



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

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## Base Line Study

**Partner 4**

**KMOP**

**Greece**

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## **MORE WOMEN IN EUROPEAN POLITICS – MORE WOMEN IN 2014**

### **BASE LINE STUDY**

**“Women’s position in politics”**

**KMOP**



## **1. EU level**

### **1.1. EU Parliament:**

The European Parliament has undertaken significant efforts during the last decade in order to enhance women’s participation in the domain of decision making and the political scene. However, the desired 40% minimum percentage of women representatives in EP has not yet been achieved let alone the ideal total parity. Moreover, based on Eurobarometer’s reports almost half of European women feel that their interests are not well represented by the EU, especially among young ages; over a third of women aged 18-24 feel their issues are not well represented. Furthermore, half of European women would like 50% or more of the MEPs to be women and 70% would like at least 40% women among those working in key-positions within the parliament; i.e. as Committee chairs, delegation chairs, in the General Secretariat of the EP , in the political groups’ General Secretariats etc(The Gallup Organization, 2009).

In order to further proceed in the specific research it is important first of all to make a short historical review of the presence and participation of women in the European Parliament and in key decision-making positions at the European level. During the first European Parliament elections in 1979, the seat of the President was won by a woman, Simone Veil, who served as the first president of the elected Parliament (until 1982). Simone Veil was also the first female President since the Parliament was created in 1952.<sup>1</sup> The other female President was Nicole Fontaine MEP in 1999. Furthermore, Luise Weiss was the EP's first 'oldest member', elected during the first EP elections and served until her death on 1983. The proportion of MEPs elected in the first EP elections was only 16.5%; a number that has been slowly but steadily increased over the years, as shown in figures 1 and 2 below. Regarding the current situation of women’s participation in the European Parliament, the proportion of female MEPs elected in 2009 was 35%;

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<sup>1</sup>Veil was reelected in 1984 until 1989 and again in 1989 until her withdrawal in 1993.



Although the results show some progress compared to the 16% of the first EP election in 1979, the approximate 30% at the beginning of the 1999-2004 term and the 32% in 2004-2009, the EP still failed to attain parity or even the 40% of women threshold agreed by Member States of the Council of Europe. In addition, it has to be noted that after the entrance of the “new countries” in the European Union, percentages were fallen again, at the 30% of the total number of female MEPs. Nearly only 8 of the Member States currently have more than 40% women MEPs. Specifically, Finland has 61% of women elected in the EP, Sweden 55.5%, Estonia 50%, Netherlands 48%, Bulgaria 47%, Denmark 46.2%, France 45.8%, and Austria 41.1%, with two of those countries having more women than men MEPs (Finland and Sweden). Accordingly, 11 of the EU Member States reach a level between 30%-40% of female representation in the new EP. Finally, eight Member States did not even reach the minimum threshold of 30% of women representatives in the last elections; Slovenia (28.5%), Lithuania (25%), Ireland (25%), Italy (25%), Poland (22%), the Czech Republic (18.2%), Luxembourg (16%) and Malta with not a single woman elected in the European Parliament.

**Table 1: Percentage of women in the new European Parliament by Member State, compared to the 2004-2009 EP and to the percentage of women in national parliaments**

Member State	Totalseats <sup>1</sup>	Numberofwome n <sup>1</sup>	% ofwomenin EP (2009-2014) <sup>1</sup>	% of women in the former EP (2004-2009) <sup>2</sup>	% of women in the national parliaments <sup>3</sup>
FINLAND	13	8	61%	42.9%	41.5%
SWEDEN	18	10	55,5%	47.4%	47%
ESTONIA	6	3	50%	50%	20.8%
NETHERLANDS	25	12	48%	48.2%	41.3%
BULGARIA	17	8	47%	44.4%	21.7%
DENMARK	13	6	46.2%	42.9%	38%
FRANCE	72	33	45.8%	44.9%	18.2%
AUSTRIA	17	7	41.1%	27.8%	28.4%
SLOVAKIA	13	5	38%	35.7%	19.3%
LATVIA	8	3	38%	22.2%	20%
GERMANY	99	37	37%	33.3%	32.3%
BELGIUM	22	8	36%	29.2%	35.3%
HUNGARY	22	8	36%	37.5%	11.1%
PORTUGAL	22	8	36%	25%	28.3%
ROMANIA	33	12	36%	28.57%	11.4%
SPAIN	50	15	36%	27.8%	36.3%
UK	72	24	33%	26.9%	19.5%
CYPRUS	6	2	33%	0%	14.3%
GREECE	22	7	32%	29.2%	14.7%
SLOVENIA	7	2	28,5%	42.86%	13.3%
LITHUANIA	12	3	25%	38%	24%
IRELAND	12	3	25%	38.46%	13.3%
ITALY	72	18	25%	20.5%	21.3%



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POLAND	50	11	22%	14.8%	20.2%
CZECH REPUBLIC	22	4	18.2%	20,8%	15,5%
LUXEMBOURG	6	1	16%	50%	23.3%
MALTA	5	0	0%	0%	8.7%
<b>Total</b>		736		261	
<b>Mean</b>		35 %		32.1%	

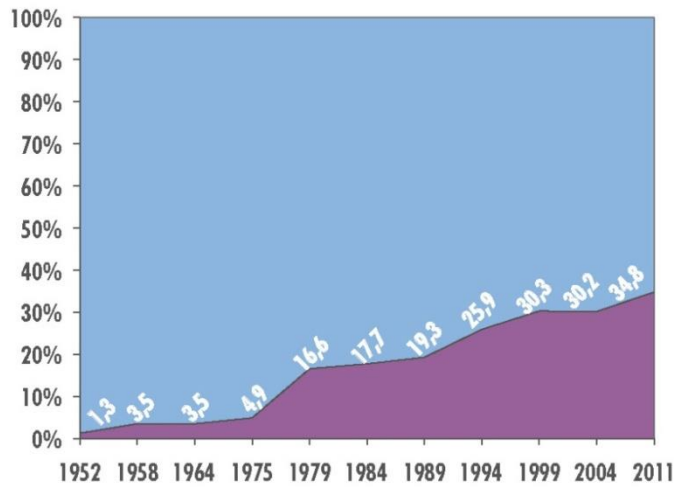
*Source:* [www.europarl.europa.eu](http://www.europarl.europa.eu)

It's worth noting that the European Parliament has the most gender balanced composition, 35% women and 65% men, in contrast to the national parliaments of each member state, however, with great variations between the Member States. In the majority of countries, the level of female representation is higher in the European Parliament than in the single/lower house of national parliaments, as seen in figure 3, with the most significant difference (between women MEPs at the European level and women MPs at the national level), observed in Estonia, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, Hungary, and Slovenia. This difference occurs due to a combination of factors that affect each country differently, such as the electoral system used in the EP on the one hand, and the electoral system in the national parliaments of each Member State on the other. “Although each Member State is free to specify the system used for electing its MEPs, it has to be a form of *proportional representation* and it is well documented that such systems, where there are multiple winners from each electoral district, tend to make it easier for women to be elected than the single-winner systems used in some countries at national and local levels” (European Commission, 2009, p.20). Another factor that actually provokes such a difference between female MEP's and MP's among most member States, is that political parties may have different procedures for selecting candidates for European elections than for national elections, including the use of gender quotas.



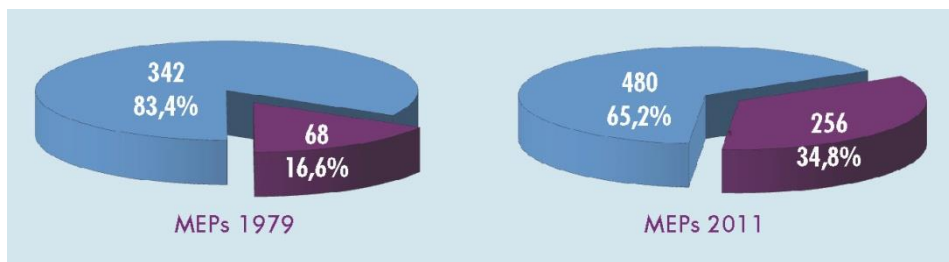
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**Figure 1: Percentage of women in the European Parliament from 1952 - 2011**



