federal Ministry of Justice (2015), Federal Act on Gender Equality of 24 April 2015, *Federal Law Gazette Part I*, pp. 642–643 ([https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/101573/122451/F-237725072/englisch\\_bgleig.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/101573/122451/F-237725072/englisch_bgleig.pdf)); ES: Spain, Cortes Generales (2007), Constitutional Act 3/2007 of 22 March for effective equality between women and men, Madrid ([https://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/spain\\_constitutionalact3\\_2007\\_en.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/pace/campaign/stopviolence/Source/spain_constitutionalact3_2007_en.pdf)); AT: Government of Austria (2012), Federal law on equal treatment in the area of the federal government (Federal Equal Treatment Act), Section 11a(1) ([https://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource\\_pool/aut42823.pdf](https://www.genderportal.eu/sites/default/files/resource_pool/aut42823.pdf)); FI: Finnish Government (2014), Act (1329/2014) amending the act on equality between men and women (609/1986) ([https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1986/en19860609\\_20160915.pdf](https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/1986/en19860609_20160915.pdf)).

<sup>(155)</sup> Swedish Parliament (2006), Decision of June 1, 2006 ([https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/riksdagen-i-en-ny-tid\\_gt01ku21#stepBeslut](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-lagar/arende/betankande/riksdagen-i-en-ny-tid_gt01ku21#stepBeslut)).

<sup>(156)</sup> <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/05.-sa-fungerar-riksdagen/arbetet-i-riksdagen/jamstalldhetsarbete-i-riksdagen/action-programme-for-equality-2022-2026.pdf>.

<sup>(157)</sup> OECD (2023), *Gender Budgeting in OECD Countries 2023*, OECD Publishing, Paris (<https://www.oecd.org/publications/gender-budgeting-in-oecd-countries-2023-647d546b-en.htm>).

<sup>(158)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2023), 'Budget statement 2023', Dáil Éireann debate, 27 September 2022 (<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/debates/debate/dail/2022-09-27/3/>).

A body specifically tasked with gender budgeting was identified in three national parliaments (IE, AT, FI). The Parliamentary Budget Office in the Austrian parliament supports the Budget Committee of the parliament with gender analysis of the budget and review of the gender budgeting process. The Parliamentary Budget Office has also been effective in triggering parliamentary debate and ensuring gender equality concerns are integrated into budget debates <sup>(159)</sup>. In Ireland, the Parliamentary Budget Office has supported the Committee on Budgetary Oversight in tracking the implementation of equality budgeting <sup>(160)</sup>.

**Two national parliaments use gender-responsive public procurement** (ES, AT). Improving the gender sensitivity of parliaments' procurement requires systematically questioning the implications of the services or goods bought by parliaments for women and men, whether these goods or services meet the needs of both men and women and whether gender equality is respected throughout the procurement of these contracts <sup>(161)</sup>. Even though parliaments may account for a small share of public spending, gender-responsive public procurement measures allow parliaments to set a good example. The implementation of these measures is essential to ensure the application of gender equality throughout parliament practices. In Austria, the 2021–2026 women's advancement plan for the Parliamentary Directorate includes measures to ensure gender-responsive public procurement <sup>(162)</sup>. Section 6 of the plan states that all tenders must be written

using gender-sensitive language; requirements for project roles in tenders must be formulated in a way that does not disadvantage women; applications, particularly from women, during a legally stipulated form of absence from work must be considered in equal regard with other applications; and a copy of the advertisement for a tender must be sent to the equal treatment officer before publication or internal announcement.

The latest annual report on the implementation of the 2020–2024 gender equality plan of the national parliament in Spain stated that the procurement process was modified to integrate a requirement for contractors to implement measures to promote gender equality in the execution of contract. Additional criteria related to gender-sensitive content and language were added to the parliament's tendering processes. The procurement department created a guide on procurement, and the annual report also includes a reference to gender-responsive public procurement training <sup>(163)</sup>.

**There is limited publicly available information on gender equality training received by MPs and parliamentary staff.** Parliaments can use gender equality training to equip MPs with the capacity to integrate gender concerns into all aspects of their work <sup>(164)</sup>. Overall, parliaments rarely publicly provide information on the gender equality training offered to or taken up by their members, and the possibility of accessing this training. Only two national parliaments provided information on gender

<sup>(159)</sup> UN Women, Deveaux, K. and Dubrow, G. (2022), *Engaging Parliaments in Gender Responsive Budgeting*, action kit, New York (<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Action-kit-Engaging-parliaments-in-gender-responsive-budgeting-en.pdf>).

<sup>(160)</sup> OECD (n.d.), *OECD Scan: Equality budgeting in Ireland* (<https://www.oecd.org/gov/budgeting/equality-budgeting-in-ireland.pdf>).

<sup>(161)</sup> EIGE (2022), *Gender-responsive Public Procurement in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-responsive-public-procurement-eu-report>); EIGE (2021), , Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-responsive-public-procurement>); EIGE (2022), , Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/gender-responsive-public-procurement-step-step-toolkit>); OECD (2021), 'Promoting gender equality through public procurement: Challenges and good practices', *OECD Public Governance Policy Papers*, No 09, OECD Publishing, Paris (<https://doi.org/10.1787/5d8f6f76-en>).

<sup>(162)</sup> Austrian Federal Chancellery (2021), *Women's Advancement Plan for the Parliamentary Directorate 2021–2026* (<https://www.ris.bka.gv.at/eli/bgbl/II/2021/168/20210414>).

<sup>(163)</sup> Spain, Congress of Deputies (2023), *Third annual monitoring report on the implementation of the first equality plan of the Cortes Generales* ([https://www.congreso.es/docu/igualdad/informes/III\\_INFORME\\_definitivo.pdf](https://www.congreso.es/docu/igualdad/informes/III_INFORME_definitivo.pdf)).

<sup>(164)</sup> EIGE (2016), *Institutional Transformation: Gender mainstreaming toolkit*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, step 9 'developing gender equality competence' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-institutional-transformation?back=>).

equality training (ES, HR). In Croatia, for example, when a new legislative session starts, MPs who are members of the Gender Equality Committee complete mandatory gender equality training.

**No national parliament has carried out a gender pay gap assessment among MPs and made the results public.** The principle of equal pay for equal work is at the core of EU legislation, based on the recognition that gender pay gaps are a form of discrimination against women. Despite long-standing legislative commitments, on average, the gender pay gap in the EU is 13 %<sup>(165)</sup>, although the extent of this gap varies across Member States<sup>(166)</sup>. A range of factors contribute to the gender pay gap. For example, family/caring responsibilities may reduce the number of hours women can work and can sometimes force them to take career breaks, with a subsequent impact on their career development. Women are also more likely to be working in lower-paid jobs and often on a part-time basis<sup>(167)</sup>.

MPs typically receive a standardised base payment, which is the same for women and men MPs. Different allowances and increases can be added to this base salary – in line with the positions and functions held within the parliamentary structures – and national parliaments are, like other workplaces, subject to gender dynamics that can have an impact on women's and men's average pay. Factors such as seniority within the legislative forum

(mandates) and leadership positions held affect the level of payment received by an MP. These factors disfavour women MPs, who may be fewer in number and elected to fewer leadership positions, and thus these factors contribute to the differences in pay between women and men.

The EU pay transparency directive sets a legal obligation to report the gender pay gaps of private- and public-sector employees, including parliamentary staff. Four national parliaments adopted measures to foster pay transparency and report on the gender pay gap (IE (both houses), ES (both houses), IT (both houses), SE). In three of those (IE, ES, SE<sup>(168)</sup>), there are regulations stating that data on the gender pay gap are to be disseminated each year. For example, in Ireland, the Gender Pay Gap Information Act entered into force in May 2022<sup>(169)</sup>. In December 2023, the Oireachtas Services of the Irish parliament published their first gender pay gap report<sup>(170)</sup>. In Spain, as part of the annual monitoring of the 2020–2024 gender equality plan of the national parliament, information on the annual median gross salary by gender is presented, both for the whole parliament and separately for each house<sup>(171)</sup>.

**The use of gender-sensitive language is not widespread.** Using gender-sensitive language in official documents and communications demonstrates parliaments' commitment

<sup>(165)</sup> European Council and Council of the European Union (n.d.), 'Pay transparency in the EU' (<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pay-transparency/>).

<sup>(166)</sup> Eurostat (2021), 'Gender pay gap statistics' ([https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender\\_pay\\_gap\\_statistics](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Gender_pay_gap_statistics)); EIGE (2019), *Tackling the Gender Pay Gap: Not without a better work-life balance*, research note, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20190416\\_mh0119035enn\\_pdf.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/20190416_mh0119035enn_pdf.pdf)).

<sup>(167)</sup> European Parliament (2020), 'Gender pay gap in Europe: Facts and figures (infographic)' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20200227STO73519/gender-pay-gap-in-europe-facts-and-figures-infographic>).

<sup>(168)</sup> Swedish Parliament (2023), *Amendment of the basic support in the act on support to the party groups for the work of Members of the Riksdag in the Riksdag*, Stockholm ([https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/framstallning/andring-av-basstodet-i-lagen-om-stod-till\\_hb04rs2/](https://www.riksdagen.se/sv/dokument-och-lagar/dokument/framstallning/andring-av-basstodet-i-lagen-om-stod-till_hb04rs2/)).

