



TRANSFORMING POLITICS WOMEN IN POLITICS

2015





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“TRANSFORMING POLITICS - WOMEN IN POLITICS”

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

■ Foreword	8
■ Korčula School 2015 - Report: “Transformative politics - Women in politics”	11
• I. Introduction	12
• II. Key Findings	15
• III. Messages and Recommendations	18
■ Zita Gurmai, Introductory Statement Korčula School 2015	23
• Our struggle for gender equality and against violence	24
• Addressing the plight of refugee and migrant women	25
• Women in politics	27
■ Annex 1: Case Studies	29
• Situation and solutions	32
• SD parties – 2014/2015 electoral results reflecting percentage of elected women MPs	35
■ Gender Equality Platform - Socialist and Social-Democratic parties of South Eastern Europe - June 2015	39
■ CEE Network Statement on the Refugee and Migrant Crisis - September 6, 2015	47
• Follow-up	49
■ Testimonials	53
• Feminist approach towards women's engagement in SD parties: the case of Croatia	53
• Lost referendum on equal marriage for all in Slovenia, December 20, 2015	57
■ 2015 CEE Network Annual Evaluation Seminar - Budapest November 12, 2015	61
■ Vignettes	65
• 1. Croatia: Equality and inclusion in the electoral process (and post-electoral blues)	65
• 2. Forum for gender politics - New practice of dialogue in the Republic of Serbia	69
• First forum	70
• Second forum	71
• Third forum	72
• 3. Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina Women's Forum	73
• 4. Ukraine: Local elections 2015. Behind the curtains	76

FOREWORD

These are challenging times – ideologically, politically, in economic terms, socially and culturally. We are all trying to find answers and innovative solutions to meet our aspirations towards peace, security, social justice and equality, how to show solidarity, last but not least our quest for equality between men and women continues.

But even when we have ideas, solutions and some concrete answers, leaping into action and change seems difficult. Stifled sometimes by our own inaction and/or by the constraints of the political environment and given moment, we see social movements and ordinary citizens take the lead ahead of our parties. And women, as you can see in this publication are ready to assume their responsibility and their equal share in the political leadership that will shape the future.

If only it were that simple. In spite of great strides that women have made and that gender equality is slowly picking up, it still seems that we move one step forward and two steps backwards. Slow move therefore it is. For instance, various anti-abortion and pro-family groups are pulling us back into a discourse that we have resolved decades ago in the region. In spite of laws against violence against women it is still advocated as a private affair. By neo-liberal technocratic governments abortion is seen as this socially divisive issue better left for other times. As if reforms are best to be “neutral” and just managerial and not there to better lives!

Women’s Forums in the region have been strengthened and are active in reaching out to the electorate and party leaderships but their engagement, political status and financial party backing seriously lags behind. This is not, we believe, conducive to a better standing of our parties in the electorate, especially among women.

Political leaderships still shy away from affirmative action to change the gender balance. Addressing gender equality transcends the political and ideological issues of solidarity, social justice, rule of law and directly conceptualizes the society/societies we want to build in the 21st century. These are issues close to the everyday life of our citizens and hence our voters. The women that have come together within the CEE Network, especially those who have participated at the Korčula School have clearly articulated the cost of inaction and the progressive, forward looking need for action. Precisely for this reason the messages from this year’s

Korčula School, from the joint regional Gender Equality Social Democratic South Eastern European Platform and the feedback from national social democratic women’s forums are important. They clearly point out to the precariousness of the moment and state a dissatisfaction with inaction. On the bright side women are ready to take the bull by the horns.

2015 has set the substantive ground for our future activities in implementing the regional gender equality platform which has been signed by all the parties in the region and beyond. We are proud to have received this endorsement, to have articulated clearly our platform and to have joined the PES family as observers and the PES Women as full members. While it is an honour it is also a duty to contribute to a better, safer, just, progressive and democratic Europe as a vehicle for world peace, security and development. We shall start from home – Central and Eastern Europe - and work upwards!

December 2015



Daša Šašić Šilović

*Chair, International Board
CEE Network for Gender Issues*



Daša Šašić Šilović



Korčula School (2015)

REPORT: “**TRANSFORMATIVE POLITICS - WOMEN IN POLITICS**”

KORČULA SCHOOL

2015

“ When a woman enters politics - She changes

When thousand women enter politics - Politics changes

Let's change politics! ”

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The “**Korčula School**” is intended to gather women and men leaders particularly from South Eastern Europe to discuss gender equality issues. The 4th “School” (2012-2015), has become a recognized think tank due to its innovative, open, progressive and substantive approach to equality and human rights. It is guided by Chatham House rules to foster a free, open and substantive debate among participants.
2. The **2015 meeting** discussed transformative politics focusing on the participation of women in mainstream politics and in the political parties on the center left. The emphasis was on gender equality, i.e. the role of men and women in party leaderships to promote parity and equality.
3. The 2015 Korčula School was preceded by a meeting of the **European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity** to launch the project on social democracy in the Balkans (28 August 2015). A special session of the meeting was dedicated to consultations with the **CEE Network** and presidents of **SD women’s** forums.
4. 2015 Korčula School was organised by the CEE Network and the European Forum. Co-financing for the CEE Network was equally provided by the **Olof Palme International Center** (through the 2015 project) and the **Party of European Socialist**. The success of the Korčula School could not have been achieved without this financial support and the political support from the European Forum and the PES and **PES Women**.

5. **65 participants** invited by both organisations participated at 2015 Korčula School.
6. High level participation and substantive political discussions ensured the success of the School. Additional short film clips with messages from European women leaders, received from **Elke Ferner** (SPD Germany), **Helena Dalli** (Minister, Malta) and **Zohra Lhioui** (USFP Morocco), provided a broader outreach, as the basis for future cooperation and Korčula discussions. The special documentary film presentation by the Serbian (FOSDI) film maker: “**Aristofan in Dnopolje or Let me be ME**” (“Aristofan u Dnopolju ili da ja budem JA”) highlighted women’s human rights and the human cost of war, well introducing the topics on the programme.
7. 2015 Korčula School was accompanied by **media coverage** with a number of journalists attending.



Elke Ferner - SPD Germany



Helena Dalli - Minister Malta



Zohra Lhioui - USFP Morocco

II. KEY FINDINGS

- Inequality is a systemic issue and societies change slowly. Progress on gender equality, with all the gains over time, has been slow, uneven and not a given. Transformative action and changing gender equality paradigms today demand both feminist activism (in the society and parties) and a partnership with men. This is slowly changing per force, as more women assume decision making positions and as the economic and social environment demands a stronger equal partnership to manage everyday challenges.
- Gender equality is a test for the economic and social, political equality model of societies in general. It is a systemic problem that should therefore be addressed systematically. It is not only a matter of human rights in a narrow sense, but a matter of equality in the society as such.
- However, there seems to be a backlash to gender equality happening in Europe. The EU is lagging behind in developing and implementing its gender strategy. This is felt politically, but also financially in terms of support to women's movements in the EU felt especially in EU candidate countries. Without adequate political and financial commitment and backing it is difficult to make progress.
- SD parties unfortunately do not deal with gender equality issues in a systematic and emancipatory way. SD policies in many cases are not gender-sensitive, particularly in terms of a feminist perspective to urban development, environmental issues, transport, education, economy, healthcare.

