



Project “More Women in European Politics – More Women in 2014”

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Base Line Study

Partner 13

BALLYBEEN WOMEN'S CENTRE

United Kingdom

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Base Line Study

Women in Politics



Base Line Study on the Situation on women in Politics in EU

1. Northern Ireland/UK – Basic Data (levels of decision-making/authorities, demographic data including the system of collating data about women in politics in EU)

According to NISRA¹, the current estimated population for Northern Ireland is 1,806,873. Out of this population it is estimated that 888,527 (49.17% of the population) are male and 918,346 (50.83% of the population) are female. However, the population of the adult working age range between the ages of 20 and 65 is a total of 1,060,146. Of this total population 526,631 (49.68% of the population) are male and 533,515 (50.32% of the population) are female, therefore this range is closer to a 1:1 ratio than the entire population taken into consideration.

From these statistics for Northern Ireland we can see that there is slightly more women than men, however very close in equality of population. Therefore, we should be able to assume that these statistics would be similar for women and men in working life or in politics; however, this is not the case in Northern Ireland.

Looking at the United Kingdom entirely, including Northern Ireland, the total population that was estimated in the 2011 census² at 63.2 million. This is the highest population of the UK on record as well as recognising that between the years of 2001 and 2011 the population of the UK increased by 7%. Of this total population 31 million are men and 32.2 are women. Therefore, there is an estimated 1.2 million more women than men within the United Kingdom.

Even though from these statistics it can be clearly seen that there are more women in the population than men, it is considerably disappointing when reviewing the following statistics in the last NI Assembly³ elections; May 2011.

Party	No. of Women	No. of Men	% of Women
Alliance	2	6	25%
DUP	5	34	12.82%
SDLP	3	11	21.42%
Sinn Féin	8	21	27.58%
UUP	2	13	13.33%
Other	0	3	0%
Total:	20	88	18.51%

Figure 1: Statistics of Northern Ireland Devolved Assembly Elections May 2011

From these statistics in Northern Ireland, it is clear to see how little power women have in politics. In relation to the population ratio of women to men in Northern Ireland; the fact that the percentage of women having any authority or level of decision making within

¹ Northern Ireland Statistics Agency 2011 Population Census

² UK Office for National Statistics

³ The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland

politics in Northern Ireland at 18.51% seems almost unrealistic. However, it is also important to take into consideration that “Most political parties have a membership which is at least 50% female” (Rooney and Woods 1995:27). Although the political parties are made up of at least 50% female, this does not mean that they have any power in decision making or at all have any authority over any political agreements or decisions. It is generally recognised that a critical mass figure of 30% or above is required in any decision making institutions before women can begin to have any influence on policy matters.

In the UK parliament we see a similar pattern to the Northern Ireland Political Parties:

	Con	Lab	LD	Other	Total
Men					
<i>House of Commons</i>	257	171	50	25	503
<i>House of Lords</i>	172	157	63	265	657
<i>National Assembly for Wales</i>	10	15	4	7	36
<i>Scottish Parliament</i>	9	20	4	51	84
<i>Northern Ireland Assembly</i>	-	-	-	88	88
<i>London Assembly</i>	8	7	1	1	17
<i>European Parliament (UK Members)</i>	19	8	5	16	48
Women					
<i>House of Commons</i>	48	86	7	6	147
<i>House of Lords</i>	38	63	26	53	180
<i>National Assembly for Wales</i>	4	15	1	4	24
<i>Scottish Parliament</i>	6	17	1	21	45
<i>Northern Ireland Assembly</i>	-	-	-	20	20
<i>London Assembly</i>	1	5	1	1	8
<i>European Parliament (UK Members)</i>	6	5	6	7	24
% Women					
<i>House of Commons</i>	16%	33%	12%	19%	23%
<i>House of Lords</i>	18%	29%	29%	17%	22%
<i>National Assembly for Wales</i>	29%	50%	20%	36%	40%
<i>Scottish Parliament</i>	40%	46%	20%	29%	35%
<i>Northern Ireland Assembly</i>	-	-	-	19%	19%
<i>London Assembly</i>	11%	42%	50%	50%	32%
<i>European Parliament (UK Members)</i>	24%	38%	55%	30%	33%

Figure 2: Men and women in the UK Parliament and devolved legislatures

In both Figure 1 and Figure 2, we can justify that women in politics do not have much authority in both Northern Ireland and UK parliament. In Figure 2 we can observe that in the European Parliament only 33% of the UK members are of women. Therefore, it can be justified from these statistics that although political parties may be made up of at least 50% of women the authority and levels of decision making are limited due to political hierarchies. It must be noted that with the Scottish and Welsh devolved Assemblies, special action measures were taken to improve the representation of women. It is as a direct result of these special measures that there is a higher representation of women in their respective

devolved Assemblies⁴. “Proportional Representation in Scotland and Wales has enabled political parties to adopt proactive measures to ensure a better gender balance compared to elsewhere under “First Past the Post” system, Electoral Reform Society report May 2011 p20. Northern Ireland Political parties chose not to adopt the same special measures as their devolved counterparts as the focus was on a mandatory coalition post the Good Friday Agreement signed on 11th April 1998. This was a missed opportunity in Northern Ireland considering the parties had signed up to the Good Friday/Belfast Agreement 1998 which made a provision under the heading: Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity, Human Rights Section for the “right of women to full and equal political participation”. The Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition was set up in 1996 to contest seats during the election of the Northern Ireland Forum⁵ with the aim of increasing women’s representation in the peace talks and subsequently in the political institutions set up post Agreement 1998.