<sup>(169)</sup> Irish Stationery Office (2022), Employment Equality Act 1998 (Section 20A) (gender pay gap information) regulations 2022, Statutory Instruments S.I. No 264 of 2022, Dublin (<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2022/si/264/made/en/pdf>). For further information, see the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021 (<https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2021/act/20/enacted/en/print.html>); and gov.ie (2022), 'What is the Gender Pay Gap Information Act 2021?' (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/29606-what-is-the-gender-pay-gap-information-act-2021/>).

<sup>(170)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas Service (2023), *Gender Pay Gap Report 2023*, Dublin ([https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/corporate/reports/2023/2023-12-20\\_gender-pay-gap-report-2023\\_en.pdf](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/corporate/reports/2023/2023-12-20_gender-pay-gap-report-2023_en.pdf)).

<sup>(171)</sup> Spain, Congress of Deputies (2020), *Equality Plan: Monitoring and evaluation – Equality plan of the Cortes Generales* ([https://www.congreso.es/es/cem/plan\\_de\\_igualdad](https://www.congreso.es/es/cem/plan_de_igualdad)).

to gender equality, yet only a few national parliaments have issued rules to enforce the use of gender-sensitive language in their work and communications. In 2023, four parliaments – Greece, Croatia, Italy (lower house) and Austria (both houses) – reported having formal rules and standing orders written in gender-sensitive language. For example, in Greece, Article 12 of Law 4604/2019 on the inclusion of the gender dimension in the drafting of administrative

documents explicitly prohibits the use of wording that assumes or involves gender-based discrimination<sup>(172)</sup>. In Italy, the plan on positive actions mentions provisions on the use of gender-sensitive language in the activities of the Chamber of Deputies, including formulating documents in a gender-sensitive manner, and promoting the use of language respectful of gender differences in all parliamentary activities, acts and documents<sup>(173)</sup>.

<sup>(172)</sup> Article 12 of Law 4604/2019 as amended by Law 5043/2023 ([https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou?law\\_id=aec4302e-ab03-4f6e-867c-afdb002aaf0f](https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/Nomothetiko-Ergo/Anazitisi-Nomothetikou-Ergou?law_id=aec4302e-ab03-4f6e-867c-afdb002aaf0f)).

<sup>(173)</sup> Italy, Chamber of Deputies (2017), *Plan on Positive Actions* ([https://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/file\\_bollettino\\_organ\\_collegiali/files/000/000/087/organ\\_coll\\_048.pdf](https://www.camera.it/application/xmanager/projects/leg17/attachments/file_bollettino_organ_collegiali/files/000/000/087/organ_coll_048.pdf)).

## 4. Area 4: The parliament produces gender-sensitive legislation

A gender-sensitive parliament should produce legislation that seeks to further gender equality by considering and integrating women's and men's concerns into the political process and across all policy sectors. Area 4 assesses the extent to which parliaments achieve this objective by:

- using gender impact assessments in legislative proposals;
- identifying legislation, policies and action plans that address gender equality and the range of policy areas covered;
- ratifying key international conventions related to gender equality and therefore demonstrating a commitment to action in these areas;
- producing or endorsing a national gender equality action plan;
- having a dedicated body to oversee gender equality in government action.

### 4.1. The European Parliament has promoted the use of gender impact assessment in European Union policymaking

**The European Parliament committed itself to carrying out a gender impact assessment for each legislative own-initiative report, with**

**the aim of improving gender mainstreaming in the legislative process** <sup>(174)</sup>. The commitment to better integrating a gender perspective when drafting legislative proposals is also translated in the roadmap for the implementation of the 2020 EP GAP <sup>(175)</sup>. Through FEMM and the GMN, the European Parliament has explored further methods and tools for improving gender mainstreaming in the legislative process. The European Parliament has also urged the Commission to carry out and publish a gender impact assessment for each legislative proposal and include gender-related objectives and performance indicators in its proposals <sup>(176)</sup>.

**The European Parliament endorsed the European Commission's gender equality strategy for 2020–2025.** The EU gender equality strategy sets out the EU's policy objectives and actions to foster concrete progress towards a gender-equal Europe by 2025. The strategy is based on the dual approach of introducing targeted measures to achieve gender equality combined with strengthened gender mainstreaming and including an intersectional perspective in EU policies <sup>(177)</sup>. Key objectives focus on ending gender-based violence, challenging gender stereotypes, closing gender gaps in the labour market, achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy, addressing the gender pay and pension gaps, closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics <sup>(178)</sup>.

<sup>(174)</sup> European Parliament (2022), *European Parliament resolution of 10 March 2022 on gender mainstreaming in the European Parliament – Annual report 2020 (2021/2039(INI))*, point 6 ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2022-0072_EN.html)).

<sup>(175)</sup> European Parliament (2021), *Gender Mainstreaming in the European Parliament – State of play*, Brussels ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS\\_STU\(2021\)694216\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2021/694216/EPRS_STU(2021)694216_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(176)</sup> For example, EIGE carried out training sessions for the GMN and FEMM members on gender impact assessments and gender budgeting, and developed a checklist for gender-sensitive screening of proposals of EU directives ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/checklist\\_for\\_gender-sensitive\\_screening\\_of\\_proposals-mh0321222enn.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/checklist_for_gender-sensitive_screening_of_proposals-mh0321222enn.pdf)).

<sup>(177)</sup> European Commission (2020), Commission communication – A Union of equality: Gender equality strategy 2020–2025, COM(2020) 152 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>).

<sup>(178)</sup> European Commission (2020), Commission communication – A Union of equality: Gender equality strategy 2020–2025, COM(2020) 152 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0152>).

The European Parliament welcomed the EU gender equality strategy, but raised concerns about the lack of a monitoring and accountability framework with clear gender equality targets and corresponding time frames, and indicators for monitoring progress <sup>(179)</sup>. In addition, the European Parliament called on the Commission to ensure that women's rights are considered in all its proposals, to develop concrete plans to reduce women's poverty rates and to strengthen efforts to close the gender pay gap.

**Since 2019, the European Parliament has adopted crucial legislative actions to advance gender equality in the EU.** The European Parliament voted on the EU work-life balance directive, which aims to improve the work-life balance of parents and carers across the EU. The directive became effective on 1 July 2019, requiring Member States to implement it in national law by 2 August 2022 <sup>(180)</sup>.

In March 2021, the Commission issued a proposal for a directive on binding pay transparency measures, specifically targeting the gender pay gap, and in April 2023 the European Parliament and Council of the European Union adopted new rules for combating gender-based pay discrimination <sup>(181)</sup>. In addition, after being blocked in the Council for 10 years, the European Parliament adopted the directive on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures <sup>(182)</sup>

in November 2022, aiming to increase the presence of women on corporate boards.

In June 2023, the EU acceded to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), a major human rights treaty establishing comprehensive legal standards to ensure women's right to live free from violence. The Istanbul Convention entered into force in October 2023 for the EU, which became the convention's 38th party. This is a significant development that will strengthen the legal framework for tackling gender-based violence and constitutes a concrete step towards achieving equality as set out in the EU gender equality strategy for 2020–2025.

Furthermore, a proposal for a directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence was put forward by the European Commission in March 2022 <sup>(183)</sup>. The European Parliament and MEPs from FEMM prepared a supporting report <sup>(184)</sup> and negotiated the legislative text with the Council.

This range of legislation and policies adopted by the European Parliament contributes to the achievement of the objectives of wider international frameworks for gender equality, such as the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). In addition, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the BPFA, the parliament adopted a resolution to assess

<sup>(179)</sup> European Parliament (2021), European Parliament resolution of 21 January 2021 on the EU strategy for gender equality (2019/2169(INI)) ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0025\\_EN.html](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2021-0025_EN.html)).

<sup>(180)</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents>).

<sup>(181)</sup> <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/04/24/gender-pay-gap-council-adopts-new-rules-on-pay-transparency/>.

<sup>(182)</sup> Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures (OJ L 315, 7.12.2022, p. 44) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj>).

<sup>(183)</sup> European Commission (2022), Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women and domestic violence, COM(2022) 105 final (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52022PC0105>).

<sup>(184)</sup> The European Parliament report on combating violence against women and domestic violence was a joint report of FEMM and the Committee on Civil Liberties ([https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2022/0066\(COD\)&=en](https://oeil.secure.europarl.europa.eu/oeil/popups/ficheprocedure.do?reference=2022/0066(COD)&=en)). The negotiation stage reached a final form of the text in February 2024, after long debates, negotiations and input from civil-society organisations, including organisations working on gender equality and women's rights (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20240205IPR17412/first-ever-eu-rules-on-combating-violence-against-women-deal-reached>).

the progress made on women's rights and the challenges that lay ahead <sup>(185)</sup>.

