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Gender Parity and Decision-Making in the Serbian Public Administration

Despite the widespread public commitment towards gender equality, gender disparity in positions of decision-making is still recognised as a persistent phenomenon in the EU.

It is 2017 and gender inequality still abounds even in the most developed societies with robust policies aimed at achieving gender parity. In the context of the Serbian public administration,¹ women make up 30% of highest managerial positions² within the Serbian ministries, although in the total civil service they comprise as much as 62.24%.³ This comparison points to relevant gender disparity in decision-making⁴ within a sector which is obliged to serve the entire population of a country, an issue which appears not to have been systematically addressed even by institutions such as SIGMA/OECD, which continually assess the overall state of play in the Serbian public administration (PA).⁵ Gender disparity within non-political decision-making structures of the PA serves as an indication of wider gender inequality in the country, especially taking into consideration that decision-makers within the PA affect all citizens through the public policies they create, the way they manage public funds, the manner in which they conduct public procurement, etc. This policy brief aims to delve further into the importance of this issue, the reasons behind the lack of parity, the present situation in Serbia, and possible policy responses necessary to address the current inequality.

Why Does Gender Parity Matter in Public Administration Decision-Making?

*In the future, there will be no female leaders. There will just be leaders.*⁶

Promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in all aspects of political, economic and cultural life has been a universal policy goal for decades.⁷ Gender equality is enshrined as a fundamental principle of the European Union and a subject of numerous efforts taken at the national and European level to ensure equal opportunity and equal participation of both women and men. However, despite the widespread public commitment towards gender equality, gender disparity in positions of decision-making is still recognised as a persistent phenomenon in the EU.⁸

The lack of gender parity in managerial positions in both the private and public sectors indicates the persistence of a range of structural, legal, and social barriers.

The lack of gender parity in managerial positions in both the private and public sectors indicates the persistence of a range of structural, legal, and social barriers which continue to negatively affect women's promotion and participation in positions of power. Those barriers may include direct discrimination, discriminatory mechanisms of promotion, and difficulties in achieving work-life balance, but these are also

1. Although the term 'public administration' could indicate a wider scope of institutions, in this brief the term will be used to represent state or central administration (ministries and other relevant administrative bodies).
2. European Commission, Gender Equality in National Administrations [Data collected between 26/06/2016-12/10/2016], http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/public-administration/national-administrations/index_en.htm.
3. SIGMA, Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration (Serbia 2016), OECD Publishing, Paris, May 2016, <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2016-Serbia.pdf>, 15.
4. This brief focuses on women managers in civil service positions, rather than on political appointees (e.g. ministers, state secretaries).
5. For example, the most recent monitoring report for Serbia, from May 2016, praises the increase in the percentage of women in the Serbian senior civil service without questioning whether this increase was a result of a policy response or just the same volatility in this number which has been seen on a few occasions in the previous years. See: SIGMA, Monitoring Report: The Principles of Public Administration (Serbia 2016), OECD Publishing, Paris, May 2016, <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2016-Serbia.pdf>.
6. Sheryl Sandberg, Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead (New York: Knopf, 2013), 360.
7. Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>.
8. European Commission, Gender balance in decision-making positions, 24 November 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/index_en.htm.

complemented by widely spread stereotypes and social attitudes. As a result, in the recent past, the issue of enhancing female participation in decision-making has become increasingly prominent in the national, European, and

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international arena. In Serbia, this issue has been explored by various institutions both within the government and civil society sectors. For instance, a more recent government study explored the participation of women as decision-makers on the local level identifying examples of good practices in the country.⁹

The relevance of gender parity in decision-making in PA arises from the broader idea of creating a just and genuinely equal society where all its members will fully participate and contribute to the decisions that impact their lives. Apart from this wider agenda, each country may wish to strive towards gender parity within the PA decision-making structures for more specific reasons presented in the following paragraphs.

First of all, gender parity in decision-making is a key indicator of the level of gender (in)equality in a society and the participation of women and men in decision-making should accurately reflect the composition of society. Hence, the prevailing gender imbalance in the PA reveals the patriarchal character of institutions which do not equally represent all citizens and only contributes to the existing discrimination of women. On the contrary, equality between women and men in decision-making in PA could serve as a model for the entire society, promoting principles of equal opportunity and women's empowerment.