- Women in SD parties are often motivated by their electoral losses and are ready to engage both externally, in assisting parties to gain political ground again, and internally to instill party democracy and build party cadres. Women are also motivated and more flexible to seek broader societal coalitions and partners outside established SD parties, as CEE Network and women's forum (WF) experience have shown.
- SD parties are as a rule male-dominated in leadership, in membership and in the electoral camp. Political parties, even when they respect the quota, position women in places that do not ensure victory since male leaders get preferential treatment on electoral lists. And yet women tend to more vote for center left parties, but this should not be taken as a given!
- Women tend to be well represented in the drafting committees of SD parties when party documents are being prepared, e.g. in LSDV 45% women participated in the drafting of the party electoral platform. In SDP Croatia it was 40% women, while in other parties the number swings around 20%. However, these teams are all led by male leaders. In SDP Montenegro 65% of women participated in election monitoring. (Source: CEE Network 2015 questionnaire to WFs).
- The glass ceiling remains an issue. As women climb the decision making ladder they tend to be isolated within leaderships. Women are also not always supporting other women as they see them as rivals in a "man's world".



1. The trends regarding women's empowerment within parties in times of elections are mixed, so the glass is nowhere half full or half empty.
2. SD parties have, slowly, started to target women voters with concrete electoral promises but their implementation is still lagging behind. Gender sensitive policies are getting their way into party documents and decisions, as well as gender sensitive language.
3. The deficit of women's power and WFs in electoral processes means that they have limited possibilities to delegate their best activists to the eligible positions on the lists and positions of executive power.
4. The Joint SD Regional Gender Equality Platform, signed by all the parties in the region is an important political instrument to promote gender equality concerns and women leaders as well as to enhance capacity building of political party leaderships. This also demands the strengthening and empowerment of WFs.



III. MESSAGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- SD history and experience shows that parties lose when they are alienated from the people, the electorate, the working woman and man. SD parties in the region need to go back to their societal role but with a critical analysis of what went wrong, what are the lessons learnt and what could be the new ideological and political paradigm true to the principles of social democracy both in election times and when in power.
- There is a need for more internal ideological dialogue in social democratic parties (and political dialogue in general) as parties are overwhelmed by daily politics. However, without the ideological and substantive political dialogue, including capacity building and the training of cadres, SD parties can hardly make progress and ensure the adequate outreach. Political academies for women politicians have given results and shown that women welcome ideological education and political capacity building. However, capacity building and training provided to women in SD parties do not necessarily prepare them for post-election positioning to ensure their equal representation both in party structures and government institutions when in power.
- More inter-generational dialogue is necessary and an interface should happen between older and younger women feminists, activists and political leaders. This would strengthen coalitions and the social democratic cause but also provide the necessary political and ideological perspective for the renewal and reinvigoration of the social democratic movement.

- SD parties need to develop cadres with specific expertise for informed political and ideological positioning. But they also need to overcome the opportunistic attitude to follow and compete with the right by abandoning their ideological orientation. This has cost votes and blurred the political edge and ideological distinction between the left and the right and SD visibility and identity.
- Women and the youth are substantial political actors in society and in parties. This should be recognised by SD parties, politically supported with adequate funding. Political struggle is long term, with short and medium term gains as important steps, so it should be viewed and supported with sustainability in mind. SD parties should, as much as possible refrain from one shot deals meaning also that WFs need to be sustained and supported over time. More effort should be made to continue work with women who have been trained so that they can upgrade their skills and influence and mentor other women.



- Women's forums have been created as organisations of political parties, but have also maintained their autonomy which allows for broader action and reach out to the civil society. This has not been utilised enough.
- Political academies for party cadres, including specific programmes for women, should be enhanced and sustained, while the establishment of more active networks at local level, including a sustained ideological dialogue between the national and local levels can only ensure better advocacy, outreach and party electoral results. This also means careful attention to the language used in societal dialogue so that the electorate can understand what SD stands for.
- In depth statistical data about women in SD parties, and in general, is lacking and better and more systematic tracking is necessary to inform analysis and action.
- CEE Network should develop a gender equality educational and training toolkit, in cooperation with the WFs that could be used by all SD parties. This work needs to go hand in hand with strengthening the network itself and regular communication at regional and national levels. Today's IT technology offers many opportunities and these needs to be seized.
- The Joint Regional Gender Equality Platform (Annex 3) provides a diagnosis on the current state of social democratic parties and offers recommendations. Its implementation should be supported both by political parties within the region and beyond.
- Preparations for 2016 Korčula School should take stock of lessons learnt and upgrade the format and participation for substantive political impact.



Zita GURMAI

President PES Women

Member CEE Network International Board



“Let’s support each other and together, we will gain more and more energy, more and more power, and we will make it: we will reach equality!”

ZITA GURMAI, INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT KORČULA SCHOOL 2015

Every year the Korčula school is growing. We are growing in numbers by the year, bringing more women from the region, and now we even have the pleasure to count representatives of social democratic foundations with us.

May I dare say, I have a dream? I have a dream that someday, soon, we can even bring our leaders here, to exchange with us.

After all, Korčula is where leaders and thinkers were gathering, from 1964 to 1974. The summer school was organized by the publishers of the journal Praxis. It was a meeting place for philosophers and social critics from the entire world. Some of the prominent attendees included Ernst Bloch, Eugen Fink, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse, Jürgen Habermas, Henri Lefebvre, Richard J. Bernstein and Shlomo Avineri, to name a few.

OUR STRUGGLE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND AGAINST VIOLENCE

Last year we were successful in addressing the issue of violence against women. We had concrete demands, and concrete proposals on how to:

- Legislate
- Put pressure
- Implement
- Deliver on violence against women in the region

PES Women also had a successful campaign on the 25th of November 2014 to raise our voice and draw attention on the need to end violence against women, and the urgent need to ratify the Istanbul Convention. We have just celebrated the fifth anniversary of the convention, and still some European countries have not ratified it. But rest assured that we are keeping our pressure up.

It is important for the European Union, and it is important for this region too. We understand the need to keep a special focus on the Southern and Eastern European countries. As you can see today with our presence, we

are very much mobilized for the women of the region. Why? Because we are very much aware of the fact that even before we could improve the situation, a terrible conservative backlash is taking place. In times of crisis there are some who think it is not essential to deal with women's issues but I say it is even more important. I am thinking of all those women living on their own with children, with little or hardly any support from the state.

I can speak about my own country, Hungary, to illustrate the terrible backlash against gender equality and the fundamental rights of women. Victor Orban's government is sparing nothing to diminish the accomplishments of Hungarian women. After the Berlin wall came down, we have fought for our political freedom and our economic independence. And we have come far. But before we could go far enough, he has arrived, determined to send us back to our kitchen, into our homes and only to mind our children.

