

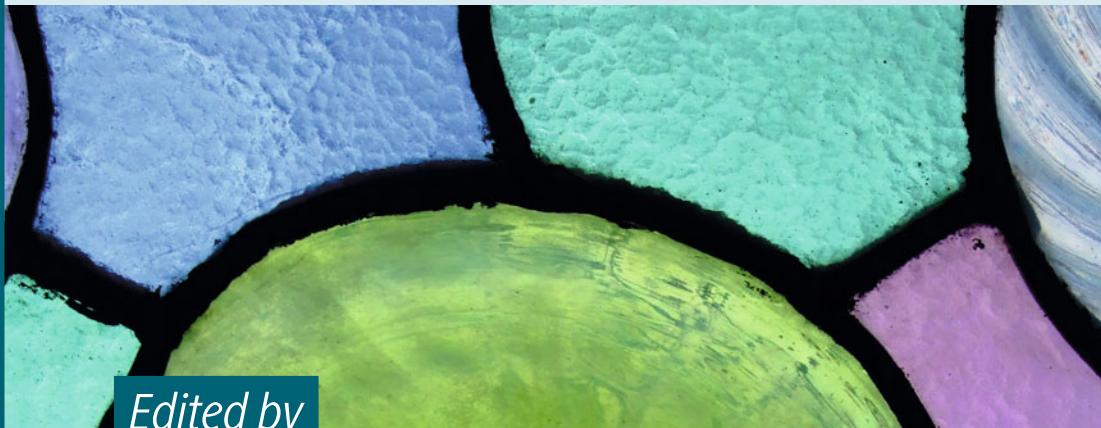


**GENDER AND POLITICS**

SERIES EDITORS: JOHANNA KANTOLA · SARAH CHILDS

# Party Politics and the Implementation of Gender Quotas

## Resisting Institutions



*Edited by*

Sabine Lang · Petra Meier · Birgit Sauer

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# Gender and Politics

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Sabine Lang · Petra Meier · Birgit Sauer  
Editors

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*Editors*

Sabine Lang  
University of Washington  
Seattle, WA, USA

Petra Meier  
University of Antwerp  
Antwerp, Belgium

Birgit Sauer  
University of Vienna  
Vienna, Wien, Austria

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## CHAPTER 17

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# Legislative Gender Quotas in Slovenia: Implemented But Not Internalized

*Milica Antić Gaber and Irena Selišnik*

Legislative gender quotas have been implemented for elections at all levels of political decision-making in Slovenia, from local to European elections, since 2004, but debates on quotas were initiated at the beginning of 1990s by women's groups within political parties. Learning from the French quota law, which was initially declared unconstitutional, a large part of the Slovenian political elite was in favor of gender quotas and decided to first amend the Constitution and then to introduce quotas in election laws (Antić Gaber & Selišnik, 2018: 111). As a result, a new paragraph introduced to Article 43 of the Slovenian Constitution in 2004 reads: "The law shall provide the measures for encouraging the equal

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M. Antić Gaber (✉) · I. Selišnik  
Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Ljubljana, Slovenia  
e-mail: [Milica.AnticGaber@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Milica.AnticGaber@ff.uni-lj.si)

I. Selišnik  
e-mail: [Irena.Selisnik@ff.uni-lj.si](mailto:Irena.Selisnik@ff.uni-lj.si)

**Table 1** The introduction of legislated gender quotas in Slovene Politics

<i>Year</i>	<i>Level of election</i>	<i>Quota</i>	<i>Additional provisions</i>
2004	European Parliament	40%	Yes (one of each sex in the first half of the list)
2005	Local	40% by 2014 (beginning with 20% in 2006)	Yes (one of each sex in the first half of the list; partial derogation possible)
2006	National Assembly	35% (started in 2008 with 25%)	No

Source Antić Gaber and Selišnik (2017)

opportunities of men and women in standing for election to state authorities and local community authorities.” This was an important basis for further legislative changes, including the introduction of gender quotas in electoral legislation.