## 4.2. Most Member States have signed and ratified key international instruments on gender equality and women's rights

**The Istanbul Convention has been signed by all Member States, but ratification is still pending in five Member States** (BG, CZ, LT, HU, SK) due to 'legal uncertainty and incompatibility with their constitutional framework' <sup>(186)</sup>, and as part of a broader backlash against gender equality and women's rights <sup>(187)</sup>. All Member States have ratified the 1979 CEDAW and signed the BPFA. However, only 11 Member States (BE, IE, ES, HR, CY, LT, LU, MT, PT, RO, SI) have a national strategy or an action plan to foster progress towards the objectives of the BPFA. In those countries, gender equality strategies or action plans were informed by the BPFA or – given the increased importance of the UN sustainable development goals (SDGs) – by the 2030 Agenda monitoring framework and the implementation of the SDGs (especially SDG 5). For example, Italy's national strategy for gender

equality adopted in July 2021 cites the SDGs as the context for measures to promote the integration of a gender perspective in all areas of social and economic life and of policy, and for the dissemination of suitable tools to support assessment of the impact of public policies from a gender perspective and use of gender budgeting <sup>(188)</sup>.

All Member States have adopted legislation that addresses gender equality, equal opportunities between women and men and anti-discrimination, including sex-based discrimination and violence against women <sup>(189)</sup>. Hungary and Poland treat gender equality as part of more general legislation dealing with equality or non-discrimination. Latvia does not have a specific gender equality or anti-discrimination law that includes sex-based discrimination, but it transposed the EU directives on gender equality by adding specific provisions to its existing legislation (e.g. in labour, social security and discrimination law) <sup>(190)</sup>.

**The comprehensiveness of legislation dealing with gender equality in specific areas of policy varies considerably among Member States.** Gender equality in the economy <sup>(191)</sup> is the most addressed area in national legislation, being present in almost all Member States (except

<sup>(185)</sup> European Parliament (2021), European Parliament resolution of 11 February 2021 on challenges ahead for women's rights in Europe: More than 25 years after the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (2021/2509(RSP)).

<sup>(186)</sup> European Parliament (2023), *EU Accession to the Istanbul Convention* ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/747114/EPRS\\_ATA\(2023\)747114\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2023/747114/EPRS_ATA(2023)747114_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(187)</sup> EIGE (2020), *Beijing +25: The fifth review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/beijing-25-fifth-review-implementation-beijing-platform-action-eu-member-states>).

<sup>(188)</sup> Italy, Chamber of Deputies (2022), *Gender Legislation and Policies* ([http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/testi/ID0007.htm?\\_1649221209367](http://documenti.camera.it/leg18/dossier/testi/ID0007.htm?_1649221209367)).

<sup>(189)</sup> For an overview of the national legislation and policies in different aspects of gender equality in each of the countries of the EU-27, see EIGE (2022), 'Country specific information' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/countries>). See also European network of legal experts in gender equality and non-discrimination (2023), *A comparative analysis of gender equality law in Europe 2022*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg (<https://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/5804-a-comparative-analysis-of-gender-equality-law-in-europe-2022-1-82-mb>).

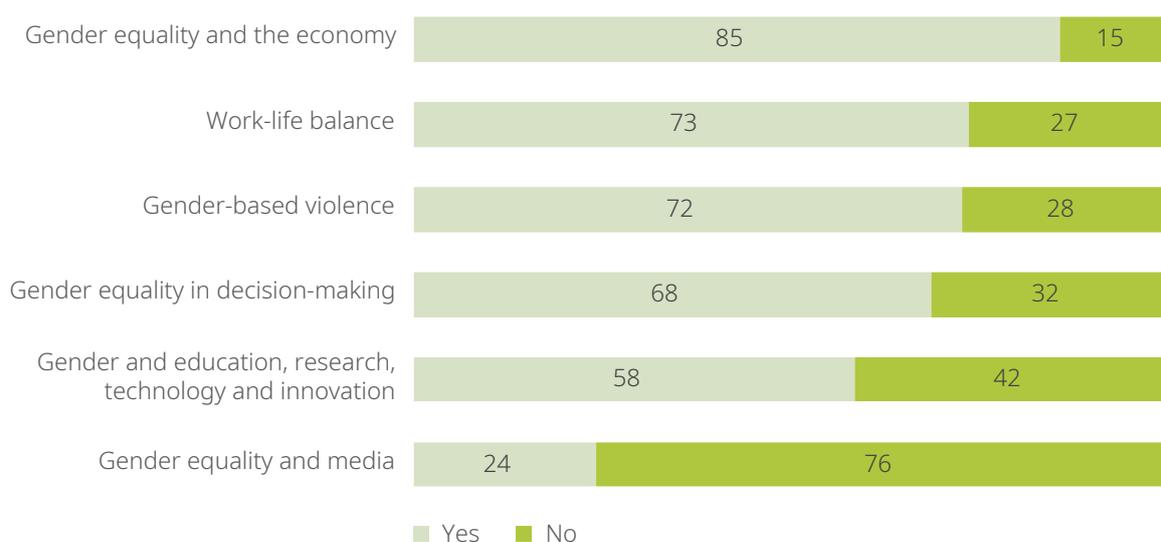
<sup>(190)</sup> See footnote 189.

<sup>(191)</sup> Gender equality concerns affecting the economy are varied. The main barriers include (1) the lack of women in leadership, (2) poverty and a lack of economic opportunities, (3) workplace discrimination and inequalities, (4) an imbalance in unpaid care work, (5) social norms and cultural practices, (6) inadequate access to education and healthcare, (7) food insecurity, (8) violence against women and girls, (9) inadequate funding for gender equality initiatives, (10) legal barriers and poorly enforced legislation and (11) a lack of access to clean energy and sanitation. See UN Women (2023), *Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023*, New York (<https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/progress-on-the-sustainable-development-goals-the-gender-snapshot-2023>).

HU and PL), while aspects dealing with gender and the media <sup>(192)</sup> are the least regulated, addressed in just a few (IE, EL, ES, FR, HR, PT) (Figure 16). In Greece, for example, Article 24 of Law 4604/2019 on substantive gender equality and preventing and combating gender-based violence <sup>(193)</sup> sets out measures to promote gender equality in mass media and advertising and in the responsibilities of the National Council

for Radio and Television. This includes ensuring advertising free from gender stereotypes, codes of conduct that implement the principle of gender equality, the inclusion of themes that contribute to the promotion of gender equality and work to ensure that language is free from gender-based discrimination when broadcasting advertising.

**Figure 16. Gender equality areas addressed in national legislation, EU-27, 2023 (%)**



NB: The list of areas covered by gender equality legislation is not exhaustive. It includes the most addressed topics, mostly those related to the 12 areas of concern of the BPFA, key European legislation and other international conventions. The percentage is calculated out of total answers (yes or no) received per Member State. Hungary and Poland have overall legislation dealing with equalities (not specific to gender), so they were not counted in the total number of Member States per area.  
Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023.

**National parliaments play a key role in promoting coordinated action for gender equality but do so in less than half of the Member States.** EIGE's previous research <sup>(194)</sup> showed that in 16 Member States (BE, DK, DE, EL, ES, CY, LT, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SI, FI, SE) the governmental gender equality body responsible

for implementing the national gender equality strategy and gender equality action plan reports on its activities to the national parliament. Nine of these governmental gender equality bodies report regularly to the parliament (BE, DK, LU, MT, NL, AT, PT, RO, SE) and four report directly to a parliamentary committee (EL, ES, CY, LT). Three

<sup>(192)</sup> Women are under-represented in media ownership, information production and decision-making positions. When it comes to media content, women represent only about a quarter of the persons heard, read about or seen in the news. Gender stereotypes persist and sexist hate speech, including online, remains a major concern. For more information, see Council of Europe (n.d.), 'Women in media and artificial intelligence' (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/women-in-media>); and European Parliament (2018), *Gender Equality in the Media Sector* ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/596839/IPOL\\_STU\(2018\)596839\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2018/596839/IPOL_STU(2018)596839_EN.pdf)).

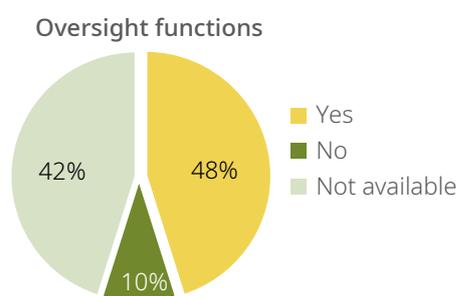
<sup>(193)</sup> Greek Ministry for Social Cohesion and Family (2019), Law 4604/2019 on substantive gender equality, preventing and combating gender-based violence (<https://isotita.gr/en/law-4604-2019-substantive-gender-equality-preventing-combating-gender-based-violence/>).

<sup>(194)</sup> EIGE (2023), *The Pathway to Progress: Strengthening effective structures for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 25 and 27 (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/pathway-progress-strengthening-effective-structures-gender-equality-and-gender-mainstreaming-eu>).

governmental gender equality bodies (DE, SI, FI) report irregularly to the parliament. In 2022, the majority (18) of Member States had a national strategy either entirely dedicated to gender equality (14 Member States: BG, CZ, DE, EE, EL, HR, IT, LT, LU, HU, RO, SK, FI, SE) or as part of broader strategy on equality and non-discrimination (4 Member States: DK, LV, NL, PT) <sup>(195)</sup>. In 2023, 11 national parliaments (BE, BG, CZ, EE, EL, IT, CY, LV, LU, RO, FI) reported having officially promoted a gender action plan or a national programme for enhancing gender equality during the latest legislative term. In France, for example, the interministerial plan for equality between women and men for 2023–2027 was developed with the participation of parliament but was not adopted or publicly endorsed by the parliament.