ADDRESSING THE PLIGHT OF REFUGEE AND MIGRANT WOMEN

And of course, I have to mention the fence, this shameful fence that "Orbanistan" is building to separate us from our neighbours, as if running away from our responsibility towards migrants would make the problem go away. Worse, he is sending the police to push them back, and the police are even resorting to tear gas against migrants. We says migrants, now the term has become generic, but these are people. And among

those people, there are many women, with their children and entire families. It is our duty to fight the madness of Orbanism and feel solidarity with those people, the majority being war refugees. And here I want to say that I am very disappointed in our leaders. Who is taking care of those people? Who is speaking for them? We cannot remain silent nor speak with four or five different voices, with four or five different positions on the issue and never agree on how to actually help them.

There was a time when European were war refugees as well, and they were going through an exodus. This one is only the second worst exodus since World War II. It puts terrible pressure on the EU, and on this region, but we have to help them, we have to help those women find their way to freedom and empowerment. Europe has a huge role to play, and the region has a huge role to play as it receives those who are passing through on their way from Greece to the EU.

There are some women in politics who are showing the way. I am thinking of an inspiring woman in Iraq, Vian Dakhil. She is a member of Parliament and a member of the Yazidi community which is under terrible persecution by the ISIS monsters. She has already helped girls and women, who were used as sexual slaves in Iraq, to flee the war zone and find freedom or their family.

She has to go under protection because ISIS made her a target now, and she is very isolated in a man's world where it is improper to work too closely with women. But she is resisting. She flies to war zones and she has used her position in Parliament and her network in her community to take concrete action to help women. You might have seen this heart-breaking video where she makes an emotional appeal to the Parliament to act against the incredible ordeal experienced by the Yazidi community.

I have always been convinced that women are made for action. It is our best card to play in politics : a sense of empathy and pragmatism that drives us to take action rather than to simply discuss about taking action.

WOMEN IN POLITICS

That is why we have to ask ourselves: yes, we have more women in politics, but what do we do with the power we are gaining? Are we playing the old games, with old rules, that have been set up by a highly patriarchal society? Or have we actually changing politics?

I have just spent a few days with our youth movement, YES, at their summer camp in Portugal. Their leaders are two great young feminists, Laura Slimani and Nina Jovanović. It was the best Summer school ever, with the most gender-sensitive programme ever. It was very interesting listening to them. There is a real feminist movement within our youth who want to move on women's issues. The young generation of voters, of activists and of politicians, want change. Should we, women, contribute to bring change to them? Is this the meaning we want to give to our topic, "transformative politics"?

The young generation is open to the feminist struggle. They perceive that full equality between women and men is the key to the modernity of our progressive society, and the recovery of our broken economies. Everywhere women are being emancipated, either as an act of resistance to patriarchy or naturally, and proud of it, and proud to show it. Emma Watson sets the perfect example of a young woman bravely standing up on the world scene, with her personal convictions, to use her fame and to serve the #HeForShe campaign to bring men on board to speak out for gender equality.

We should feel their energy and hear their call.

That is why I strongly believe that we need to connect with the civil society and build alliances and platforms, reaching across the new generation of women's rights organisations. Our political family is key to make the rights of women a reality for all women, including in the SEE region. The world is changing fast. Those who think they still hold the keys to male domination can feel it. We must feel it too, with confidence, and make it our weapon against them.

Times are changing and there are more and more inspiring women who refuse to be patronized and are taking their full part in the political life.

It is our time. We must be optimistic, because we are transforming politics, already.

I think it is most important that in the region, we strengthen the awareness of MPs, MEPs and Governmental Representatives from our family. We need to mobilise all our forces and make sure they understand the importance of women's political, social and economic empowerment.

Women's empowerment is a force for the entire society.

That's why PES Women is very happy to continue with our successful campaign #power2women, because we want to emphasize that it is not enough to gain rights and have more women in politics, we want women to actually be able to exercise those rights.

ANNEX 1:

CASE STUDIES

- UNDP Montenegro has undertaken a regional analysis of the status of women politicians and the perception of the same in society. The most favourable image of a woman politician is that she looks good (beautiful) but also reflects a family image. 78% of respondent women consider that politics and political parties do not impact their daily life. Women politicians are not receiving adequate media coverage and only scandals attract attention.
- Women in Macedonia are asking for change and reforms which is a good basis for the electoral success of the Macedonian SDP. The WF is particularly active and the SDP political platform has been engendered.
- In Montenegro weak legal quota system and affirmative gender parity laws are easy to be adopted but are not implemented. There are few women at the high levels of decision making and women tend to prefer their individual privacy to public activity. Based on a UNDP analysis particular public approval goes to women who project themselves first as mothers and that image remains key in a patriarchal society.

12% of the population (60% of men and 40% of women) believes that the presence of women above 30% in the Montenegrin Parliament and Government would have negative influence on the quality of political life! Reasons for this are the following: view that politics is not for women 33% (i.e. 4% of general population); women are weak and too soft to be good in politics 13% (2% of general population); men are stronger and better politicians 13% (2% of general population); 10% of women is enough, 30% is too high, 8% (1% of general population); women should stay at home 5% (less than 1% of general population); women would make wrong decisions, we would be ruined because of them 5% (less than 1% of general population); there would be even more disputes with a higher percentage of women 4% (less than 1% of general population).

- In the Democratic Party of Serbia in the last national elections for the first time the party prepared electoral material specifically targeting women and not only women candidates. The party as a whole led a specific gender equality campaign on the most important gender equality issues. In Vojvodina, and the LSDV gender parity functions at the highest levels in the party (over 30%), the local levels fall behind. LSDV WF is represented in all the party decision making bodies but is now engaged in advocating for a quota provision and the implementation of gender sensitive party documents and decisions. In its outward activity it is especially engaged on issues related to labour policies and gender based discrimination.
- SD Slovenia has 2 women MPs out of 6 MPs and out of three ministerial portfolios two are women with strong sectors – defense and labour, social policy and gender equality. The changes undertaken by the SD Minister of labour and social policy which focuses on extreme poverty, have not been visible and recognised by the middle class people who traditionally voted for the SD.
- The social democratic Women's Forum in Croatia is marking 20 years of existence. This celebration is

meant to be connected with 70 years of the victory over Nazism and fascism and 20 years from the Beijing platform. In the last 20 years the WF has changed dramatically accompanying changes in the SDP and the public in general. SDP was the first party in war torn Balkans to organize its women members into the WF in 1995. With strong expansion of civil society activities and the anti-war movement the situation has changed in the late 1990s resulting in the establishment of gender sensitive policies, institutions and mechanisms. That was the basis for the establishment of an emancipatory environment and for the WF to foster dialogue and build issue-based coalitions with progressive women in the civil society which also in turn brought them into the political arena. Moreover, it was a cross-border movement and it definitely helped to change regimes both in Croatia and Serbia at the beginning of 2000.

■ SITUATION AND SOLUTIONS ■

SDUM is opposition for 10 years. The government of VMRO-DPMNE and DUI led by Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski for these 10 years rules with various types of pressure, corruption, fear, election manipulations, politicization of state institution, no rule of law, criminal and usurpation of media freedom. All of this is stated in the European commission report for the progress of Republic of Macedonia.

SDUM created a strategy and realized a campaign "Truth for Macedonia" which revealed all of the government manipulation. The international community is guarantor for signing and realization of the June's agreement, which will ensure fair and democratic general elections.