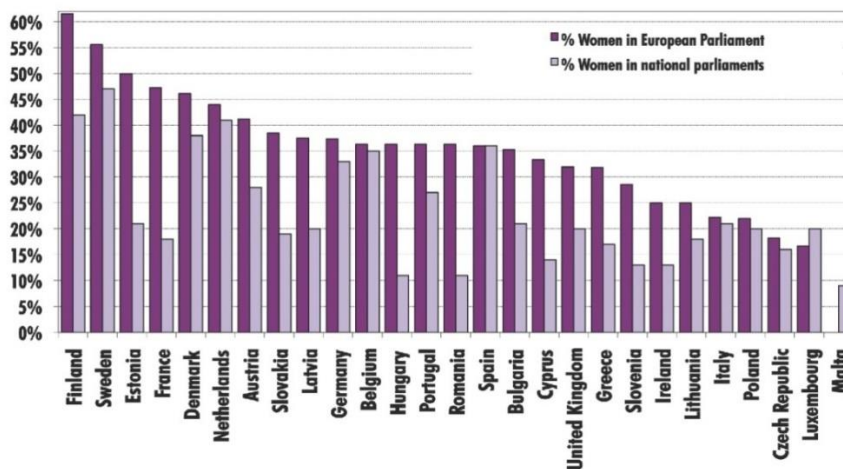
Source: Equality and Diversity Unit Directorate-General for Personnel, 2011

**Figure 2: Percentage of women in the new European Parliament in comparison to the first EP elections:**



Source: Equality and Diversity Unit Directorate-General for Personnel, 2011

**Figure 3: Representation of women in the EP and in National Parliaments by Member State, 2011**



Source: Equality and Diversity Unit Directorate-General for Personnel, 2011



Regarding the number of women occupying key decision-making positions inside the European Parliament, between the 6<sup>th</sup> (2004-2009) and the 7<sup>th</sup> (2009-2014) parliamentary period, women vice presidents had fallen from five to three amongst the 14 vice presidents in total (21.4%). In addition, during the 6<sup>th</sup> parliamentary period, only six women chaired the committees and subcommittees. This number was increased into 10 of the 24 presidents in total during the first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> parliamentary period, whereas now the number of women presidents is 8 out of the 22 total (European Parliament, 2013). Finally 2 women deans are now (40%) in the European Parliament, 3 Secretaries-General of political groups (43%) and solely 8 chairs of delegations (19%) (Equality and Diversity Unit Directorate-General for Personnel, 2012). Overall, women are still disproportionately absent from key leadership positions in the EP.

The slight increase of female presence within the European Parliament after the 2009 elections is disproportionately reflected in an increase in the number of women holding leading seats especially in the sectors of Employment and Social Affairs, Culture and Education, Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Development, Petitions, Regional Development, Human Rights (Sub-Committee), Internal Market and Consumer protection and of course in the women’s rights Committees (European Women’s Lobby, 2009). As seen in table 2 below, while the majority of women in leadership positions of the distinct executive bodies controlled by the European Parliament, is mainly found in the social welfare sector, specifically in the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, Employment and Social Affairs, Development, Human rights and Petitions as well as Women’s rights and protection Committees, men are predominantly occupying leading seats mostly in the Economic and Monetary Affairs, Budgetary Control, and Foreign Affairs Committees; the last two Committees have no women at all in their leadership. Due to their ‘sensitive nature’ as many still believe, women are perceived as more suitable for leading positions within the social welfare/care and domestic sphere, rather than the socio-economic milieu, which is perceived as a ‘male’ sphere (European Women’s Lobby, 2009).



**Table 2: Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons of Parliamentary Committees:**

EP Committees and Sub-Committees	Chairpersons		Vice-Chairpersons	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Foreign Affairs		X		4
Budgets		X	1	3
Budgetary Control		X		4
Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs		X	3	1
Economic / Monetary Affairs	X		1	3
Legal Affairs		X	1	3
Industry, Research and Energy		X	2	2
Employment and Social Affairs	X		3	1
Environment, Public Health and Food Safety		X	1	3
Agriculture		X	1	3
Fisheries	X			4
Transports and Tourism		X	1	3
Culture and Education	X		1	3
Development	X		2	2
Constitutional Affairs		X	1	3
Women’s Rights	X		4	
Petitions	X		2	2
Regional Development	X		1	3
Human Rights (Sub-Committee)	X		1	2*
Security and Defence (Sub-Committee)		X	1	3
International Trade		X	1	3
Internal Market and Consumer protection		X	3	1
<b>Total in numbers</b> (% of total)	9 41%	13 59%	31 36%	56 64%
<b>%, excl. the Women’s Rights Committee</b>	38%	62%	32.5%	67.5%
<b>General % of women</b>	36.7%			
<b>General % of women, excl. the Women’s Rights Committee</b>	33.65%			

Source: European Women’s Lobby, 2009





At the legislative level, the European Parliament has undertaken various measures in order to enhance women’s participation in the parliament and attract more women candidates. However it should be noted that a general and mandatory provision for gender quotas in the European Parliament has not yet been set in place and is highly dependent on the distinct legislative rules of each country. Every Member State functions under its own national electoral law and thus provisions for quotas are only applicable and legally fortified in some countries; mainly in Scandinavian countries which have the most upgraded and flexible laws in women matters. In reality there is a great controversy between Member States concerning the issue of quotas and thus it is difficult enough to actually establish mandatory gender quotas at a European level. On a wider perspective, the right of all women to participate in the public and political life, including their right to vote and be eligible for election to all publicly elected bodies, as well as the right to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to perform all public functions at all levels of government, is explicitly provided by article 7 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (UN, 1979).

Also, other more generalized provisions for the equal treatment between men and women, including in the public sphere and political life, have been successfully implemented and pave the way for a more balanced representation of women in the political scene. More specifically, within an emergent pluralistic approach of gender mainstreaming that the EP has set into force the last few years, the EU and its Member States are committed to promote gender equality through the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) agreed at the UN World Conference on Women in 1995. The specific Declaration aims to remove obstacles to women's participation in all spheres of public and private life through an equal share in economic, social, cultural and political decision-making; its implementation is reviewed by the UN every five years. BPfA calls for the governments to establish the goal of gender balance in governmental bodies and committees as well as in public administrative entities. It also urges them to take measures in electoral systems that will encourage political parties to integrate women in elective and non-



elective public positions in the same proportion as men and to review the differential impact of the existing electoral systems in order to consider, where appropriate, the adjustment or reform of those systems for enhancing women’s political representation. Finally, the said Declaration indicates that all governments should provide for the monitoring and evaluating of progress in the representation of women through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men at all levels in various decision-making positions and disseminating these data on a yearly basis (Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). Nevertheless, as stated in the outcome document adopted by the General Assembly<sup>2</sup> in paragraph 23 “despite general acceptance of the need for gender balance in decision-making bodies at all levels, a gap between de jure (i.e. lawful) and de facto equality had persisted, and women continued to be underrepresented at the legislative, ministerial and sub-ministerial levels” (Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, 2010, p.155). Furthermore, the European Pact for Gender Equality (2011-2020), adopted by the European Council in March 2011, also urges the EU and all Member States to work towards achieving gender equality as well as promoting the equal participation of women in decision-making procedures.

The European Parliament has indeed set among the major priorities in its agenda, the issue of achieving parity in participation in political decision-making and leadership at all levels, inviting the Commission, the Council and Member States to design and implement effective gender equality policies accompanied by clear action plans and monitoring mechanisms. It simultaneously welcomes gender quotas for elections as these introduced by legislation in some Member States and urgently calls on the other Members to introduce such legislative measures. Many formal suggestions have been proposed within this emerging promotion of enhancing the presence of women in decision-making positions and political life. These may well include gender educational programmes aimed at civil society and young people, launching a pledge to be endorsed by all political parties at European level, calling the Commission to ensure in its relevant annual work

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<sup>2</sup>General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex



programmes’ funding (2013-2014), inter alia, appropriate awareness-raising campaigns in the media to encourage the election of women etc. Along the same lines, in Recommendation 1899 (2010): ‘Increasing women’s representation in politics through the electoral system’, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe encourages its member states to increase women’s representation by introducing quotas. Also, in the work of promoting young women’s participation in political and public life in some Member States, mentoring programmes have been introduced as an effective and innovative method; mentoring, training and exchange experiences programmes are measures that are repeatedly recommended by the European Parliament as a means to achieve gender balance in politics (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, 2012). In addition, an action plan that would promote and enhance women’s presence in leadership positions, has been successfully set up by the European Parliament: *European Action Plan for the Promotion of Gender Equality and Diversity by the general secretariat of EP (2009 – 2013,)* which aimed to ensure full equality between women and men in all aspects of professional life (Equality and Diversity Unit Directorate-General for Personnel, 2012).

Other important actions and examples of good practice initiated by the European Parliament in order to promote gender equality in public and political life, include various campaigns and events organized on a yearly basis, which focus on a wide range of topics. For example the recent celebration of Woman’s Day by the European parliament in 2013, focused on the theme of “Women’s response to the crisis” – female Entrepreneurship.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, within the European Parliament and some European political parties, the constitution of ‘women’s wings’ is meant to secure women’s voice inside the Party and encourage women to join formal party structures, while stressing out the various women issues that are of great concern. However, these internal women’s organizations are not institutionally established for all European political parties, but rather optionally included, depending on each party’s line and policy; for instance, within the current European political parties only the Party of European Socialists (PES) has a women’s wing (‘PES Women’).