Even before the constitutional reform, an amendment to the Law on Elections to the European Parliament (March 2004) introduced a 40% gender quota for candidate lists, while the law on local elections from 2005 provides that lists of candidates for election to municipal councils must be drawn up in such a way as to ensure that each gender accounts for at least 40% of all candidates listed, and that the candidates in the first half of the lists must alternate by gender (Article 70a). The act provided a transition period until 2014, when the 40% representation of each gender became compulsory. A transition period for candidacy gender quotas was also provided in the law on election to the National Assembly, which was amended in 2006, when a 35% quota (starting at 25% women candidates for the first election and increasing to 30% for the following election) was introduced (see Table 1).

In 2021, after four national elections with legislative quotas, the data show that quotas have changed elections. The percentage of elected women MPs increased significantly from 12.2% in 2004 to 35.5% in 2014, which is the highest ever percentage of elected women in the Slovenian National Assembly. The positive effect of gender quotas can also be seen in the fact that in the elections 2018, almost all political parties put more than 40% of women on their candidate lists, even though the law stipulates a quota of “only” 35%. Electoral gender quotas have succeeded in increasing not only the share of women candidates on party lists, but

also the number of elected women, particularly since 2008, when the 35% gender quota was introduced (see Table 2).

However, after Slovenia experienced a sharp increase in the number of elected women in 2011 and 2014, the 2018 elections brought a setback for gender equality. Even though the total percentage of women candidates rose to 44%, almost ten percent fewer women were elected. Table 2 highlights the positive impact of newly formed parties on increasing women's representation in 2011 and 2014. In both elections, parties standing for election and entering Parliament for the first time had party lists with more than 40% women and substantial numbers of women candidates were elected: in 2011, Positive Slovenia (*Pozitivna Slovenija*, PS), which can be considered a center-left party, submitted a candidate list with 48% women and 42.8% of their elected representatives were women (twelve representatives), while in 2014, the candidate list of the centrist Party of Miro Cerar (SMC) had 47% women and 47.2% of their elected representatives were women (17 representatives). These "new" parties from 2011 and 2014 enabled the election of the highest number of women MPs (see Table 2). In comparison with "old," established political parties (except for the central-right party NSi [*Nova Slovenija*, New Slovenia]), new parties were much more successful in electing women until 2018. We can suggest that the described unstable party composition also played a significant role in the implementation of gender quotas and in the electoral success of their women candidates.

Why was this the case? We assume that newly formed political parties do not know exactly which places on electoral lists, or which electoral districts, are safe and which are not. Therefore they place women on candidate lists with an unclear outcome (Antić Gaber & Selšnik, 2018; Murko Pleš et al., 2011, 2015). Moreover, the number of women on their candidate lists tends to be higher, as new parties do not have established incumbents claiming particular districts or a better position on the list. In 2018, the candidate list of another new party, List of Marjan Šarec (LMŠ), comprised 41% women, but it was not exceptional in this respect, as some more established political parties had even more women candidates. However, only four women were elected from the list of LMŠ (31% of their elected representatives). This may be partially explained by the fact that Marjan Šarec established his political party one year before the election and therefore had more time to prepare for the election than SMC and PS had had at previous elections.

**Table 2** Percentage of women on candidate lists and percentage and number of elected women in Slovene National Assembly by Political Party

	1992			1996			2000			2004		
	C		E	C		E	C		E	C		E
	C	E	C	C	E	C	C	E	C	C	E	C
DESUS	—	—	—	1 (20,0%)	1 (20,0%)	1 (20,0%)	17%	0 (0%)	22,4%	0 (0%)	22,4%	0 (0%)
LDS	9,3%	2 (9,1)	13,6%	1 (4,0%)	25,3%	5 (14,7%)	28%	3 (13,0%)	28%	3 (13,0%)	28%	3 (13,0%)
NSI	11,2%	2 (13,3%)	9,5%	1 (10,0%)	16,2%	2 (25,0%)	23%	2 (22,2%)	23%	2 (22,2%)	23%	2 (22,2%)
SD (ZL, ZLSD)	15,5%	2 (14,2%)	40,9%	0 (0%)	33,3%	3 (27,2%)	31%	2 (20,0%)	31%	2 (20,0%)	31%	2 (20,0%)
SDS	7,9%	0 (0%)	11,9%	1 (6,2%)	12,8%	0 (0%)	10,5%	3 (10,3%)	10,5%	3 (10,3%)	10,5%	3 (10,3%)
SLS	8,7%	2 (20,0%)	13,6%	1 (5,3%)	12,8%	0 (0%)	16,9%	0 (0%)	16,9%	0 (0%)	16,9%	0 (0%)
SNS	7%	2 (16,7%)	8,9%	1 (25,0%)	20,3%	1 (25,0%)	15,5%	—	15,5%	—	15,5%	1 (16,7%)
ZARES	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
SMC	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
ZL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
AB	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
LMŠ	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DL	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PS	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
DS	13,9	1 (16,7%)	12,3%	19%	7,8%	23,5%	13,3%	25%	13,3%	25%	12,2%	12,2%
<b>Average</b>	14,8%	1 (16,7%)	12,3%	19%	7,8%	23,5%	13,3%	25%	13,3%	25%	12,2%	12,2%