2. EU Level

As previously pointed out in section one, 33% of UK members represent women in at EU level of Parliament. “In July 2009, 255 of 736 MEPs were women (35%). The proportion varied from 62% in Finland to 0% for Malta. One third of the 72 UK MEPs elected in 2009 were women, so that the UK had the 17th highest ratio of the 27 EU Member States.” (Duckworth, N. & Cracknell, R., 2013:16)

Year	Men	Women
1979-1984	84%	16%
1984-1989	82%	18%
1989-1994	81%	19%
1994-1999	74%	26%
1999-2004	70%	30%
2004-2009	69%	31%

Figure 3: Total Members of EU Parliament

From the information gathered from Figure 3 statistics we can observe the increase in the number of women in EU parliament since 1979. The percentage of women within the EU parliament has almost doubled in 30 years. The UK has a total of 73 MEP’s. In the last 2009 elections, England has a total of 60 MEP’s with 18 female MEP’s out of 60 with a 30% female representation. Scotland has a total of 6 MEP’s with 1 female MEP which gives them the lowest female representation of 16% at a regional level. Wales has a total of 4 MEP’s with 2 female MEP’s thus has 50% representation. Northern Ireland has 2 female MEP’s out of the 3 MEP’s – they are Diane Dodds (DUP) and Martina Anderson (Sinn Fein). In effect Northern Ireland has 66.6% female representation at EU level.

⁴ Women’s representation in Scotland and Wales, May 2011, Electoral Reform Society.

⁵ The **Northern Ireland Forum** (formally called the **Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue**) was up in 1996 as part of the negotiations leading to the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement signed on 11th April 1998.

The following Figure shows these statistics:

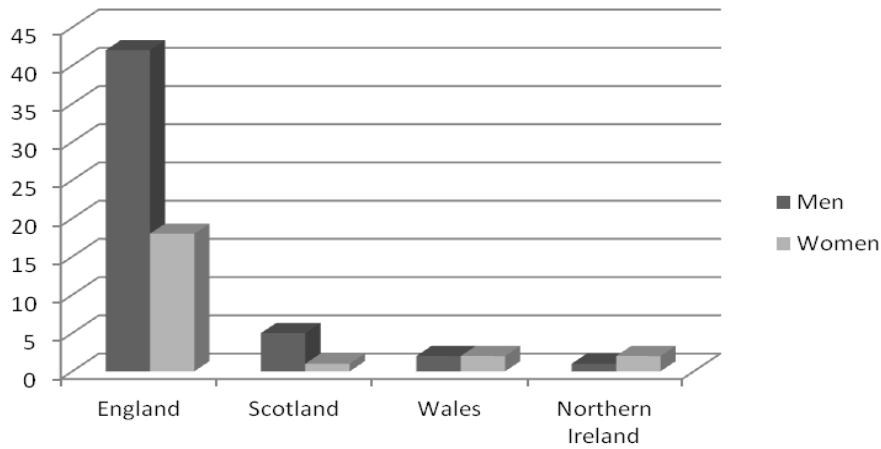


Figure 4: 2009 Election's Statistics for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

2.1 EU Parliament

In European Parliament it is clear that even though we have seen that the percentage of European parliament women members have doubled in 30 years, men still dominate the European Parliament.



Figure 5: Total EU Members

a) Actions at Legislative level (Quota) and its sufficiency

There has been a compulsory quota introduced to help increase the number of women board members in European businesses. In addition, EU Parliament has also continually called for legislation on equality between men and women. In its resolution on women and business leadership on 6th July 2011, EU Parliament called for a binding minimum quota of 30% by 2015 and 40% by 2020. The sufficiency of this call for legislation was not vast as they then felt a desire to reiterate the call in a further resolution on equality between men and women on the 13th March 2012.

b) Other Actions

The EU Parliament have also introduced the 'PROGRESS' programme. This programme consists of 5 key elements that it focuses on. The main one that is important to our study is the final key element; equality between men and women. This element is created to support the implementation of the principle of gender equality and promote gender mainstreaming in EU policies by:

- Improving the understanding of the situation in relation to gender equality issues and gender mainstreaming, in particular through analysis and studies and the development of statistics and indicators, as well as assessing the impact of existing legislation, policies and practices;
- Supporting the implementation of EU gender equality legislation through effective monitoring, holding seminars for those working in the field and networking amongst specialised equality bodies;
- Raising awareness, disseminating information and promoting debate about the key challenges and policy issues in relation to gender equality and gender mainstreaming among the social partners, NGOs and other stakeholders;
- Developing the capacity of key European level networks to support and further develop Community policy goals and strategies on gender equality.