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<sup>3</sup>The main topics discussed were the gender dimension of the economic downturn and the financial crisis and an exchange of experiences and best practices by women in leader positions to define ways out of this crisis.



## 1.2 European Commission

First and foremost, it would be interesting to have a look on the gender composition of the European Commission itself. Currently, the European Commission has 33% female commissioners and 67% male commissioners. Furthermore, in the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) 21% of the positions are occupied by women and 79% by men (Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality, 2012). With regard to the role of the European Commission on the promotion of women’s participation in the political sphere and decision-making centres, some positive steps have been made during the last few years. However, it should be noted that one should not confound the role of the European Parliament with that of the European Commission. Despite the significant efforts undertaken by the EP to enhance women’s presence in the field of decision making, and particularly in their active participation to the European and national parliaments and despite the EP’s constant calls for more innovative projects/action plans and funding by the European Commission, the latter has still a long way to go until the attainment of establishing a real equality and gender parity.

A positive action was, first of all, the establishment in 2008 of the European Commission's Network to promote Women in Decision-making in Politics and the Economy, which provided a platform at EU level for discussion of successful strategies and best practice, debate and exchange of information to improve gender balance in decision-making positions. Moreover, in European legislation, a *Roadmap for equality between women and men 2006-2010* - built on the Framework Strategy for equality between women and men 2001-2005 - set up by the European Commission and communicated to the EP, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, managed to identify key objectives and actions which would facilitate their implementation on the work of promoting women’s presence in public, political and professional milieu (Europa, 2011). Similarly, the ‘*Strategy for equality between women and men 2010-2015*’ (Communication from the Commission to



the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 21 September 2010), acts as a basis for the cooperation between the Commission and the other European institutions, Member States and other stakeholders, as part of the European Pact for equality between women and men. The Commission presents in it its new priorities for gender equality. This strategy aims at improving the position of women in the labor market, in society and in decision-making/political positions both in the European Union and the world (Europa, 2011).

Also, on a wider perspective, in the 2007 Communication on Gender Equality in development cooperation, the EU has clearly committed itself to refocus its strategy on organized actions for empowering women in the Member States. Hence the *EU Plan of Action on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Development 2010-2015*, presents specific actions to strengthen efforts to better address the issues of gender-based discrimination against women and enhance, by 2015, a common EU practice on gender equality in development, through greater policy coherence and coordination between EU institutions and all Member States. Last, but not least, the European Commission has regularly undertaken substantial research and published several reports concerning data and suggestions for the increase of female representatives especially in the political domain and in parliaments.<sup>4</sup>

Regarding measures to ensure women's participation in leadership training and positions of leadership in the world of big business, and thus enhancing women's leadership skills and experience, no European law on quotas has been established until now. However, on 14 November 2012 the European Commission proposed legislation (IP/12/1205 and MEMO/12/860) with the aim of attaining 40% of women in non-executive board-member positions in publicly listed big companies, with the exception of small and medium enterprises (Sandrous, 2012). The aim of the new legislation is to improve gender balance on the corporate boards of European companies and facilitate women's access to crucial leadership

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<sup>4</sup> Such as for example, the 'European Commission, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, 2009, *Women in European Politics - Time for Action*', or 'European Commission, 2012, *Women in economic decision making in the EU. Progress Report. A European 2020 Initiative*' etc.



positions. On that point it would be interesting to see the indeed disappointing percentages of women in business leadership. Overall, data show that there is a wide gap between the proportion of employed women and those at board level and chairs in all EU Member States. The current percentage of women on European companies' boards is only 13,7%. An increase in the percentage of women in boards has been recorded in almost all European countries, except of Bulgaria, Poland and Ireland (European Commission, 2012). This slight increase is basically resulted from the above mentioned EC's proposal and the constant discussions within the wider EU framework, concerning the need for legislation for regulating the number of women on boards. Nonetheless, the new percentage is only slightly better than the 11.8% on 2010, and with this extremely low pace of progress, it is estimated that 40 years will be needed in order to approach the goal of gender balance in boards. Moreover, the said provision (IP/12/1205 and MEMO/12/860) is just a temporary measure that will automatically cease to be valid in 2028; in order to acquire the force of law the proposal needs to be approved by the European Parliament and the Member States.

Consequently, the need of establishing a common European law that will function as a common line for all countries is now highly emergent. Member States have, as in the case of quotas, their own different rules/legal provisions; 11 of them<sup>5</sup> have legally established means for the promotion of more women in the big enterprises' boards, while 11 other countries have not even established self-regulative measures (European Women's Lobby, 2012). Among the countries that have established either legal quota provisions or other self-regulation measures, Spain, France, Italy, Netherlands and Belgium have legally approved gender quotas in large listed companies, while others have relied on different strategies; for instance Finland has introduced the dissemination of research studies that demonstrate how women have contributed to successful/profitable companies, has established corporate governance codes and quick governmental actions (by appointing at least 40% of women in boards of state-owned companies) and has made use of the Media in order to promote women's positive presence in

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<sup>5</sup>i.e. Belgium, France, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Austria and Slovenia.



companies. Speaking of numbers, in 2012, the majority of boards in large listed companies in Malta and Hungary, was entirely comprised of men and in nearly a third of Member States – namely in Malta, Estonia, Luxembourg, Cyprus, Hungary, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Slovakia - at least half of the largest companies have no women in their boards. Finally, only in five EU countries there are more than half of corporate boards with at least two female board members – namely in France, Sweden, Germany, Finland and the UK (European Commission, 2012).

There are indeed great variations between the countries and insurmountable problems in the establishment of a renewed framework or a common law on quotas for the entrance of more women into entrepreneurship and big businesses, since some Member States resist to the proposal of ensuring gender quotas in the specific domain, as for instance Germany. On that occasion, the Vice President of the European Commission Viviane Reding, is seriously concerned about the slow rate of progress regarding the representation of women on boards of Europe’s listed companies, and for that reason has launched a new initiative in March 2011. Specifically, CEO’s and/or Chairs of listed companies are encouraged to sign a Pledge by which they commit to reach the target of 30% female board members by 2015 and 40% by 2020 by actively recruiting qualified women” (European Commission’s Network to promote women in decision-making in politics and economy, 2011).

### **1.3. Suggestions and ideas for enhancing women’s participation in European politics**

Some of the most widespread and realistic proposals and ideas for future changes and improvements in order to enhance women’s representation in the EP and in political life in general, include: a) the transnational exchange of experiences programmes in order to increase transnational female participation in the next European elections and spread the message in a broad context, b) joint training sessions for both men and women (parliamentarians, officials working in the EP, candidates etc), more intensive campaigning to promote more women candidates and encourage others to actively participate in politics, and most importantly, c)





an organized and collaborative effort by all Member States to proceed to the necessary legal reformations and establish a common European law that would render gender quotas in ballots mandatory (while simultaneously monitoring the procedures and imposing sanctions on States that do not comply). As the European Commission and other European institutions have repeatedly pointed out, the first and vital step within this framework is to attract and ensure as many women candidates as possible for the European Parliament. This could be initially targeted to political parties that should first and foremost incorporate a gender sensitive renewed policy in their agendas and increase the number of women candidates in their ballots (through campaigning, advertising, establishing quotas etc). Therefore, it comes naturally that a strong cooperation between Member States should take place in order to establish and consolidate this refreshed approach at a European level.

A substantial change in current political structures that has resulted in the enhancement of women in the political field and should be further updated and intensified, could be summarised in 4 dimensions, institutional/procedural change, representation change, influence on output and discourse. “Institutional/procedural change” entails basically cultural changes, such as greater gender awareness, which should be accompanied by procedural changes designed to attract more women members. “Representation change” could include actions to secure women's continued and enhanced access to equality legislation, encouragement of women candidates and appropriate changes in electoral and campaigning laws. It also foresees that parliaments should better promote and place women in important parliamentary positions and secure their presence in government. This dimension must also include similar changes within political parties. “Impact/Influence on output” refers to the ‘feminization’ of legislation and other policies, i.e. changes in laws and policies altered in women’s favor. “Discourse change” includes not only efforts be made to alter parliamentary language so that women's perspectives are normalized, but also the necessary actions to make use of the parliamentary platform to alter public attitudes and to change the discourse of politics so as to establish women politicians as ‘normal’ political entities (Lovenduski&Karam, 2002).