	2008		2011		2014		2018	
	C	E	C	E	C	E	C	E
DESUS	31,8%	0 (0%)	41,38%	3 (33,3%)	44,8%	3 (30%)	40%	0
LDS	31,7%	1 (20%)	42,17%	—	—	—	—	—
NSI	27,2%	— /—	39,29%	2 (50%)	43,9%	2 (40%)	40%	2 (29%)
SD (ZL, ZLSD)	36,3%	8 (27,6%)	41,38%	2 (18,8%)	47,4%	2 (33,3%)	47%	2 (20%)
SDS	32,5%	2 (7,1%)	36,36%	7 (27%)	44,7%	5 (23,8%)	44%	7 (28%)
SLS	29,7%	0%	39,76%	0%	37,2%	0%	42%	0%
SNS	40,6%	0 (0%)	46%	0%	42,2%	0%	47%	1 (25%)
ZARES	30,2%	1 (11,1%)	41,9%	—	—	—	—	—
SMC	—	—	—	47%	17 (47,2%)	41%	4 (40%)	4 (40%)
ZL	—	—	—	47%	17 (47,2%)	41%	4 (40%)	4 (40%)
AB	—	—	—	39,8%	1 (16,7%)	40%	2 (22%)	2 (22%)
LMŠ	—	—	—	42,9%	2 (50%)	45%	0	0
DL	—	—	—	—	—	42%	4 (31%)	4 (31%)
PS	—	—	46,25%	4 (50%)	38,2%	—	—	—
DS	—	—	48,24%	12 (42,86%)	43,2%	—	—	—
<b>Average</b>	<b>35,2%</b>	<b>13,3%</b>	<b>43,15%</b>	<b>32,2%</b>	<b>43,8%</b>	<b>35,6%</b>	<b>44%</b>	<b>24,4%</b>

Source The statistic is based on authors' past articles and Slovenia Fifth and Sixth Periodical Report on Implementation of CEDAW, Vindiš (2014), Štakul (2016) and Dolar (2018)

In the following sections, we explore the factors and actors that influenced the implementation of gender quotas in Slovenia, emphasizing how major political, institutional, and cultural factors—especially political parties, the electoral system, and the prevailing political culture—shape this process. Our research is based on information and data compilation by the authors as well as secondary data analysis: transcripts of parliamentary debates, data on candidate lists for parliamentary elections provided by the National Election Commission, data from national public surveys, media coverage of elections specifically concerning gender quotas, interviews with MPs and gatekeepers, and focus group discussions. We also consider legal documents and legislation, as well as documents published by political parties.

## 1 PARTY RULES AND PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING GENDER QUOTAS

From the 1990s on, the composition of the Slovenian party system has undergone constant change (Fink Hafner & Krašovec, 2011). Parties have changed their names and new parties have emerged and won elections. In the past decade, parties bearing the name of their party leader have become attractive, including the List of Zoran Janković (*Lista Zorana Jankovića*—LZJ), later renamed Positive Slovenia (PS); the Party of Miro Cerar (*Stranka Mira Cerarja*—SMC), later the Party of the Modern Center; the Party of Alenka Bratušek (*Stranka Alenke Bratušek*—SAB); and the List of Marjan Šarec (*Lista Marjana Šarca*—LMS). Not only have small parties appeared and disappeared, but formerly successful parties have also departed the political scene, such as Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (*Liberalna demokracija Slovenije*, LDS), which controlled the government for several election cycles. In some parties, especially those with a long tradition and a large membership, special women's groups have formed to target and demand the resolution of specific women's issues.

