

Lobbying for Quotas: International and Regional Cooperation

Overview of the Session

This session focused on quota discourses and how international and regional associations can be important in promoting gender equality and lobbying for quotas. It examined the work of Socialist International Women (SIW) and the activities of the CEE Network for Gender Issues in encouraging the adoption of quotas in political parties. It also looked at the Stability Pact, an agreement between countries in Southeast Europe, and the part it has played in the push for gender equality in the region.

Socialist International Women

Ms. Karolina Leaković examined the activities of the SIW, an international association of women's organizations connected to the Socialist, Social-Democratic and Labour Parties affiliated to Socialist International. She stressed the long-term commitment of the organization to the values of gender-balanced representation in political parties and decision-making bodies. The SIW strongly favours the promotion and implementation of quota mechanisms within its member organizations.

The SIW has been effective in applying pressure to ensure that women's issues are put on the international agenda. The organization is very active in international fora, such as the United Nations (UN) and the Party of European Socialists. In addition, it has adopted a series of instrumental resolutions and statements stressing the need for quota measures. For instance, the 1994 SIW Bureau Meeting in Budapest adopted the 'Implementing a Gender Perspective in Public Policies' resolution. The document urged all political parties to adopt the SIW quota proposal and to strengthen their commitment to gender equality. The 1998 Bureau Meeting in Oslo confirmed the organization's commitment to gender equality in the 'Women and Power-Sharing: Leadership and Strategies' declaration. The latter called for affirmative action to: promote women in national governments and international institutions; ensure gender-bal-

anced party structures and electoral lists; and make sure that, in dealing with the media, gender issues are on the public agenda.

The SIW is a useful international mechanism to encourage political parties around the world to implement quotas. Given its long history, and in light of many new developments, a certain amount of re-tailoring of its institutional capacity is necessary to allow it to reach out to political parties worldwide and give them the opportunity to share their experiences.

CEE Network for Gender Issues

Ms. Daša Šilović provided an overview of the activities of the CEE Network with regard to women's political participation. She highlighted the challenges that women faced during the transition in Eastern Europe and the role that international instruments played in promoting the women's agenda. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, women participated equally as citizens in the mass demonstrations, but, when new parties and democratic governments were established, they found themselves excluded from positions of power. The newly created CEE Network decided to help women in the region to prepare for public life and to work for change through political channels. International instruments proved strong allies in this process.

"International instruments have made a big difference because by introducing them the discussion around the issue of equality is also introduced. International instruments are not binding but they are instrumental in pushing the agenda forward and giving women on the ground the opportunity for international support and a tool they can bring home".

The 'alliance' between international instruments and women's representation dates back to the early 1920s when women's international organizations working with the League of Nations initiated the discussion on quotas. The long process to advance the gender equality agenda culminated in the adoption

Since the very dynamic period in the 1990s, when many organizations applied for membership, all new SIW members have been required to have a 30 percent gender quota. Old members are not explicitly obliged to adopt the quota measures and the SIW does not utilize enforcement or sanction mechanisms. Yet, existing members are also encouraged to reconsider their party rules and structures and to work towards gender balance. More than 40 SIW member organizations have introduced the quota, ranging from 20–50 percent.

in 1979 of CEDAW by the UN General Assembly. Šilović emphasized that CEDAW has become almost a ‘household’ name on the ground. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action and its Beijing+10 review are other examples of international instruments that advocacy networks actively use to move the gender equality agenda forward.

Šilović noted that significant progress has been made in accumulating experience for women in public life. Quotas have been particularly valuable in increasing women’s visibility in decision-making bodies. Advocacy work has helped to introduce the gender discourse and overcome women’s reluctance to participate in public life and reach out to political parties. Women’s groups inside and outside of the parties have been instrumental in ensuring the inclusion of gender issues in electoral manifestos. Training activities, such as the ‘Women Can Do It’ modules, have enhanced women’s public capacity and ability to offer their expertise. The efforts of the GTF in the Balkans have led to the instigation of electoral reforms. Attempts to forge political partnerships have increasingly resulted in greater commitments among party leaderships. For instance, gender equality is one of the six action priorities of the Party of European Socialists.