Because of long lasting challenging situation the Women Forum of SDUM is in continuous campaign with: organizing regional and local debates, march, protests, round tables, conferences, educations, trainings and etc. Big success for the Women Forum of SDUM is the statutory obligation for quota with minimum 40%



Cvetanka Laskova - President of SDUM Women





Zoran Zaev

Radmila Sekerinska

from less represented gender. With the change of election law it was negotiated by Women Forum of SDUM for legal solution of minimum 40% for the less represented gender, which presented an historic step for all women in Macedonia. In the SDUM's election program, Women Forum of SDUM has committed for parity 50/50 till 2020 year, ratification of Istanbul's conventions, creating an agency for gender equality and revision of many laws created by this government which has demoted women rights.

Women members of SDUM can proudly speak about true gender balance in the party, because of the gender sensitive president **Zoran Zaev**, deputy president **Radmila Sekerinska**, vice president of Assembly of Republic of Macedonia **Renata Deskoska** and minister for labor and social policy **Frosina Remenski**, which is not the case in other parties.

We are convinced that this trend will continue in the future.



Renata Deskoska

Frosina Remenski

SD PARTIES: 2014/2015 ELECTORAL RESULTS REFLECTING PERCENTAGE OF ELECTED WOMEN MPS

PARTY	PERCENTAGE	COMMENT
SD Slovenia	33 % - 50 % - 33%	Party was heavily defeated, percentage of women stagnated, than went up when 2 male MPs moved to ministerial positions, than a woman MP moved to a ministerial position and she has been replaced by a male MP.

SDP Croatia	23.8% - 34%	Party won, percentage of women went up only after male MPs moved to executive power.
SDP B&H	10 %	Party was heavily defeated, percentage for women dropped even more.
DS Serbia	30%	Party was heavily defeated, percentage of elected women MP stayed stagnant due to very efficient quota rules.

LSDV Vojvodina/Serbia	33%	Party defeated, percentage of elected women went slightly up.
SDP Montenegro	12.5% - 17%	Party kept the number of elected MPs, the percentage of women went up when male MPs moved to the positions in the government.

Source: CEE Network 2015 questionnaire to WFs.



Work on the joint Platform - Zagreb (December 2014)

GENDER EQUALITY PLATFORM

SOCIALIST AND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC PARTIES OF SOUTH EASTERN EUROPE

JUNE 2015

1. Based on the socialist, social democratic ideological socio-political goals, aspirations and secular worldviews, we are concerned about the developments in our countries and the region. The transition to a democratic, multi-party and market-oriented society has not brought the desired social transformation and the expected rapid economic and social progress and well-being. Conservative and clerical forces, and the neo-fascist right itself, continue to encourage nationalism, ethnic and religious intolerance, jeopardizing fundamental human rights and the status of national communities. They are pulling us backwards and not taking us into the future.

2. The neo-liberal model of economic development has brought prosperity to a small segment of the population that has often enriched itself illegally through corruption, in collusion with political and business elites. We should decisively reject this model, because it resulted in social disintegration, unemployment, poverty and an unacceptable erosion of the welfare state, which is the main accomplishment of socialist, social-democratic and progressive movements.
3. Unemployment continues to grow, with women and young people being the most vulnerable groups, birth rates are not increasing, poverty and social problems are piling up, young people continue to go abroad in search of a better future, and old people are subjected to daily reductions in benefits and their human dignity is being violated as they are pauperized. Unless we substantially change the political, economic and social policies in our countries they will be depleted of their most precious assets - human resources - educated, skilled and dedicated women and men, while young generations will seek a future elsewhere. National development will be jeopardized and peace, regional security and stability, already fragile, will be seriously undermined.
4. The constitutional and legal guarantees of equality between women and men are being threatened. Patriarchalism and conservatism are seriously eroding the achievements of our struggle for progress, attainment of gender equality and the emancipation of our societies. The most flagrant examples are reflected in the violation of workers' and social rights, reproductive freedoms, including the termination of unwanted pregnancy, as well as in the slow socio-legal measures to tackle violence against women. Gender parity in political and economic decision-making has not been reached.
5. Our parties, which politically and ideologically, in their basic tenets/postulates/principles of politics, stand for human rights, social justice and emancipation of women and gender equality, cannot allow this kind of developments. Changes should start from ourselves and we should not allow ourselves to



Work on the joint Platform - Skopje (April 2015)



Gender Equality Platform - Budapest (11-13 June 2015)

be derailed, split and defragmented! We should deliberately and through targeted policies and action push for:

1. Strengthening the rule of law and respect for women's rights as fundamental human rights:
 - *encouraging by all means measures to combat violence against women*
 - *giving women the right to decide about their body and procreation*
 - *implementing a gender-sensitive active employment policy, to defend workers' rights and take measures against the unemployment of women, including the elimination of the pay gap between women and men*
2. Strengthening democracy and gender equality within the socialist, social democratic and progressive forces, parties and their policies through:
 - *gender parity in party bodies, electoral lists (with the use of quotas to achieve a ratio of 50/50 to 2020)*
 - *gender-sensitive political platforms and decisions, as well as adequate capacity building for party cadres for policy implementation*
 - *allocation of adequate financial resources for party work in promoting gender equality in all spheres of life.*

Finally, as social-democratic women, social democrats, progressive and democratic forces we declare:

- *We will not live in poverty and autocracy!*
- *The rule of law, social justice and equality between women and men are the guarantees of democracy and progress!*

We shall fight and take action for these advanced goals and policies within the party and the government, lead and collaborate with other progressive social movement.





CEE NETWORK STATEMENT ON THE REFUGEE AND MIGRANT CRISIS

SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

Solidarity is at the core of social democracy – whether in war, peacetime, natural disasters or personal tragedies. It is an imperative that we stay true to our ideals – not only in words but also in deeds.

We cannot remain passive and watch the refugee humanitarian crisis of epic proportions evolve in front of our eyes, as women, men and children flee from war and seek a safe, peaceful and promising existence.

We, people of Europe, should remember how Europe itself has suffered the atrocities of war and displacement in the Second World War, and most recently in the Balkans. Still this is a global crisis warranting also an urgent response from the global community.

We, therefore, urge all EU member states and those aspiring to join the EU, to, among others:

- responsibly and proportionately, with the quota system as the first measure, bear the burden of the refugee influx, through a fair system of distribution and immediate assistance to those countries, and their civil societies, who are currently in the front lines
- provide throughout recipient countries humane conditions for the refugee reception, particularly focusing on women, children and the vulnerable and support civil society responses
- address and develop a joint asylum and migration policy through a pan-European common understanding and strengthened European institutions
- ensure that all policies addressing refugees are gender sensitive, as refugee women not only have special needs but also carry a big burden of the refugee plight
- engage and support civil society responses to the refugee crisis, in developing, implementing and evaluating the policies at national, regional and European level
- act and further cooperate with international organisations and other countries globally to address the refugee crisis but above all to politically and diplomatically resolve the root causes of the exodus of people, enabling an environment of peace, security and development

As women from the war torn Balkans and Central and Eastern Europe we speak from our own experience. We not only share the refugee pain but also their aspirations.