Party statutes offer only minimal engagement with election and recruitment procedures in general, and with quota policies more specifically. Statutes typically state how the selection process is to be carried out through the party organs to the stage of voting on the arranged candidate lists, but only in rare cases do they outline the recruitment process itself. Only a few established parties with a longer history of operation

and powerful local organizations (SDS) or democratic internal party rules (SD) have more precise selection criteria. Newly formed parties (LMS, SMC, SAB) with no previous experience or a modest background on the local level have very short and vague provisions in their statutes. Only one party (SD) has internal rules adopted by party leadership covering the whole candidate selection procedure, and this is the only party to explicitly state that the candidate list for National Assembly elections must include least 40 percent of candidates of each sex. Other parties' regulations on the gender composition of candidate list merely summarily state that they follow the law. We therefore deduce that in many cases de facto recruitment and selection procedures are primarily known to powerful and mostly male high party officials, who operate in small circles behind closed doors. With no formal rules in place, informal rules and practices dominate.

Before the introduction of legislative gender quotas, only two parties (as the result of the activities of their women's groups) established internal party regulations with regard to gender composition for the selection process of the party's list for National Assembly elections: LDS and ZLSD (later SD). Even in these parties, the processes were not carried out without internal party resistance. In ZLSD, for example, after having introduced a 40 percent obligatory gender quota in 1996 for the national election, the rule was changed in 1997 to voluntary gender quotas for the next election, presumably to avoid a repetition of their poor outcome in the national election, which was attributed to gender quotas. In LDS, after adopting a gender-neutral proposal for quotas in 1998, according to which neither gender could be represented by less than one third of the candidates on the party list for the national election, they then lowered the gender quota in the internal party regulations to 25 percent in 2000, with the provision to increase it for each subsequent election by three percentage points until a 40 percent share of men and women was achieved (Antić Gaber & Lokar, 2006: 150).

To summarize: before legislative quotas were introduced in Slovenia, gender quotas in politics or, more precisely, women entering the electoral process, were seen as a threat to parties' electoral success. Women were treated as intruders and not as a window of opportunity for more just and equal politics and political decisions, and, at the end of the day, a more just society. This was the case despite the actions of the initiators of the chain of events leading to gender quotas: groups of female members of LDS and SD (previously *Združena Lista* (ZL) and ZLSD), who tried to

persuade their male party colleagues to introduce voluntary gender quotas in their party statutes as early as the beginning of the 1990s.

Thus after several attempts to amend the Act on Political Parties (from 1994 to 1998) failed, mostly because the proposal came from parties from the left, the Office for Women's Politics and the Coalition for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Public Life took the further initiative. The Office for Women's Politics (later the Office for Equal Opportunities), a governmental institution established in 1992, sponsored and supported gender quota proposals. Another key factor in the introduction of gender quotas in the new millennium was the Slovenian activists who established the strong informal group the Coalition for Balanced Representation of Women and Men in Public Life in February 2001 with prominent opinion makers, politicians, and university professors, mostly from the left, but also from the right. In this particular case, the coalition overcame the great right-left division in Slovenian political culture. It organized a wide range of activities, including round tables, public confrontations, and appeals, through which public opinion and the attitude of important political actors who strongly opposed gender quotas gradually started to shift toward greater acceptance. The strong national and grassroots activities were further bolstered by external pressure from European politicians on the Slovenian political elite (the center-left coalition), who had commenced the process of EU integration. Although the EU did not demand the adoption of gender quotas and could not interfere in the electoral laws of member states, Slovenian political elites recognized quotas as a strategic advantage at that time. They understood quotas as part of the much sought-after goal of gender equality, which was supported by international norms and was high on the priority list of EU values. With this pressure from both above and below, gender quotas were accepted in Parliament.

In the new millennium, after the introduction of gender quotas in electoral laws, the discourse of those (parties and their members) who still resisted gender quotas in politics changed. The modes of resistance were much less overt, instead becoming more covert. Political parties from the center and center-left feared repercussions for their image if they failed to support gender equality. Other parties, too, avoided publicly and openly resisting gender equality and instead articulated resistance to gender quotas with equal opportunity rhetoric, stating that they support gender equality before the law, but are against measures that force women to compete for political positions, thus in effect opposing both negative

and positive discrimination.<sup>1</sup> The rhetoric of center-right parties lamented “coercion” and the fact that legally stipulated quotas could not redress the lack of “suitable and interested women.” Their rhetoric invited further measures toward the empowerment of women to enter politics, but did not contain a single policy suggestion (Vrhovac, 2019).

