
Parliamentary Elections and the Gender Aspect: A Comparative Analysis of the Experience of Ukraine and Sweden

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Abstract

Gender aspects in parliamentary elections are becoming more and more important both in the context of achieving equality between the two sexes, and in view of the important role of women in increasing the effectiveness of politics, tolerance, and combating violence and war. Studying the Swedish experience in achieving gender equality in politics will reveal directions for further political reforms in this area. The purpose of the study is to identify the most effective practices for achieving gender balance in politics by conducting a comparative analysis of the Swedish and Ukrainian experience. The main methods are statistical analysis, comparative legal method and rating method. The study of the legislation of both countries regarding gender quotas and the analysis of additional ways in which Sweden achieved modern results made it possible to formulate recommendations for Ukraine that can contribute to the achievement of gender equality in the course of parliamentary elections.

Keywords: parliament, Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, gender balance, gender quota

Introduction

Today, the equality of women and men is enshrined in the national legislation of most countries and in international documents, and it is defined as one of the sustainable development goals. Equal access of women and men to the top management positions in countries is especially important (Goswami et al.,

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2023). Gender aspects in politics are increasingly asserted not only in the context of achieving the equality of the two sexes, but also as a factor affecting the effectiveness of politics, the effectiveness of management decisions, and even as a strategy to counteract a number of negative phenomena, such as violence, war, etc. (Hessami and da Fonseca, 2020). Female politicians speak on behalf of all women of the country, it is assumed that they will promote their rights and interests in all spheres of life, and set a positive example. This causes increased attention of researchers, politicians, journalists, and legal scholars to the problem (Barnes and Beaulieu, 2019; Krook, 2019; Johnson and Williams, 2020). However, despite the de jure equality of electoral rights of both genders, statistical information on the number of women in state authorities indicates the absence of de facto equality.

The problem of a disturbed gender balance can be solved through the study of the positive experience of countries that have actually achieved equality between women and men in politics, including the tools used in this process (gender quotas, activities of civil associations and mass media, etc.) (Arndt and Wrohlich, 2019; Hughes et al., 2019; Lippmann, 2021). The countries of the European Union (EU) are distinguished by significant successes in this area. Sweden is the most striking example among them in terms of achieving gender balance (Freidenvall, 2022). This evokes an increased interest among academics in studying the path that Sweden has overcome to achieve the current ratio of women and men in politics.

Sweden is a recognized leader in the field of gender equality, particularly in relation to the representation of women in politics. Even in 1987, equal representation of both sexes in the field of politics was defined by the country's Statistical Office as varying between 40-60%. At the same time, the target indicator was reached already in 1994 - when, on average, the representation of women in the world barely exceeded 10%. It is worth noting that only 5 countries managed to exceed the mark of 30% (Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Finland and Sweden) (Freidenvall, 2021). Today, the share of women in the country's parliament reaches about 45%.

A different situation is observed in Ukraine, where the share of women in the Parliament at the time of the last (ninth) convocation barely exceeds 20%. This is characteristic of many developing countries, although a number of problematic aspects in the field of gender equality remain in developed countries as well. That is why a comparative analysis of the experience of different countries is important for developing strategies for further actions and determining the most effective practices for achieving gender balance. Such comparative analysis may include research on gender quota mechanisms, including examining their effectiveness under different types of quotas, identifying the impact of women's movements on

policy change, and determining how the perception of gender equality by politicians and citizens is related to the achievement of equal representation of both sexes in politics.

The aim of the study is to identify the most effective practices for achieving gender balance in politics by conducting a comparative analysis of the experience of Sweden and Ukraine.

Research Objectives

- study the statistics about women's participation in politics and other spheres of life in EU countries and Sweden;
- determine Ukraine's current advances in achieving gender balance;
- compare the experience of Ukraine and Sweden regarding the use of gender quotas as a key tool for achieving gender balance;
- provide recommendations regarding the achievement of gender balance in the Parliament of Ukraine.

Literature review

The growing attention to gender issues in modern scientific thought is confirmed by numerous studies, in particular on political aspects. Sharova (2022) studies the possibilities of feminism as an anti-war strategy and practice using the examples of Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. Studying the challenges associated with various transformational processes in the post-communist countries during 2000-2020, the researcher concludes that they all have a gender dimension.

Tarkhanova (2021) studies Ukrainian gender politics and the transformational processes that occur through the rethinking of fundamental categories of public good. The researcher focuses on the policy of Ukraine from the acquisition of independence to the period after the Revolution of Dignity, positioning the research of other authors in the field of feminist theory of the state.