## **2. National level**

### **2.1. National Assembly**

At the national level, the situation is not much different. Although the percentage of elected women in the Greek parliament appears to be increasing during time, especially over the last few years, this increase is still lower than the European average of women MEPs (average 35%) and solemnly fails to meet the minimum standard of the 40% of elected women, let alone a total parity inside the Greek parliament. The important social changes that took place in the past decades, such as urbanization, the diminution of the percentage of illiterate population, the advancement of women's position in the job sector and her active presence in it, a decline in gender segregation within work environment and so on, had a notable impact on young women's political perception and participation in political life. Also, the most recent socio-political changes in the country and the great impact of economic crisis, have necessarily led women to take a more politicized position inside society. The same reasons have resulted in the entrance of more women in the job sector, in order to cope with the family's financial difficulties and contribute to the continually reduced family income. This fusion of rapid changes and social pressures have virtually introduced most Greek women into the current socio-political struggles that cannot but affect all members of society and have been the motive to make most of them politically active. Nonetheless, age is actually a factor of great importance in Greek political culture, where gender differences are usually smaller than age differences with regards to political participation; indicatively, there is a bigger similarity between young women and men in the age group 18-29 than between young and old women in the age group of 60+ in their interests in politics and active political participation. (Maloutas, 2006) However, in spite of the above observations on the political outlook of younger women, it is still evident that Greek women continue to participate less in the formal political process and decision-making area.

In order to pave the way for a more thorough analysis, it would be useful to have a look at the historical evolution of women's presence in the national political



scene since the first official recognition of women’s political rights in 1945. That day marks the official consolidation of women’s right to vote and stand, with a resolution of the National Council, which explicitly indicates for the first time that all Greek citizens, both men and women, have the same political and civil rights. This was a temporary constitutional charter which was solidified in 1952 with Law 2159, which guaranteed the right of all women to vote and stand. However, the new electoral law included an arbitrary amendment according to which women could not actually vote in the general elections in November 1952, because of a mistake by the agents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs who had not registered all women electors. The said amendment was deemed unconstitutional by the Women’s Committee and the League for Women’s Rights and after several complaints, in 1953, a by-election took place in Thessaloniki, where Eleni Skoura was the first woman to be elected in the Greek parliament (with the Greek party “Greek Alert”). Subsequently, in 1956 women finally participated on equal terms with men, when another woman, the right-wing Lina Tsaldari, was elected and was the first ever female minister in Greece.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, in 1964, 135 women were elected as members of the city council and in 1975 the first Greek Constitution included the provision for equality between men and women before the law, including their political rights.

In the parliamentary elections of 1958 three out of 16 women candidates were elected in the Greek parliament. Accordingly, in 1961 three women out of 19 were elected, and in 1974 six women were elected by vote and 1 woman from the ballot of territory candidates. In 1977 the percentage of women MPs was only 3,7% and in 1981 the same percentage reached the 4,3%. According to the available official data, from 1996 until today, women’s presence in the Greek parliament shows a steady increase that escalates from the woeful 6,3% in 1996 to the 21% in 2012. However, as mentioned above, the specific percentage is still considerably low; lower than the European percentage of women MEPs and even lower than the average percentage of women MPs in National parliaments of all EU Member States (26%)(GSGE, 2012).

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<sup>6</sup>Served in the Ministry of Social Welfare



**Table 3: Participation of Elected Women in the Greek parliament between 1996 and 2012 by political party:**

	TOTAL WOMEN MPs	PASOK	N.D	KKE	SUNASPISMOS/ SYRIZA	LAOS	INDEPENDENT GREEKS	DEMOCRATIC LEFT	GOLDEN DAWN	DIKKI
Year	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
1996	6,3	4,3	5,6	18,2	30					11,1
2000	10,3	10,8	8	18,2	33,3					0
2004	13	15,4	10,3	25	16,7					0
2007	16	20,6	11,2	31,8	14,3	10				
2009	17,3	21,3	12,1	19	15,4	6,7				
2012 May	18,7	9,8	11,1	26,9	32,7	-	27,3	31,6	4,8	
2012 June	21	9,09	13,9	33,3	35,21	-	35	29,41	5,56	

*Source:* General Secretariat for Gender Equality (Ministry of Interior), 2012

Furthermore, it has to be noted that, as seen in table 3 above, based on the percentages of women MP’s from each elected Greek political party, only one party (SYRIZA) actually managed to exceed the 1/3 desired proportion of elected women MPs, during the last national elections. Additionally, 3 political parties (KKE, Independent Greeks, Democratic Left) almost reached the 1/3. Although, the percentage of women candidates from all political parties is indeed in the desired level (34,7%), as provided by existing law (i.e. more than 1/3 of the total number of candidates), the percentage of elected women is still considerably low. In short, Greek parliament is currently consisted of 63 women MPs (21% - the highest percentage that the country has ever reached); 18 from ‘New Democracy’(ND), 25 from SYRIZA, three from PASOK, seven from ‘Independent Greeks’, four from KKE, one from Golden Dawn and five from ‘Democratic Left’. These numbers have slightly increased in contrast with previous national elections (52 women MPs in total), without making a significant difference though.



**Table 4: Number of women MPs from each political party today:**

 New Democracy (ND)		 SYRIZA		 PASOK		 Independent Greeks		 Golden Dawn		 ΔΗΜΟΚΡΑΤΙΚΗ ΑΡΙΣΤΕΡΑ Democratic Left		 KKE	
18	111	25	46	3	30	7	13	1	17	5	12	4	8
Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men

Source: Hellenic Parliament, 2012

Concerning the representation of each sex executive bodies, such as Ministries and other public administrative bodies, the typical gender stereotypes and the obvious segregation in key political decision-making positions (i.e. women mainly undertaking care distributive tasks and men the more powerful, resource-related tasks, such as economics or external affairs) is far from evident in Greek society. Based on a large scale research project undertaken by KETHI in 2006, most participants interviewed agreed that men give more priority and are more likely to be involved in the political economy sector (62,6%), in external affairs (58,5%) and in national security (43,6%), while for women, citizens believe that they are more effective and inclined to participate in policies concerning gender equality (49,9%), social protection and social policy sector (42,5%), education (42%) as well as in the cultural sector (39%). These stereotypical patterns can indeed reliably depict the country’s political scene and are similar to those identified in the European level (Arvanitis, K. et al, 2006).

With regard to the representation of Greek women politicians inside the European Parliament, the percentage is quite higher than that of female MPs in the Greek parliament (32% in contrast to 21%), however it still fails to approach the desired standard of 40%. According to the official available data, there has been a steady evolution of Greek women’s presence in the EP during the last few years, proportional with the overall increasing percentages of most Member States. In 1980, only two Greek women had a seat in the European Parliament (8,3%) and during the period 1981-2000 eight Greek women MEPs were elected. Nonetheless, a rapid increase took place in the elections of 2004-2009, when 29% of Greek MEPs were women. Furthermore, it is interesting to note that 2007 was an important year, since for the first time a Greek female politician was elected as



Vice President of the EP. Finally, in the last elections (2009-2014) the percentage further rose to 32% of Greek female MEPs - seven Greek women currently standing in the EP (European Parliament, 2013).

At the legislative level, Greece has proceeded to several legislative regulations in order to enhance women’s participation in political and decision making positions and promote the universal principle of gender equality in the political sphere. The most important measure within the national legal framework was the establishment of mandatory gender quotas in national parliamentary elections, with article 34 of the Presidential Decree 26/2012, entitled “Codification into a single text of the legislation for the election of MPs”(Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2011). This recent article codifies the current legislation on quotas on the number of parliamentary candidates, and more specifically articles 34 of the Presidential Decree 96/2007 and 3 of Law 3636/2008 (“Amendment of Law 3231/2004 on MPs election”). The said article states that at least one-third (1/3) of the total number of a political party's candidates in an electoral district must include candidates of each sex (Quota Project: Global Database of quotas for women, 2013). This step played an important role in the increase of women elected MPs in the last two electoral periods (from 2009 to 2012). However, concerning the gender quotas for candidates included in the ballots of political parties, in Greece only one party (PASOK) among those represented in parliament has officially established the measure of voluntary political party quotas. More specifically, PASOK has a 40 percent minimum quota for women on party lists, which actually exceeds the percentage/number of the national quota legislation.

In addition Greece has ratified the Convention on elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (1979,UN) with law 1342 in 1983 (1342/1983), which was amended by law 4096/2012. Particularly, article 7 of the same law requires that all Member States should take measures to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life of the country and to guarantee women’s right to vote and stand in national elections and any public referendum. Moreover, it provides for the right of women to be actively involved in the state policy and its execution, to occupy key public positions and exercise all public



tasks at all levels of government, as well as to take part in NGOs and Unions that are concerned with the country’s public and political life.