After the first National Assembly election with implemented legislative gender quotas in 2006, one can observe two important shifts in the Slovenian party system that we assume could have influenced women’s interest in politics and their electoral possibilities. One was the significant decline in trust in political parties and politicians observed by public opinion pools (Toš, 2009: 30) and the decline of the proportion of women in party membership.<sup>2</sup> The other was the aforementioned phenomenon of new parties formed shortly before elections, which resulted in a shrinking of the pool of women seeking candidacy, although this does not necessarily damage women’s electability.

The decline in trust in political parties can be seen in the following observed practice. Despite the importance of self-selection in recruitment, evidence suggests that only one third of women already active in politics decided to engage in politics on their own initiative, while this is the case for two thirds of men (Selišnik & Antić Gaber, 2015). Research among politically active women (MPs and ministers) also shows that women who enter electoral or executive politics are often not former party politicians, but career-oriented professionals who are then asked to enter the political field (Antić Gaber & Selišnik, 2012: 405–406). As the decision of women to enter politics is generally dependent on an invitation from high-level politicians, the leader of a party, or a prominent party member (Selišnik & Antić Gaber, 2015: 147), working one’s way through the party is not a secure route to success for women.

Similarly, women who are active in political parties’ report that their party gatekeepers did not select them for election (Murko Pleš et al., 2015).<sup>3</sup> Slovenian research also indicates that party gatekeepers place women in less promising positions on candidate lists. Slovenian gatekeeper surveys state that the most important factor in the decision to nominate someone is not the opinion of the chair of the local committee, important party officials, or the electorate; the most important factor is “other,” which is unspecified (Antić Gaber & Berberović, 2015). This X-factor suggests that emotions are at play as well as value judgments. We can also speculate that decisions are based on the homosocial culture and male networks that prevail in political parties (Antić Gaber et al., 2015).

Political parties usually adapt their selection strategy after certain experiences in competing in elections, but, at least according to some personal reports, the logic changed.<sup>4</sup> At the beginning of 1990s, in the first round of composing candidate lists, political parties—without any previous experience and with no firm internal regulations—usually allocated safe seats to prominent members, such as ministers, MPs, deputy ministers, influential party members, and those with a high status in society. In the second round, important candidates from regional centers were added to the list. Such candidates were found by local party committees, drawing from partisans of the party (medical doctors, managers, lawyers). Only in the third round were other party members considered and selected for candidacy (Antić Gaber, 1998: 199–200). Even at this stage, however, the winnable places on the list were allocated to important political personalities, after which the further selection of candidates was usually based on the party's own public opinion surveys and the potential for success in the election. This round was contended by important local figures, especially those who were popular locally and who had contacts with a lot of local people, such as physicians or school principals. In this round, it was claimed that the gender of the candidate was not so important, but this could conflict with the interests of local party members (male and female) and their electoral aspirations.<sup>5</sup>

Recent research on the role of gatekeepers in local elections has provided some telling insights into the way they operate. These insights can also be useful for understanding the role of gatekeepers in National Assembly elections. Bearing in mind that, in Slovenia, the same party officials typically lead the election process at both the national and local levels, the disclosure of their role in this process might be relevant to our case as well.<sup>6</sup> What are the most convincing findings of this study (based on a questionnaire and discussion in focus groups with gatekeepers) for our discussion here? In trying to find a reason for the relatively low number of women elected at the local level, the gatekeepers of all parties admit that they have problems complying with gender quotas and are happy to find any women for candidacy. Interestingly, they view the key reason for the low presence of women in elections as being on the side of women, in their alleged lack of interest in participating actively in politics, which gatekeepers attribute to the low reputation of politics in general, as well as the lack of experience in political work among women. They also think that women do not decide to run in elections because they do not want to expose themselves and their families to the public spotlight. Even more

interesting is how differently they picture an ideal candidate. An ideal male candidate should have high expertise and professional qualifications, as well as high political visibility and rich political experience. Therefore from their perspective, finding a qualified male candidate is not such a big problem. On the other hand, the most important feature for an ideal women candidate is a pleasant outward appearance and her political visibility. Putting aside the sexist expectations regarding the pleasant appearance of women, it is precisely the political visibility of women candidates that is a problem: women who have not yet entered politics cannot have political visibility, but without political visibility they cannot compete in an election. Thus women find themselves in a vicious circle (Jalušič & Antić Gaber, 2020: 449).