The element of equality between men and women will receive 12% of the budget for this programme – making it the fourth most important element within the programme.

c) Status Quo

EU Parliament met on 11th March 2013 to discuss gender equality, in a plenary session to mark International Women's Day. The session was based on reports drafted by the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM), which are not legally binding, like most of the reports penned by the FEMM MEPs.

'The EU has been a prolific communicator on gender equality and women's rights, with major events like 'One Billion Rising' in the Parliament, or the awareness the report on the Impact of the Economic Crisis on Gender Equality. But enforcing equal pay and prosecuting violence against women are issues politicians at EU level seem wary of – as much as their national counterparts.' (Dyon, F. 2013)

However, When Commissioner for Justice Viviane Reding announced she would draft a proposal to enforce an 'under-represented gender' quota on non-executive boards of listed companies, EU officials, Member States and the private sector alike was up in arms. As a result, the draft proposal is heavily watered down.

d) Proposals for changes

‘Quotas attempting to maximise the number of educated and skilled women in executive positions could improve corporate performance and help raise national productivity. But doing so will depend on keeping ambitious, well-qualified women moving up the management ranks. Gender quotas will encourage more women to pursue education and career options leading to the top of executive positions. Quotas create incentives for women to adapt their job preferences to the more accessible boardroom positions and develop necessary skills which would reduce the need for positive discrimination in the future. Encouraged to develop relevant skills, women will contribute to the long-term talent pool and the economy. According to McKinsey report, women’s interest in being leaders increases as they progress from entry level to middle management’ (Barsh, J., 2013) , which is exactly what the principle behind quotas aims to encourage - more women following professional career development.

2.2 EU Commission

On 14th November 2012 the European Commission proposed legislation with the intention of attaining a 40% objective of the under-represented gender in non-executive board-member positions in publicly listed companies, with the exception of small and medium enterprises. The intention of this new legislation is to speed up progress towards a better gender balance on the corporate boards of European companies.

2.3 Other

The European Commission has long recognised the need to promote gender balance in decision-making processes and positions and the European Commission is encouraging the process by various means.

3. National Level

Statistics shown in Figure 2, tell us the amount of women that have any impact on a national level within the UK Parliament. It is clear to see that there are a total of 650 members of the UK Parliament. 503 of these members are men and 147 are female. This is almost only one quarter of the MP’s are female (23.8%).

3.1 UK Legislation

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates) Act 2002, is an act of the parliament of the UK. The initial purpose of the act was to exempt the selection of candidates in parliamentary elections from the provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 that highlight sexual discrimination. The purposes of the Act allow political parties to select candidates based on their gender in an effort to increase the representation of women within British politics.

This Act ends at the end of 2015, however; part 2 of this act extends only to Northern Ireland but also applies to:

- House of Commons
- Scottish Parliament
- National Assembly for Wales
- Northern Ireland Assembly
- Local government
- European Parliament

3.2 The Prime Minister

In history of politics, there has only ever been one female Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. Margaret has been one of the longest serving Prime Minister for 150 years, being in office 4 May 1979 – 28 November 1990. It is un-deniable that she made a huge influence in the economy and in UK politics even more so that she has been the only ever woman in history of the UK parliament to be Prime Minister.

3.3 Houses of Parliament

In the Houses of Parliament, nearly a quarter of MP's in the House of Commons are female. In the House of Lords, only one fifth of the total members are female. Overall, the total number of women in both Houses of Parliament is still less than 25%. However, there were no women at all just over 100 years ago.

3.3.1 Speaker of the House of Commons

The statistics for Speaker of the House of Commons is also astonishing in terms of gender equality to women in politics. It is similar to the statistics for the Prime Minister role being that only one woman in history has every played the role. Betty Boothroyd was the first and to this day the only female speaker of the House of Commons being elected as Speaker in 1992.

