

GENDER BALANCE IN ELECTED OFFICE IN EUROPE

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What Why and How

- **What** is the status of equal representation of women and men in elected office today?
- **Why** do we not have gender balance in elected office?
- **How** can we address the continued lack of gender balance in elected office?

Gender balance shouldn't be a problem

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Beijing Platform for Action, 1995
- EUs Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025

Negative narrative

A hundred years ago, women across the EU made historic gains — they won the right to vote and to stand for election.

Today, a century later, women are still under-represented in politics, and men are over-represented.

Positive narrative

The proportion of women in national parliaments (single/lower house) across EU-28 has gradually increased:

from 21 % in 2005 to an all-time high of 30% in 2018.

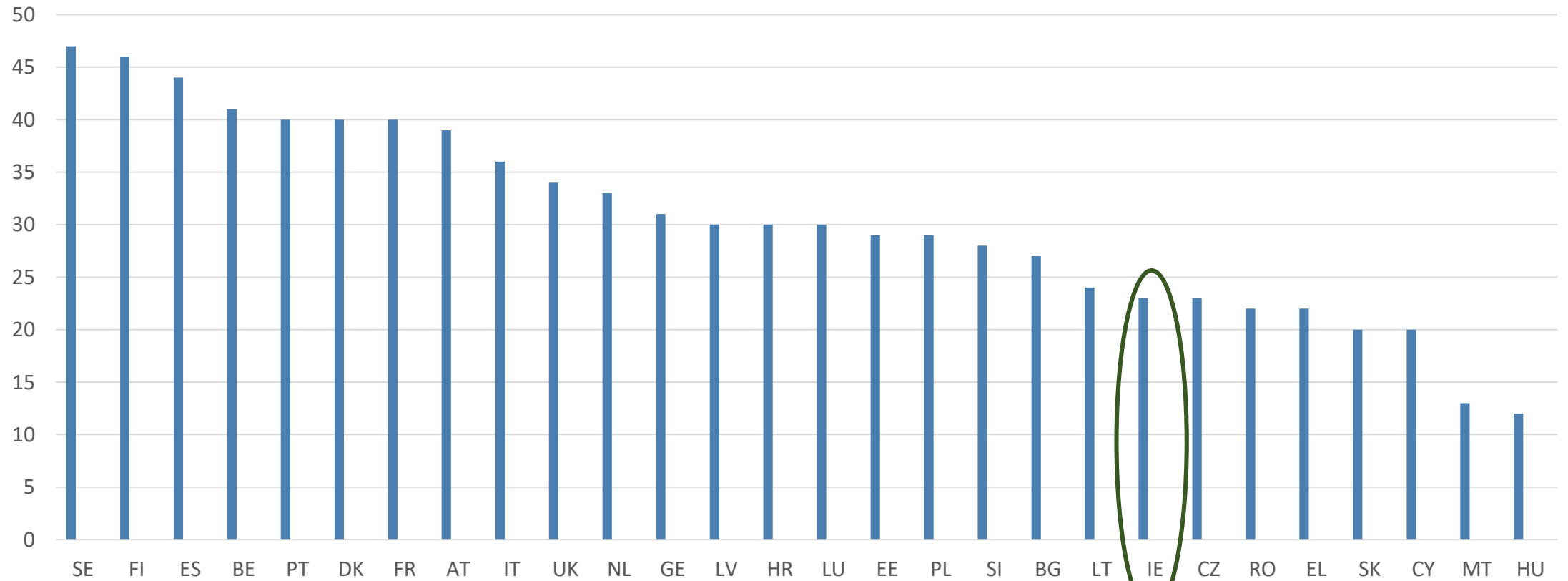
Mixed results

Some parliaments such as Finland, Sweden, Spain and France have more than 40% women.

But others such as Malta and Hungary have less than 20% women. [Ireland has 22.5%.]

Frontrunners and laggards!

Women's representation in Parliament - EU-28 (2020)



**Ireland is in 21st place out of the EU 28
in terms of women's representation**

Why do we not have gender balance in elected office?...

Or, more specifically, why do patterns differ?

Different...

- Electoral systems
- Party structures
- Policies on women's representation in elected office, ranging from legislative quotas to no quotas.

Political parties are gate keepers and gate openers: it is the political parties which decide who is to represent them in elections.

How can we address the continued lack of gender-balance in elected office?

- Legislative gender quotas – in 10 Members states including Ireland (9 have seen improvement)
- Party quotas
- Other non-quota measures:
 - Raising awareness, recruitment initiatives, training programs, fund-raising networks
 - Political parties: women's sections, recruitment initiatives, capacity building, campaign funding

Spain - Legislated gender quotas

- Lists of candidates shall have a balanced proportion of women and men, so that candidates of either sex make up at least 40% of total membership.
- Rank-order rules: Quotas are applied to the whole party lists and to every 5 posts.
- Sanctions for non-compliance.

Portugal - Legislated gender quotas

- Candidate lists for the elections to the National Assembly with a minimum representation of 33% of each sex Rank-order rules: No more than 2 consecutive names of the same sex in multi-member constituencies
- Sanctions for non-compliance: error is made public & financial sanctions in the form of reduction of the public funding.

Sweden

Political approach

- No legislative gender quotas
- Party quotas in 3 parties using the **Zipper System**

Sweden

The **Zipper System** is a method of drawing up party lists in proportional representation electoral systems.

It requires candidates on the list to alternate between men and women in order to secure equal representation in candidacy and potentially elected members.

Sweden

Political approach

- Recommended targets in 2 parties, minimum percentage of the under-represented sex
- General goals in 2 parties - gender balance is the aim

Sweden

Public administration and business

- Soft policy of gender balance in the boards of government agencies and of state-owned companies & in commissions of inquiry
- Equal distribution of power and influence – a national gender equality goal
- Gender balanced Cabinet
- Leading by example