Second, gender parity in managerial positions in the PA could create a more inclusive and responsive public administration able to better respond to citizens' needs. As a place where national policies are shaped and implemented, participation of women in the decision-making process would bring a

women's perspective into policy discussions. This is, of course, dependent on whether adequate complementary policies are set in place which raise awareness among women and men and train them to enable the establishment of more equal practices and administrative culture.

The equal participation of women in decision making in the PA could result in modelling female leadership. Present perception of power and leadership as masculine traits has resulted in a situation where women are discouraged from even imagining themselves in decision-making positions. Conversely, a psychological study from 2011 demonstrates women's empowered behaviour when they are exposed to female leaders.¹⁰

Next, contrary to the often biased assumptions about women's lack of expertise, on average women have a higher level of education¹¹ than their male colleagues in the EU - 34% of working women have some form of tertiary level education compared to 28% of men. However, at the top levels of business, women remain under-represented. Thus, their professional careers do not fully reflect their skill levels, which indicates a waste of human resources and competences.

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The arguments presented above are just some of the key reasons why gender parity within the PA is beneficial to any society and should be strived for by governments seeking to improve not only gender parity within their countries, but also their administrations' performance and quality. However, these benefits cannot be reached until the reasons for the existing inequality are adequately analysed and addressed, which the next section will deal with.

9. Višnja Bačanović, Učešće žena u odlučivanju na lokalnom nivou, Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy of Serbia, February 2014, http://zir.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/Knjiga_Ucesce_zena_18-09-2014.pdf.

10. Ioana M. Latu, Marianne Schmid Mast, Joris Lammers, and Dario Bombari, "Successful female leaders empower women's behaviour in leadership tasks," *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 49.3(2013): 444-448.

11. European Commission, Women and men in leadership positions in the European Union 2013, Report, October 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/gender_balance_decision_making/131011_women_men_leadership_en.pdf.

A gap between different pieces of legislation, for instance those which regulate gender equality and those related to public administration, may create space for continuous discrimination of women.

What are the Reasons Behind Gender Inequality in PA Management?

It is clear that women continue to face formidable legal, social, financial, and cultural barriers in labour forces around the world.¹²

Explanations for why women remain under-represented in decision-making positions are often based on assumptions about women's career choices or lack of expertise. For instance, nearly one third of Europeans believe that women are less willing to fight to make a career for themselves, and that they are less interested than men in positions of responsibility.¹³ In some countries, this number encompasses almost 50% of respondents. Moreover, one in four Europeans believe women have less qualities and skills regarding positions of responsibility. However, these common assumptions fail to take into account the impact of systemic and pervasive gender-based discrimination that continues to characterise even the most 'developed' societies.

The Gender Equality in Public Administration¹⁴ report identified some common obstacles to women's equal presence in decision-making. They are broadly divided into four groups:

Gaps in adoption and implementation of enabling legal and policy frameworks

Harmonisation of national legislation and policies with international standards and norms that call for balanced participation in decision-making plays an important role in ensuring equal access for women to managerial positions in the public administration. Further, the report states that

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"seemingly gender-neutral laws" quite frequently have a discriminatory impact on women. Moreover, a gap between different pieces of legislation, for instance those which regulate gender equality and those related to the public administration, may create space for continuous discrimination of women.

Discriminatory and unsupportive organisational cultures within public administration

As the report states: "organisational cultures are influenced by gendered norms, which are usually unarticulated, unwritten, and sometimes unconscious, and therefore hard to identify and address."¹⁵ Particularly important are gender stereotypes about female leaders and certain personal traits (e.g. obedience, emotion) incorrectly ascribed to women exclusively because of their gender. Recruitment practices and rules on

participation in trainings are two additional aspects of public administration which can reinforce discrimination and put women in a disadvantageous position. Moreover, difficulties of achieving a work-life balance (supported by gendered family ideologies) on one hand, and the so-called 'long-hours culture'¹⁶ on the other, prevent women who typically assume responsibilities for the family to have equal participation in PA overall and decision-making processes in particular.