The Gender Task Force of the Stability Pact

Ms. Sonja Lokar addressed the question of how women from 13 countries in Southeast Europe learned to use the Stability Pact as an international instrument in order to gain more political power. The Stability Pact, an ad hoc intergovernmental agreement, was established in 1999 with the purpose of assisting reconstruction efforts in Southeast Europe. Women in the CEE Network decided that it provided a window of opportunity to engage international actors in the region’s gender equality agenda. At the commencement of the process, the leaders of the UN and the OSCE missions in BiH were very supportive of the agenda. The CEE Network quickly organized a petition to include women in the process, signed by 150 organizations, and demanded a formal place for women at the table where the region’s future was to be discussed.

The Stability Pact leadership was taken by surprise. Initially, it agreed to the request and promised to set up the Gender Task Force (GTF). Yet, when the formal Stability Pact institutions were created, the GTF seemed to have been forgotten. It was necessary, therefore, to involve Western Social-Democratic women’s groups in an informal campaign to lobby for the establishment of the GTF. Eventually, the Stability Pact Secretariat granted its formal approval for the formation of the GTF as a regional gender equality institution.

Once established, the GTF faced the challenge of working in practice. Together with the CEE Network, an action plan was developed, which included gender mainstreaming. Yet, as Lokar emphasized, it was very hard to aim for mainstreaming when no streams existed. Throughout the region, insensitive governments, chaotic NGO communities, media hostility and a very low level of women’s representation in key

offices impeded work on gender equality. Thus, the initial struggle was not so much focused on the adoption of quotas, but rather on creating the basis for future work by bringing together and training women from political parties and NGOs. As part of the ‘Women Can Do It’ programme, some 16,000 women were trained in small group seminars. In addition to training, the GTF participated actively in networking, strategy-building, planning electoral campaigns, preparing equal opportunity legislation and pressuring political parties to make space for women. The quota issue became a recurrent demand of women across the region.

The GTF has made some notable progress. The successes were made possible by years of stable financial support from donors and strong regional cooperation. Issue coalitions on gender equality brought together NGOs, national institutions, international organizations and media entities. They continuously used the ‘sandwich strategy’, top-bottom (from international actors) and bottom-up (from grassroots organizations), to put pressure on national political establishments.

The most important future challenge concerns sustainability. There is a real danger that the inter-

The diverse experiences of women in Eastern Europe indicate that the process to bring about change is incremental and far from complete. The way to achieve continuous progress is by sustaining both upstream pressure and downstream support.

national community will disengage from the gender equality process in the region, withdraw its resources and abandon its focus. The GTF's very successes are used to justify the extrication of international donors and to create the illusion that all of the work has been completed. Lokar concluded that it is vital to persuade international actors of the value of their future support, find new sustainable donors and enhance regional strategic partnerships.

Discussions from the floor

The discussion concentrated on challenges to encouraging and sustaining a gender equality agenda and on promotional strategies. The process to achieve gender equality is typically very slow and incremental; several factors hinder it, such as the financing of gender equality programmes and initiatives. GTF activities, for instance, are affected by the fact that the Stability Pact has never had a permanent financing mechanism, but instead is based on a series of bilateral agreements. An additional problem pertains to the fact that, although the GTF was planned regionally, it has been implemented nationally and locally. The CEE Network has enjoyed a stable but limited supply of resources, and it funds all of its activities separately to avoid major donor-driven crises.

The issue of sustainability was linked to the need to build internal party democracy. It is necessary to support 'women in power' strategies in parallel with internal party democracy campaigns. Making political parties more internally transparent and responsible to their members would open up further the political participatory channel. Women will be able to get to the heart of the decision-making structures and avoid being regarded as 'token representatives' only when the correlation between internal party democracy and participation is made. A case in point is the 'Women Can Do It' programme in Croatia: women learn to work for democratic reforms in their own political parties, including candidate nomination procedures and funding practices. In addition, it was noted that the SIW actively encourages all of its party members to examine their internal structures and to replace discriminatory practices. The SIW focuses on the establishment of women's groups within political parties as an instrument that can push for modifications to internal party structures.