In comparison to European legislative framework, Greek legal provisions on women’s political rights and their political representation are almost in the same line of thought with the European standards, with the advantageous difference that Greek laws have included the legal, mandatory provision of gender quotas in parliamentary elections (as well as in management boards and other public administrative bodies); something that in the European Parliament is still among labyrinthine discussions, because of the aforementioned dispute between Member States. However the tantalizing question still remains: Why are the percentages of women involved in politics still in such low rates in Greece, and even lower than the corresponding percentages/gender proportion in the European Parliament? Moreover, to what extent is the aforementioned law on mandatory quotas implemented? As mentioned in the previous section, this may well have occurred due to various reasons, such as the different internal organization and approaches of political parties, the latter’s different procedures and criteria for selecting women candidates for the EP on the one hand, and for the Greek parliament on the other, as well as factors that have to do with women’s occupation versus family responsibilities (problems in reconciling family and professional life). Also, another important obstacle includes the well-rooted socio-cultural bias, such as gender stereotypes, that has not yet been extinguished in Greek society, as well as the strong Greek ‘clientistic’ political system. In addition, it should be noticed that “the design and implementation of gender policy in Greece has been guided by the framing of equality in terms of women’s “difference”. In this context gender is conceptualized as a clear dichotomy, with specific roles and duties belonging to each side, without putting into question prevailing conceptions of gender.” (Meier et al 2005, p.48). This has thus favored the legitimization of a traditional perception of women and their roles.

With regard to the national official policies in order to promote and ensure women’s participation into politics, it is important first of all to note the legal establishment, for the first time in the country, of the position of a ‘Special Advisor for Gender Equality Issues to the President’ in 1982, under the strong



influence of women’s organizations and the corresponding legal framework that operates in all EEC countries. Alongside the specific department, the ‘Council of Gender Equality’ was established with Law 1288/82 and was upgraded to the ‘General Secretariat for Equality’ (from now GSGE) in 1988 with Law 1558/88 (operating under the Ministry of Interior). One of the primary priorities of the GSGE, is the reinforcement of women’s participation in decision-making centers, and especially in the political domain in order to “give a fresh impetus in our political culture...” (Arvanitiset al, p.77), consorted with the practice of ‘National Priorities and Lines of Action for Gender Equality (2004-2008). Within this specific framework and the general State policy for gender Equality, the GSGE provides a number of services and actions in order to support and promote women in politics and in the country’s social life. These include: a) the regular organization of informative and sensitization campaigns, such for instance the sensitization campaign entitled “Defy Stereotypes in these elections, Vote more Women”(2010), under the project “Encouragement and sensitization for the enhancement of women’s participation in positions of political responsibility”, b) the active support of women’s organizations and NGOs concerned with women issues –basically by funding 2-year action plans that promote gender equality, c) the pilot operation of a monitoring system of Greek politicians, with both qualitative and quantitative data and gender indicators, as well as d) training programmes for public servants and staff in the public administration. Specifically for the year 2013 the attention of the “National Programme for substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013” falls to the national and European elections and the participation of more Greek female politicians to them. The said action plan focuses especially in the strengthening of the administrative organization of national feminist and women’s organizations and NGOs, by staffing them with extra personnel etc, and has also provided for the creation of a separate section in GSGE’s webpage for uploading proposals(GSGE, 2012).

Furthermore, the operational programme “Administrative Reform 2007-2013” of the National Strategic Reference Framework(NSRF) includes, inter alia, the support of women candidates in order to increase their representation in the political institutions at the European, national and local levels (i.e. informative campaigns, networking activities for women politicians at national and local





levels, events for diffusion of experiences, creation of a reliable database for all elected women per political party and ‘experiential seminars’ with women politicians and candidates).<sup>7</sup> Finally, a highly relevant and important project within the specific framework is currently implemented by the Research Center for Gender Equality (KETHI) and aims at the support of women candidates in order to enhance their participation in positions of political responsibility. Within the project, KETHI has formed three thematic working groups: a) the working group for the empowerment of women who belong in vulnerable social groups concerning their participation in the political decision-making centres, b) the working group for gender mainstreaming in the executive bodies and decision-making processes of political actors-parties and c) the working group for the configuration of a new framework for the empowerment of women in decision-making centers<sup>8</sup> (GSGE, 2013).

Other important actions and examples of good practice in the specific domain include, the cooperation of the GSGE with the media, such as the Greek Radio and the National TV Channel (ERT) in order to eliminate the representation of gender within sexist stereotypes and promote the face of women in the social and political field (i.e. imposition of sanctions, creation of relevant documentaries, advertisement spotsetc). Moreover, Greek women organizations and political parties’ women sectors (wherever these exist<sup>9</sup>), have played and continue to play a vital role in the combat of women’s political exclusion, with their constant pressures towards public bodies and political parties for the proportional representation of women in political decision-making structures. These pressures and struggles eventually led, in 1988, in the establishment of the Committee of women organizations and political parties’ women sectors, which among others achieved the establishment of gender quotas or the unofficial self-regulative measure of more proportional gender representation by some big political

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<sup>7</sup> For the implementation of these actions the responsible organization is KETHI (Research Center for Gender Equality)

<sup>8</sup> See more details at: <http://www.gynaikes-politiki.gr/page/%CE%B8%CE%B5%CE%BC%CE%B1%CF%84%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AD%CF%82-%CE%BF%CE%BC%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B3%CE%B1%CF%83%CE%AF%CE%B1%CF%82>

<sup>9</sup> Special women’s sectors have been created in PASOK, KKE, SYRIZA, Independent Greeks, Democratic Left and New Democracy.





parties.<sup>10</sup> In addition, the GSGE has undertaken the realization of an Action Plan entitled: “Implementation of Gender Mainstreaming in Public Administration” within the framework of the Community Program “PROGRESS” 2007-2013, which is mainly addressed to senior political and administrative officials of Ministries who design, recommend, implement and monitor all policies and actions of their respective competency on equality between men and women. Its goal is training/awareness-raising of the relevant officials as well as to provide motivation and present the necessity of gender mainstreaming in all fields, from politics to the business sector and public affairs (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2011).

Most political parties (among those forming the current government), have also set the issue of women’s political representation and enhanced participation in the country’s socio-political affairs high in their agenda, with relevant actions and examples of good practice towards this direction. For example, the women’s network of SYRIZA has often organized several awareness raising events, such as the event organized on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2013 (International Day for the elimination of violence against women), has submitted proposals for the amelioration of women’s position in the political, economic, social and private space, often initiates activist actions in favor of women, and has also published many articles for several crucial topics concerning gender equality, including in the political field. Also, the Women’s sector of PASOK, has published proposals<sup>11</sup> for the strengthening, improvement and enforcement of existing legislation (on gender quotas etc) in order to guarantee the equal participation of both genders in the political life of the country, or for the establishment of new special programmes on the enforcement of women in Greek society, as well as for the establishment of strict ethical rules by the Media with the purpose to cease the display of gender stereotypes. It has also proceeded with several public awareness events for the promotion of more women in the Greek parliament.<sup>12</sup> Along the

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<sup>10</sup> Which was actually followed only by one Greek party (PASOK), as mentioned further above

<sup>11</sup> See for example the last published proposals in March 2013 (on the occasion of Women’s day):

<http://www.pasok.gr/announcement/item/444-anakoinosi-toy-tomea-gynaikn-gia-thn-pagkosmia-hmera-ths-gynaikas.html>

<sup>12</sup> As for instance the last relevant event in October 2012, with main theme: “The power of women in the new parliament”



same lines, the ‘Secretariat of women and the protection of the family’ sector of the Independent Greeks has recently published proposals for State reforms and other public actions in order to enhance women’s position in the socio-political domain.<sup>13</sup> Finally the ‘Secretariat of Women’ of KKE is often publishing papers and brochures on women’s issues and, in spite the fact that it has not officially established voluntary gender quotas for candidates in ballots, in 2012 the percentage of women reached 50% of their representatives in the parliament (4 elected men and 4 women), which apparently shows a promotion of female voices in the parliament by KKE and a serious consideration/appreciation of their abilities. It is worth noting that some political parties (i.e. Democratic Left, New Democracy, PASOK, Ecologist Greens, L.A.O.S) are also participating in KETHI’s (‘Eleni Skoura network’) new thematic working group on ‘Enhancing the participation of women belonging to vulnerable social groups in political decision-making’ that will research, record and submit proposals to State and Non-state actors and further plan special actions on the said topic.