The behavior of party gatekeepers in the selection process indicates that gender equality is still not a genuine internal party policy orientation for the majority of political parties that currently play a significant role in Slovenian politics. As some research has indicated for France, in the process of accepting gender quotas, Slovenian elites have made a pragmatic calculation about an “escape clause” in quota implementation (Murray et al., 2009: 4). One MP, for instance, has argued that those who want to discriminate against women will do so by putting female candidates in less “interesting posts,”<sup>7</sup> while others have said that quotas as an “administrative measure will change nothing.”<sup>8</sup> The same conclusion about the attitude of political parties toward gender equality can be reached on evaluating party programs from a gender perspective. Although gender equality issues have gained more space in the programs of Slovenian political parties from 2000 onward (Krašovec & Deželan, 2011), gender equality policy still seems to be something imposed from outside. An evaluation of party programs in the 2018 election from the gender perspective found that there are still parties that do not mention these issues in their programs at all (DeSUS, NSi, and LMS), as they presuppose that equality of women and men has already been achieved. Moreover, despite the fact that half of the political parties in the Slovenian Parliament (The Left, SD, SDS, and SMC) in principle advocate the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men, only three of them (The Left, SD, and SMC) have made concrete legislative proposals on achieving gender equality.

At least two pieces of evidence of the disingenuous party acceptance of gender quotas have come to light recently: the first is the unsupportive attitude of parties toward the introduction of gender quotas in the field

of the economy (Primorac et al., 2018: 32–37), and the second is the way in which, in the last election, one party fulfilled the obligatory 35 percent gender quota by duplicating women candidates and was therefore excluded from the election competition (Dnevnik, 2018).

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL, POLITICAL, AND CULTURAL FACTORS IMPACTING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER QUOTAS

Political parties—with their unclear recruitment and selection processes and the absence of state legislation stipulating the candidacy procedure in detail, together with the lack of gender equality in programs and the behavior of party gatekeepers—are not the only obstacles to the implementation of gender quotas in National Assembly elections. Among the institutional factors at play in Slovenia since 1991, the electoral system and its impact on women’s electability have received much more political attention and academic research than other factors.<sup>9</sup>

In the early 1990s, Slovenia introduced “proportional representation consisting of eight eleven-seat constituencies” for the National Assembly in the newly established Parliament (plus two seats reserved for representatives of the Italian and Hungarian minorities). Although this electoral system was meant to limit “partitocracy” by assuring a direct linkage between the MP and the voter, it has some peculiar implications. As it is not a simple proportional representation system with party lists of candidates in each constituency, each party has to select one candidate for each of the 88 districts ( $8 \times 11$ ) and allocate them as candidates in each of the eight constituencies. In addition, each party is obliged to implement gender quotas at both the country level and the level of the constituency. Consequently, the voter does not vote for the party list, but for the candidate his/her party of choice presents in that district. The requirement for individual candidacy and individual voting in such a constellation fundamentally alters the logic of the formation of the party electoral list in an otherwise proportional electoral system. If the party selects a woman, she will be the only name the party presents in a particular district. This feature makes party gatekeepers more hesitant to nominate women, especially newcomers, as they fear women—who are also frequently newcomers—lack electoral appeal (Antić Gaber, 2011). The complexity of the system is compounded by the regulation that each of the eight constituencies must have eleven representatives elected. Which party list they came from depends on the results achieved (the

share of votes in the candidate's district) in the particular constituency. Party allocation of seats is calculated using the d'Hondt formula.

The complex electoral system limits the electoral opportunities of Slovenian women, and the requirement for 35 percent gender quotas would bring better results only if there was enough political will to abandon uninominal electoral districts and introduce a simple proportional representation system in which parties present lists of candidates for each of the eight constituencies. The facts presented above warn that the total share of women candidates is not in itself a guarantee that these women have a good chance of being elected. This was demonstrated in the 2018 election, when several parties (center-left SD, center-right SDS, and right SNP) presented lists on which more than 40 percent of the candidates were women, but only around 20 percent of those women were elected (Dolar, 2018: 15).