Participants highlighted some other variables that

affect progress towards increased women's representation and discussed the value of inter-regional cooperation and experience-sharing. Political parties that embrace gender quotas (such as Nordic parties) might work with their sister parties in Eastern Europe to highlight the benefits of women's representation and participation in the decision-making field. One participant suggested that political parties in Eastern Europe could be persuaded of the value of particular policies when they are linked to the EU enlargement process. Existing and older members of international and regional institutions (Socialist International and the EU) should not, however, be exempt from meeting the standards demanded of newer members. Participants agreed that there is a greater need to frame the debate on women's political participation in terms of the quality of democracy and democracy promotion.

Socialist International Women (SIW) is an international organization that represents the women's organizations of the socialist, social-democratic and labour parties affiliated to the Socialist International (SI). The objectives of the SIW are: to strengthen relations between its members; to encourage action programmes to overcome any discrimination in society, including any inequality between men and women, and to work for human rights in general, as well as development and peace; to promote understanding among women of the aims of democratic socialism; and to facilitate relations between its members and other socialist-oriented women's groups that are not part of the SIW, but which desire cooperation.

Socialist International Women is a non-governmental organization (NGO) that enjoys consultative status at the United Nations Economic and Social Council and at the Council of Europe. This case study provides an overview of SIW and its position regarding quotas for women in political parties.

Background to SIW

The SIW dates back to 1907, when 58 delegates from European and other countries met at the first International Socialist Women's Conference in Stuttgart, Germany, and decided to establish an international secretariat. (Clara Zetkin was appointed Secretary). The conference adopted a resolution on the enfranchisement of women, which was to become the starting point for an untiring struggle for women's political rights.

The second conference, which took place in Copenhagen, Denmark, in 1910, adopted a resolution to set one day a year aside as International Women's Day and on that day to agitate for women's suffrage and the political emancipation of women.

The women's movement was restructured after the end of the First World War in 1918. The organization was quite active until the start of the Second World War in 1939. In 1955, the International Council of Social Democratic Women was founded, following a series of international women's conferences demanding the re-launch of the movement. The name of the organization was changed to Socialist International Women in 1978.

Since 1978, the SIW has promoted women's rights

effectively, focussing on the political, economic and social empowerment of women. As the organization of socialist, social-democratic and labour women's organizations, the SIW has been especially involved in the internal democratization of these parties, pressing for the adoption of the gender quota system as a temporary special measure to ensure higher representation of women, both within the memberships of these parties and within their decision-making bodies.

SIW on Gender Quotas

The SIW has concentrated on the incorporation of the gender quota into party statutes and other regulative instruments that govern the internal life of a party. This can be seen in SIW documents and statements that deal with the quota. Two of these documents are:

1. 'Women and Power-Sharing: Leadership and Strategies'

SIW Bureau Meeting, 15–16 May 1998, Oslo, Norway

This declaration calls for affirmative action to promote the participation of women in government and party structures.

'From the point of view of socialist, social democratic and labour women, several aspects of gender politics must be addressed in order for women to achieve equality. Measures must be implemented to ensure that women are represented at all levels of government and party structure. Affirmative action must be taken to promote women within these institutions, for example:

- the preparation of more gender-balanced lists of candidates for elections of any kind;
- the assurance of gender-balanced representation in party structures;
- the promotion of women to leadership positions, such as ministries and executive positions in international institutions; [and]
- the close scrutiny of the media to ensure that women's issues are put on the public agenda and that women in public positions are well represented'.

2. 'Implementing a Gender Perspective in Public Policies'

SIW Bureau Meeting, 29–30 November 1994, Budapest, Hungary

At this meeting, the SIW Bureau concluded that, 'in order to achieve these objectives it is a necessary precondition to enhance the contribution made by women, increasing their number and guaranteeing their effective presence in decision-making positions, implementing specific measures of affirmative action'. The SIW welcomed plans to achieve equality and the steps that had been taken in this regard in many countries by 1994. Social-democratic and socialist women recognized and supported 'gender mainstreaming' as 'an additional approach to policies of positive action and an instrument not only towards promoting equality but also towards making the female vision of life a fundamental part of governance'.