3.3.2 MP's

There are currently 503 male MP's and there are currently 147 female MPs. Just over 22% of the total MP's are female, not even one quarter.

a) Actions at Legislative/UK Parliament Level (Quota) and its sufficiency

There is a clear consensus amongst comparative studies of the representation of women in parliament that quotas make a positive impact on the numbers of women represented. The European Commission document 'Women in political decision-making positions' states that: 'Quotas regulations are an important tool for giving women access to leading political positions.' (2000, p.17) Inglehart and Norris state that: The adoption of quotas for female candidates in internal party rules has proved one of the most important and successful

means for getting more women into office, especially in bureaucratic mass-branch parties where the rules count.’ (Inglehart and Norris 2000, p.14) Furthermore, “It has been shown that the rise in the number of women Labour MPs in 1997 was primarily the result of the party’s use of ‘all women shortlists’ for the selection of many of its candidates.” (Eagle, M. and Lovenduski, J. 1998).

b) Proposals for changes

Achieving policy change is hard, and integrating new issues such as gender equality into established policy agendas is harder still (Annesley et al. 2007 and 2010). Governments can only provide limited attention to new policy development and radical budgetary shifts are on the whole rare (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; True et al. 2007). Committed policy advocates may take years to bring about a coalition for a change in policy direction (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith 1993) and they often need to wait for a ‘window of opportunity’ to get new policies on to the agenda (Kingdon 1995).

The term ‘quotas’ covers a range of strategies and proposal for changes, which may differ in three significant regards: quotas can be set at different levels (for example, 20 per cent or 50 per cent); they can be applied at difference stages of the selection process. This could be for shortlists or selections of parliamentary candidates; and, most significantly, they can be implemented either by law or by internal party rules (Norris 2000, p.3). Quotas can also be applied to internal party posts also called party quotas, as well as to different stages of candidate selection also called candidate quotas. A significant distinction can be made therefore between those positive action strategies that are adopted voluntarily by a particular political party and those that are implemented across a political party as a result of legislative action requiring action to promote gender equality. Norris finds that: ‘in general, ceteris paribus (all things being equal), the higher the level of the specified quota, the closer the quota is applied to the final stages of election, and more binding the formal regulation, the more effective its impact.’ (Norris 2000, p.3)

3.3.3 House of Lords (synopsis of second chamber and gender balance)

The government agreed to set up a Commons/Lords committee in May 2002 to discuss two issues:

- The future composition of the second chamber
- The powers that the second chamber should have

It first had 24 members and the chairperson was Jack Cunningham. The composition of the committee was announced in June 2002 and many in the commons where angered by its make-up. Most of the committee were known to be traditionalists while on the other hand the majority of the members in the commons wanted a majority elected second chamber. This put him alongside with what was thought to be Tony Blair’s belief, that any second chamber should be dominated by appointed peers and not elected ones.

Where are we now?

There is rancor that the position of Lord Chancellor is to be abolished and the traditional supremacy of the Law Lords is to be taken over by a proposed Supreme Court. This was however not mentioned in the Wakeham Report that was announced in 2003. In March 2004, the vote of Lords went against the decision. The government threatened to use the 1911 Parliament Act to force it into legislation. Their argument was that a 21st Century nation needs a 21st Century legal system and that reform is long overdue with regards to the Law Lords.

It was said that Tony Blair was in favour of an all appointed second chamber, leading to a charge that it would be filled with 'Tony's Cronies'. It is generally believed that Blair wanted non-political 'types' in the second chamber to give it an edge away from politics, so that it would represent the ordinary person."

http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/wakeham_report.htm). The current Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition government had agreed to a programme of the reform of the House of Lords when they came into power in May 2011 but this has failed to materialise due to lack of support from the majority of Conservative MP's.

4. Devolved Northern Ireland Assembly

The Devolved Northern Ireland Assembly is the devolved legislature of Northern Ireland that has the power to legislate a number of areas that are not explicitly reserved to the UK parliament. It is one of two 'mutually inter-dependent' institutions created under the 1998 Good Friday agreement, the other, North/South Ministerial Council with the Republic of Ireland. This agreement was made with the intention of bringing an end to the Northern Ireland's violent 30 years of troubles. It is also based on the principle of 'power-sharing' under the D'hondt method to ensure that Northern Ireland's largest political communities, the unionist and nationalist, are able to both participate in governing the region. The assembly is a unicameral and democratically elected body currently comprising 108 members known as 'Members of the Legislative Assembly, or MLA's (20 of which are women). These members are elected under the single transferable vote in the form of proportional representation.

4.1 First Minister and Deputy First Minister

These roles are joint heads of the Northern Ireland Executive, with the overall responsibility for the running of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister; also known as (OFMDFM).

Since the formation of the assembly on 1st July 1998 there has only ever been one woman to play an active role as First Minister for Northern Ireland for a brief period of time between the dates of 11th January 2010 to 3rd February 2010. Arlene Foster stepped up to this role to fulfil the duties of Peter Robinson while he dealt with the scandal. Arlene was Minister for the Environment between 2007 and 2008 and is currently Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment which she took on in 2008.

Jennifer McCann is one of two Junior Ministers assisting the First minister and Deputy First minister in carrying out the work of their department. Jennifer is also jointly accountable to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

4.2 Northern Ireland Executive

The Executive exercises executive authority on behalf of the Northern Ireland Assembly. It takes decisions on significant and controversial issues - matters which cut across the responsibility of two or more ministers, or which require a common Executive position, and on legislation proposed by ministers.