**Of the gender equality parliamentary committees in national parliaments, less than half have oversight functions** (Figure 17) that give them the power to scrutinise government policy and function from a gender perspective (BE (upper), CZ (lower), DK, DE (both), ES (both), HR, CY, LT, AT (both), PL (lower), PT). Three committees have no such power (IE (joint), LV, SI (lower)). Information is not available on the remaining committees (BE (lower), CZ (upper), EL, LT, LU, NL (both), PL (upper), RO (both), SI (upper), SK and FI) <sup>(196)</sup>.

**Figure 17. Gender equality parliamentary committees, oversight functions in parliamentary committees (%)**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023, based on IPU Parline database

<sup>(195)</sup> See footnote 194.

<sup>(196)</sup> Refers to 21 parliamentary committees included in IPU Parline database. Additional research is required to create a complete mapping of the oversight functions of gender equality committees.

<sup>(197)</sup> EIGE (2023), *The Pathway to Progress: Strengthening effective structures for gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, pp. 25 and 27 (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/pathway-progress-strengthening-effective-structures-gender-equality-and-gender-mainstreaming-eu>).

<sup>(198)</sup> Portugal, Assembly of the Republic (2018), Law No 4/2018 on establishing the legal framework for gender impact assessments of normative acts, *Official Gazette*, No 29/2018, pp. 881–883 (<https://dre.pt/dre/detalhe/lei/4-2018-114661388>).

### 4.3. Limited efforts have been made in national parliaments to ensure the systematic assessment of the gendered impact of different policies and legislation

**Less than a third of national parliaments have binding rules that require gender impact assessment or gender analysis of draft legislation** (DK, IE, HR, NL, AT, PT, SK, FI). Three bicameral parliaments (IE, NL, AT) have binding legislation requiring them to carry out gender impact assessments of the legislative proposals and laws in both houses. In most Member States, however, national parliaments are not directly responsible for the implementation of gender impact assessments. National governments are often encouraged or obliged to evaluate the impact of legislation on gender equality before submitting the legislation to parliament. Based on the findings of EIGE's recent report, 16 Member States (BE, BG, CZ, DK, DE, EE, ES, HR, IT, LV, NL, AT, PT, SK, FI, SE) mandate their governments, by law, to carry out an *ex ante* gender impact assessment when drafting laws and/or policies, plans and programmes <sup>(197)</sup>. After the assessment, national parliaments have a duty to check that the findings of this evaluation have been considered and that the relevant issues have been addressed satisfactorily.

For example, in Portugal, based on Article 2 of Law 4/2018, a gender impact assessment is carried out on draft normative acts developed by the central and regional administration, as well as on draft bills and proposals submitted to the parliament <sup>(198)</sup>. Each legislative proposal is accompanied by an *ex ante* gender impact assessment that goes through the legislative process within the parliament, first discussed within the allocated committee and then in

plenary. The parliamentary services also prepare a technical note that presents the gender impact of the legislation. If a negative impact is identified, the parliament can propose rewording, a further

study or compensatory measures. The legislative proposal, together with all technical assessments, including the gender impact assessment, is debated and voted on in the plenary.

## 5. Area 5: Parliament complies with its symbolic function

A gender-sensitive parliament should be aware of and attend to the symbolic meanings conveyed within and by the institution, particularly in its dealings with the public <sup>(199)</sup>. The physical space and communications of parliaments are two important areas of this symbolic meaning, addressing gender inequalities and promoting more equal participation of diverse groups of women and men in the workplace and society. Area 5 considers the extent to which parliaments recognise the importance of gender sensitivity by measuring (1) efforts made to make the space more gender sensitive and (2) efforts to promote gender equality in external communications. It covers in particular the following topics:

- whether childcare facilities are provided in parliamentary chambers, and what type of services are available;
- official policy or efforts made to enhance the gender sensitivity of physical spaces;
- the number of initiatives dedicated to gender equality issues / women's rights organised in the last calendar year (May 2022 to May 2023) on the parliament's premises;
- whether there is a section for citizens on the parliament's website that addresses gender equality;
- if and how information about gender-equality-related initiatives of the parliament is systematically disseminated to the public and civil society.

### 5.1. The European Parliament continues to take steps to make its physical spaces and communication more gender sensitive

**The European Parliament's buildings in both Brussels and Strasbourg have childcare facilities for the children of MEPs, parliamentary staff, accredited parliamentary assistants and other European Parliament employees** <sup>(200)</sup>. Most physical spaces within the European Parliament are named after men; however, concerted efforts have been made in the past to diversify the naming of physical spaces. Currently, the visitors' centre in Brussels is named after Simone Veil, the first woman President of the European Parliament), and the main parliamentary building in Strasbourg is named after Louise Weiss, a renowned feminist, author and politician. To continue to increase public awareness and improve its internal practices, the European Parliament hosted the Herstory exhibition from October 2022 to March 2023 to illustrate the importance and relevance of women's perspectives. More recently, recognising the imbalance in artwork created by men compared with women, the European Parliament's contemporary art collection – which was founded by Simone Veil in 1980 – has adapted its acquisition strategy with a view to achieving a gender-balanced collection of contemporary art.

**The European Parliament holds events and hearings dedicated to gender equality and women's rights** and ensures that its work on gender equality is made available to the public. The parliament has dedicated an area

<sup>(199)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), *Gender-sensitive Parliaments Toolkit – Description of indicators and scoring model*, p. 24 ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eige\\_gsp\\_description\\_of\\_indicatorsscoring\\_modelv2.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eige_gsp_description_of_indicatorsscoring_modelv2.pdf)).

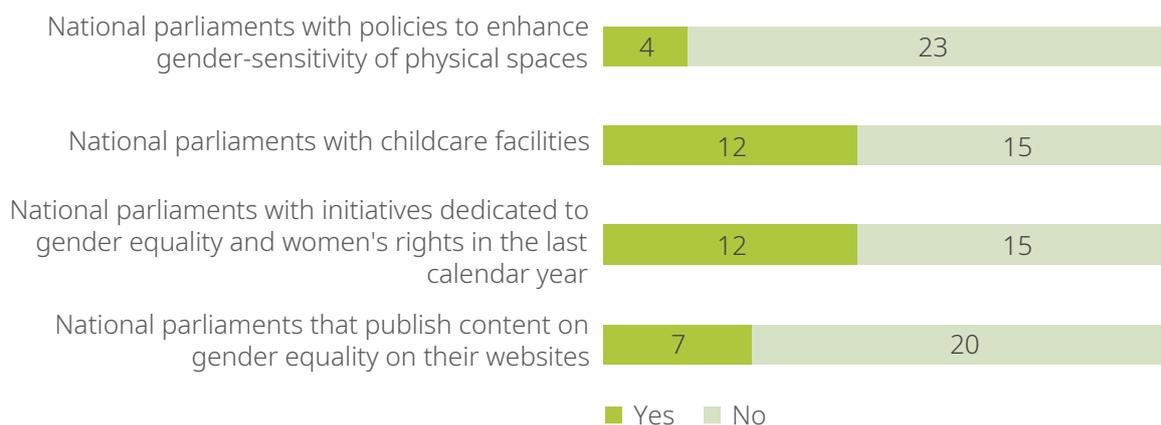
<sup>(200)</sup> For Brussels, see the web page on the Brussels crèche (<https://creche.europarl.europa.eu/home/bruxelles.html>) and for Strasbourg see the web page on the Luxembourg crèches (<https://creche.europarl.europa.eu/home/luxembourg.html>). Employees of the European Parliament in Strasbourg can also access the childcare facilities hosted by the Council of Europe (<https://creche.europarl.europa.eu/home.html>).

of its website to the topic of gender equality, accessible to all citizens <sup>(201)</sup>. The European Parliament's FEMM <sup>(202)</sup> regularly organises hearings to engage with experts and hold discussions on gender equality and women's rights. These hearings are recorded and made available online to the public, alongside meeting schedules and minutes, documentation and supporting analysis <sup>(203)</sup>. Annually, on 8 March (International Women's Day) and 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women), the European Parliament organises events, hearings and discussions to which all MEPs are invited, which are accessible to the public through the European Parliament's Multimedia Centre. In addition, since 2020 the European Parliament has organised four European Gender Equality Weeks <sup>(204)</sup>, which have taken place in the last week of October, highlighting the European Parliament's continuous efforts to place gender equality and women's empowerment at the centre of legislation, and inviting all parliamentary committees, delegations and partners to organise sessions related to their policy areas.

## 5.2. There is a lack of gender sensitivity of national parliaments' physical spaces

**There is a continued lack of attention to the gender sensitivity of national parliaments' physical spaces.** In the period from May 2022 to May 2023, four national parliaments had policies and initiatives in place to improve the gender sensitivity of their physical spaces (DK, IE, IT, FI) (Figure 18). In Ireland, both houses operate in the same building (Leinster House in Dublin), and a family room was created to allow parent MPs to spend time with their children during long sitting days. Responding to findings of research published in 2018, the Finnish government has renovated and opened a childcare and family room for parent MPs <sup>(205)</sup>. In Denmark, an effort has been made to highlight women in parliamentary artwork, and since 2019 the parliamentary buildings have also installed gender-neutral toilets.