We call upon European states, political parties and civil society to come together to organise and support the refugees, whether they are in transit, or they ask for asylum or they just want to live and work.

We are ready to do our share, but above all work towards the development of gender sensitive political solutions to the refugee crisis to ensure that the specific needs of women and girl refugees are met.

■ FOLLOW-UP

A number of meetings, national and one European were held after the CEE Network for Gender Issues issued the above statement. A number of parties, namely, the Social democrats of Slovenia, Democratic Party of Serbia and the League of Socialdemocrats of Vojvodina endorsed the statement at their leadership meetings. The two latter parties organized a consultative meeting on the issue of women refugees and migrants in October 2015 in Novi Sad, Vojvodina/Serbia.

A conference entitled “**Tackling the Refugee/Migrant Crisis through a Socialdemocratic Lens**” was held in Athens, 18 and 19 December 2015. The meeting was hosted by PASOK in cooperation with the PES,

PES Women and the CEE Network on Gender Issues. The conference participants endorsed the draft PESW statement on the refugee crisis, the PASOK declaration and the CEE Network statement on the Refugee and immigration crisis. Participants had a rich, substantive and political discussion on the plight and hardships women and girls face as they leave their homeland, houses and families behind fleeing from war, death and destruction. While the need for urgent responses to the refugee and immigrant crisis is immediate, it should be addressed from a longer term perspective. Resolving the root causes of the crisis is an urgent task for the international political community and socialists, social democrats and progressives have to engage actively in this process. The participation of women, both from the refugee and migrant groups and Europe in general, in the resolution of these conflicts should be ensured as well as the implementation of the UN SC Resolution 1325 on women and conflict.

Women refugees lack resources, food, housing, access to health and social services, protection and security. There is a rise in child labour, early marriages, prostitution and trafficking with women and children as well as all sorts of sexual harassment, violence and abuse. The international community has to recognise their vulnerability and take concrete action including adequate budgeting. Disaggregated data on refugee groups are lacking and data is constantly shifting as the flows fluctuate. There is also a high number of unaccompanied children which hampers a differentiated approach to the needs of refugees and vulnerable groups including the LGBT community.

Political responses should rest on the principles of solidarity justice and equality, open societies and borders denouncing fear, xenophobia, racism, homophobia and right wing ideologies. Socialists, socialdemocrats and progressive should be clear in this respect, since combating such ideologies in our societies and even within our own ranks, has broader implications for the future of Europe. Socialist, socialdemocratic and progressive women stand ready to actively engage in finding humane, just, long term solutions to the different aspects of the refugee and migrant crisis and to support refugee women along this road.



Tackling the Refugee/Migrant Crisis through a Socialdemocratic Lens - Athens (December 2015)

Karolina **LEAKOVIĆ**

SDP Croatia Women's Forum Vice-President

PES Women Vice-President

Member of the CEE Network for Gender Issues Board



TESTIMONIALS

FEMINIST APPROACH TOWARDS WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN SD PARTIES: THE CASE OF CROATIA

"I am not a feminist, but I stand for gender equality", a sentence I have heard so often in last couple of years by women activists that showed up at SDP Croatia Women's Forum and Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung "Politics to women!" education series. Although no one even posed the notorious "Are you a feminist?" question, some of our comrades were intrigued by the term (and the content as well as prejudices of it), that had to decline their potential connection to it. It goes both for members of centre-left and/or liberal political parties that have been a part of that cross-party educational forum, as well as for women from trade unions, for example. It is why this negative attitude towards the very word "feminism", followed by a misunderstanding of the political consequences of it, had to be confronted.

That is precisely what we have been trying to change within the framework of “Politics to women!” debates, workshops and trainings since 2012. More than 200 women have been involved in the series of debates, discussions, workshops and trainings on history and future of feminism, social democratic women’s movement, gender equality, law and policy-making, as well as introspective type of gaining and sharing knowledge, based on personal experiences, fears and hopes.

This interactive, open and dialogue-based type of learning have proven to be crucial for women’s empowerment in political parties. The opening I-am-not-a-feminist-but statement was actually both intriguing and inspiring, for it has led to a series of thought-provoking discussions, hard debating, and - in most cases - re-shaping of attitudes by our participants.

This is exactly what we, as feminist political organization, are looking for: to change/improve the content of political/women’s activism by strengthening capacities of women in political parties (left, centre-left, liberal as well as trade-unions members), to equip them with information, arguments, data, to emancipate and enable them to be agents of change within their own communities.

There are a couple of innovative moments within our programme: first of all, it is a cross-generational gathering - we welcome women 16+ and encourage the exchange of experiences between women of all ages.

Secondly, we engage in a dialogue, which means that lecturers are sort of participants as well.

Thirdly, we believe that personal experience can lead to collective societal transformation. And we stand for the need for political emancipation of all, regardless of their background or political position they hold. These courses are, thus, not designed to improve political leadership per se, but to serve as a forum for emancipatory practices that perhaps would, one time in future, result in better women leadership.

“Politics to women!” programmes have been recognised within the broader region of the Western Balkans and have been transposed in various women’s political organizations, for they serve as a tool for engaging more progressive women into policy and decision-making. These newly established political forums for women’s political emancipation, that are developed into platforms for cross-party dialogue, can serve as a source of inspiration and a tool for change. A feminist one!

Sonja
LOKAR

*Executive Director
CEE Network for Gender Issues*



LOST REFERENDUM ON EQUAL MARRIAGE FOR ALL IN SLOVENIA

DECEMBER 20, 2015

The Slovenian Constitution has four important articles which should prevent us from the abuse of the referendum to diminish democratic standards and level of human rights in the society:

- Ban of discrimination on any personal ground
- Ban of the possibility to diminish already achieved level of human rights and freedoms
- Ban of the referendum concerning laws that would act anti-constitutionally regarding human rights and individual freedoms.

The law can be abolished by the referendum only if the majority of those who came out to vote voted against, and if the number of those who voted against reaches at least 20% of all who have the right to vote. (The first

two articles are in Slovene Constitution from 1991, while the last two ones have been enacted in 2013). Slovenia has a disturbing tradition that right wing parties and the Catholic Church are using the most democratic tool of democracy - the referendum - to abolish progressive legislation, accepted in the parliament, concerning human rights of specific minorities: single women and same sex and LGBT couples. On this issue, Slovenia is not divided between the right and the left, but between conservatives and modernists. Both categories can be found in all political parties, regardless of their values and ideological affiliations on other issues. Our Constitutional court, with a tiny majority though, has always found the way to allow the referendum which should not be allowed at all. It has accepted to allow this very undemocratic use of the referendum for the third time, regardless of the fact that modernists have hoped that after the amendments of the Law on referendum and people's initiative in 2015, such referenda would be automatically rejected. This did not happen.

In Slovenia, the first disgraceful referendum on human rights of a minority group was held in 2001, on the right of single women to get biomedical support for conception and pregnancy. The turnout was low: only 35.66 % of the voters casted their votes, but 72.36% of those who voted, voted against this right which has been in place and implemented no questions asked, for decades. So a conservative minority robbed single women of their already achieved right to biomedical support for conception and pregnancy.