Besides the representation of women in the political field, other important provisions have been set by the State concerning women’s participation in leadership positions in the job sector, with the ultimate purpose to enhance their leadership skills and provide them with the necessary knowledge and experience that is needed for an active contribution in key decision-making positions. First of all, it should be noted that the percentage of women on boards of large listed companies in Greece for the year 2012 was 28%. Greece has prescribed gender requirements mainly for the composition of boards of state-controlled companies. In particular, it has legally established gender quotas with article 6 of Law 2839/2000, under which quota of women on company boards of the public sector is officially ensured (at least 1/3 of members in administrative positions). Along the same lines, the Gender Equality Act 53 imposes a one third quota requirement for state-appointed portion of a board of all executive bodies consisting of members appointed by the state or local authorities, including companies fully or partially state-controlled. Moreover, relevant sanctions are imposed when these requirements are not met by the said companies, such as

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<sup>13</sup> For further details see in: [http://www.anexartitoiellines.gr/post.php?post\\_id=1417](http://www.anexartitoiellines.gr/post.php?post_id=1417)



annulment by administrative or civil courts when appointment decisions fail to respect the quota requirement (Mastromihalis, 2011).

Also, some legislative measures have been undertaken by the State for the establishment of gender quotas in service councils and administrative boards or other collective administrative bodies. Specifically, with article 4 of Law 3839/2010 (FEK51/A’/29.3.2010), entitled “Selection of directors of organizational units with objective and meritocratic criteria – Establishment of a Special Council (E.S.E.P.) for selecting directors and other provisions”. This law replaced article 161, entitled “Gender Representation” (before article 160, par.3 of the “Status Code for public policy administrators and other public entities” (Law 3528/2007, FEK/A’/26/9.2.2007), with the purpose to define that in the Councils of articles 157,158 and 159, the number of members from each gender should be equal with at least 1/3 of the total number of members, insomuch a sufficient number of officers serves in the relevant services and members are more than one (1). Similar provisions are included in par. 5 of article 7 in the Status Code of municipal officials” (Law 3584/2007, FEK/A’/143/28.6.2007) (General Secretariat for Gender – Ministry of Interior). Moreover, with article 57 of Law 3653/2008, entitled “Institutional framework for research and technology and other provisions” regulates the percentage of researchers and scientists to the minimum of 1/3 for each gender in the staffing of National instruments and Councils of research and technology, under the condition that candidates acquire the necessary skills for the relevant positions.

## **2.2 Suggestions and ideas to enhance women’s participation into politics and increase the country’s rates in that field.**

Among the proposals/ideas for enhancing women’s participation into politics, especially in the country’s context, is the increase of cooperation between State actors and women’s organizations, groups and networks or other NGO’s and the active support of the latter (by funding, promoting their actions/campaigns in the wider public etc). Furthermore, most stakeholders focus on the need for increasing the representation of women politicians candidates through the Media and most crucially on the imperative need to make the necessary



reforms/additions to current legal provisions for ensuring women’s more powerful presence in the political scene. Specifically for the use of the Media, it is important to approach the means in a more inclusive way and in co-operation with other public bodies/institutions, in order to better promote women’s face in the political milieu (e.g. presentation of positive outcomes due to the contribution of women politicians etc) within a general anti-discrimination promotion. Moreover, other proposals are related to the need for more national campaigns and mentoring programmes, as well as local actions, in order to raise citizens’ awareness on the said sensitive issue and encourage more women to occupy themselves with politics, and even participate as candidates in national and European elections. In addition, measures should be taken in order to help women in the crucial issue of reconciling family and professional/political life, which is often a serious obstacle that prevents the latter to occupy themselves with politics. This could be done first of all by financially supporting those women and secondly by organising mentoring programmes and seminars with other more experienced Greek female politicians, who would share their experiences (and their dual identity as mothers and politicians) in order to persuade and encourage other women to enter the political arena. Also, the promotion of gender equality in education and the creation of special gender equality programmes in Greek schools, can play a crucial role in the general public’s education and perception (especially directed to younger generations) on those issues and in the subsequent change of mentality, both by men and women of the country. Finally, the dissemination of relevant research studies to a wide variety of bodies and institutions would be an important step towards promoting the idea of women’s more active entrance in Greek political life.

### **3. Local level**

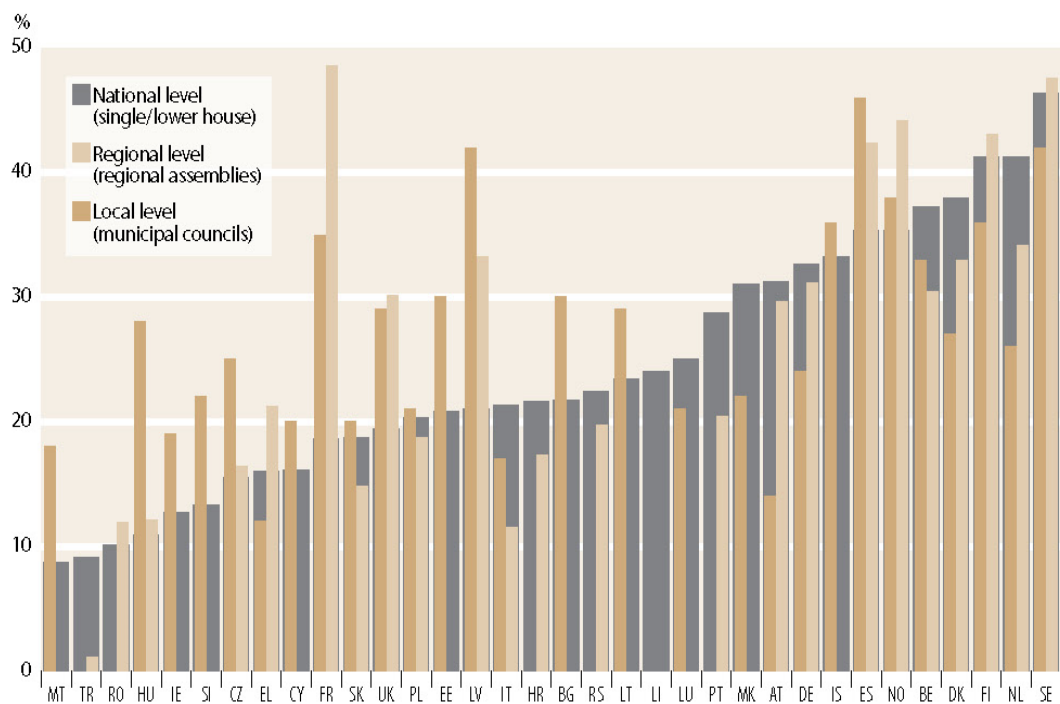
#### **3.1. Mayors and Members of city and local councils**

In general, the participation of women in local governments in developing, and especially in the developed countries, is apparently bigger than their participation in the national governments (European Commission, 2009). This is mainly due to the fact that local government is mostly focused on issues that



historically/stereotypically concerned women and thus, the latter seem more comfortable in occupying themselves with such matters and furthermore, voters tend to prefer women in such positions. Even in the electoral campaigns for local government, it is usually stressed (by both sexes) that women are especially useful at the local level because of their “special abilities” (Maloutas, 2012). In general, community issues are traditionally concerned to be easier handled and acquiring a more ‘sensitive’ nature, which is mainly connected with women’s nature, whereas big scale political matters that need more dynamic policy are left to be managed by men. Also, reduced cost and less fierce competition are usually important factors that facilitate women’s access in local government. Nonetheless, in Greece the situation is rather different and is pretty disappointing in this respect. As seen in figure 4, in contrast to other European States and despite the apparent traditional linkage of women with community affairs, the presence of women in the local government of Greece is notably weak, even weaker than in the national parliament.

**Figure 4: Percentages of women in national and local governments in the EU Member States**



Source: European Commission, 2009



In order to make a more integrated evaluation of the situation at the local level, it would be useful to provide a short retrospect to the historical evolution of women’s presence in local councils. After the first Greek Constitution that fortified the rights of all Greek citizens, men and women, to participate in the country’s political life (1975), the local elections held in 1978 highlighted 337 elected women in local governments. While this was an initial positive step in the active participation of women in local political affairs, the percentage was still considerably low in relation to the total female population of the electorate. Based on the available official data, some notable increase in the percentages of female participations in local government took place only after the “Kapodistrias Reform” in 1998.<sup>14</sup> Before that period numbers were woefully low; in the 1994 elections only one woman prefect was elected, Aleka Makrogianaki, in the prefecture of Chania, (out of 54 prefects in total), 10 women mayors (out of the 463 mayors in total) and 77 women prefectural advisors (out of the 1242 in total) (E.E.T.A.A – Hellenic Agency for Local Development and Local Government, 2005). These trends actually represented the wider picture in the whole EU in the early 1990, where women mayors acquired 2% - 8% of the total number of elected mayors, and the corresponding percentage for women members of city council were average 20% of all elected members of city council (Mastromixalis, 2011). As seen in table 6 below, after the implementation of “Kapodistrias Reform”, while the number of women prefects and mayors was not increased and the contrast in relation to men was still much provocative, the percentages of women prefectural advisors managed to reach 11% in 1998 and 18% in 2002 (in contrast to the meager 6.5% of the year 1997). In addition, during the same period the percentage of women members of city councils was 12%. Furthermore, the imposition of mandatory quotas in the prefectural and municipal elections (Law 2910/2001)<sup>15</sup> was another positive action to slightly boost the relevant percentages in the local elections of 2002.