Balasyanovych (2020) studies the peculiarities of the formation of gender democracy in Ukraine. In addition to defining gender democracy in general, the author examines the Ukrainian case through the lens of gender stereotypes that still exist in the country's politics. The researcher determines the position of Ukraine regarding the achievement of gender balance in the Parliament, identifies key problems, and suggests ways of solving them.

Parkhomenko-Kutsevil (2023) reveals aspects of gender policy implementation in the political sphere of Ukraine. The work notes the importance of achieving gender equality as one of the main constitutional principles of any modern democratic state: the equality of women and men. At the same time, the representation of women in politics is one of the main indicators of achieving

gender balance. In Ukraine, gender balance in politics has not yet been achieved, so the study considered various ways to increase the representation of women in parliament.

Baranovskyi and Dyhal (2021) describe the experience in the field of applying gender quotas and reveal their effectiveness in the politics of EU countries and Ukraine. Gender quotas are characterized by researchers as an effective mechanism for achieving gender equality. The researchers study of the legal framework and mechanisms for the implementation of gender quotas, and also list their types and describe their effectiveness.

Fernández and Valiente (2021) argue that gender quotas not only contribute to increasing the share of women in parliament, but also stimulate support for greater representation of women among the country's citizens. The work focuses on the analysis of public attitudes towards strengthening the role of women in politics.

Bush and Zetterberg (2021) confirm the hypothesis that the introduction of gender quotas, especially in autocracies where there is pronounced gender inequality, is aimed at improving the country's reputation as a democratic state in the international arena. The researchers conduct their experiments in Sweden and the United States of America.

Freidenvall (2021) describes the measures that have been taken in the country to achieve gender balance in politics in his work *Equal Representation Without Legislation: Gender, Power, and Institutions in Sweden*. The author notes that the key result was that the idea of gender balance was institutionalized in the country's political parties as an informal institution with regulatory functions.

Erikson and Freidenvall (2021) examine the case of the Swedish Parliament regarding the application of the legislative norm of gender equality. The researchers consider the Swedish case an interesting example for research, because this country has a high percentage of female deputies, and also many women work in key positions. Besides, the Swedish Parliament is taking other measures to achieve gender equality, although there are still some unresolved issues in this area.

Håkansson (2021) focuses on political violence and raises the important issue of whether women in politics experience more violence than men. The researcher provides a thorough analysis of gender-based psychological and physical violence against officials in the political hierarchy. The analysis involves using the results of a survey of 8,000 politicians at the local level in Sweden.

In the author's opinion, the available studies slightly lack of practical recommendations for achieving gender balance in the parliaments of developing countries. Existing research mostly focus on the application of gender quotas to

achieve equality between women and men in politics. Gender quotas are probably the most common means of increasing women's representation in parliament, but the ways to achieve equality in politics are not reduced to them. This necessitates further research into the effectiveness of both gender quotas and other tools for achieving gender balance.

Methodology

Research design

The first stage of the study provided for a statistical analysis of indicators regarding gender equality, including a general analysis of various spheres of life and an analysis in the field of politics, within the EU with a focus on Sweden. This analysis includes an assessment of the following indicators:

- the overall Gender Equality Index of the EU countries in 2022;
- the dynamics of the Gender Equality Index for the EU countries over the past 9 years;
- the share of women and men in parliaments in the member states of the Council of Europe;
- the value of the Gender Equality Index for Sweden together with its component elements - domains and subdomains.

The results of the analysis gave grounds to evaluate the change in indicators over the past 9 years, as well as to draw conclusions on the current situation in the countries regarding the achievement of gender equality, and identify the remaining problems in this area.

The second stage involved for determining the advances of Ukraine in achieving gender equality in the Parliament (the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine). For this purpose, some legislative provisions, in particular, the provisions of the Election Code of Ukraine, as well as the statistics were analysed through the evaluation of the dynamics of the indicator Gender Composition of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the Years of Independence.

The third stage is focused on researching gender quotas as a tool for achieving gender balance. The essence, types, and main aspects of gender quotas are identified, as well as the types of quotas used in EU countries. Their effectiveness in achieving equality in Sweden is determined, and it is also revealed how gender quotas are implemented in Ukraine. Some provisions of the Law of Ukraine "On Political Parties in Ukraine" were referred to for this purpose. Based on the results of the analysis, a number of recommendations were provided to achieve gender balance in the Parliament of Ukraine.