Gaps in data and analysis

A lack of available data and analyses is recognised as a significant obstacle for any effort aimed at improving women's equal participation in decision-making in public administration. The report explains that most countries suffer from a general lack of adequate and comparable data which could be utilised in

12. Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders: Opening doors for women working in government, 2013, [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_Worldwide_Index_of_Women_as_Public_Sector_Leaders/\\$FILE/EY-Worldwide-Index-of-Women.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_Worldwide_Index_of_Women_as_Public_Sector_Leaders/$FILE/EY-Worldwide-Index-of-Women.pdf), 19.

13. European Commission, "Special Eurobarometer 376: Women in decision-making positions," March 2012, http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_376_en.pdf.

14. UNDP, "Gender Equality in Public Administration," 2014, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/democratic-governance/public_administration/gepa/.

15. Ibid., 20.

16. The so-called 'long-hours culture,' an unwritten (or sometimes explicit) requirement to demonstrate commitment to the organization by working beyond contractual hours – is widely held to be a masculine model of work. GEPA Global Report, May 2014, 23.

policy-making processes. Consequently, it prevents evidence-based policy-making and monitoring of implemented measures.

Weak gender mainstreaming in public administration reforms

The process of reforming the public administration and efforts to create an efficient and modern system present a valuable opportunity to mainstream gender balance and equal participation of women in decision-making. A failure to promote women's participation and introduce policies that will empower women means missing a chance to create a more inclusive public administration which reflects the diversity of the society it serves.

In addition, the report of the European Institute for Gender Equality,¹⁷ which explores gender equality in power and decision-making positions between 2003 and 2014, recognises the similar hindering social and institutional factors for the underrepresentation of women. Analogous to the UNDP report, it is recognised that the traditional division of labour in households impacts the women's ability to enter leadership positions, while the perception of leadership traits as masculine makes it difficult for women leaders to demonstrate them.

In the Serbian context, the crosscutting nature of gender disparity and the fact that public policies are not gender neutral have recently been more recognised. However, there are relevant gaps between different pieces of legislation which fail to create an equal playing field for women.

Is Serbia Progressing in Achieving Gender Equality?

We, gathered here in the same place, are convinced that gender equality is a precondition for development and the key to resolving the greatest development challenges in Serbia.¹⁸

In the Serbian context, the crosscutting nature of gender disparity and the fact that public policies are not gender neutral have recently been more recognised. The best example of this development is the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 which states that all government bodies should "follow the implementation of gender equality principles in all areas of public life."¹⁹ However, there are relevant gaps between different pieces of legislation which fail to create an equal playing field for women in Serbia. For instance, the Law on Civil Servants indirectly precludes women returning from maternity leave to advance to higher positions.²⁰ One of the key reasons for these legal gaps is the lack of gender mainstreaming in Serbia.²¹ CEP's earlier policy brief on gender mainstreaming in policymaking indeed indicated that: "a failure to incorporate provisions on gender mainstreaming could lead to the continuation of the practice of gender-blind policymaking in Serbia and consequently to persistent discrimination and inequality in the wider society."²²

Apart from legal and policy gaps, another issue is that of the organisational culture which enables the continuation of gender inequality. As an example, the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of Serbia published a report in 2015 claiming that institutional sexism is widely spread through "deeply rooted systems of opinions and behaviours of professionals in institutions of a system based on gender stereotypes and prejudices."²³ Taking these legal, policy and social factors into account, there is also the issue of Serbia being a data light envi-

17. European Institute for Gender Equality, "Gender Equality in Power and Decision-Making: Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in the EU Member States," Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015, <http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/mh0215090enn.pdf>.

18. "Ženska platforma za razvoj Srbije 2014-2020", Palić, 2 November, 2014, http://socijalnoukljucivanje.gov.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Zenska_platforma_za_razvoj_Srbije_Palic_III_2014_final.pdf, 1.

19. National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020, Republic of Serbia, <http://www.mgsi.gov.rs/lat/dokumenti/nacionalna-strategija-za-rodnu-ravnopravnost-za-period-od-2016-do-2020-godine-sa-akcionim>.

20. More specifically, article 83 of the Law on Civil Servants prohibits employees who worked less than six months in a given calendar year from being appraised for their work. In turn, according to other appraisal-related articles of the Law, lack of successive appraisal then impedes managers from promoting their staff.