The SIW called for enhanced cooperation and coordination between different sectors and new political players, including NGOs. It also underlined that governments should establish an internal structure responsible for following up on and appraising the gender dimension of public policies at the national and local levels. This structure must exist within each government department or at the cross-ministerial level. Finally, the SIW urged all of the members of the Socialist International to adopt the proposals set out in 'Implementing a Gender Perspective in Public Policies', strengthening their commitment to a 'future of solidarity incorporating greater equality and fairness between the sexes'.

Three quota models

By adopting declarations, resolutions and recommendations, the SIW has tried to put pressure on SI member parties. The internal democratization of political parties remains open to question, and processes of fair and open dialogue at all levels of the party organization are closely connected to women's participation in decision-making bodies. There is still much to be done, however, to improve the position of women members of political parties. Not all members have equal access to information, not everybody participates in decision-making and policy-making processes, and many women continue to be excluded from party activities.

Although most social-democratic, socialist and labour parties have incorporated gender quotas into their internal statutes, it is not easy to implement these regulations at all levels. It is also the case, furthermore, that, if the quota is not respected, in most

cases, no one can be held to account. (I am not aware of any local party organization being sanctioned for not respecting the quota rule.) There are no strong mechanisms to monitor implementation of the gender quota in everyday political life and it seems that there is no political will to develop such instruments. Today, for the most part, there are only the reports or recommendations that are submitted to local party structures.

One can discern three models of quotas within political parties: (1) some parties have applied the quota rule to candidate lists and not to party structures, (2) some parties have applied the quota rule to party structures only and (3) a small number of parties have applied it to both party structures and candidate lists. When analyzing these three models, it is obvious that they demonstrate different commitments to the promotion of gender equality, both with respect to party positions and to positions, for example, in local and national councils and in government. When a party only applies a quota to candidate lists, this commitment to gender-balanced representation may not be connected to its internal values, but rather to a provision of electoral law or to an obligation that has been forced on a country by 'the international community'. This is a common scenario in post-conflict societies, where supranational institutions and mechanisms are engaged in 'establishing the rule of law'. While it is certainly a helpful tool, if political parties are not strongly committed to ensuring gender-balanced representation within their own internal structures, then it is not one that social-democrats are in favour of.

Conclusion

Parties that have incorporated quotas into their statutes—mostly socialist, social-democratic and labour parties—have encouraged other political actors to follow suit, or at least to consider quotas. Progress in promoting temporary special measures like quotas has been made by centre-left and leftist parties throughout the world. All of the three models mentioned above can be found among socialist, social-democratic and labour parties.

The SIW and the SI have been encouraging all of their members to incorporate the quota rule into their statutes. Whether they have chosen to do so has been an important factor in determining their membership status both in the SIW and in the SI.

Although no special steps have been taken to monitor implementation of gender quotas at all levels of political parties, over the past couple of decades, the

percentage of women in our parties has increased significantly. Would this have been the case if the quota had not been introduced? Given the negative experiences of those parties that do not support special measures in the same way as socialist, social-democratic and labour parties, we believe that the answer to this question is no. At least, the process to empower women politically would have taken much longer and would have yielded less positive results.

A gender quota grants the under-represented sex the opportunity to make its voice heard. It is a response to the fact that access to decision-making positions is dependent on the political will of those who are more powerful.

Ultimately it comes down to basic rights: the right of any human being to be treated equally. For if one is not given a chance to decide for one's self, what is democracy? For all of these reasons, the promotion and the implementation of gender quotas in the political sphere are still very important tasks for the SIW. We certainly have much more to do.

Lobbying for Quotas: The Experience of the CEE Network for Gender Issues

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“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights”

United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (Article 1)

The Historical and International Perspective

It is all in the balance of power. Human relations are not a given. Relationships between men and women are a work in progress. For there to be progress, a partnership must be established that is based on equality.