Sample

The study uses data from the EU countries, because these countries have made significant progress in achieving gender balance. Sweden and Ukraine are the main countries for comparison. Sweden is a leader in terms of women in parliament, and has also achieved high levels of gender equality in other areas of life. Ukraine is a developing country, however, in the context of Ukraine's European integration intentions, the issue of achieving gender equality in its policy is becoming particularly expressive.

Methods

Statistical analysis, comparative legal method, and ranking method are the main research methods. The statistics from EU countries, including Sweden, and Ukraine were used in the course of the statistical analysis of women's participation in politics and other spheres of life. The results of the analysis gave grounds to compare the gender composition of the countries' parliaments. In particular, such indicators as the share of women and men in the parliaments of the member states of the Council of Europe, as well as the gender composition of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, were analysed. The countries were also compared based on the results of applying the ranking method to determine the Gender Equality Index, which showed the degree of achievement of gender equality in the politics of the countries. The Gender Equality Index was presented in more detail For Sweden — the values of its separate domains and subdomains are given. The comparative law made it possible to study certain legislative aspects in the field of gender equality for Sweden and Ukraine, while the main attention was paid to the legislative enshrinement of gender quotas.

Results

The desire of the EU countries for the equality of both genders in all spheres of life, in particular, in politics, is reflected in a number of international agreements and national legislative acts of the countries. The sustainable development goals focus on this, but the de jure equality indicators differ significantly from the de facto statistical indicators. Figure 1 shows the values of the general Gender Equality Index in the EU countries.

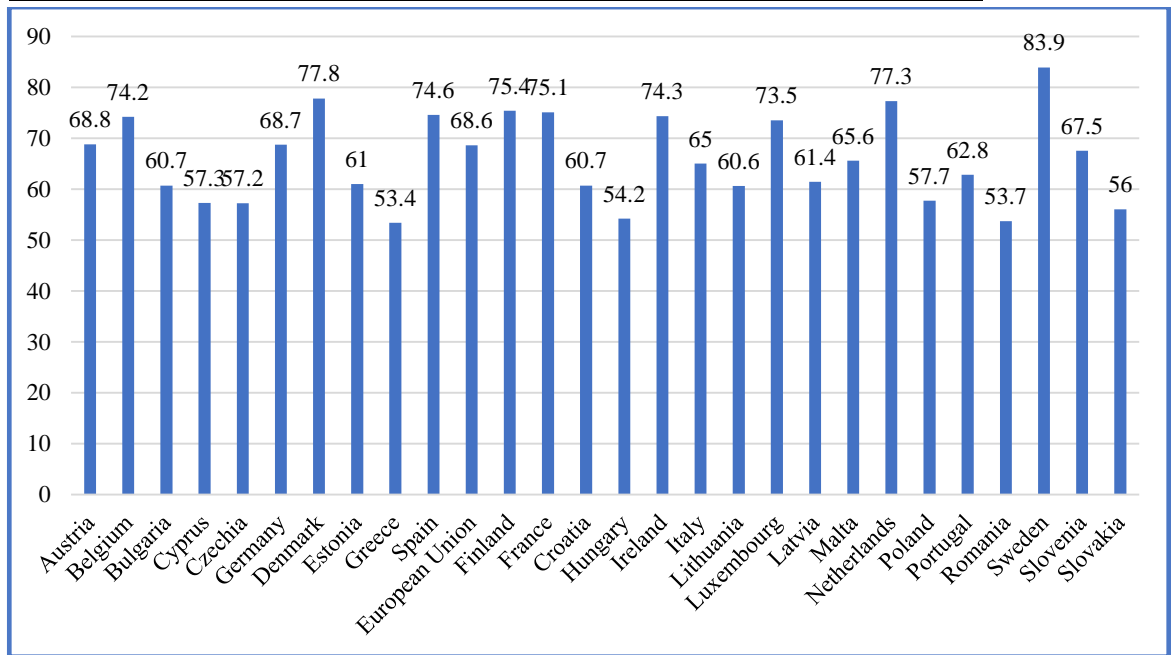


Figure 1. General Gender Equality Index of the EU countries in 2022

Source: Eige (2023)

Figure 1 shows that there are countries in the EU where the Gender Equality Index barely exceeds the value of 50 points (Greece, Hungary, Romania, etc.). The leaders in terms of this index are Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and Sweden. Scandinavian countries have made particularly notable progress in achieving gender balance. Figure 2 shows the dynamics of this index for EU countries over the past 9 years for demonstrating the change in the Gender Equality Index.

Figure 2 shows that all countries show positive changes in the Gender Equality Index. It is worth noting that while the change was more significant and amounted to more than 10% for some countries, for such countries as Sweden it was less than 4%. This can be explained by the fact that Sweden already had a high value of the Gender Equality Index 9 years ago - 80.1, so further shifts are occurring more gradually.