21. Gender mainstreaming "is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies, at all levels and at all stages by the actors normally involved in policymaking." See: Council of Europe, Gender Mainstreaming conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices - Final Report of Activities of the Group of Specialists on Mainstreaming, Strasbourg, 1998, 17.

22. Katarina Tadić, "Gender Mainstreaming of Public Policies in Serbia: A Case for (Light) Optimism," European Policy Centre - CEP, Belgrade, October 2016, http://cep.org.rs/images/train/train_brief_final.pdf.

23. Commissioner for the Protection of Equality of Serbia, Special Report of the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality on Discrimination of Women, May 2015, http://ravnopravnost-5bcf.kcdn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/images_files_Poseban_izvestaj_o_diskriminaciji_zena_priprema_korigovana-1.pdf, 24.

24. Katarina Kosmina, "Demanding open data in Serbia Role of think tanks and research-based civil society organizations," European Policy Centre - CEP, Belgrade, September 2016, https://wbc-rti.info/object/document/15352/attach/demanding_open_data_in_serbia.pdf.

Gender gaps are usually accompanied by corresponding gaps in data and analyses. In Serbia's case, it is hard to find reliable and consistent numbers for women within the public administration, which presents a problem for any future civil society or government efforts to monitor or evaluate gender equality.

approach to monitoring data trends in the country. This leads to situation where it is hard or impossible to monitor gender (in)equality trends in different sectors over time.

Women Managers in the Serbian PA by Numbers

The dearth of data makes it difficult to set policies and gauge progress, preventing governments and organisations from taking measurable steps to empower women and improve lives.²⁵

Serbia has received mixed reviews through different gender equality assessments. For example, the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)²⁶ ranks Serbia with the fifth lowest level of discrimination out of the 108 countries included in the assessment. On the other hand, the EU's Gender Equality Index places Serbia below the EU average.²⁷ However, these diverging assessments focus on gender equality overall and, while most directly or indirectly encompass the public administration, they are not precise enough to address the state of play in terms of gender parity in PA decision-making.

As explained earlier, gender gaps are usually accompanied by corresponding gaps in data and analyses. In Serbia's case, it is hard to find reliable and consistent numbers for women within the public administration. Sources from the SIGMA/OECD mission indicate that HRMS does not possess reliable

data on the gender ratio in the public administration. An additional issue is the fact that there is divergence in the existing data, depending on the source, regarding the number of women managers.

According to the European Commission data, the peak in the number of women in the highest non-political decision-making positions within ministries was reached in 2011, when women accounted for 39% of senior managers (see table below).²⁸ However, the following year was marked by a drastic drop to 15%, which then slowly increased to 30% in 2016. However, the Commission's data appears to be in conflict with official data from the HRMS. A document from HRMS puts the percentage of women in senior managing positions within ministries at 45% in 2015, whereas the Commission's data gives 18% for that year. Another example of data divergence is between HRMS and SIGMA/OECD data. The SIGMA/OECD monitoring report from May 2016 indicates that women held 44.7% of senior managing positions in 2015 across the public administration. On the other hand, for the same year and scope, HRMS data puts this number at 41%.

Women managers in ministries in Serbia: 2008-2016



25. The New York Times, "Closing the Gender Data Gap: How Efforts to Collect Data About Women and Girls Drive Global Economic and Social Progress," 13th May 2016, <http://paidpost.nytimes.com/gates-foundation/closing-the-gender-data-gap.html>.

26. Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI), OECD, 2014, <http://www.genderindex.org/ranking/all>.

27. European Institute for Gender Equality, "Serbia - the first EU candidate country to produce a Gender Equality Index," 2 February, 2016, <http://eige.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/serbia-first-eu-candidate-country-produce-gender-equality-index>.

28. European Commission, Database - Women and men in decision-making, 24 January, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/index_en.htm.