**Figure 18. Gender sensitivity of physical spaces and communication on gender equality in national parliaments, EU-27, 2023**



Source: EIGE, data collection on gender-sensitive parliaments, 2023.

<sup>(201)</sup> European Parliament (2024), 'Committees – Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/home/highlights>).

<sup>(202)</sup> European Parliament (2022), 'Committees – FEMM Committee: About – Welcome words' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/about>).

<sup>(203)</sup> For more information on FEMM public hearings, see European Parliament (n.d.), 'Committees – FEMM: Hearings' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/events/events-hearings>).

<sup>(204)</sup> See European Parliament (n.d.), 'Committees – FEMM: Other events' (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/femm/events/events-other>).

<sup>(205)</sup> The research report *Gender Equality in the Parliament 2018* Identified the need for a family room and the opening of a new facility is reported in the 2022 follow-up study: Finnish Parliament (2023), *Equality in Parliament Work – Follow-up study 2022*, p. 18 ([https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/naineduskuntatoimii/julkaisut/Documents/ekj\\_1+2023.pdf](https://www.eduskunta.fi/FI/naineduskuntatoimii/julkaisut/Documents/ekj_1+2023.pdf)).

**Twelve national parliaments have some type of childcare facilities** (DE, EE, IE, EL, ES, IT, LT, NL, AT, PT, FI, SE). The provision of facilities and basic services that help to balance personal and professional responsibilities plays a crucial role in enabling equal participation in parliaments, and affects the desirability of the parliament as a workplace and the retention of staff and MPs<sup>(206)</sup>. The persistent unequal distribution of care work, with women as primary carers, can make the gaps in care services an important barrier for women wanting to seek political office and also for women as staff members to undertake certain roles in parliament and to obtain promotions.

**Where parliaments have made provisions for childcare, the types of facility and service provided vary considerably.** Few parliaments offer childcare facilities such as professional ‘daycare’ style provisions, including crèches or kindergartens (DE, IE, EL, ES, IT, PT, SE). Since 2008, the Portuguese parliament has had a nursery for children of MPs and parliamentary staff aged 3–36 months<sup>(207)</sup>. The Swedish parliament has childcare facilities for children aged 1–12 years. In Lithuania, since 2023, state institutions and agencies with 100 or more employees have been required to have a children’s room (based on amendments to the Law on the Protection of Children’s Rights), and this sort of room has also been established in the parliament<sup>(208)</sup>. These children’s/family rooms do not provide services, but are supervised and have space for children to, for example, do homework or play with toys. The study identified that a few parliaments have breastfeeding rooms (EE, IE, ES, IT, NL, AT). In Ireland, the Houses of the Oireachtas Service provide an on-site childcare facility, late-night services are also available for when ‘sittings’

go into the evening and there are drop-in services. In addition, there are breastfeeding and restrooms available in multiple locations, and breastfeeding is permitted in the Dáil and Seanad Chambers. Services and facilities are available for MPs and civil service staff<sup>(209)</sup>.

### 5.3. Publicly available information on national parliaments’ gender equality initiatives is scarce

**Twelve national parliaments held at least one event or initiative dedicated to gender equality and/or women’s rights** from May 2022 to May 2023. The types of initiatives included:

- research events on the gender sensitivity of parliaments and violence against women in politics (LT, SE);
- publishing events presenting the publication of work on issues of gender equality (FI);
- award ceremony aiming to reward people, organisations or institutions engaged in the defence of women’s rights (FR);
- conferences for training on gender equality (for MPs) (SI); on thematic issues, often launched on symbolic days to bring focus to important topics (DK, LT, MT, RO); and on men who have progressed the agenda for gender equality (CZ);
- debates to discuss viewpoints on highly salient topics internationally (FR) or locally, such as the benefits of gender balance in elected parliament (IE).

<sup>(206)</sup> Palmieri, S. (2011), *Gender-sensitive Parliaments: A global review of good practice*, IPU, Geneva.

<sup>(207)</sup> The nursery has extended hours from 07:45 to 19:45. For more information, see Geracao Chupeta (n.d.), ‘Generation of the pacifier’ (<https://www.geracaochupeta.com/>).

<sup>(208)</sup> See Ministry of Social Security and Labour of the Republic of Lithuania (2022), ‘From the beginning of next year, public sector institutions will have children’s rooms’, 29 November (<https://socmin.lrv.lt/lt/naujienos/nuo-kitu-metu-pradzios-viesojo-sektorius-istaigose-vaiku-kambariai?lang=lt%20/%20https://www.lrytas.lt/lietuvosdiena/aktualijos/2023/01/19/news/pasizvalgykite-seime-ikurtas-kambarys-politiku-vaikams-sie-atskleide-ar-paliks-jame-savo-atzalas-25846180>).

<sup>(209)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (2021), *Forum on a Family Friendly and Inclusive Parliament – Report as presented to the Ceann Comhairle, Mr Seán Ó Fearghail TD* (<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/office-holders/ceann-comhairle/forum-on-a-family-friendly-and-inclusive-parliament/>).

- art exhibitions showcasing art by women (BE, PT) or related to gender equality (MT).

**Seven national parliaments publish content on gender equality on their websites** (DE, IE, ES, IT, AT, FI, SE.). Austria (both houses) <sup>(210)</sup>, Finland <sup>(211)</sup> and Sweden <sup>(212)</sup> have dedicated web pages that provide information on women's suffrage, women in parliament and additional resources (e.g. reports, literature, policy). The websites of the upper and lower chambers in Germany <sup>(213)</sup> and Ireland <sup>(214)</sup> are connected to specific committees, thus predominantly featuring activities of the committees rather than having the sole aim of disseminating information on gender equality. Italy's web page focuses on the country's progress towards gender equality <sup>(215)</sup>. In Spain, the parliament's web page has a dedicated section on equality, with a focus on the parliament's gender equality action plan <sup>(216)</sup>.

**Five national parliaments systematically disseminate information about gender-equality-related initiatives to the public** (IE (both), ES (both), AT (lower), RO (both), FI). The channels used to distribute this information include the option to sign-up for emails, monthly or weekly updates and dedicated web pages. For example, in Finland, the communications department within the parliament disseminates information on legislation and political debates related to gender equality and women's rights, which is communicated on the web page and through social media. Progress still needs to be made, as a lack of systematic dissemination of information persists in all Member States. Even where parliaments do publish information, it is very uncommon for the websites to have tools in place that the public can use to regularly receive updates on the topic (e.g. through email newsletters or notifications for new publications).

<sup>(210)</sup> Austria, National Council (n.d.), 'The proportion of women in parliament' (<https://www.parlament.gv.at/verstehen/demokratie-wahlen/frauen-im-parlament/anteil/index.html>).

<sup>(211)</sup> Finnish Parliament (n.d.), 'Women's suffrage 110 years information package' (<https://www.eduskunta.fi/EN/naineduskuntatoimii/kirjasto/aineistot/yhteiskunta/womens-suffrage-110-years/Pages/default.aspx>).

<sup>(212)</sup> Swedish Parliament (2023), 'Gender equality work in the Riksdag' (<https://www.riksdagen.se/en/how-the-riksdag-works/the-work-of-the-riksdag/gender-equality-work-in-the-riksdag/>).

<sup>(213)</sup> Germany, Federal Council (n.d.), 'Committee on Women and Youth' (<https://www.bundesrat.de/DE/bundesrat/ausschuesse/fj/fj-node.html>); German Bundestag (n.d.), 'Committee on Family, Seniors, Women and Youth' (<https://www.bundestag.de/familie>).

<sup>(214)</sup> Houses of the Oireachtas (n.d.), 'Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus' (<https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/members/womens-caucus/>).

<sup>(215)</sup> Italy, Chamber of Deputies (2022), 'Special provisions – Constitution, rights, and freedoms: Gender equality' ([https://www.camera.it/leg17/522?tema=tl18\\_parit\\_di\\_genere](https://www.camera.it/leg17/522?tema=tl18_parit_di_genere)).

<sup>(216)</sup> Spain, Senate (2021), *Equality Plan of the General Courts* (<https://www.senado.es/web/composicionorganizacion/administracionparlamentaria/portaldeigualdad/planIgualdadCortesGenerales/index.html>); Spain, Congress of Deputies (2020), 'Equality plan of the Cortes Generales', ([https://www.congreso.es/en/cem/plan\\_de\\_igualdad](https://www.congreso.es/en/cem/plan_de_igualdad)).

## 6. Conclusions

This report assessed the gender equality and gender sensitivity of the European Parliament and the national parliaments of the EU-27. It presented a comparative assessment of the findings for the European Parliament and national parliaments in the five areas of EIGE's self-assessment framework for gender-sensitive parliaments. It recognises the efforts made by the parliaments since EIGE's first assessment in 2019, while identifying the room for improvement to promote and deliver gender equality, both in the parliaments' internal structures and in their legislative outputs. This section presents conclusions and key insights from this study by area <sup>(217)</sup>.

### **Area 1. Gender parity in parliaments across the EU is a crucial ambition but remains a distant goal, as it will take 28 years to achieve it at the current rate of progress.**

Although there is evidence of slow progress, the concept of parliaments that are fully representative of the diverse groups of women and men they serve remains a distant goal. Only just over half of Member States explicitly enshrine the right of equal access to politics in legislation and, across the EU, men still account for two thirds (67 %) of all members of national parliaments. The European Parliament and six national parliaments (BE, DK, ES, AT, FI, SE) have achieved the first target of gender balance, with at least 40 % of each gender, but elsewhere women remain significantly under-represented.