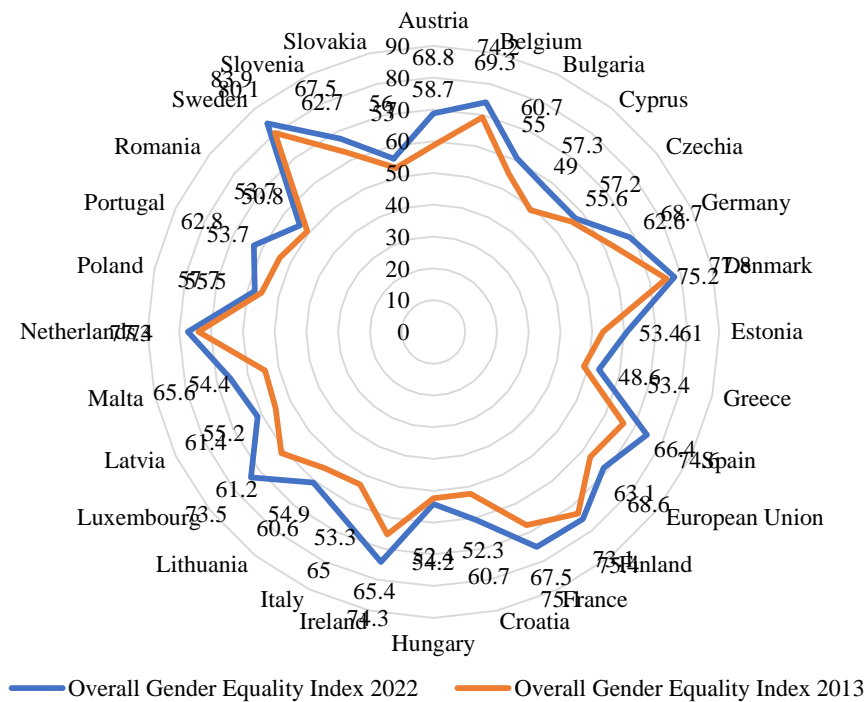


Figure 2. Dynamics of the Gender Equality Index for EU countries over the past 9 years

Source: Eige (2023)

Gender equality indicators related to the representation of women in politics are particularly important. Female politicians defend women's rights in other areas of life, promote their interests and prevent discrimination, setting a positive example. Women make up more than half of the population and voters in the EU countries, however, as statistics show, they remain very underrepresented in political and public decision-making processes (Council of Europe, 2003). Figure 3 shows the share of women and men in parliaments in Council of Europe Member States.

The most likely reason for women's underrepresentation is the persistence of dominant traditional gender roles. In this regard, the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers to Member States on the Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Political and Public Decision-Making (Council of Europe, 2003) note that the balanced participation of women and men implies that the representation of women or men in decision-making bodies in political or public life should not be lower than 40%.

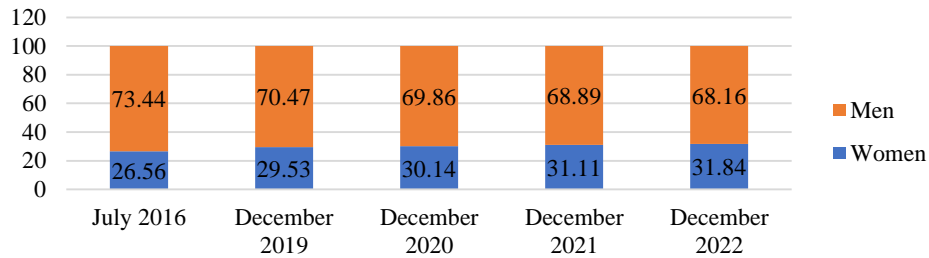


Figure 3. Parliamentarians in Council of Europe Member States

Source: Council of Europe (2023)

For Sweden, as one of the recognized leaders in achieving gender balance, the representation of women in the country’s politics is significant. There are voluntary party quotas in the country, and the percentage of female candidates is 43.5. The percentage of elected women reaches 49.3 (Council of Europe, 2023). Figure 4 shows the value of the Gender Equality Index for Sweden, together with its constituent elements — domains and subdomains.