In general, having diverging data from credible sources suggests low reliability overall and presents a problem not just for this paper and its analysis, but also for any future civil society or government efforts to monitor or evaluate gender equality within the public administration. For example, an extensive study on public management work context and reform in Serbia in 2013, which was based on a “large scale survey of senior

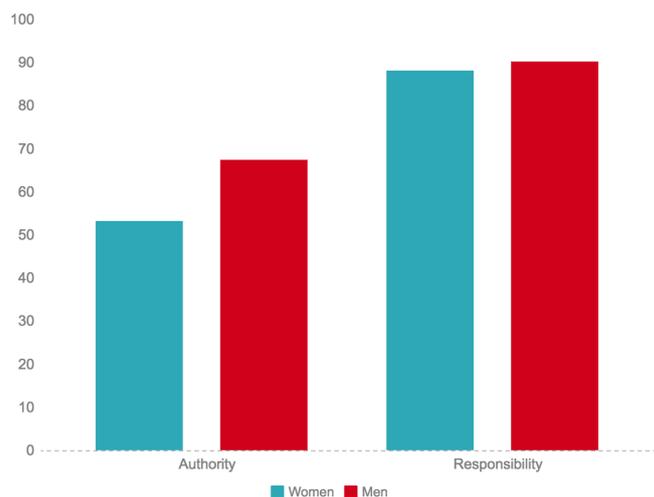
Recent data points to relevant differences in the levels of autonomy, formal decision-making authority, and responsibility between male and female managers within the PA.

public executives”, indicated that 52.4% of senior managers who responded to the survey were women.²⁹ Such a large scale effort is certainly commendable and can provide invaluable insights, but given that there is no precise or reliable data on the gender composition overall, it makes it harder to draw credible inferences from this sample as it cannot be concluded how representative of the whole public administration it is.³⁰

Apart from the uncertainty of the existing numbers, there is also the question of how much should one care about percentages? Or, are equal numbers the same as equal representation? Our research points to problems which go beyond mere numbers. Recent data³¹ points to relevant differences in the levels of autonomy, formal decision-making authority, and responsibility between male and female managers within the PA. Namely, while the level of responsibility is the same for both female and male managers, irrelevant of their managerial level, levels of autonomy and decision-making authority are strongly correlated with gender. More specifically, female managers in the PA indicate lower levels of autonomy and authority in comparison to their male colleagues, while maintaining the same level of personal responsibility. For example, in the area of policy planning and policymaking, female and male managers have a similar level of responsibility, while the women’ level of authority is 10 percentage points lower compared to their male colleagues (see graph).

Although these are numbers and not accounts of individual professional experiences of women working in the PA, it is not hard to imagine the situation these unbalanced levels of autonomy, authority, and responsibility lead to. For example, in areas such as public procurement, budget management, and policy-making, female managers might regularly get into situations where they cannot act in accordance with their level of knowledge, expertise, or professional duty. While the qualitative aspects of gender disparity should be analysed in more depth, these examples point not just to the lack of data and analysis of this issue, but also to the lack of policies addressing them directly.

Levels of authority and responsibility in policy planning and policymaking
Serbia 2016



Policy Response for Ensuring Equality: Learning from Slovenia?

For the past 40 years, governments across the world have implemented measures to address gender inequality in the workplace and have introduced equal opportunity legislation and created protections against discrimination.³²

Using the most recent Commission data on women and men in decision-making allows us to focus on the level of ministries and make comparisons across EU and candidate countries. In the Serbian context, comparisons on the regional level make the most sense given that the region includes former Yugoslav

29. The study excluded the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior as ‘ministries of force’. Vid Štimac and Mina Lazarević, “Public Management Work Context and Reforms in Serbia: Results from a large scale survey of senior public executives,” Belgrade Fund for Political Excellence and the Social Inclusion and Poverty Reduction Team of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, Belgrade, 2013, http://www.cocops.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Stimac-and-Lazarevic-2013_Public-Management-Work-Context-and-Reform_Serbia.pdf, 18.

30. It is important to note that this issue, however, is not just a gender data gap, but an overall problem of lack of adequate data on the composition of staff within the public administration.