There is also evidence of imbalanced representation by age, highlighted by the low numbers of young women and men in parliament. However, quantitative data on representation characterised by race, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation are extremely limited and almost non-existent when considered in combination with gender, an intersection that can compound discrimination, exclusion and other disadvantages. While the collection of relevant data is not straightforward because of legal issues related to the treatment of 'sensitive' personal data (as defined by the EU's general data protection regulation), there is an important information gap that needs to be filled.

The real question is how to address these persistent imbalances, speed up progress towards gender parity and ensure equal representation for different groups of women and men. The European elections represent a crucial opportunity for the European Parliament to push towards parity, but the chance to adopt common EU legislation governing the 2024 elections, which would have given room to make specific provisions regarding gender balance, has been missed. The responsibility to promote women candidates therefore lies with Member States and the political parties.

Political parties' voluntary efforts to promote gender equality are welcome but a concerted approach across the political spectrum is far from guaranteed. Legislative gender quotas mandating a minimum share of each gender among candidates for election can ensure minimum standards across the board.

<sup>(217)</sup> For tailored indications of where specific efforts are needed in each of the five areas of EIGE's gender-sensitive parliaments framework, parliaments can use EIGE's online self-assessment tool. The self-assessment helps parliaments to see where they stand on their way to gender equality, identify main gender inequalities and monitor progress. Then parliaments can reflect on the findings of the assessment, take action and develop concrete measures to address the gender inequalities identified. Parliaments at the EU, national and regional levels can use EIGE's tool with its practical step-by-step guidance on how to develop, implement, monitor and evaluate a gender equality action plan. See EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender-sensitive parliaments toolkit' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-sensitive-parliaments>).

The evidence is clear that gender balance, among both MEPs and national MPs, is higher in countries with legislative quotas than those without them. It is equally clear that to be effective the numerical quota must be accompanied by meaningful sanctions if there is non-compliance and by appropriate placement rules to ensure equal visibility of both sexes. Even then, the evidence shows that the proportion of women elected tends to be lower than the proportion of women candidates. This represents a strong argument for higher quota levels; 30 % or 40 % quotas are not enough – there has to be a push for parity.

## **Area 2. Full contribution to the work of parliament requires equal access to leadership positions, a working environment free from any form of gender-based violence and working conditions that respect work–life balance.**

Since 2019, there has been an increase in the number of women MEPs in key leadership roles in the European Parliament, illustrated by the election of a woman as the President of the European Parliament and a better gender balance among chairs and vice-chairs of parliamentary committees and subcommittees. Nonetheless, women MEPs are still less likely to chair committees, and they are concentrated in specific committees primarily focusing on sociocultural functions. In national parliaments, there has been no improvement since 2019 and both vertical and horizontal segregation persists in leadership positions. Women remain under-represented as chairs of permanent parliamentary committees (29 %) compared with their share of MPs (33 %) and are particularly poorly represented as leaders of committees with high-profile economic functions (18 %). In fact, there is evidence that horizontal segregation at the committee chair level is

worsening. Specific measures to ensure gender balance across leadership positions and within parliamentary committees are largely missing.

Addressing gender-based violence, including sexual harassment, in the European Parliament and national parliaments demands urgent attention, as policies and procedures in parliaments are overall lacking. More efforts are needed to tackle one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women MEPs and MPs: cyber violence. Due to the special status of elected public officials at the EU level and in most countries, measures to support MEPs' and MPs' work–life balance are generally missing. Only half of national parliaments in the EU have provisions regulating work–life balance or provide access to family leave options; combined with unregulated working hours and a lack of flexible working arrangements, this lack of measures hinders the ability of carers (still mostly women) to participate on equal footing in parliamentary work.

Continued efforts and collective commitments are essential to ensure that women's voices are not only heard but are also influential in legislative bodies across the EU. Adopting legislation that criminalises violence against women in politics, ensuring zero tolerance towards gender-based violence and adopting specific policies with sanctions for perpetrators and supporting mechanisms for victims are some of the steps parliaments can take towards creating a safe working environment. The provision of work–life balance measures is important for addressing underlying barriers for the equal representation of women and men in parliaments in their diverse life situations. This includes not only family leave options, but also procedures for proxy voting, limitations to working hours and sitting schedules, and childcare provisions. Enhancing family-friendly working conditions and promoting the equal distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men in parliaments are key to achieving gender-sensitive parliaments.

**Area 3. More efforts are needed to mainstream a gender perspective into parliaments' practices and outputs. Strong gender equality bodies with mandates and resources are essential, together with the use of gender mainstreaming tools.**

In the current legislature (2019–2024), the European Parliament has made important progress in advancing gender equality within its operational activities and remains a forerunner in developing, using and advocating for gender mainstreaming tools. This includes the adoption of a new gender equality plan by its Bureau and the adoption of gender equality plans by each of its committees. Its interest and will to mainstream gender through its work to make the EU budget more gender-responsive and introduce gender budgeting tools in the Union's budgeting process is notable. However, FEMM requires better status and power for it to produce a more sustainable gender mainstreaming impact on the work of other committees. In addition, there is still room for improvement within the European Parliament's own budgeting procedures.

Gender equality bodies are present in most national parliaments (23 out of 27), but the bodies varied in terms of their legislative powers to assess proposed legislation and policies from a gender perspective and ensure gender-related concerns are mainstreamed in parliamentary work. National parliaments have so far been using a limited range of tools to mainstream a gender perspective in their structures, internal practices and operational activities, and those tools are used neither regularly nor systematically.

Systematic inclusion of gender equality concerns in the work of the parliament demands empowered, dedicated gender equality bodies with resources and mandates to influence the parliamentary agenda and use of gender mainstreaming tools. A sustained commitment to implementing and

expanding the use of gender mainstreaming tools – such as gender equality action plans, gender budgeting, gender-responsive public procurement, gender equality training and gender-sensitive language – is crucial to achieve comprehensive and lasting transformation towards more gender-sensitive parliaments.

**Area 4. While progress has been made to promote gender-sensitive legislation, coordinated action and commitment is required at the national level for change to take place.**

The European Parliament has endorsed the EU accession to the Istanbul Convention and has voted on legislation such as the work-life balance directive, the women on boards directive and the pay transparency directive to eliminate the gender pay gap. The European Parliament has also endorsed the EU gender equality strategy for 2020–2025 put forward by the Commission. Furthermore, the European Parliament has contributed to advancing negotiations and reaching a compromise with the Council on the directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence and the directive on standards for equality bodies.

Most national parliaments are actively contributing to advancing gender equality through the adoption of legislation and the ratification of international conventions in the gender equality area. The Istanbul Convention has been signed by all Member States, although accession is still pending in five of them (BG, CZ, LT, HU, SK). In less than half of Member States, gender equality strategies or action plans have been informed by the BPFAs or by the 2030 Agenda monitoring framework and the implementation of the SDGs (especially SDG 5).

Consistent efforts are crucial to ensure the effective implementation of ratified international instruments, including the Istanbul Convention, at both the EU level and the Member State level. Continuous review and update of existing

legislation to address emerging challenges and gaps in gender equality, including intersecting inequalities, is needed.

### **Area 5. The European Parliament leads the way with initiatives to address gender equality in parliaments' infrastructure and communication efforts. Greater commitment is needed in national parliaments.**

Since 2019, the European Parliament has taken additional steps towards enhancing its gender sensitivity, in terms of both physical spaces and external communications. This includes fully serviced childcare facilities accessible to all MEPs and staff, continued efforts to alter the physical space of parliament to enhance the visibility of women, the holding of events dedicated to gender equality, the hosting of a dedicated web page for publishing available information addressing gender equality and the systematic dissemination of this information to the public.

By contrast, the findings reveal varying levels of awareness and action among Member States' national parliaments, with little

progress towards improved access to childcare facilities and limited efforts to promote awareness through communication activities. Less than half of national parliaments have adopted policies or made efforts to enhance their gender sensitivity. Less than half provide childcare facilities, and an even smaller number have facilities with daycare services. This is a major barrier to having fair, supportive and family-friendly working conditions that bridge paid work and caring responsibilities. While initiatives dedicated to gender equality and women's rights have taken place in some national parliaments between May 2022 and May 2023, only a few have a publicly available web page dedicated to gender equality and only eight disseminate information on the topic systematically.

More needs to be done at the national level to support the gender sensitivity of parliaments' physical spaces and gender-equality-related communication efforts. The European Parliament provides a good model in terms of granting the public open access to debate or attend events and through communicating its work addressing issues related to gender equality. This approach increases the visibility of gender equality and the importance of awareness of these issues.