The Executive agrees a Programme for Government and the Northern Ireland budget for approval by the NI Assembly. Northern Ireland Executive Ministers are nominated by the political parties within the Northern Ireland Assembly. The amount of ministers which a party can nominate is determined by its share of seats within the assembly. The First Minister and Deputy First Minister act as chairmen of the Executive.

Out of 15 Northern Ireland executive ministers, including the First and Deputy First Minister, there are only 4 women who play active roles on the decision making of the committee. Looking at these figures, only 27% of the committee is made up of women, not even one third of female influence. This also makes gender equality deplorable within Northern Ireland. In relation to women in politics in the Northern Ireland Executive, it could be debated that gender equality is more evidently practiced by Sinn Fein, as they have nominated more female Ministers since the Devolved Assembly elections 2011 in Northern Ireland. They currently have three out 15 Ministerial posts headed by women. As mentioned above, the other female Minister being Arlene Foster DUP.

4.3 MLA's (Member of the Legislative Assembly)

There are currently 108 MLA's for Northern Ireland. Of these 108 MLA's 21 are women and 87 are men. Just fewer than 20% of MLA's are women. It has to be noted that the numbers of women being put forward for the NI Assembly elections has improved, but this was in response to the set up of the Women's Coalition in 1996 when the local political parties need to ensure that votes for female candidates are not cast for the Women's Coalition. From this, more women have been included in NI party lists during subsequent N.I. Assembly elections. However despite an increase from 16.8% to 20% this still shows an under-representation of women in all the NI political parties.

The following graph puts into perspective the current NI Assembly parties and how many MLA's for both male and female they include.

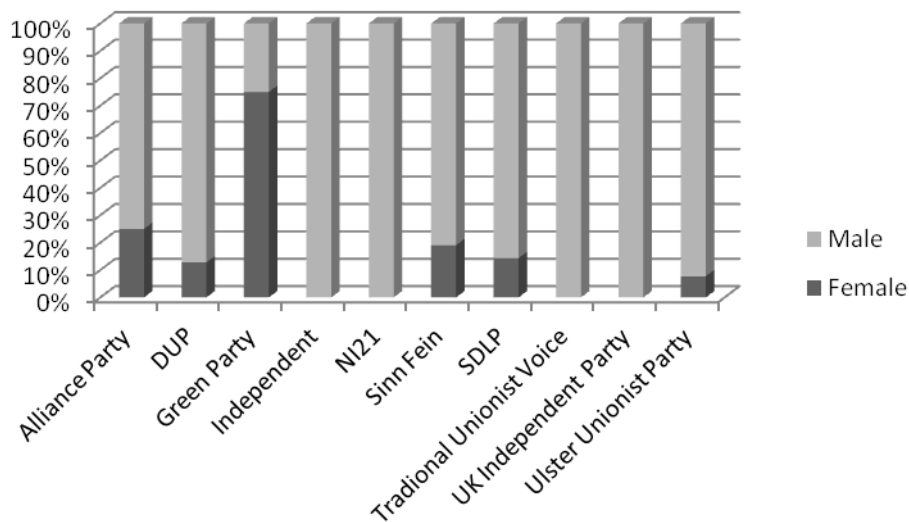


Figure 6: Male and Female MLA's in Northern Ireland

It is clear from this graph the volume difference of both male and female MLA's in Northern Ireland. It is interesting that the majority of the Green party consists of women cannot be seen in any other political party. Therefore, it is a question that women may only want to enter into politics for specific intentions and not the intentions of current political parties or either a case of the parties preventing women presence to be MLA's.

4.4 Devolved Matters

"Devolved matters are those policy decisions which can be taken by the devolved administrations." (<http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/devolved-and-reserved-matters/>)

In 1921, Devolution came into effect for Northern Ireland for the Fourth Home Rule Act. The Parliament of Northern Ireland established under that act was prorogued on 30 March 1972 owing to the destabilisation of Northern Ireland upon the onset of the Troubles in late 1960s. This followed increasing violence by state and paramilitary organisations following the restraint of civil rights demands by Northern Ireland Catholics.

The Northern Ireland Parliament was abolished by the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973, which received royal assent on 19 July 1973. A Northern Ireland Assembly was elected on 28 June 1973 and following the Sunningdale Agreement, a power-sharing Northern Ireland Executive was formed on 1 January 1974. This buckled on 28 May 1974, due to the Ulster Workers' Council strike and the 'Troubles' continued.

The Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention (1975–1976) and second Northern Ireland Assembly (1982–1986) were unproductive at restoring devolution. In the absence of devolution and power-sharing, the UK Government and Irish Government formally agreed to collaborate on security, justice and political progress in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed

on 15 November 1985. Furthermore, progress was made after the ceasefires by the Provisional IRA in 1994 and 1997.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement resulted in the creation of a new Northern Ireland Assembly, proposed to bring together the two communities (nationalist and unionist) to govern Northern Ireland. In addition, renewed devolution in Northern Ireland was provisional on co-operation between the newly established Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Ireland through a new all-Ireland body called the North/South Ministerial Council. A British-Irish Council covering the whole British Isles and a British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference were also established.

Since 15th October 2002, the Northern Ireland Assembly was suspended due to a breakdown in the Northern Ireland peace process but, on 13 October 2006, the British and Irish governments announced the St Andrews Agreement, a 'road map' to restore devolution to Northern Ireland. Then, on 26th March 2007, Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Ian Paisley met with Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams for the first time and together announced that a devolved government would be returning to Northern Ireland. During this period of suspension, the British Government appointed Northern Ireland assembly first and only female Speaker to date. This was Eileen Bell, Alliance MLA for North Down. She stepped down once the fourth Assembly convened in May 2011. The Executive was then restored on 8th May 2007. Several policing and justice powers were transferred to the Assembly on 12 April 2010.

The 2007-2011 Assembly (the third since the 1998 Agreement) was dissolved on 24th March 2011 in preparation for an election to be held on Thursday 5th May 2011, this being the first Assembly since the Good Friday Agreement to complete a full term. The fourth Assembly convened on 12th May 2011.

A gender equality strategy for 2006-2016 has been set in place as a framework of incentives set in order for Northern Ireland to tackle the current gender inequalities throughout all aspects and areas such as:

- childcare/caring as roles for both women and men;
- health and well being;
- representation in public life/decision making;
- education and lifelong learning;
- access to employment;
- gender pay gap;
- work-life balance;
- stereotypes and prejudices linked to men and women's gender;
- peace-building;
- poverty; and
- gender related violence

It is worth noting that the Office of the First and Deputy Minister set up a Gender Advisory Panel of NI NGO's to advise on the development and delivery of the Gender Equality

Strategy of which Women into Politics is a member. There is a current review of Departmental Action Plans relating the strategy which will be completed by the end of 2013.

4.5 Reserved Matters

“Reserved matters are those policy decisions affecting Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and the regions of England that are still taken by the UK Parliament at Westminster.”
(<http://www.parliament.uk/site-information/glossary/devolved-and-reserved-matters/>)

Some reserved matters include; civil aviation, postal services, national minimum wage, financial services, financial market, the National Lottery, along with a few others. These reserved matters however do not mention any interest in gender equality or gender equality in politics.

5. Local Government

Currently, Northern Ireland is divided into 26 different districts for local government purposes. They do not however carry out the same range of functions as the rest of the United Kingdom such as responsibility for education, road building or even for housing, although they do nominate members to the advisory Northern Ireland Housing Council. Their main functions and duties include waste and recycling services as well as leisure and community services, building control, local economic and cultural development. This does not mean that they are planning authorities but they are consulted on some planning applications.

5.1 Local government councils

The councils of the 26 districts are variously styled ‘district councils’, ‘city councils’ and ‘borough councils’. As discussed and outlined in Section 1 and 4 of this report, the statistics of women involved in these local government councils can be quite astonishing in comparison to the population of Northern Ireland. Currently 22% of NI elected local councillors are women. Lynn Carvill, Women’s Lobbyist for the NI Women’s Resource and Development Agency states that, “Political leadership and decision-making should mirror the society it represents, and this is not the case in Northern Ireland”.

The Good Relations Unit Belfast City Council produced a booklet in May 2013 titled “Women in the Council” as part of their Decade of Centenaries programme. In May 2013 Belfast City Council was 40 years old. In 1973 only six of the Councillors elected were women, but that number steadily rose over the years with currently 16 women members. The booklet states “women are still significantly under-represented in public life”. Over the 40 years Belfast City Council has only seen two women Lord Mayors Grace Bannister (UUP) in 1981 and Naomi Long (ALL) in 2009.

5.2 Other - Northern Ireland Women in local council’s initiative

The Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is a partner in the Women in Local Councils initiative. The initiative aims to encourage the integration of men and women into non-traditional roles and ensure equality of opportunity in terms of access to all levels of employment, leadership, and training and also in relation to promotional opportunities. The initiative specifically wishes to address the under-representation of women at senior officer levels and as elected representatives.