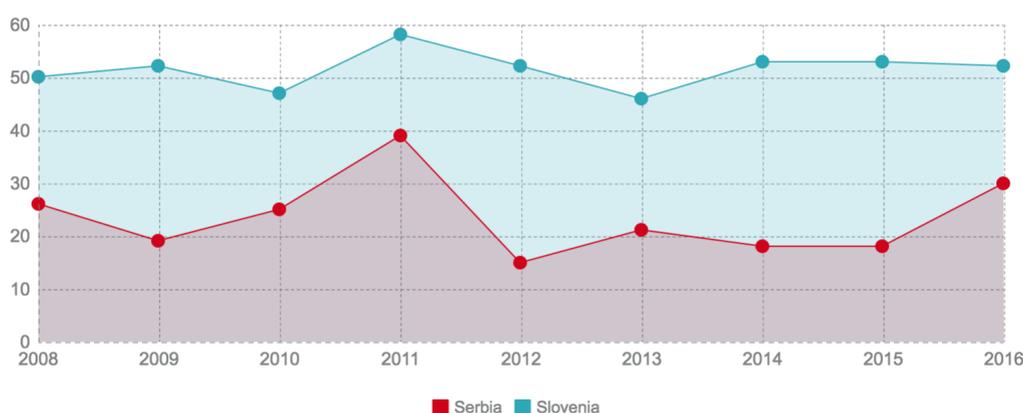
31. Collected through a SIGMA/OECD requested managerial accountability study in the fall of 2016. The survey encompassed 309 civil servants.

32. Worldwide Index of Women as Public Sector Leaders: Opening doors for women working in government, 2013, [http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_Worldwide_Index_of_Women_as_Public_Sector_Leaders/\\$FILE/EY-Worldwide-Index-of-Women.pdf](http://www.ey.com/Publication/vwLUAssets/EY_-_Worldwide_Index_of_Women_as_Public_Sector_Leaders/$FILE/EY-Worldwide-Index-of-Women.pdf), 13.

neighbours, who come from the same administration culture. Although the percentage of women as senior managers³³ within ministries rose to 30% in 2016, Serbia still ranks low compared to ex-Yu neighbours: Slovenia (52%), FYR Macedonia (47%), and Montenegro (38%).³⁴ In this context, Serbia currently ranks higher only when compared to Croatia, which has 20% of women among non-political senior management. Given that the Commission data demonstrates that gender parity on the highest non-political management levels managed to vary from 39% to 15% and then back to 30% within just 5-6 years, it is clear that there is no stable policy framework enabling progress in terms of gender parity. Put more simply, gender parity varies according to circumstances which are hard to judge without precise data and in-depth analysis.

Achieving equal representation for men and women is certainly a long-term goal and requires changes in all aspects of private and professional life in one society. Most countries in the European context have developed and implemented 'active policy responses' (e.g. use of diversity or gender quotas, equal pay rules/guidelines, leadership training) to ensure women are equally presented in the workplace, including managing positions.³⁵

Women in senior management in ministries in Serbia and Slovenia: 2008-2016



What can be a useful approach is to look at how EU member states similar to Serbia in terms of their administration cultures, have designed and implemented policies to enhance gender parity in senior management within the public administration. The most valuable case might be that of Slovenia, which had 24% of women in highest management in ministries in 2003, and reached a 50/50 ratio by 2008.³⁶ The table below allows for a comparison of how the percentage of women at the highest managerial levels varied in both Slovenia and Serbia between 2008-2016. As one report indicated, "Slovenia was one of the first European transition countries to translate civil society initiatives on women's and gender issues from the late 1980s into governmental policy programmes and legislation."³⁷ Hence, the process of achieving gender equality has been a decades long initiative engaging different sectors of society - government, civil society, and citizens.

Serious policy decisions aimed at gender equality were initiated in the early 2000s in Slovenia, when the government took several steps towards addressing existing inequality. For example, in 2001, it established an Office for Equal Opportunities which was "primarily responsible for promoting equal opportunities and gender equality".³⁸ Another positive example is that of work-life balance policies, which are equally important

because women are traditionally pressured to assume most of the responsibility for family matters - ranging from housework to childcare. Slovenia has had a good track record in this area as well. Namely, Slovenia is one of the few European countries that reached the 'Barcelona targets'.³⁹ The benefits of these achievements can be seen, for example, in the fact that Slovenia is one of the three European countries

33. According to the European Commission methodology this entails only level 1 managers.

34. European Commission, Database - Women and men in decision-making, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/index_en.htm.

35. OECD (2013), "Women in senior administrative positions in central government", in *Government at a Glance*, 2013, OECD Publishing, Paris, 124.