In order to understand progress, or the lack thereof, with regard to gender equality, one needs to reflect on lessons learnt. The struggle for equality—that is, human rights—gained momentum after the French Revolution. It is also the product of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. The establishment of trade unions gave rise to the emergence of the women’s movement. Women activists demanded the right to vote, the right to work and the same working conditions as men, as well as the abolition of slavery, child labour and discrimination. These are the issues that the women’s movement brought to the attention of the International Labour Organization (ILO), the League of Nations and the United Nations (UN) itself.

Women like Klara Zetkin and Rosa Luxembourg not only led the workers’ movement but they introduced it to the notion of equality between the sexes. They ‘mainstreamed’ it, as one would say today. The CEE Network for Gender Issues, established in 1993, draws on this heritage.

The founding of the League of Nations in 1919 marked the beginning of organized and institutionalized inter-governmental collaboration to achieve supra-national goals (peace and security). Women’s organizations got involved not only to promote peace following the end of the First World War, but also because they believed that the advancement of women could not be achieved at the national level without dedicated government policies and democracy. The creation of international women’s networks was seen as a prerequisite for the achievement of these goals.

Representatives of women’s organizations present at the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where the League of Nations and the ILO were established, made concrete proposals to the Covenant of the League of Nations. As a result, the latter declared that, inter alia, governments should make sure that all positions within the League of Nations and its Secretariat are open to men and women on an equal basis. They stopped short of calling for positive action, or the introduction of a quota. In 1937 the League of Nations created a Committee of Experts on the Legal Status of Women—which, in a way, was the precursor of what was to become the UN Commission on the Status of Women—which undertook to follow up on this agenda. Article 8 of the UN Charter states: ‘The UN shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs’. This was, indeed, very little progress since the creation of the League of Nations.

Today, 85 years since the establishment of the League of Nations and almost 60 years since the creation of the UN, the overall rate of participation of women in the UN Secretariat, and in many agencies and programmes, does not exceed 40 percent—and is much lower for senior posts. The first woman to become Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations was Helvi Sipilä of Finland, in 1972. Sipilä brought about a significant change in political activism when she lobbied governments to include women in their delegations. As a consequence a critical mass of women delegates began to emerge.

The increase in women staff members at the UN is the result of international conferences on women’s issues and a heightened sense of awareness following the Fourth International Women’s Conference in Beijing, China, in September 1995. Still, progress is tremendously slow, and there may be a new backlash looming as a result of adverse world developments. New momentum is required to reinvigorate the struggle for gender equality; the ten-year anniversary of the Beijing conference may provide an opportunity to push the agenda forward. International conventions, treaties and conferences have been instrumental in putting pressure on actors at the international and national levels.

Central and Eastern Europe: Backlash in the 1990s

In Central and Eastern Europe, as long ago as the mid-twentieth century—that is, during the period of communist rule—equal rights and status were guaranteed for all. These rights were enshrined in national Constitutions. Legal provisions concerning equality were introduced and focussed on different social, economic and public sectors. Officially, there was no discrimination. Hidden forms of discrimination, however, thrived.

The communist regimes emphasized, in particular, social and economic rights, such as equality with respect to employment opportunities and education. In the political sphere, a quota for women, on average, 30 percent, was introduced. But quotas and equal rights and opportunities also require equal outcomes and appropriate conditions for implementation. Many women members of political leaderships during the communist era were seen by other women as ‘token women’, subservient in a male-dominated political climate and inadequately militant on the ‘women’s issue’. In many respects, this has led to misconceptions about the quota in Central and Eastern Europe. Initially the CEE Network had to dispel these false impressions when pressing for the introduction of the quota.

What really hindered the meaningful participation of women in political life, and, to some extent, their public activism, though, were cultural, psychological inhibitions with deep connections to patriarchal society. Even if goodwill did exist among men in the political leaderships, their perceptions of women had changed very little: women were seen as care-providers and home-makers. ‘They are our flowers’, according to a prominent Central European politician (addressing an assembly of the CEE Network). At a meeting in Belarus, an academic said: ‘they are our mothers and they carry with them the burden of reproducing our society, they are the bastion of a nation’.