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# Annexes

## Annex 1: Key terms and concepts

Term	Definition
<b>Carers' leave</b>	Leave from work 'to provide personal care or support to a relative, or to a person who lives in the same household as the worker, and who is in need of significant care or support for a serious medical reason, as defined by each Member State' <sup>(218)</sup> .
<b>Cyber violence against women and girls</b>	A range of different forms of violence, which can include cyber stalking, cyber bullying, cyber harassment, online gender-based hate speech, and non-consensual intimate image abuse, perpetrated across different cyberspaces. Cyber violence can take place on social media platforms, messaging apps and discussion sites <sup>(219)</sup> .
<b>Equal pay for work of equal value</b>	'Equal pay for work to which equal value is attributed, without discrimination on grounds of sex or marital status, with regard to all aspects of pay and conditions of remuneration' <sup>(220)</sup> .
<b>Gender-balanced representation</b>	'Representation of either women or men in any decision-making body in public and political life not falling below 40 % as a parity threshold' <sup>(221)</sup> .
<b>Gender budgeting</b>	'A gender-based assessment of budgets, incorporating a gender perspective at all levels of the budgetary process and restructuring revenues and expenditures in order to promote gender equality' <sup>(222)</sup> .
<b>Gender equality committees</b>	Cross-party structures that place gender equality on the agenda of the parliament. These committees often hold governments to account on gender equality law and policy, carry out gender analysis of draft legislation, monitor the implementation of enacted laws and foster cooperation with institutional mechanisms for gender equality <sup>(223)</sup> .

<sup>(218)</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU (OJ L 188, 12.7.2019, p. 79) (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32019L1158#PP1Contents>).

<sup>(219)</sup> EIGE (2022), *Cyber Violence against Women and Girls – Key terms and concepts* (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/publications/cyber-violence-against-women-and-girls-key-terms-and-concepts>).

<sup>(220)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Equal pay for work of equal value' (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1209>).

<sup>(221)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender-balanced participation' (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1127>).

<sup>(222)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender-sensitive parliaments toolkit – Glossary of terms' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-sensitive-parliaments/glossary-terms>).

<sup>(223)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), Gender-sensitive Parliaments Tool – Description of indicators and scoring model ([https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eige\\_gsp\\_description\\_of\\_indicators\\_scoring\\_modelv2.pdf](https://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/eige_gsp_description_of_indicators_scoring_modelv2.pdf)).

Term	Definition
<b>Gender equality training</b>	'Any educational tool or process that aims to make policymakers and other actors in the EU and Member States more aware of gender equality issues, build their gender competence and enable them to promote gender equality goals in their work at all levels' <sup>(224)</sup> .
<b>Gender impact assessment</b>	Gender mainstreaming tool 'for the screening of a given policy proposal, in order to detect and assess its differential impact or effects on women and men, so that these imbalances can be redressed before the proposal is endorsed' <sup>(225)</sup> .
<b>Gender parity</b>	The 'relative equality in terms of numbers and proportions of women and men, girls and boys ? often calculated as the ratio of female-to-male values for a given indicator' <sup>(226)</sup> . Gender parity is defined as 50 % of each gender.
<b>Gender pay gap</b>	This represents 'the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of female and male employees' <sup>(227)</sup> .
<b>Gender-responsive public procurement</b>	'[P]rocurement that promotes gender equality through the purchase of works, supplies or services by public sector bodies. This means that buyers and suppliers look at the impact of all of the contracted activities related to women's and men's interests and concerns and design and deliver contracts in a way that reduces gender inequalities' <sup>(228)</sup> .
<b>Horizontal and vertical segregation</b>	Horizontal segregation is defined as 'the concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs', while vertical segregation refers to situations where opportunities for career progression for a particular gender (men or women) are limited, which therefore contributes to gender inequalities, including the gender pay gap <sup>(229)</sup> .
<b>Maternity leave</b>	Leave of 'a[t] least 14 weeks allocated before and/or after confinement' that 'must include compulsory maternity leave of at least two weeks allocated before and/or after confinement' <sup>(230)</sup> .
<b>Parental leave</b>	'[L]eave from work for parents on the grounds of the birth or adoption of a child to take care of that child' <sup>(231)</sup> .
<b>Paternity leave</b>	'[L]eave from work for fathers or, where and insofar as recognised by national law, for equivalent second parents, on the occasion of the birth of a child for the purposes of providing care' <sup>(232)</sup> .

<sup>(224)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender equality training' (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1144>).

<sup>(225)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender impact assessment' (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1337>).

<sup>(226)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender parity' ([https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1258?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1258?language_content_entity=en)).

<sup>(227)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender pay gap' (<https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1098>).

<sup>(228)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender-responsive public procurement' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/grpp>).

<sup>(229)</sup> Eurofound (2017), 'Segregation', European Industrial Relations Dictionary, Dublin (<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/european-industrial-relations-dictionary/segregation>).

<sup>(230)</sup> Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A31992L0085>).

<sup>(231)</sup> See footnote 218.

<sup>(232)</sup> See footnote 218.

Term	Definition
<b>Pay transparency</b>	The right to request information on pay levels prior to employment, and the requirements to issue gender pay reports, conduct gender pay audits, discuss the issue of equal pay during collective bargaining, and regularly report (every year, every second year) on pay and pay conditions <sup>(233)</sup> .
<b>Sex- and gender-based discrimination</b>	'Discrimination occurring due to interaction between sex (as the biological characteristics of women and men) and their socially constructed identities, attributes and roles and society's social and cultural meaning for biological differences between women and men' <sup>(234)</sup> .
<b>Sexual harassment</b>	'[A]ny form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature occurs, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' <sup>(235)</sup> . In alignment with Directive 2006/54/EC, these acts are inclusive of – but not limited to – vulgar actions, requesting sexual favours, threatening or forcing with the purpose of gaining sexual satisfaction and forcibly imposed sexual intimacy.
<b>Women's caucus</b>	Groups that bring together women MPs from different political parties and can help the parliament to identify key gender equality concerns in the institution, raise cross-party support for gender equality and advocate for gender-sensitive legislative outputs and policies <sup>(236)</sup> .

## Annex 2: Family and care leave for members of national parliaments

Parliament, house	Type of leave	Provision and source
<b>BE, upper</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Procedure of the Senate, Articles 21.4 and 34, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>BE, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity	Chapter 1, paragraph 8 'Maternity / adoption / birth leave / unofficial guardianship', of the Statute of the Members of the Chamber, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>BG, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Organization and Procedure of the National Assembly, available <a href="#">here</a> .

<sup>(233)</sup> More information is available in European Council and Council of the European Union (n.d.), '<https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/pay-transparency/>'. See also the study 'Equal pay for equal work': European Parliament (2020), *Equal Pay for Equal Work – Binding pay-transparency measures*, Luxembourg ([https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/642379/IPOL\\_STU\(2020\)642379\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2020/642379/IPOL_STU(2020)642379_EN.pdf)).

<sup>(234)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Sex- and gender-based discrimination' ([https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1220?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1220?language_content_entity=en)).

<sup>(235)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Sexual harassment' ([https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1212?language\\_content\\_entity=en](https://eige.europa.eu/publications-resources/thesaurus/terms/1212?language_content_entity=en)).

<sup>(236)</sup> EIGE (n.d.), 'Gender-sensitive parliaments toolkit – Glossary of terms' (<https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/toolkits/gender-sensitive-parliaments/glossary-terms>).

Parliament, house	Type of leave	Provision and source
<b>CZ, upper, lower</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Procedure of the Senate, available <a href="#">here</a> ; and Rules of Procedure of the Chamber of Deputies, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>DK, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Chapter XV of the Rules of Procedure 'Leave of absence', Article 41, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>DE, upper, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	MPs are eligible for family leave just as any other federal civil servant is. See <a href="#">here</a> and <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>EE, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental	Article 6 of the Status of Member of the Riigikogu Act, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>IE, upper, lower</b>	None	N/A. See Standing Order No 79A of the Dáil Éireann Standing Orders Relative to Public Business, available <a href="#">here</a> ; and Standing Order No 57A of the Senead Éireann Standing Orders Relative to Public Business, available <a href="#">here</a> . See also <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>EL, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. For further information, see Rules of Procedure of the Hellenic Parliament, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>ES, upper, lower</b>	None	N/A. For further information, see Rules of Procedure of the Senate, available <a href="#">here</a> ; and Rules of Procedure of the Congress, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>FR, upper, lower</b>	None	Regulations of the Senate, available <a href="#">here</a> . Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>HR, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Article 22 of the Standing Orders of the Croatian Parliament, available <a href="#">here</a> . Act on Maternity and Parental Benefits, available <a href="#">here</a> . For carers' leave, see Article 87(3)–(7) of the Labour Law, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>IT, upper, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Articles 97 and 98 of the Italian constitution refer to MPs under Part II, Title III, Section II 'Public administration', available <a href="#">here</a> . Article 2, Consolidated Act on Maternity and Paternity, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>CY, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. Rules of Procedure of the House of Representatives of the Republic of Cyprus, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>LV, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental	Article 4 <sup>1</sup> (1) of the Rules of Procedure of the Saeima, available <a href="#">here</a> . Labour Law, Articles 154–156, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>LT, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. See Seimas Statute, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>LU, unicameral</b>	None	N/A, Regulations of the Chamber of Deputies, available <a href="#">here</a> .