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<sup>14</sup>Law 2539 of Greece, which reorganized the country's administrative divisions; specifically, it reduced the number of municipalities and communities: from 5775 (441 municipalities and 5382 communities) to 1033 (900 municipalities and 133 communities)

<sup>15</sup> See further details in page 29



**Table 6: Total candidates elected to local government after the “Kapodistrias Reform” and the imposition of quotas (2002)**

	1998	2002
<b>Women Candidates</b>	14%	34%
<b>Elected women prefectural advisors</b>	11% (54)	18%
<b>Elected women members of city council</b>	7%	12%
<b>Prefects</b>	3,5% (2)	1.75% (1)
<b>Mayors</b>	1.45% (15)	2.13% (22)

Source: E.E.T.A.A, 2012

Similar results were also presented in the subsequent local elections, in 2006, where again only two women were elected as prefects<sup>16</sup> and 32 (3%) as mayors, out of 1030 of all elected mayors (Ministry of Interior, 2012). Regarding the current situation in local government, eight women were elected as mayors in the 325 new ‘Kallikratian’ municipalities during the last local elections in 2010 (i.e. 2.47% of all elected mayors). However, in the regions, which have after the “Kallikratis Project”<sup>17</sup> became part of the local government, while 4 women appeared as candidate regional governors in the 2010 local elections none was ultimately elected (KEDKE – Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece). Finally, as seen in tables 8 and 9 further below, currently Greek municipal councils have 1558 women, i.e. 14.40% of the total, which is slightly higher than the percentage of previous elections, and 115 women (16.3%) in district councils.

<sup>16</sup> Basically these were the last prefects to be elected, since with “Kallikratis project” (2010), prefectures ceased to exist as separate grades of local government.

<sup>17</sup> Specifically ‘Kallikratis Project’ was set up in 2011 in order to reorganize the country at the administrative level. The new administrative divisions based on that project were as follows: the merging of several former *municipalities* and communities (municipal level), which are further sub-divided into municipal units and local communities, the composition of the *regions*, which are divided into regional units (regional level) and the composition of the *decentralized administrations*; i.e. a decentralized administration consists of a group of regions (Kallikratis, 2011).





**Table 7: Percentages of Women candidates as Mayors, Members of city council and Local Advisors in the elections of 2006**

Percentages of Women Mayors candidates	Percentage of Women Members of city council candidates	Percentage of Women local advisors candidates	Total percentage of women candidates
6%	29%	36%	32%

Source: Ministry of Interior, 2012

**Table 8: Women City Councilors in 2010 local elections**

Regions	Number of Members in Municipal Councils	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
East Macedonia & Thrace	660	66	10%
South Aegean	668	105	15,72%
Thessaly	745	85	11,41%
Attica	2251	548	24,34%
Crete	656	92	14,20%
North Aegean	228	40	17,54%
Central Greece	750	108	14,40%
West Greece	595	72	12,10%
Central Macedonia	1286	217	16,87%
West Macedonia	363	57	15,70%
Peloponnese	784	83	10,59%
Epirus	498	56	11,24%
Ionian Islands	210	29	13,81%
Total	9694	1558	14,40%

Source: General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 2011

**Table 9: Women Regional Advisors**

Regions	Number of Regional Advisors	Number of Women	Percentage of Women
Attica	101	23	22,77%
East Macedonia & Thrace	51	7	13,73%
North Aegean	41	6	14,63%
West Greece	51	5	9,80%
West Macedonia	51	7	13,73%
Epirus	51	4	7,84%
Thessaly	51	9	17,65%





IonianIslands	41	10	24,39%
CentralMacedonia	71	15	21,13%
Crete	51	8	15,69%
NorthAegean	51	10	19,61%
Peloponnese	51	7	13,73%
CentralGreece	51	4	7,84%
<b>Total</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>16,13%</b>

Source: General Secretariat for Gender Equality, 2011

With regard to the positive legislative measures and reforms on the part of the State in order to increase women’s participation in local government, some basic changes have taken place in the local electoral system within the last few years. The most important step that Greece has undertaken in order to ensure a relevant equity, was the legal establishment of mandatory gender quotas in the prefectural and municipal elections, with article 75, paragraph 1 of Law 2910/2001, which explicitly stipulates the mandatory and minimum 1/3 quota for each gender’s participation as candidates in prefectural and municipal elections. Along the same lines, article 34, par.3 of Law 3463/2006 basically confirms the above mentioned law, by stipulating 1/3 quota for each gender’s participation as candidates in the ballots of municipal or community councils, local councils and municipal department councils. Similar provisions for 1/3 gender quota regarding candidates as municipal community councilors, local community councilors and regional councilors, are indicated in article 18, par.3 of the recent Law 3852/2010 entitled: “KallikratisProject”. At the same law, article 186 also stipulates the constitution in each district of Regional Committees for Gender Equality that should have broader and more representational membership and jurisdictions. On that point however, it is important to note that the aforementioned law, has received serious criticisms, in terms that it represents a legislative setback and impinges to the Greek Constitution concerning gender quotas. Specifically, as the Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights<sup>18</sup>, for instance, stated in an officially published complaint letter: “it was a great disappointment and setback that based on the new law the quota of at least 1/3 of candidates by gender will no longer

<sup>18</sup>Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights (MFHR) was established in 1977 by George N. Marangopoulos, President of the Supreme Administrative Court of Greece (Council of State) and its main objective is the defense and promotion of the recognized fundamental human rights and freedoms. It is a non-profit legal entity and has its legal seat and secretariat in Athens. It is also self-funded, deriving its financial resources from income accruing mainly from its property (Marangopoulos property)



be calculated on the number of *candidates*, as stipulated by previous laws (2910/2001 and 3463/2006) and as the Greek Constitution explicitly indicates, but rather on the number of members of the municipal council or of the local community, which seriously contradicts with the Constitutional provisions.”(Association for Women’s Rights, 2010). Finally, it is also interesting to mention that new supervision mechanisms have been established by the Ministry of Interior in order to monitor all the aforementioned legislative provisions and other regulations for gender equality.

In evaluating the measure of mandatory quotas in local elections, it is important first and foremost to stress the fact that the said measure is not directly addressed to the heads of the electoral lists, i.e. potential mayors and prefects. Nevertheless, one could estimate that even the implementation of quotas in the ballots, would have some positive effects in the election of more women mayors and prefects. Unfortunately, this never happened, since numbers were only increased with regard to women councilors (i.e. prefectural advisors and city councilors), while for prefects and mayors the same numbers remained almost immutable. Hence, one could say that although the evolution of women’s presence in local government, and especially the imposition of mandatory quotas, have resulted to a more enhanced participation of women, as we move to the higher positions in the hierarchy (i.e. prefects - mayors), women’s numbers are considerably reduced. Furthermore, Greece has still the lowest percentage of women members of local government within the EU.

The State has also proceeded to several important actions within the framework of enhancing women’s representation in local government and encouraging more women to take part in local elections. Among the most important projects currently implemented in the country’s local level, is the project entitled: “Encouragement and support of women’s participation in positions of political responsibility and representation at regional and local level”, (under the “Operational Programme: Human Resources Development 2007-2013”), which was financed by the NSRF and implemented by a consulting company in collaboration with the Central Union of Municipalities of Greece (KEDE). This project included the setting up of two offices for networking and promoting Gender Equality within the Greek Association of



Municipalities and Municipal Committees and the Greek District Association, the creation of a data basis and Work Portal design ([www.airetes.gr](http://www.airetes.gr)), actions for exchange of good practices of women participating in institutions and formations of the local political life, research, assessment and recording of proposals, as well as the realization of various education and training seminars on the promotion of gender equality in politics (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, 2011).

Along the same lines, in 2010 the GSGE gave a special emphasis on the visibility of women in the regional and municipal elections, and on gender mainstreaming in local governance, by implementing relevant co-funded programmes and actions that aim to overturn existing gender stereotypes in the political field and encourage more women to participate in local government. One of these positive actions was the sensitization campaign for the last regional and local elections, launched in November 2010<sup>19</sup>, with the theme: “Defy the stereotypes in this election, Vote for Women” (including a TV spot, dissemination of informative printed material, all-day conference etc) (KETHI, 2013). Moreover, within the wider project “National Programme for substantive Gender Equality 2010-2013” mentioned in the previous section of this report, the GSGE has set the target to implement, inter alia, various substantive actions especially in the Greek municipalities. These actions include the promotion of gender mainstreaming in the policies of local government (including the creation of instruction guides with an emphasis on women belonging to socially vulnerable groups, such as Roma, immigrants etc), training seminars in the officials working in the local government as well as the support of elected women holding any post in the local government. (GSGE, 2012) Another much relevant example of good practice on the specific field was the participation of KETHI (as a partner in a transnational level) in the project “Taking Gender Equality to Local Communities”, coordinated by the National Committee for the Promotion of Equality in Malta, which basically aimed at the enhanced participation of women into actions of local societies, and especially concerning the decision-making milieu. Within the overall objectives set by the GSGE for the renewal of local government’s policies, the latter

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<sup>19</sup> 2010 was the year that GSGE focused especially in the field of local government and the enhancement of women presence in it, due to the elections to be held at the same year



has also organized various informative conferences<sup>20</sup> and experiential workshops with elected women and candidates in order to train and encourage more women to occupy themselves in local government.