The cause, the issues and how it started

Aware of the key issues confronting Central and Eastern European women in the 1990s, a number of women and men,¹ political activists in the region, set up the CEE Network for Gender Issues. It sprung from the realization that, in a male-dominated society, women, who were professionally educated and had gained recognition, were going to be the losers in the transition and that the key gains made in the communist era, particularly in the so-

cial and economic spheres, were going to be eradicated.

The liberal market-economy model was going to affect sectors where women were most active and the transition was going to mean job losses and, with them, a cut in benefits. In this region, gender inequalities are also staunchly embedded in the private sphere of patriarchal dominance and in the social sphere of patriarchal culture as reflected in a general lack of access to politics, lower pay for equal work, and women’s responsibility for household management and reproductive labour. Unless women were granted a voice in the transition process it was going to be difficult to repair the damage later. The rise of nationalist and conservative ideologies, often dominated by the church, risked pushing women back to the three K’s: küche, kinder and kirche (kitchen, children, church).

The activists who set up the CEE Network realized that it was vital to get women into the public arena and to create the conditions that would allow them to participate in political life. This was a daunting task at the beginning of the 1990s, a period characterized, for example, by disorientation, disillusion, unemployment and social security cuts. While feminist organizations lobbied for women’s individual rights they did not seek to influence broader societal dialogue on the status of women. Equally, confronted with hardships related to the transition, women returned to the home and assumed their traditional roles, trying to cope with the new challenges and with little time for private undertakings. They withdrew from political life. The recourse was to break the mould and seek to change the political discourse. What better than through political parties.

The chance arose in 1993 with the formation of the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity—an alliance of socialist and social-democratic-oriented European foundations close to the Party of European Socialists (PES). As a result, the CEE Network chose not to become an independent NGO, but, rather, decided to work within the European Forum and to support gender mainstreaming in its activities. It also concentrated on achieving change within individual parties through awareness-raising, discussions on positive measures and initiatives to strengthen the capacity of women’s political party groups and individual women members of party leaderships. To ensure cross-border fertilization and support through joint activities, the CEE Network was created to work across the CEE region.

The European Forum provided the CEE Network with a political platform, an outreach capability and the means to influence developments at the highest political level, with adequate backing from a strong

Table 1: Percentage Of Women in Parliament and in Government in Particular Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Country	Year right to vote granted to women	Highest % of women members of parliament (MPs), 1974–1985	% women MPs, 1990	% women MPs, 1992–1994	% women MPs, 1996–1998	% women MPs, 2001	% women ministers, 2001
Albania	1920	33.2 (1974)	3.6	5.7	7.1	6.5	16.7
Bulgaria	1944	21.8 (1981)	12.9	13.3	10.8	28.0	-
Romania	1946	34.4 (1985)	3.6	4.1	7.3	11.6	20.0
Macedonia	1945	-	-	-	4.0	6.67	10.4
Kosovo	1945	-	-	-	-	30.0	-
Serbia	1945	-	3.0	-	5.0	12.0	-
Montenegro	1945	-	-	-	3.0	10.0	0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1945	23 (1982)	5.0	3.0	26.0	18.0	-
Croatia	1945	17 (1982)	4.4	5.8	7.8	20.5	8.33
Slovenia	1943-1946	26.0 (1982)	11.0	14.0	7.8	13.3	20.0
Hungary	1958	30.1 (1980)	7.3	11.4	8.3	8.55	6.25
Average		26.5	6.35	8.19	8.7	15.0	13.6

European caucus. The CEE Network decided to be extremely focussed in terms of its topics of interest and its constituency, concentrating on: women in politics and political leaderships; women members of minorities (as an issue concerning democracy and equality); reproductive rights (as issues associated with equality and the human rights of women); the social and economic transition and its impact on women's rights; and EU accession and gender equality.