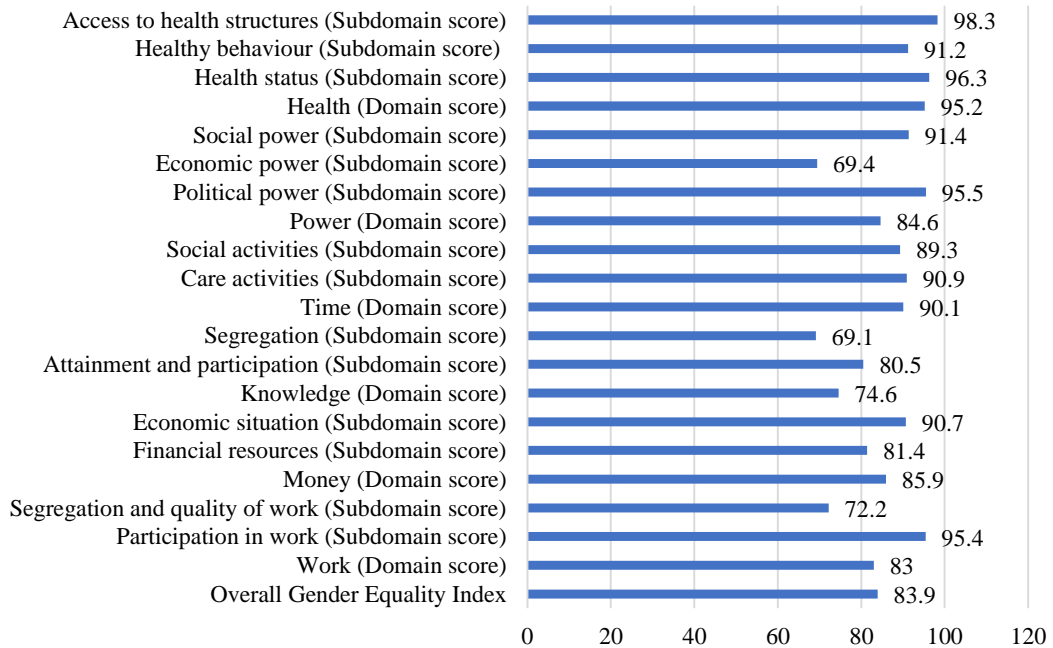


Figure 4. Indicators of gender equality in Sweden

Source: Eige (2023)

In the context of the study, the “political power” indicator in Figure 4, which is 95.5, is worth noting. The lowest values are characteristic of the “economic power” and “segregation” indicators: 69.4 and 69.1, respectively.

The conducted analysis gives grounds to conclude that despite significant successes, many EU countries should strengthen their work in the field of achieving gender equality. Even in the Scandinavian countries, which came closest to achieving gender balance, additional measures should be introduced that will consolidate and strengthen the achieved results.

a. Advances of Ukraine in achieving gender balance

Article 154 of the Election Code of Ukraine approves the procedure for nominating candidates for People’s Deputies of Ukraine. Clause 12 states that when making both national and regional electoral lists, each party is obliged to provide at least two candidates in each top five (from the first to the fifth place, from the sixth to the tenth, and so on) of each gender. If the number of candidates on the electoral list is not a multiple of five, a requirement is applied, which provides for the alternate inclusion of candidates of different genders on the list (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023b). Figure 5 shows the gender composition of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the years of independence.

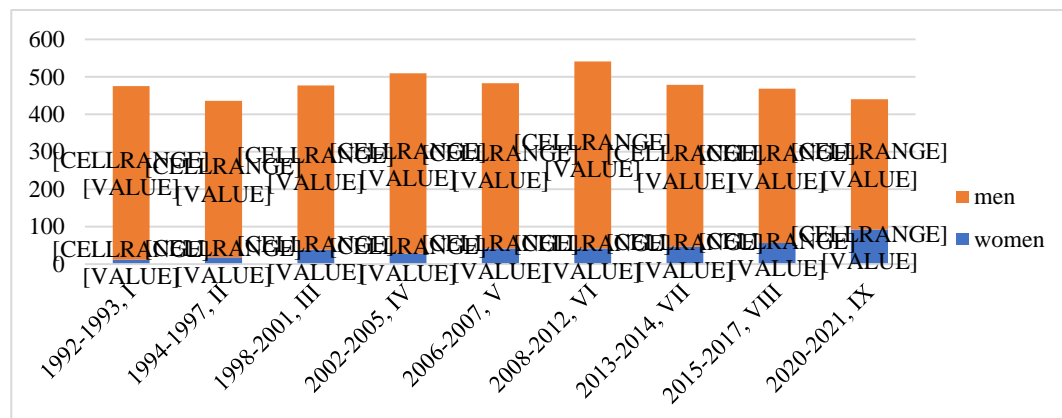


Figure 5. Gender composition of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine during the years of independence

Source: Slovo i Dilo (2021)

Figure 5 shows that the number of women in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine remained insignificant for quite a long period of time. This number began to exceed 10% only since 2015. The most noticeable change occurred between the eighth and ninth convocations, when the number of women in the Verkhovna

Rada of Ukraine increased by more than 8%, and their share compared to the share of men reached more than 20%, or 92 women to 348 men. In 2022, there were 334 men and 86 women in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine of the ninth convocation. As of September 1, 2023, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine employs 320 men and 84 women (*Personnel Department of the Apparatus of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023*).