36. European Commission, Database - Women and men in decision-making, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/gender-decision-making/database/index_en.htm.

37. European Commission, "Gender equality and women's rights / empowerment in Slovenia," 18 July, 2013, http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/gender-equality-and-womens-rights-empowerment-slovenia_en.

38. However, the Office was closed down in 2012 due to austerity measures and its duties transferred to the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs. See: European Parliament, *The Policy on Gender Equality in Slovenia*, 2015, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510010/IPOL_STU\(2015\)510010_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2015/510010/IPOL_STU(2015)510010_EN.pdf), 10. & European network of legal experts in the non-discrimination field, *Closing down of the Government Office for Equal Opportunities*, news report, April 2012, <http://www.equalitylaw.eu/downloads/2566-si-31-office-for-equal-opportunities-closed-down>.

39. Barcelona targets were set in March 2002 when the European Council addressed the relevance of childcare in achieving equality. In accordance with these targets, Slovenia now provides childcare to more than 90% of children between three years old and the mandatory school age, as well as childcare to at least 33% of children under three years of age. European Commission, "Gender equality in the workforce: Reconciling work, private and family life in Europe", JUST/2011/GEND/PR/1081/A4, April 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140502_gender_equality_workforce_ssr_en.pdf.

which has a higher employment rate for mothers than for women without children.⁴⁰

What is possibly the most valuable lesson for Serbia is that gender equality in PA decision-making cannot be resolved by a policy status quo, but that an active policy approach is the only way to achieve relevant progress in this area. Additionally, the case of Slovenia shows that, apart from policies directly aimed at PA management, additional policies which affect the private sphere where women face equal or higher rates of discrimination are also necessary to enable gender parity.

Gender Equality in Decision-Making as a Precondition for Good Governance

*The equal participation of women and men in decision-making is a matter of justice, human rights and good governance.*⁴¹

The abovementioned arguments serve as a clear indication that Serbia needs to create and implement policies aimed at achieving women's equal participation and leadership in the public administration. Moreover, these policies must be based on reliable data, more precisely, the managerial gender gap can be adequately closed only if quality gender equality data exists as a prerequisite. Additionally, examples like that of Slovenia can be used to inspire smart policy design or learn valuable lessons from countries which have similar public administration cultures but have reached a higher level of equality than Serbia.

Most importantly, the existing data and analyses show that, if left alone, the gender gap in PA decision-making positions in Serbia will continue to fluctuate based on political, social or

economic trends. Put simply, gender inequality will not go away if it is left ignored and inadequately addressed, rather, it requires reliable data, quality research, in-depth analysis, and careful policy development and implementation. On Serbia's paths towards gender equality and public administration reform, women have to become key figures rather than marginalised in decision-making processes.

To prevent negative fluctuation of the gender gap in PA decision-making positions in Serbia, an active policy response is crucial.

The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 and the fact that, in 2016, Serbia became the first non-EU member state to make an official equality assessment using the EU's Index of Gender Equality⁴² point to the fact that serious policy considerations on the topic of gender parity already exist in the country. Nonetheless, existing inequality in PA decision-making requires a policy specifically tailored for this sector and the issues faced by women within it. First of all, it would be necessary to embed the aspect of gender parity and decision-making in PA in equality-related policy documents, since it was not included in the 2016-2020 Strategy. Secondly, the question of gender parity and decision-making should become an inseparable element of civil service-related HRM reforms, as well as relevant policy and legal documents (particularly the Law on Civil Servants). Overall, existing inequality in PA decision-making requires a proactive approach on multiple fronts, as well as strong coordination between different policy reform efforts.

40. European Commission, "Gender equality in the workforce: Reconciling work, private and family life in Europe", JUST/2011/GEND/PR/1081/A4, April 2014, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/documents/140502_gender_equality_workforce_ssr_en.pdf, 7.

41. European Commission, "Report on equality between women and men 2015," 2016, http://ec.europa.eu/justice/gender-equality/files/annual_reports/160422_annual_report_en.pdf.

42. European Institute for Gender Equality, "Serbia - the first EU candidate country to produce a Gender Equality Index," February 2016, <http://eige.europa.eu/news-and-events/news/serbia-first-eu-candidate-country-produce-gender-equality-index>.

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