The second shameful referendum was on the new Family Code in 2012. This time the point of dissent was the newly recognised right of a person in the same sex couple to adopt the children of his or her partner. This time the turnout was even lower, only 30.31% of the voters casted their votes. The victory of those who were against this progressive solution, was thinner than the first time: only 54,55 % of those who came to cast their votes voted against. Open discrimination against same sex couples has been kept in place again by the will of the radical conservative minority, barely reaching over 15% of all voters.

The third shameful referendum, this time on the Amendment on the Law on Wedlock and Family Relations, which

has foreseen equal marriage for all and equal rights of heterosexual and LGBT couples living in registered unions out of wedlock, has just taken place on December 20, 2015. Pro and con campaigns before the first two referenda were really strong. Nevertheless, their mobilisation effect on the modernists' side of the political spectrum has been low. The silent majority did not care to go to the booths and enabled a tiny but passionate conservative minority to abolish progressive legal solutions.

The last referendum showed again that radical conservatives, campaigning on homophobic prejudices and open lies copy pasted from US right wing homophobic manuals, are openly supported by the Catholic Church. The "modernist" bloc has been reduced to human rights NGOs, to a small United Left Party and to a small centre left SD party, while the leading party of the governing coalition, The Party of the Modern Centre, which became a relative winner of the general election in 2013 under the tag of centre left, did not even bother to participate in the PRO campaign. Public media, with the exemption of public TV, were this time more pro than con and played a big role in spreading the arguments pro and con in a way that the voters could make an informed choice, while social media has been totally divided between the two blocks and the level of the debate in the conservative camp was really pitiful. The turnout this time has been at the level of the referendum against the right of single women to artificial insemination - 36%. The votes against the right to equal marriage for all got 63 % of support of casted votes, while the votes pro got 37%. The votes against surpassed considerably the 20% of all votes needed to abolish the law. Again radical conservatives succeeded to get more people to the booths, and also enough to abolish the law. The silent majority again preferred to remain at home.

The mobilisation power of the radical conservatives has risen to the level of 2001 which led to the victory of the right wing coalition in general elections of 2004. This time the left and centre left parties stood bravely for their values of equality, solidarity and human rights for all, but the absence of the left wing in the democratic liberal camp has led to the victory of the conservatives. It remains to be seen if the sad outcome of this referendum is announcing the future victory of the right wing parties in the next general elections in Slovenia, due in the fall of 2017.

2015 CEE NETWORK ANNUAL EVALUATION SEMINAR

BUDAPEST - NOVEMBER 15, 2015

The annual 2015 CEE Network Annual Evaluation Seminar was very well attended with presidents and representatives of women's forums from the region, CEE Network Board Members and representatives of the Party of European Socialists (PES), Party of European Socialists Women (PES Women) and Young European Socialists (YES). The Annual Evaluation Seminar was composed of two sessions: the first one took stock of and evaluated 2015 activities, the second one looked ahead to 2016 and had the purpose of establishing the workplan of the Network for the coming year, together with outlining some structural and functional developments.



CEE Network Annual Evaluation Seminar - Budapest (November 2015)

In terms of substantive discussion participants were quite clear that right wing parties are on the rise. SD parties have, it seems, lost their connection with citizens while internal party fissures and divisions have surfaced and are hurting the socialdemocratic “cause”. This is further exacerbated by the refugee crisis. Politically, for SD parties there is no “business as usual” and they need to work hard to (re-)connect with their electorate.

Women's Forums and women politicians play a key role in this but, despite their role, their participation is not always recognised and further action is needed to strengthen their role and status within the parties. This reflects the general situation of social-democracy in the region, where a renewal process is urgently needed. Mutual cooperation and support among parties, WFs and umbrella organisations (such as YES, PES and PES Women) will facilitate this process, and, in parallel, it is crucial to devote resources to “passing the torch”, i.e. making it possible to transfer knowledge, best practices and encourage involvement of different social and demographic groups.

Participants agreed that the refugee and migration crisis (sadly accentuated by and confused with the recent Paris terrorist attacks) will have serious spin-off effects on peace and security in Europe. It is a huge challenge for SD parties to align their fundamental values of justice, equality and freedom with the increasing public pressure and right wing slogans, which put human rights, democracy and left values in peril. This is a long-term political challenge for the left and a long-term topic, where a particular difficulty is to find the best channel to bring the SD message of solidarity across, all the while addressing citizens' fears. WFs will play a key role here, and this point links back to the need for dialogue and capacity building.



Karolina LEAKOVIĆ

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VIGNETTES

1. CROATIA: EQUALITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ELECTORAL PROCESS (AND POST-ELECTORAL BLUES)

Results of Croatian parliamentary elections of 8th November 2015 have (possibly) marked a beginning of a new era, at least when it comes to the local political landscape. That goes for, on one hand, two main political camps (centre-left and centre-right), as well as, particularly, women candidates in the elections.

For the first time, the voters were given the opportunity to vote preferentially, to cast a vote not only for a list, but for a particular candidate on that list. For the first time Croatia has experienced this type of voting in 2013, at the European Parliament elections and it seems that this type of voting is highly appreciated by left-oriented voters (80% of those who voted for centre-left parties or coalitions have also cast their votes for a particular

candidate, research shows). Parliamentary elections 2015 were marked by another historical step for women candidates: a gender quota was introduced in the electoral law for the first time. Although it is, de facto, not a binding mechanism, since the ruling by Constitutional Court¹, fine is to be paid by each party or coalition that fails to fulfill legal obligations as stipulated. Introduction of the legally binding gender quota was a proposal by the SDP Group in Croatian Parliament and marks a step forward in our parliamentary conduct (the Party itself has introduced 40% gender quota as early as 1996).

Political actors, however, or at least the majority of those, have not shown particular progress in the number of women candidates on electoral lists: only 23 women were elected to the Parliament (15,23%), which is one of the lowest percentages of women in the Croatian Parliament overall. This percentage will, most probably, be increased with their male colleagues leaving for the executive to be replaced in the Parliament by women candidates (who are dominantly placed in the second half of electoral lists). Further analysis that SDP Croatia Women's Forum will be undertaken once the election process is finished (and that includes concluding negotiations on the future Croatian Government) and will give a clearer picture on the status of women in the context of the Croatian political system.

In the meantime, election results and post-electoral developments have led me to the following conclusions:

- Rise of self-proclaimed anti-ideological political platforms, who believe they stand for expertise and reforms, unlike other mainstream political actors.

¹ The Constitutional Court decided to abolish the legal provision on invalidity of candidates' lists without at least 40% of underrepresented gender, however keeping the financial sanctions.

- Newly established political platforms tend to avoid questions that show the ideological divide between progressives and conservatives, but insist on a concept of reforms (as such).
- New political platform(s) consider themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the people (although they are not the most influential political forces).
- Concepts of anti-political and anti-ideological go hand-in-hand with the concept of expertise, which assume that political parties and politicians are in a constant clash with experts, who are - by definition non-political or even anti-political.
- Since new platforms insist on anti-ideological questions, it is quite obvious that questions of gender equality and balanced gender representation within the Croatian Parliament as well as the executive, are not high on the reform agenda that has been discussed in the post-election period. The same goes for human rights and anti-discrimination as a whole. The concept of reforms is mainly associated with and oriented towards economy and administrative reforms, while gender equality is hardly mentioned.