The partner bodies in the development and implementation of this initiative include

- The Local Government Staff Commission
- The Equality Commission for NI
- Queens University Belfast
- SOLACE
- NI Local Government Association
- Business in the Community
- NIC-ICTU
- National Association of Councillors
- Women into Politics

The Initiative features a series of events and programmes designed to attract women into councils as employers of choice, to encourage those already employed to apply for higher graded positions and to raise the profile of women in local politics.”

http://www.equalityni.org/sections/default.asp?cms=employers_Employment%20equality%20plans_case%20studies_local%20government%20gender%20initiative&cmsid=129_311_389_449&id=449&secid=3

As part of this initiative, in September 2010 – March 2011, Women into Politics partnered with the Northern Ireland Local Government Association and the Local Government Staff Commission to deliver a Local Elections Mentoring Programme. This targeted the local council elections of May 2011. All five main political parties signed up to the programme and nominated 2 councillors each to mentor a woman who had completed a Women into Politics Political Leadership programme. As a result of this programme, one woman was elected onto Belfast City Council, one put herself forward for selection as a council election candidate (though not selected another female candidate was selected), one joined a political party and a fourth one has declared an interest for selection at the next local council election. Six mentees did not proceed onto the Mentoring programme as they felt they would prefer to be party activists. Due to funding restrictions, Women into Politics have not been able to continue with the Mentoring programme on a larger scale.

6. Conclusion with summary of the proposals for changes

In conclusion to each topic discussed and outlined, it is clear that Northern Ireland, United Kingdom and the EU parliament have made small improvements where women in politics are concerned. More women are now becoming more involved in decision making roles and roles with further authority. It could be debated that legislations, special action measures and different programmes introduced to improve the number of women in politics could be improving the percentage of women present across all governing bodies or political parties. It is clear however that as more of these organisations and special action

measures are introduced we should see an increase in women in politics in the EU and at national levels. However as mentioned earlier, for women to influence policies and practices in our political and decision making institutions an increase to a critical mass of 30% of female representation is required.

To bring a proper representation of women into decision-making at an EU level the UK Government and the EU should consider the following:

- All political parties within the UK/EU need to consider how they can ensure better female representation and adopt a fair and transparent recruitment and selection policy of prospective election candidates. This to include recruitment for all the political institutions at a national level i.e from Local Councils, devolved Assembly, House of Parliament and the EU Parliament.
- Setting achievable and realistic targets for balanced representation in the institutions for which it is responsible and introduce strategies to achieve this,
- Introduce a Code of Practice for Political parties and institutions for which it is responsible to enable women to combine their private and public lives.
- Ensure the statutory bodies and NGO's which promote equality and support women to participate in decision making are adequately resourced to do so.
- Establish acceptable and accessible mechanisms to ensure proper consultation with women's groups and organisations at local level to ensure women's experience is brought into the political mainstream.
- An EU directive is required to set up a Gender Equality Committee with special powers to recommend action aimed at improving the disadvantaged position of women within the EU Parliament.
- There should be a comprehensive review of the EU roadmap for equality between women and men COM (2006) 92 and identify and address any emerging gaps and take action to deliver on one of its six priority areas for action ***“the equal representation of women in decision-making”***
- The comprehensive review to be carried out by a Review/Monitoring Group to include representatives of the Luden project “More Women into Politics” and European Women's Lobby – an action plan to be put in place after the EU elections of 2014 and targets set for the 2018 EU elections.

Appendix 1

The EU roadmap for equality between women and men COM (2006) 92

The Roadmap outlines six priority areas for EU action on gender equality for the period 2006-2010; equal economic independence for women and men; reconciliation of private and professional life; equal representation in decision-making; eradication of all forms of gender-based violence; elimination of gender stereotypes; promotion of gender equality in policies. For each area, it identifies priority objectives and actions. This Roadmap represents the Commission's commitment to driving the gender equality agenda forward, reinforcing partnership with member states and other actors. It reaffirms the dual approach of gender equality based on gender mainstreaming (the promotion of gender equality in all policy areas and activities) and specific measures.

Appendix 2

European Women's Lobby Mentoring programme for EU elections of 2014.

The EWL European Political Mentoring Network aims to empower ethnic minority women and women of foreign origin ahead of the June 2014 European elections and, ideally, to increase their representation the European Parliament (EP), in order to address the lack of gender parity and ethnic diversity in political decision-making at European level.

<http://www.womenlobby.org/spip.php?article4832>

Since formation in 1990, EWL is the largest organisation of women's associations in Europe with more than 2000 member organisations which are represented through 30 national co-ordinations and 21 European member organisations. It is an organisation that focuses on a wide range of topics which are related to women's right but the promotion of the equal representation of women and men in decision making and authority roles.

The programme is only open to mentees who are women from foreign origin/ethnic minority background because of the figures we previously discussed on the equal representation of women and men in decision making within the EU Parliament. EWL believe that the lack of representation is problematic from the point of view of democracy and also feel that it implies the needs and situations of this group of women are not sufficiently taken into account.

The under-representation of women in political decision-making in general and the absence of women from ethnic minorities/of foreign origin also contributes to the continuation of racist and gender stereotypes among both voters and decision-makers about the role of women, in particular ethnic minority women and their relation with political power.