Comparing the results of the analysis of the presence of women in politics in the EU countries and Ukraine, it can be noted that the former, especially Sweden, have much greater success in achieving gender balance. This result is often associated with the introduction of gender quotas, so the analysis of the effectiveness of the introduction of quotas in Sweden and Ukraine is of particular academic interest.

b. Comparison of Ukrainian and Swedish experience regarding the application of gender quotas as a key tool for achieving gender balance

When researching ways of achieving gender balance in politics, one often comes across such a term as “positive discrimination.” Positive discrimination is one of the principles of gender democracy and involves the introduction of benefits or quotas for discriminatory categories of the population. In politics, a form of positive discrimination can be gender quotas, which can be divided into legally defined (legislative quotas, which include reserved seats, as well as legislative candidate quotas) and voluntary (voluntary party quotas). Legislative quotas are “hard” quotas, because they can be prescribed in the constitutions of countries or in their electoral laws. Voluntary, although not mandatory, is the most common and based on the understanding of party members of the value of gender balance. Important aspects that must be remembered when studying the mechanism of the application of quotas are their size determined as a percentage, the mandate for a place (the end or the lowest passing part of the list), as well as the presence or absence of sanctions for non-compliance. The quotas in force in the EU countries are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Availability and types of gender quotas operating in EU countries

Country	Availability and type of quotas
Austria	Voluntary party quotas
Belgium	Legislative quotas
Bulgaria	No
United Kingdom	Voluntary party quotas

Greece	Legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas
Denmark	There were voluntary party quotas before
Estonia	No
Ireland	Legislative quotas
Spain	Legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas
Italy	Legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas
Cyprus	Voluntary party quotas
Latvia	No
Lithuania	Voluntary party quotas
Luxembourg	Voluntary party quotas
Malta	Voluntary party quotas
Netherlands	Voluntary party quotas
Germany	Voluntary party quotas
Poland	Legislative quotas
Portugal	Legislative quotas
Romania	Voluntary party quotas
Slovakia	Voluntary party quotas
Slovenia	Legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas
Hungary	Voluntary party quotas
Finland	No
France	Legislative quotas, voluntary party quotas
Croatia	Voluntary party quotas
Czech Republic	Voluntary party quotas
Sweden	Voluntary party quotas

Source: *Martsenyuk (2015)*

As Table 1 shows, voluntary party quotas are used most often in EU countries, including Sweden. It is worth noting that Sweden was characterized by a slow and gradual path to increasing the representation of women in politics. So, the country needed 60 years for the share of women to exceed 20%, 30% - another 70 years. At the same time, the state did not introduce legislative quotas, only voluntary party quotas. In 1972, the Liberal People's Party established 40% for either gender on internal committees and boards (Dahlerup and Freidenvall, 2005; Martsenyuk, 2019). It should be assumed that not only gender quotas played an important role in establishing gender balance in Sweden, but also the women's movements, as well as the gradual rethinking of the value of gender equality in the perception of politicians and citizens.

Moreover, quotas become more effective if additional measures are implemented to achieve gender balance and ensure equal rights. For example, quotas in Sweden are provided not only in politics but also during competitions for management positions in business. An important step is the introduction of the position of the Ombudsman as the Commissioner for Human Rights, whose duties include ensuring and protecting the rights and freedoms of the country's citizens, including gender equality. In the EU, both the European Ombudsman and national ombudsmen operate in virtually every Member State. The institution of the Ombudsman was introduced in Sweden for the first time, where the state agency Equality Ombudsman currently operates, and there is also a position of the Minister for Gender Equality.