For all the progressive women and men, this is a clear sign for a need of further politicization of the issues related to women's human rights and political participation in general. The story goes on...

WOMEN'S FORUM OF THE LEAGUE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATS OF VOJVODINA

2. FORUM FOR GENDER POLITICS

NEW PRACTICE OF DIALOGUE IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The Friedrich Ebert Foundation initiated a forum for gender policies to support the implementation of the Women's Platform for the Development of Serbia. The aim of the Forum for gender policy is to start a dialogue on specific problems that women and men encounter in their daily life in Serbia. While the results of the Forum, depending on the topic, may differ, the goal is to improve public policy and, for example, the recommendations are sent to duty bearers and decision makers with initiatives like the adoption of legislation, awareness-raising campaigns and the like. The participants of the Forum are representatives of institutions, political parties and civil society.

Maja
SEDLAREVIĆ

Member of the Presidency of LSV

President of the Council for Gender Equality LSV



FIRST FORUM

The first Forum for gender policy was held in Belgrade. The topic was the practice of exercising the right to alimony. It rests on the on-going dialogue initiated by the Women's Parliamentary Network and the Women's Parliamentary Network of Vojvodina, in connection with the exercise of the rights of single parents who remain invisible in our system.

Parents who have custody over children after divorce, mostly women, face obstacles in exercising their right to alimony, and even when the court has determined the alimony sum for child support they have difficulties in cashing it in. Simply put, Serbia still has no effective mechanism to address this problem.

In the light of this experience, one of the proposals is to establish an alimony fund from which alimony would be paid to the parent, and the state would charge the parent who is the giver of child support. This would present the state as an intermediary to prevent abuse of long court proceedings to force the payment of alimony. Equally it would ensure that the income of the parent who is paying the alimony is transparent.

In addition to key stakeholders and actors in the Republic of Serbia we had the opportunity at the Forum to hear and discuss practices from neighboring countries, primarily the Croatian and Slovenian practice since we share a similar legal and economic environment.

SECOND FORUM

The second gender policy Forum, which took place in Novi Sad, dealt with the current situation with the humanitarian catastrophe that brought refugees from the Middle East to our region. In spite of the fact that the process of migration and plight of people from this region is not a new phenomenon, Europe was not well prepared to receive them and was left without a systemic solution.

In this regard, the Republic of Serbia which is generally a transit country with refugees staying in it for various amounts of time is faced with numerous problems and challenges. Moreover, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of refugees who pass through our country, Serbia is faced with the closure of borders by all its neighbours, countries that are members of the European Union.

Women, it has been demonstrated, are specific victims of migration processes and of the refugee and humanitarian catastrophe on both the global and local levels. The challenges faced by women, children and their families to survive the exodus was discussed with colleagues from Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia, as well as representatives of the Republic of Serbia institutions and civil society.

THIRD FORUM

Under the auspices of the CEE Network for Gender Issues, women's forums and their social democratic parties from the region adopted a joint regional Gender Equality Platform, which was also signed by many other European social democratic political leaders at the June 2015 Congress of the Party of European Socialists.

With regard to the conclusions of the Gender Equality Regional Platform and the FES commitment to enhance gender policies at the local level, which is especially important in view of the need to consolidate, coordinate and agree, as social democrats, on a minimum of common policies, themes and services to advocate for gender equality in the upcoming local election campaign in Serbia, we organised a meeting in Belgrade. Participants were representatives of social democratic parties that are active in the Republic of Serbia and the leaders of the CEE Network for Gender Issues.

After an engaged, substantive and inspiring political discussion there was an agreement on a set of topics that would need to be prepared for the campaign, as well as a number of conclusions regarding the most effective ways that the women's campaign can be conducted at local level and steps to assist women politicians at the local level.

3. SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA WOMEN'S FORUM

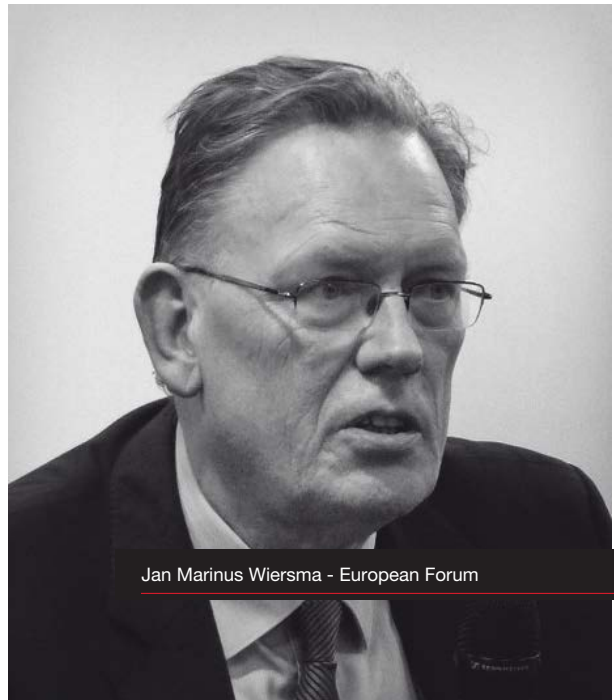
The Social Democratic Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SDP BiH) has raised the quota for the less represented sex from 35 to 40 percent. This is a result of the Forum of Women's struggle for amendments of the party Statute, improvement of internal party democracy, and our ongoing efforts to introduce parity and greater decision-making powers for women in the SDP BiH.

The SDP BiH has adopted a new party Programme with a separate chapter on gender equality. In this chapter, the party is defined as a feminist party.

The SDP BiH Forum of Women has drafted seven gender sensitive Social Democratic policies, including policies of sexual and reproductive health (including topics of right to abortion, sexual education, medically assisted insemination, and sexuality of women with disabilities); labour relations and protection from mobbing; religious education and gender stereotypes; school curricula, textbook policy and gender stereotypes; economic

empowerment of women; reconciliation of private, professional and public life; and the status and rights of the LGBT population. The Forum is currently drafting an analytical and instructive piece with recommendations on role of men in achieving gender equality.

The SDP BiH Forum of Women proposed, and the party Convention endorsed, the Resolution on Migration and Refugee Crisis.



Jan Marinus Wiersma - European Forum



Nermin Niksic - President of SDP BiH



INSTITUTE FOR DEMOCRACY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS, UKRAINE.

4. UKRAINE: LOCAL ELECTIONS 2015. BEHIND THE CURTAINS

- The political system of inequality, artificial constraints, lack of opponents for ideological reasons which strongly entered into the modern history of Ukraine echoed with indifference and disappointment by the society.
- Analyzing the electoral programs for the local elections proved that regional representatives in the majority do not intend to represent the interests of local communities to the parties.

- Leaders of some political parties decided not to overload themselves by questions about purely local issues.
- It is necessary to deliver information to all citizens about the dangers that populism brings with the aim to change the electoral culture.