The CEE Network set out the following ambitious agenda:

- 50 percent power-sharing, via the **quota**;
- a **change in political values**—peace and respect for all human rights;
- a **change in political priorities**—job creation, care for victims of war and violence, care for children and the elderly and sustainable development;
- a **change in the political culture and methods of political work**—consensus-building, decentralization and power-sharing, inclusive and participatory democracy, and social justice and gender equality; and
- supportive national and regional institutions.

Research, advocacy and direct activism involving male and female members of party leaderships produced tangible results. The most striking are the quota system and the number of women in parliament and in the political leaderships of socialist and social-democratic parties.

Keys to Success

Success rested on the generation of political will to change power relations and to establish gender equality. To do this it was necessary to take a number of steps.

Political platforms and party constitutions

It was crucial to penetrate political decision-making structures in order to ensure that gender equality is embedded in party documents, as the basis for promoting it at the parliamentary level and at more general levels nationally. Equally, it was necessary to introduce measures and to campaign to make sure that women are included in appropriate numbers on electoral platforms and in electoral agreements. This was a step-by-step process—introduction of parity in political leaderships; empowerment of women's organizations and individual women politicians; negotiations

The CEE Network identified its key successes in 2003:

1. More women in the political structures and on the electoral lists of socialist and social-democratic parties—except the Albanian Socialist Party.
2. Promotion of the quota principle—adopted by all parties, except the Albanian Socialist Party.
3. Identification of emerging issues—challenges to gender equality in the EU enlargement process as a result of a conservative backlash.
4. Greater support for women's groups within socialist and social-democratic parties and allied NGOs in the region vis-à-vis political decision-making through “Women Can Do It I, II and III” training at the local level in all countries of the region. Women, members of socialist and social-democratic parties from 73 cities were included.
5. Identification of priorities and elements of joint activities for the implementation of the EU Gender Equality and Gender Equal Opportunity Policy in a broader European context—SP/SDP Manifesto on Gender Equality. For instance: equal political representation of women; separation of public schools and churches; feminization of poverty and women's employment issues; abortion and prevention of reproductive health issues and violence against women. All workshops and conferences brought together women members of socialist and social-democratic parties from EU member states and candidate countries.
6. Media campaigns to achieve gender equality in the region and preparation for the 2004 EU elections.

on establishing electoral platforms and lists; lobbying for the zip system; and post-electoral rapid action to ensure that gender equality remains on the agenda, especially within parties that come to power.

Introduction of quotas

‘If quotas can be a useful means to make up for the lack of representation of a certain category, it is important to recall the fundamental conceptual difference with parity. Whereas quotas can be perceived as a “ceiling” used to protect the rights of a minority and ensure its participation in the decision-making ... Parity goes a step further. Parity concerns our societies as whole and not just women. It is also about more than just participation. It is about power sharing and participation on an equal basis (50/50) or from 40/60 to 60/40. In other words, Parity is the claim that men and women must be equally represented in decision-making positions whereas quotas are only a means to achieve fair representation’.

European Women's Lobby
<http://www.womenlobby.org>

It was necessary to translate party declarations and commitments on gender equality into practice. This was done through lobbying for, and the introduction of, affirmative/positive action. The quota system served as a tool with which to put political will into practice and as an interim measure to foster equality, albeit formally. The understanding was that it would also target hidden discrimination, which more often than not is central to the exclusion of women from public life.

Today, the existence of the quota is a precondition for socialist and social-democratic parties to become members of the Socialist International (the worldwide organization of social democratic, socialist and labour parties which currently brings together 166 political parties and organizations from all continents). This has helped significantly, since it has provided strong ‘political’ backing for the demand for parity. However, opposition to the quota had a gender dimension. While in general men were reluctant to relinquish their hold on power and to give up their privileged positions, some women claimed that the quota was ‘humiliating’, insisting that they should be elected on merit and underscoring the danger that ‘token women’ will neglect gender issues when elected.

The CEE Network advocated for the quota in order to achieve:

- parity in political leaderships at all levels;
- parity in political instruments, as a result of more women in leadership positions;
- parity with respect to candidate lists; and
- post-electoral parity (once the party comes to power) in the executive and legislative branches.