Comparing the Swedish experience with the Ukrainian one, it should be noted that voluntary party gender quotas were also introduced in Ukraine. This happened only in 2013 by amending the Law of Ukraine "On Political Parties in Ukraine" (Article 8, Clause 10 and Article 17(5)) (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023a). These changes are reduced to the fact that, in case of compliance with the 30% gender quota established by the election results, the party receives 10 additional percent to the annual volume of state funding (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2023a). Analysing the statistics provided in the work on the ratio of the men and women in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, it can be noted that the introduction of the quota could contribute to a gradual increase in the share of women. In the author's opinion, additional incentives or recommendations for the further growth of the representation of women in the politics of Ukraine can be:

- a personal example of female political leaders in the country's government by promoting experienced and charismatic female politicians with a positive image;
- study of the practice of increasing the number of women in the ruling elite as an anti-war strategy;
- improvement of the mechanism of gender quotas (considering the possibilities of introducing legally defined quotas, increasing the size of quotas, etc.);
- improving the activity of the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine for Human Rights in the field of representation of women in politics;
- promoting the activities of women's movements and organizations promoting gender equality.

In the author's opinion, the most significant obstacle to achieving gender balance in the politics of Ukraine is outdated stereotypes related to the difference in the "responsibilities" of women and men. At the same time, such stereotypes

are characteristic of representatives of both genders, and therefore, work in the field of raising public awareness of the value of gender balance should be strengthened as a supplement to the mentioned recommendations.

In addition to the established recommendations, it is worth paying attention to the ways to overcome the gender gap presented in the results of the briefing *Women in Politics in the EU* (Shreeves and Zamfir, 2023). The document emphasizes the importance and effectiveness of quotas, but notes that the effect of their implementation is not the same for all countries. It is concluded that gender quotas can have a positive effect on the growth of women's representation in politics, however, quotas should be developed in accordance with the electoral system and contain rules for placing candidates in "winning" seats and effective sanctions for non-compliance to increase their effectiveness. Further additional measures are also needed to reach a diverse range of women. In addition to quotas, targeted support and training for running for office, including equal access to campaign finance, has an impact on increasing the number of women in parliament.

Discussion

Sharova (2022) studies the role of gender aspects in politics and concludes that countries such as Ukraine, Belarus and Russia have not yet achieved a sustainable gender balance at the highest level of governance. The formulation of the political process almost or completely does not involve the integration of the gender approach. Furthermore, the researcher notes that the presence and role of women in the politics of countries is increasing, which can be explained as a result of the Soviet project of women's emancipation in combination with European liberal ideas and other modern phenomena. These results, as concerns the study of the Ukrainian experience, are consistent with the author's conclusions. However, in the author's opinion, these countries should be considered separately in view of Ukraine's choice of European integration direction and, accordingly, the use of other approaches to achieving gender balance.

Tarkhanova (2021) deals with the gender policy in Ukraine, revealing how political discourses on gender aspects are built. The researcher noted that these processes take place through labour, social security, and family policies. Balasynovych (2020) notes that the source of the problem of not achieving gender balance in the Parliament of Ukraine is certain gender stereotypes among representatives of both genders. The solution to this problem can be the involvement of mass media to influence the public consciousness, forming a positive perception and understanding of gender democracy and gender equality. Agreeing with the researchers' conclusions, it is worth noting that it is not enough

to involve the mass media to solve the problem, it is worth using a number of recommendations proposed in the author's research, which will help increase the role of a female politician in the perception of different segments of the population.

Parkhomenko-Kutsevil (2023) identifies the following factors for increasing the representation of women at the highest level of decision-making: the development of a mechanism for gender equality in the country, an electoral system that is friendly to women, gender quotas, gender-sensitive party rules, attention to "selectors" (party minorities, etc.), pressure from activists and women's organizations. The need for countries to strive to achieve the UN sustainable development goals is also important for gender balance in politics, which provides for the comprehensive participation of women not only in political but also in economic and social life. In the author's opinion, these recommendations lack ways to influence the way of thinking of people who still believe in outdated stereotypes about the responsibilities of women and men. For example, such influence can be exerted by mass media, successful female politicians, etc.

Baranovskyi and Dyhal (2021) study the application and effectiveness of gender quotas in the political sphere of EU countries and Ukraine and find that legislative candidate quotas and party quotas, which are voluntary, are used in EU countries. Researchers proved the effectiveness of gender quotas to increase the representation of women even if they are used once, but the effect is not immediately apparent. So, the example of the Scandinavian countries demonstrated that as soon as gender equality in the political sphere is achieved, the application of quotas can be stopped. The example of Ukraine also demonstrates the effectiveness of gender quotas, but it could be higher if sanctions were applied for non-compliance with quotas. Improving the effectiveness of gender quotas requires an appropriate legal basis and several additional measures, including sanctions for non-compliance. The result of the application of quotas can be manifested not only directly through an increase in the number of women in representative bodies but also through the influence on other aspects of life. The results of the author's research also indicate the possible influence of quotas on increasing the number of women in parliament, although this may be related to other factors, for example, the European integration of Ukraine. Therefore, we can fully agree with the researchers that the effect of quotas will be stronger if sanctions for non-compliance are applied.