Once again the local elections in Ukraine give grounds for reflection on the paradoxes that include a full range of social contrasts. Along with the ostentatious luxury of the “elite” continued impoverishment most of the population, human losses in Eastern Ukraine severely contrasted with loud and still unresolved corruption scandals, whilst Maidan’s declared new quality of politics overshadowed spectacular showdowns among oligarchic clans and political opponents.

At first glance it seems that all the upper-mentioned include obvious every day things for most Ukrainians. However recent local elections manifested the most glaring political contrasts as well as moral breakdown, which foremost touched the tops of society.

Here we should recall that out of 294 registered political parties, 142 participated in local elections. Representatives of 10 parties enjoyed the largest voter support: Solidarity (Petro Poroshenko’s party), Matherland (Yulia Tymoshenko’s party), Our land (former Party of Regions’s split), Opposition bloc (former Party of Regions’s split), the Agrarian Party of Ukraine, Ukraine Radical Party, UKROP, Renaissance, Self-Support (Samopomich), Freedom.

The analysis of the leadership of these parties showed that it consists predominantly of the state executives, financial and oligarchic circles, MPs.

The latter out of mentioned ones were unanimous to change the legislation to raise the electoral threshold for political parties from three to five percent. This and other provisions of the Law “On local elections” led to significant reduction of the number of people and parties willing to participate in elections, managed to establish a kind of “big leagues” of politicians and political forces that monopolized power. The legislator also ignored the right of voters to participate in the fate of some political parties and movements in local government. As you know, the ban of the Communist Party has caused mixed reactions by both inside Ukraine and of some experts of the Venice Commission. According to the latter, the right of freedom on expression was affected by that ban.

The breakdown of electoral programs for the local elections was a proof that regional representatives do not intend to represent the interests of local communities to the parties, but to defend instead the interests of their parties at the regional level. Overall, these programs duplicate the programs of parties in parliamentary elections and did not differ significantly from each other. In general, the programs of all political parties are full of populism, but combating the populism together with the corruption and oligarchs are declared in the same programs.

Also one could trace poorly hidden visionary goals, such as the calculations by some political forces to hold early parliamentary elections in Ukraine in 2016 and resetting of state power. There was the impression that the leaders of the major parties decided not to overload themselves by questions about purely local issues and offered a set of empty promises to the public or certainly important issues, but of national importance, which cannot be resolved at local level. It was difficult for voters to understand what the beautification of the city, district or village has in common with slogans about peace (Opposition Bloc), “Be yourself” (Samopomich) contract army (Motherland), peace and stability (Solidarity), the destruction of the oligarchic dictatorship and of anti-Ukrainian forces (Freedom).



Undoubtedly, all these manifestations based on proven methods of manipulating voters using populism were used by political consultants and were properly calculated. These conclusions were drawn by experts of the Institute for Democracy and Social Progress (IDSP), who in addition to research on the manifestations of populism in Ukrainian society, organized together with the Social Democratic Platform (a new social and political movement that brings together young people from different parts of Ukraine sharing the values of freedom, justice and solidarity, as well as to change the stereotypical perception of social democracy) nationwide campaign “Populism kills!” (#BeatPopulism). The main goal of this campaign was to deliver information to all citizens about the dangers that populism brings and to work on finding counterweights to populism (Find more information using the following links: <https://youtu.be/IBEmN7aAMT8>; <https://youtu.be/oVQ6c7UQS9g>; https://youtu.be/A1Cre_X8qsg; fb.com/NewSDPlatform).

At the same time when the façade of political battles were covered by passionate speeches of candidates, the purely pragmatic goals were hidden behind the curtains. Namely, it is the decentralization of powers aiming to spread their influence accompanied by access to the distribution and control of local budgets. The fate of the latter (local budgets) judging from years of “experience” of mentioned above parties in the sphere of the allocation of financial flows at the state level does not raise even a shadow of optimism.

Unequal distribution of political resources is a conscious attempt and result, as written in the apt observation by Swedish magazine Svenska Dagblade, that the Ukrainian economy and politicians are controlled by a small group of oligarchs who reach the very top. And these politicians, in their turn, shall adopt the decisions necessary for the small group.

The political system of inequality, artificial constraints, lack of opponents for ideological reasons, the division into “party” and “mass”, which strongly entered into the modern history of Ukraine echoed with indifference and disappointment by the society. Parties’ invasion to regions goes against the background of a sharp drop of

confidence to the governmental institutions. Balance of confidence to the Parliament decreased from -26% in December 2014 to -74% a year later; to the government from + 18% in December 2014 to -67% respectively, to the president of + 5% in December 2014 to -40% in December 2015 (data published by Fund “Democratic initiatives named after Ilko Kucheriv”). As for political parties, in particular, according to the survey, rating of non-confidence to them reached -72% in December 2015. Voter turnout in 2015 (46.62%) showed deep disappointment of society on its capacity to have an effective influence on government at all levels. This is to some extent confirmed by opinion polls done by IDSP.

Meanwhile, the team of the initiators and leaders of political inequality demonstrates increasing aggression, a dramatic struggle for spheres of influence, the manifestations of personal animosity that reaches the limits of decency. During the elections the reality of programs offset by conflicts, numerous billboards and city lights appealing not to reason or even to emotions, but rather to instincts of prospective voters.

The struggle between the recent political allies performed unclear. In the battle around utility tariffs the coalition members focused the blame for overvalued level and tariff’s “unreality” on the Petro Poroshenko’s Bloc (PPB) and on the government. “Motherland” demanded tariffs’ cut and the “Samopomich” together with “Radicals” accused PPB in regards of procedures in getting subsidies, although they were partially agree with the tariffs’ rates. Tears of regret by each candidate regarding needs on which society is experiencing looked as sacrilege amid the huge sums spent on advertising. Experts estimated that the total cost of the campaign exceeded 2 billion UAH.

Mentioned above negative manifestations of morality during the elections in 2015 left its destructive power and a bitter “after taste” in modern political life. Photos, swearing, fighting, public humiliation like “Yatsenyuk’s body removal” scandal on the amendments to the Law “On budget” in 2016 which threatens the visa-free regime with the EU, – all seems to have taken root in modern political system of Ukraine.



Given reflections, do not imply to analyze mentioned phenomena only the prism of political science or philosophy. However, if you invoke the grounds of these sciences, it is worth noting that politics and morality are interdependent categories. Ethical concepts such as goodness, justice, honor, dignity, moral obligations to society are vulnerable criteria of power, the state, political power. They act as stimulants, regulators politics, some politicians and a kind of moral examination of political programs and pledges.

On the other hand, morality is influenced by policies, which are proven by the proposed research. Unfortunately, the listed ethical concepts are mostly discarded by Ukrainian politicians in today's realities. They do not take into account the fact that the policy, which does not include social and individual moral qualities – is sentenced, and politicians who do not profess moral principles – will fade into oblivion!

Sources: documents of the Central Electoral Commission of Ukraine, the Committee of Voters of Ukraine, IDSP researches, media analysis, the parties' programs.

Institute for Democracy and Social Progress is Ukrainian think tank that operates in educational projects, scientific researches, conferences. The topical framework ranges from international politics and policies to grass-root researches on electoral priorities in certain regions of Ukraine including the aspects of populism.



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