Parliament, house	Type of leave	Provision and source
<b>HU, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, Chapter IX 'The labour law and social security status of the Members of the National Assembly and of candidate Members' of the Act XXXVI of 2012 as on 07.11.2016, available <a href="#">here</a> . Act I of 2012 on the labour code includes relevant provisions. Available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>MT, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. See Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>NL, upper, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Temporary replacement of representatives of the people, available <a href="#">here</a> . Work and Care Act, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>AT, upper, lower</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of procedure of the Austrian parliament, Section 11, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>PL, upper, lower</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Procedure of the Senate, available <a href="#">here</a> . Standing Orders of the Sejm of the Republic of Poland, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>PT, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Statute Governing Members of the Assembleia da República, Article 15, available <a href="#">here</a> . Labour Code, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>RO, upper, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	MPs are considered public employees of high rank; relevant provisions are available in Emergency Order No 158, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>SI, upper</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Republic of Slovenia, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>SI, lower</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Article 95, Rules of Procedure of the National Assembly, available <a href="#">here</a> . Parental Protection and Family Benefits Act, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>SK, unicameral</b>	None	N/A. See Rules of Procedure of the National Council of the Slovak Republic, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>FI, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental, carers'	Section 48 'Recording absence' of the Parliament's Rules of Procedure, available <a href="#">here</a> . Family Leave Reform, available <a href="#">here</a> . Length of leave is described by InfoFinland <a href="#">here</a> . Employment Contracts Act 55/2001, amended by Law 32/2022, available <a href="#">here</a> . Health Insurance Act 1224/2004, amended by Law 28/2022, available <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>SE, unicameral</b>	Maternity, paternity, parental	Conditions of attendance, absence and leave from the Riksdag, available <a href="#">here</a> . Riksdag Act (2014:801), available <a href="#">here</a> . Parental Leave Act (1995:584), available <a href="#">here</a> .

NB: N/A, not applicable. This is a non-exhaustive list based primarily on a review of national parliaments' rules of procedure or standing orders maternity leave and paternity leave provisions for MPs. More comprehensive legal analysis is required to identify family leave provisions for MPs where these are included in national legislation.

## Annex 3: Gender equality bodies in parliaments

**Table 1. Parliamentary committees dealing with gender equality, scope and areas covered, by Member State**

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)	Areas covered	Portfolio
<b>BE</b>	Lower house	Health and Equal Opportunities Commission	Commission de la Santé et de l'Égalité des Chances	Gender equality, health	Combined portfolio
<b>BE</b>	Upper house	Commission on Cross-cutting Issues – Community Competences	Commission des Matières transversales	Cross-cutting issues (including gender equality)	Combined portfolio
<b>CZ</b>	Lower house	Standing Commission on Family Issues, Equal Opportunities and Minorities	Stálá komise pro rodinu a rovné příležitosti	Gender equality, family, elderly people	Combined portfolio
<b>CZ</b>	Upper house	Committee on Social Policy	Výbor pro sociální politiku	Social economy, gender equality, disabilities, employment, children, family	Combined portfolio
<b>DK</b>	Unicameral	Equal Opportunities Committee	Ligestillingsudvalget	Gender equality	Gender equality
<b>DE</b>	Upper house	Committee on Women and Youth	Ausschuss für Frauen und Jugend	Gender equality, children and young people, civil service	Combined portfolio
<b>DE</b>	Lower house	Committee on Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth	Ausschuss für Familie, Senioren, Frauen und Jugend	Gender equality, family, elderly people, young people	Combined portfolio

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)	Areas covered	Portfolio
IE	Joint Committee	Joint Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (previously the Committee on Children, Disability, Equality and Integration)	An Coiste um Leanaí, Comhionannas, Míchumas, Lánpháirtíocht agus Óige	Gender equality, young people disability, integration, children	Combined portfolio
EL	Unicameral	Special Permanent Committee on Equality, Youth and Human Rights	Ειδική μόνιμη επιτροπή ισότητας, νεολαίας και δικαιωμάτων του ανθρώπου	Gender equality, young people, human rights	Combined portfolio
ES	Lower house	Committee on Equality	Comisión de Igualdad	Equality	Equality
ES	Lower house	Committee on Labour, Inclusion, Social Security and Migration	Comisión de Trabajo, Inclusión, Seguridad Social y Migraciones	Employment, inclusion, social security, migration	Combined portfolio
ES	Upper house	Senate Equality Commission	Comisión de Igualdad	Equality	Equality
HR	Unicameral	Gender Equality Committee	Odbor za ravnopravnost spolova	Gender equality	Gender equality
CY	Unicameral	Committee on Human Rights and on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women	Κοινοβουλευτική Επιτροπή Ανθρωπίνων Δικαιωμάτων και Ίσων Ευκαιριών μεταξύ Ανδρών και Γυναικών	Gender equality, human rights	Combined portfolio
LV	Unicameral	Subcommittee on Reducing Inequality of the Commission for Social and Labour Affairs	Sociālo un darba lietu komisijas Nevienlīdzības mazināšanas apakškomisija	Equality	Equality
LT	Unicameral	Committee on Human Rights	Žmogaus teisių komitetas	Human rights	Human rights

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)	Areas covered	Portfolio
LT	Unicameral	Committee on Social Affairs and Labour	Socialinių reikalų ir darbo komitetas	Social affairs, employment	Combined portfolio
LU	Unicameral	Commission of Interior Affairs and Equality between Women and Men	Commission des Affaires intérieures et de l'Égalité entre les femmes et les hommes	Internal affairs, gender equality	Combined portfolio
NL	Upper house	Education, Culture and Science Committee	Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap	Gender equality, culture, science, education	Combined portfolio
NL	Lower house	Education, Culture and Science Committee	Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap	Gender equality, culture, science, education	Combined portfolio
AT	Upper house	Equal Treatment Committee of the Federal Council	Gleichbehandlungsausschuss des Bundesrates	Gender equality	Gender equality
AT	Lower house	Equal Treatment Committee	Gleichbehandlungsausschuss	Gender equality	Gender equality
PL	Lower house	Social Policy and Family Committee	Komisja Polityki Społecznej i Rodziny	Social policy, family	Combined portfolio
PL	Upper house	Family Seniors and Social Policy Committee	Komisja Rodziny, Polityki Senioralnej i Społecznej	Family, elderly people, social policy	Combined portfolio
PT	Unicameral	Subcommittee for Equality and Non-discrimination – Committee on Constitutional Affairs, Rights, Freedoms, and Guarantees	Subcomissão para a Igualdade e Não Discriminação – Comissão de Assuntos Constitucionais, Direitos, Liberdades e Garantias	Equality	Equality

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)	Areas covered	Portfolio
RO	Upper house	Commission for Human Rights, Equal Opportunities, Cults and Minorities	Comisia pentru drepturile omului, egalitate de șanse, culte și minorități	Gender equality, human rights, religion, minorities	Combined portfolio
RO	Lower house	Commission for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men	Comisia pentru egalitatea de șanse pentru femei și bărbați	Gender equality	Gender equality
SI	Lower house	Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities	Komisija za peticije, človekove pravice in enake možnosti	Gender equality, petitions, human rights	Combined portfolio
SI	Upper house	Commission of the National Council for Social Welfare, Labour, Health Care and the Disabled	Komisije Državnega sveta za socialno varstvo, delo, zdravstvo in invalide	Social welfare	Combined portfolio
SK	Unicameral	Committee of the NR SR for human rights and national minorities	Výbor NR SR pre ľudské práva a národnostné menšiny	Human rights, minorities, gender equality	Combined portfolio
FI	Unicameral	Employment and Equality Committee	Työelämä- ja tasa-arvovaliokunta	Gender equality, employment	Combined portfolio

**Table 2. Women's caucuses, by Member State**

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)
EE	Unicameral	Riigikogu Women's Association	Riigikogu naisteühendus
IE	Upper and lower	Irish Women's Parliamentary Caucus	–
LV	Unicameral	Women's Advocacy Parliamentary Interest Group	Sieviešu interešu aizstāvības parlamentārā interešu grupa

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)
LT	Unicameral	Provisional Women's Group	Laikinoji Moterų grupė
PL	Upper and lower	Parliamentary Women's Group	Parlamentarna Grupa Kobiet
SI	Lower house	Women Parliamentarians Club	Klub parlamentark
FI	Unicameral	Network of Finnish Women Members of Parliament	Naisverkosto

**Table 3. Other gender equality bodies and structures in national parliaments**

Member State	House	Body (English)	Body (original language)
BE	Upper house	Advisory Committee for Equal Opportunities between Men and Women	Comité d'avis pour l'égalité des chances entre les femmes et les hommes
ES	Upper house	Special Committee for the Monitoring and Evaluation of the Agreements of the Senate on the Strategies against Gender Violence within the State Pact	Comisión Especial de seguimiento y evaluación de los Acuerdos del informe del Senado sobre las estrategias contra la Violencia de Género aprobadas en el marco del Pacto de Estado
ES	Joint committee	Joint Committee (both houses) on Monitoring of the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals	Comisión Mixta para el seguimiento y la implementación de la estrategia nacional para el cumplimiento de los objetivos de desarrollo sostenible (also deals with gender equality as one of the SDGs)
FR	Both houses	Delegation for Women's Rights and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women	Délégation parlementaire aux droits des femmes et à l'égalité des chances entre les hommes et les femmes
SE	Unicameral	The Riksdag's Working Group for Gender Equality	Riksdagens arbetsgrupp för jämställdhet

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