Fernández and Valiente (2021) conclude that the effect of implementing gender quotas is manifested in two main aspects. The first aspect is informational. This means that the debate on quotas raises the awareness of society about the

underrepresentation of women. The second is regulatory, which consists in understanding gender imbalance as a social problem. The analysis carried out by the researchers supports the hypothesis that support for increasing the participation of women in politics by citizens is stronger in countries with gender quotas. The author's research found that quotas are only one of the tools for increasing the representation of women in parliament and should be supplemented by other measures.

Bush and Zetterberg (2021) found that the introduction of gender quotas in countries that are electoral autocracies and characterized by marked gender inequality does not only directly increase the representation of women in parliament. Gender quotas in such countries are also introduced to improve the country's international reputation as a democratic state. The study confirmed such an effect: the audience tends to see autocratic states as more democratic due to the greater descriptive representation of women. Accordingly, this contributed to stronger support for foreign aid to such countries. Such conclusions, according to the results of the author's research, can be quite applicable for Ukraine as well. However, it is worth hoping that the primary goal of introducing quotas — improving international reputation — will later (with the increase in the representation of women) be transformed into a real understanding of the value of gender balance, which will contribute to the establishment of Ukraine as a *de facto* legal state with equal rights for all.

Freidenvall (2021) finds that the achievement of equal representation in parliament and the establishment of the idea of gender balance as an informal institution with regulatory functions in Sweden was primarily facilitated by the introduction of gender quotas. Besides, feminists, women's movements, and mass media played an important role, as well as their struggle to promote new ideas and challenge old outdated ones. In contrast to this work, the study notes that quotas didn't play the leading role in Sweden's success, but the activities of feminists, women's movements and organizations. Recognition of this very fact strengthens the role of women in politics and social life.

Based on surveys of Swedish politicians, Håkansson (2021) found a marked gender gap in terms of violence among high-ranking politicians. Women mayors experience the most violence. The analysis may also indicate that women pay a higher price for media visibility and support for minorities than men. This indicates a bias against women, especially prominent and influential ones, on the part of those who commit political violence. Erikson and Freidenvall (2021) conclude that, despite the Swedish Parliament's significant progress in achieving gender equality in politics, there are still some challenges in this area. These problems are most often related to informal aspects, such as, for example,

problems in combining home and work responsibilities. Researchers believe that further active work in the field of gender equality in Sweden is appropriate, which involves the adoption and implementation of special projects. As it was determined in the author's article, similar problems are also characteristic of Ukraine, although on a significantly larger scale. Therefore, it is worth emphasizing once again on "soft" means of influence, in particular those that increase citizens' understanding and awareness of the value of gender balance, changing their views to more progressive and adequate to modern times.

Conclusion

Today, equal rights of women and men are taken for granted in most countries. Legally established equality does not, however, always correspond to the real situation. The political sphere is especially demonstrative, where women occupy a significantly smaller share of positions compared to men. At the same time, important issues regarding gender equality are resolved and new ideas are spread in the political sphere. In addition to gender issues, women do not have enough access to solving national issues and making decisions because of limited representation in politics.

The positions of the EU countries according to the Gender Equality Index were analysed in the course of the study. It was found that even among the EU members, which are known to be among the leaders in the field of gender equality, there are countries in which the above-mentioned index barely exceeds 50 points. Sweden is the undisputed leader in this indicator (83.9). Ukraine, as a developing country with European integration intentions, shall pay attention to the achievement of gender balance. However, the current state of affairs can be characterized as a very insufficient representation of women in the country's parliament (the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine). Only since 2020, the share of women in the Verkhovna Rada has exceeded 20%, despite the fact that this share reaches about 45% in a country like Sweden. A comparative analysis of the legislation of Ukraine and Sweden regarding gender quotas gives reason to assert that both countries have voluntary party quotas, although in Sweden - since 1972, in Ukraine - since 2013. At the same time, it was noted that Sweden's success in achieving gender equality in politics was contributed not only by gender quotas, but also by a number of other factors, in particular, women's movements for gender equality. The conducted analysis gave grounds for providing recommendations for Ukraine.

The results of the study can be used by government representatives and activists in the field of gender equality to increase the representation of women in

parliament. Further research may involve examining social levers for increasing women's representation in politics.

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