Cultural factors impact the implementation of gender quotas in Slovenia as well. Despite all of the improvements in their educational and professional attainments, women continue to be predominantly responsible for the domestic sphere and are therefore double burdened, while men are predominantly "responsible" for public sphere activities and for political decision-making (Antić Gaber & Selišnik, 2012; Corrin, 1992). Women themselves are convinced that they are the ones who have to take care of family and children. Studies of obstacles to women entering politics reveal that, in the opinion of women themselves, the biggest hindrance is their sense of responsibility for the care for their children and family life. Apart from that, they also fear exposing themselves and their families to the public spotlight and being under media scrutiny (Antić Gaber & Selišnik, 2012: 407).

Although the attitude of the Slovenian population toward gender equality improved almost consistently until 2011, marked by increasing disagreement with the statement that men are better political leaders (Antić Gaber & Selišnik, 2015: 159), the result of this situation is as follows: although women are not prevented from entering politics, they are not particularly welcomed either. When dealing with concrete decisions, there is still a prevalent conviction in society that politics is primarily a field of male engagement.<sup>10</sup> This attitude can have an unfavorable effect on both sides: on the side of women selecting themselves as candidates, as well as on the side of political parties and voters trusting that women can compete in and win an election. These stereotypes were also reflected in the discussion regarding the acceptance of gender quotas. Moreover,

they cannot be explained by shifts from left to right in Slovenian politics. For example, a male MP from the left political party SD—a person with a long career in the party and a gatekeeper responsible for human resources—was the only MP to vote against the introduction of gender quotas for the National Assembly.<sup>11</sup> Slovenian political culture, together with political institutions, is therefore not particularly in favor of women in decision-making.

### 3 CONCLUSION

Twenty years after the Slovenian National Assembly almost unanimously voted for a 35 percent legislative gender quota for candidate lists, political parties still have issues with its implementation. This occurs independently of ideological orientation. In the 2011 election, for example, two parties on the left, TRS—*Stranka za trajnostni razvoj* (TRS—Party for Sustainable Development) and *Zeleni Slovenije* (Greens of Slovenia), put too few women on their electoral lists. These lists were consequently rejected by election commissions on the constituency level, which are responsible for determining whether electoral lists comply with the electoral rules. In the 2018 election, the same situation arose with regard to one party on the right: *Združena Desnica* (United Right). Moreover, two parties on the left, *Združena levica* (United Left) and *Sloga* (Harmony), put too many women on their lists in the 2018 election and were also rejected for failing to comply with the quota, as there were fewer than 35 percent of men on the candidate list.

Apart from these cases, all the other parties competing in the elections did in fact comply with the rules; what is more, as shown above, many parties put even more women than the required 35 percent gender quota on their candidate list. This resulted in a rise in the percentage of elected women after gender quotas were introduced. Thus gender quotas in politics serve their purpose in Slovenia, as the percentage of elected women has risen substantially. This does not, however, mean that the goal of gender equality in politics has been achieved. Slovenian legislative gender quotas showcase serious limitations in the process of implementation, as evidenced by political, institutional, and cultural modes of resistance. There is still a lack of equality measures in parties and an absence of party transparency, as well as a complicated electoral system and low evaluation of the position of women in society. These are things that are hard to change and that must be considered when new measures are proposed.

The most obvious obstacle is that the required gender quota (35 percent) is rather low, which is why it has been easily achieved and even exceeded by almost all parliamentary parties. Nevertheless, there seems to be a lack of political will to raise the quota in the near future. Although several parties have surpassed the existing requirement, there are still parties that have issues with quotas. It also seems that the Slovenian political elites are quite content with the political representation of women, as there has been no dissatisfaction (at least not vocal and/or publicly expressed dissatisfaction) with the decline in the share of women in the National Assembly.