Appendix 3

UK Parliament Speaker's Conference 2008

On 12 November 2008 the House of Commons agreed to establish a new committee, to be chaired by the Speaker and known as the Speaker's Conference. The Conference has been asked to: "Consider, and make recommendations for rectifying, the disparity between the representation of women, ethnic minorities and disabled people in the House of Commons and their representation in the UK population at large". The Speaker's Conference had until the end of the 2010/2011 Parliament to conduct its inquiries.(HC 239-I, 2010)

It worked through 2009 collecting evidence and published its final report in January 2010."

[\(http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/other-committees/speakers-conference-on-parliamentary-representation/\)](http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/other-committees/speakers-conference-on-parliamentary-representation/)

Appendix 4

Sex Discrimination (Election of Candidates Act 2002)

The Sex Discrimination (Election Candidates Act 2002) is an Act of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The purpose of the Act was to excuse the selection of candidates in parliamentary elections from the provisions in the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 that outlaw sexual discrimination. The principle of the Act allows political parties to select candidates based on gender in an effort to increase representation of women in British politics.

The Act applies to elections to:

- the House of Commons;
- the Scottish Parliament;
- the National Assembly for Wales;
- the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- Local Government Elections (including the London Assembly); and
- The European Parliament.

The Act does not apply to selection of candidates for the Mayor of London elections. Only political parties registered under Part 2 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 are covered by the Act.

The Act is scheduled to run until the end of 2015. A statutory order to extend the deadline may be made before this date if a draft has been laid before, and approved by resolution of, each House of Parliament. On 6 March 2008, Minister for Women Harriet Harman announced that the exemption would be extended until 2030 under the Equality Act 2010.[2]

The Labour Party has used the law to operate all-women shortlists, which were previously illegal under the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Appendix 4 Northern Ireland Legislative Framework and UK, EU and UN Commitments.

Appendix 5

Women into Politics Gender specific work

There are many organisations set up in order to target gender equality and help to push for more women into politics and roles which are normally filled by the majority of males.

These organisations would aim to help:

- Women's participation in politics
- Women's participation in elections
- Violence against women
- Equal opportunities for women
- Equal pay grades for women

Appendix 6

Devolved Assemblies of Scotland and Wales (gender quotas)

Britain is currently ranked 49th the Inter Parliamentary Union table of the percentage of women in national parliaments worldwide, with 18 percent women elected to Westminster in 2001 General Election. The newly devolved assemblies in Scotland and Wales have achieved significantly higher levels of female representation, with women comprising 39 percent of the Scottish Parliament and 50 of the National Assembly for Wales.

This is a survey of the discourses and decisions pertaining to, and the implementation and consequences of, electoral gender quotas in Britain, including elections to Westminster, the Scottish Parliament and the National Assembly for Wales. During this period party-based gender quotas for candidate selection have been deployed in Britain, 1993-6 and 2002 to date, to increase the number of women in Westminster and, from 1999, in the devolved administrations of the Scottish Parliament and National Assembly for Wales. They have been used most extensively by the Labour Party and, whilst they remain controversial, they have had a significant impact on the number of female representatives elected to these three bodies." (Squires.J, 2005)

Appendix 7

Women in Local Councils an Initiative of NILGA (Northern Ireland Local Government Association)

The Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) represents the collective interests of elected members in local councils and facilitates the development of the sector.

NILGA seeks to promote, strengthen and represent the local government sector as part of the Local Government Group of Associations in the UK.

The Association is supported by the main political parties in Northern Ireland together with representatives from other parties, and is supported by elected representatives from all 26 local authorities who are members.

Located in Castlereagh Road, Belfast, meetings are facilitated by officers to support the Members in their working groups and committees, providing advice and direction to take decisions and to offer to Councils for consideration.

By ensuring the collective response from Councils, the Association lobbies on local government's behalf to achieve the outcomes necessary to strengthen and support the services delivered to ratepayers and to forewarn and forearm members in regard to policies and consultations affecting the sector coming from central government , the EU and other legislative bodies" (<http://www.nilga.org/About-Nilga.aspx>)

The NILGA Full Membership consists of 154 Councillors, representing all of the main Political Parties and the 26 Member Councils.

Appendix 8

LGSC (Local Government Staff Commission)

The Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (the Commission) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body established under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972. Its powers were later extended under the Housing Orders 1976 and 1981, and the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1992.

In general, the terms of reference for the Commission are to exercise:

General oversight of matters connected with the recruitment, training and terms and conditions of employment of officers of councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and of making recommendations to councils and the Northern Ireland Housing Executive on such matters.” (<http://www.lgsc.org.uk/about-us/>)

The Commission consists of seven members and a Chairman appointed by the Minister responsible for local government and drawn from representatives of council elected members and chief executives, together with independent members chosen for their expertise in the organisational and human resource areas of management. This commission is 50% women and 50% male with a male chairman and a female vice chairman. This is what we should see a lot more regularly than what we have been seeing through the statistics discussed around women into politics.