Last but not least, through a GSGE initiative, the European Charter for Gender Equality in Local Life (2011) was adopted and adapted by Local and Regional Authorities in Greece, which, despite its non-legal status, represents an important formal public commitment by the side of local and regional authorities to promote the principle for gender equality and implement, within their territories, the commitments set in it. More particularly, local and regional authorities that have signed the Charter are committed to promote and apply the principle of balanced gender representation in their own advisory bodies and decision-making bodies.

However, despite all the aforementioned steps undertaken by the State and other public bodies, the same problematization keeps coming to the fore: Why, despite the establishment of gender quotas in the electoral lists and the general trend towards gender mainstreaming in local political scene, are women still underrepresented in local government? More specifically, why this stability in numbers insists and no important changes have taken place alongside the legal reforms? It is true that the measure of gender quotas has not in practice brought substantial changes in the presence of women in local government since it has not managed to overturn the basic structures, partisan practices and political priorities. What should be understood is that the establishment of quotas per se is not the basic crucial element in that case, but rather its effective and consistent implementation, as well as the well-rooted bias that still exist in Greek society. Such an efficient implementation and obliteration of gender stereotypes in the political field and local government cannot be realized without the establishment of a comprehensive mechanism of promotion and support of women politicians (Papageorgiou, 2004). Although women are given the opportunity to be part of local government with their mandatory participation in ballots, this opportunity risks of becoming totally meaningless if it is not accompanied by a relevant

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<sup>20</sup>Such as for example the conference entitled “City of Equality” and launched at the beginning of 2011, in cooperation with the Equality Committee of the Central Union of Municipalities and Communities of Greece (KEDKE)



policy that aims to inform women candidates as well as the organization of seminars and training seminars within a general negative projection of gender stereotypes, and the political support of the already elected women; both at the level of educating them and of facilitating their effort to reconcile family life or other professional obligations with their duties in the field of local government. In addition, as mentioned above, the State’s special initiatives and examples of good practice in the field of women’s participation in local government were intensified mostly around the period of the last local elections and after that no further actions took place in the specific domain, as the focus turned basically to the national and European elections. On top of all that, as Maloutas aptly notes, “this is a period of recession in feminist organization and mobilisation, with almost no mechanisms for promoting women’s interests independent of the State. “For various reasons, both specific to Greek society as well as common with many others, feminism is not expressed as an autonomous movement in Greece of the 2000s.” (Meier et al, 2006, p.408). Thus, behind the certain legal provisions and some State initiatives, which however must be enriched in context and quantity, there is a deeper sexist and anthropocentric reality existing in Greek society that seriously hinders women’s access to political life and especially at the local level.

### **3.2 Suggestions and ideas for future changes/improvements in order to enhance women’s participation into politics at the local/regional level**

As in the case of women’s participation into politics at the national level and national parliament, initiatives at the local level primarily presuppose a strong cooperation between State and non-state actors (i.e. women’s/feminist organizations, networks, NGOs etc). Such a collective effort would more easily lead to the formation of a comprehensive and clear Action Plan in order to promote and support women’s presence in local government. Some indicative measures that would prove substantially useful in ameliorating the existing situation concerning women’s scarce presence in the country’s local government, could include a more intensive trend towards campaigning; awareness-raising and sensitization campaigns with the presence of successful elected women politicians in local governments, who will share their experiences and encourage



people to vote for more women. The campaigns would preferably focus on spreading the message about the imperative need of more women in local government who would eventually bring a fresh impetus to local issues and refresh the old, rusty structures of local political scene, where men’s dominance is still highly prevalent. Furthermore, a crucial point of focus should be given in the role of the Media, which should be used at its full extent in order to advertise and promote women into the local political life. There is a need to make public issue by cooperating with the Media and find ways of referring to women in local government, as well as on issues of sexual stereotypes and bias that should be overturned. In short, the powerful means of the Media would be the most appropriate for promoting the existing good examples of women’s contribution to local political life and for eliminating gender stereotypes on the specific field. Moreover, the financial support of women candidates as well as of the already elected women in local government is an issue to be addressed and given priority by the heads of Greek regions and municipalities/communities; funding is a crucial issue and great motive that could encourage more women to occupy themselves with politics and facilitate them in better reconciling their family and professional life with a political career. Finally, it is important by the State and other non-state actors to organize more seminars and mentoring programmes with senior women mayors, prefects etc in order to create a sense of confidence and encourage young women to participate in local political affairs.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Overall, the hotly debated issue of women’s participation into politics, is a theme that is addressed in different ways at different levels mentioned in this report (European, national and local level). Specifically at the European level, the number of women in the European Parliament has notably increased within the last decade and appears to be the most gender balanced political composition, in relation to national parliaments or local governments. The EP has recently undertaken significant efforts to enhance women’s presence inside the parliament and attract more women to take part at the forthcoming elections, through several action plans that bind all member States to comply to a general



gender mainstreaming approach. However, basic legally established provisions that suppose to be the basis of achieving the desired parity in the European political scene have not yet been officially set in place due to certain obstacles and lack of consensus between the member States. The areas of dissent specifically concern the establishment of gender quotas in the European elections as well as the mandatory provision of women’s wings inside political parties. On the other hand, the European Commission has also proceeded to some actions that aim to support women in the political field and in leadership positions of big businesses, which however need to be further intensified in order to achieve certain parity. Co-operation between the European Commission and other European bodies is indeed an important initial step to move towards the implementation of the current action plans that should boost the, currently slow, progress of women’s increased representation in the EP and in company boards. In short, at a European basis, there is still a lot to be done in order to achieve a total parity in parliament (or at least the 40% for women MEPs); both the EP and the European Commission should exert more pressure to all Member States in order to agree and legally establish gender quotas for the European elections, as well as approach distinct political parties more closely and collaborate with them in raising public awareness, defying gender stereotypes and attracting more women candidates. At the national level, the situation is rather different; however the ultimate aim remains the same. In particular, as mentioned in section 2, although the number of women MPs in the Greek parliament is continuously increasing over time and despite the legal establishment of mandatory gender quotas in national elections, the percentages are still lower than the European average of women MEPs and solemnly fail to meet the minimum standard of the 1/3 of elected women. The main reasons/obstacles that should then be addressed more carefully by the State and other public bodies, are the problem of different approaches and practices among Greek political parties, the strong clientistic system, the difficulties faced by women to reconcile family life with their political career as well as the well-rooted cultural bias and persistent gender stereotypes that still strike Greek society. Thus, educating the public, and especially young people, and approaching all political parties in order to find ways to promote more women in the political scene, are two themes of great





priority; especially a co-operation with political parties is vital, because of their power to select and nominate candidates. Finally, the most disappointing picture with regard to women’s occupation with political affairs is identified at the local level. Despite the legal establishment of gender quotas in municipal and regional elections and other positive actions by the State and municipal/regional authorities, the numbers of women in local government are still considerably low and much lower than those in the national parliament or the EP. The reasons are almost the same mentioned above for the national level. Nevertheless, it should be noted that bias and women’s social inferiority in Greek society does not necessarily mean that feminist ideology is in crisis in the country. On the contrary, young generations function in a new climate of gender awareness<sup>21</sup> and it seems that new independent political interventions could eventually be born in favor of women and beyond public measures taken in accordance with European decisions/directives (Meier et. al, 2005). It is far from obvious that legal equality and welfare provisions, although necessary, are not enough to eliminate sexism in the political field and increase women’s participation in the decision-making realm. Gender inequalities are far deeper than legal and thus what is mostly needed is a more profound dissemination of gender equality issues alongside the contribution of young, broadminded generations. As in the case of the national level, initiatives should primarily focus on educating the public, raising awareness on the importance of women in local political life (through campaigns, media promotion etc.) and supporting them to better reconcile family and political life.

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<sup>21</sup>A mentality cultivated to a great extent in Universities, where scholarly thinking and writing is much influenced by feminist theory, with seminars, conferences and courses in which gender is a central object of study (Meier et al., 2005)



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