As is obvious from the results of the election of representatives to the Slovenian National Assembly, quota rules that only determine a required percentage of the total number of candidates, with no rank order or other rules for candidate lists, may have a very limited effect. In order to overcome this limitation in the Slovenian case, it would be necessary to eliminate electoral districts, which would result in parties forming a multi-member (unique) party candidate list for each of the eleven constituencies. In this case, gender quotas, in conjunction with additional requirements for zipping the list and the introduction of a preferential vote (as outlined in one of the proposals to the National Assembly), could be more effective. Moreover, the role and effect of party gatekeepers, who currently play an important role in limiting (or, less often, widening) women's opportunities to appear on the candidate list of winning districts, would be much more limited.

Despite all of the achievements of women in various fields of the public sphere, as well as some achievements of individual women in politics, our analysis of the success of the Slovenian variant of gender quotas in politics leads us to conclude that, with regard to the political culture, we still need to invest time, money, expertise, and energy in encouraging women to enter politics as a "normal" way of doing politics and not let it remain something exceptional. As it stands, women enter the political field more or less accidentally, or on the invitation of important male political figures, and stay in politics for a short time.

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## NOTES

1. The Minutes of the 37th Session of the NA (15th June 2004). Stenographic Records. MP from NSI: “We come from the principle of the equal treatment of men and women in terms of their natural gifts, and we also persist on this standpoint, and we also practice this. [...] Just as we are against negative discrimination, we are also against positive discrimination for reaching the goal of equality between the sexes. Both sexes should reach this without the mechanisms of positive discrimination.”
2. Slovenia Fifth and Sixth Periodical Report on Implementation of CEDAW.
3. For more details, see the interview with Nada Skuk, a female politician from a center-right party, and the analysis of placing women on the party’s candidate lists (Murko Pleš et al., 2011).
4. Personal interview of the author.
5. Author’s interview with one of the gatekeepers in a center-left political party, 2021.
6. The questionnaire and discussion in focus groups with gatekeepers was carried out in the Project OPENN in 2015.
7. The Minutes of the 18th Session of the NA (21st June 2006). Stenographic Records.
8. Ibid.
9. Numerous studies offer different perspectives, see: Antić Gaber (1999, 2003, 2008); Fink Hafner and Krašovec (2004); Fink Hafner et al. (2005); Murko Pleš et al. (2011); Jalušič and Antić Gaber (2001); Bahovec and Šetinc (2006).
10. The Minutes of the 18th Session of the NA (21st June 2006). Stenographic Records. MP from SDS: “Probably women have other priorities, they are of a personal nature, family, private life, to be unexposed to public.”
11. The Record of Voting on 3rd May 2006. [https://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/seje/sejeDZ/redne/?ut/p/z1/IZHNToNAFIWfxQcw9zBToCwZUARKCT9VmE0ziYhYhGqbLnx6p2xcNGK9q5nk-3JO7iVJFcIBnbpWHbtxUL3-19LaRk7sRnFgAKz0kZXpPbeCkKPk9DQBYp2b4RkIcpshE6v48cFjHKFB8hp\\_Bjj7-GVcXPhceMj8MrXunNxAgn\\_mByw3tc9EUoCjKNh1\\_kzBP\\_xoAmb2py\\_APhMvaUnu1fH1thteRqqem3709bkOzVtDVdurw3hSg37Xuo\\_9E5jGsHXgwtwsIwdYm1RQLajuPvzFzp3az9L7942e6mslltju3JtvJ5W5w!!/#Z7\\_J9KAJKG10OK070QT45U8J900N5](https://www.dz-rs.si/wps/portal/Home/seje/sejeDZ/redne/?ut/p/z1/IZHNToNAFIWfxQcw9zBToCwZUARKCT9VmE0ziYhYhGqbLnx6p2xcNGK9q5nk-3JO7iVJFcIBnbpWHbtxUL3-19LaRk7sRnFgAKz0kZXpPbeCkKPk9DQBYp2b4RkIcpshE6v48cFjHKFB8hp_Bjj7-GVcXPhceMj8MrXunNxAgn_mByw3tc9EUoCjKNh1_kzBP_xoAmb2py_APhMvaUnu1fH1thteRqqem3709bkOzVtDVdurw3hSg37Xuo_9E5jGsHXgwtwsIwdYm1RQLajuPvzFzp3az9L7942e6mslltju3JtvJ5W5w!!/#Z7_J9KAJKG10OK070QT45U8J900N5). Accessed 8th February 2022.

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