The success of the European Forum and the CEE Network is evidenced by the rise in women in politics, more women in political party structures, stronger women's party organizations, and functioning party quotas. The following are just a few examples.

- The Hungarian 'yellow scarf' movement campaigned tirelessly on behalf of women candidates and socialist and social-democratic ideals in the last 2003 elections, resulting in a woman being appointed speaker of parliament.
- A shadow cabinet was set up by social-democratic women in the Czech Republic after their party leaders did not respect gender equality in the composition of the Cabinet.
- Women candidates captured over 20 percent of seats in parliament in the 2000 elections. A woman was also appointed minister of defence (Croatia).
- Serbian opposition leaders signed a quota for women in 2000. The agreement stated: 'We commit ourselves to do our best to put on our party lists for the forthcoming Republican elections in Serbia, on eligible places, a minimum of 30% of women candidates. We also promise that in the new Serbian Parliament we will support the change of electoral legislation containing active measures for gradual inclusion of the gender balance (parity) in the competition for all elected and appointed political offices and civil servants' posts in Serbia'. By 8 December 2000, 14 of Serbia's 18 democratic opposition parties had signed the agreement; five of them respected it. The proportion of elected women in the Serbian parliament increased from five to ten percent. Similar pre-electoral quota agreements were signed in Macedonia in 2000 and in Montenegro in 2001. Both had a similar effect.

Advocacy, capacity-building and tools

In 1995, the CEE Network entered into an agreement with the Norwegian Labour Party to translate its training manual entitled *Women Can Do It* into all Central and Eastern European languages and to train women's

groups. Training focuses on building up the capacity of women to allow them to participate in public life. The CEE Network organized training courses for political parties and NGOs, producing immediate results.

The CEE Network was instrumental in the establishment of the OSCE Gender Task Force, which has produced second and third editions of *Women Can Do It* for Southeast Europe. The CEE Network still organizes training courses for women in the Baltic States and Central Europe.

Partnerships

The CEE Network established a broader constituency by reaching out to women in other political parties and to the NGOs. A concrete example at the sub-regional level is the aforementioned OSCE Gender Task Force. Nationally, partnerships have been forged with women leaders from different political parties and NGOs. A good example is the meeting with women from political parties, trade unions and NGOs that took place in Serbia/Vojvodina prior to the January 2004 elections to assess progress in getting women on to electoral lists and to formulate a joint strategy for the polls.

The support that the CEE Network received from men and women in the European Forum and the PES was invaluable, which in turn influenced party leaderships in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, with a level of collegiality being established. The CEE Network is a member of the Steering Committee of the European Forum and participates in the work of the Party of European Socialists' Women's Standing Committee. In this way it enjoys political leverage and can engage in outreach. Too many NGOs remain within a small circle, preaching to the converted. The CEE Network tries to work upstream and conveys key messages on gender equality to high level decision-makers.

Conclusion

Progress has been made since the collapse of Communism and women are assuming their rightful place in society and public life. This is due to a well designed and targeted political strategy, as well as to advocacy, capacity-building and the forming of partnerships. International instruments, especially those adopted by the EU and the Council of Europe, have been instrumental in moving the equality agenda forward. The next wave of work will involve pushing the agenda further and addressing the imbalances revealed in the table below. To achieve the 50/50 target may take another decade.

Endnote

- 1 The CEE Network has depended on the involvement of women and men like Lena Ag, Marta Szigeti Bonifert, Bo Toresson, Conny Fredriksson, Maria-Pia Di Masco, Sonja Lokar, Zita Gurmai, Svetlana Raulinaitiene, Alena Chudikova, Marianna Knothe, Anita Gradin, Herta Dobler-Gemlin, Marlène Haas, Vojko Venisnik, Laszlo Kovacz, Lena Hjelm-Vallin, Axel Queval, Lisl Kauer, Jan Mairnus-Wiersm, Lyssie Grüner, Pia Locatelli, Anna Karamanou. Daša Šašić Šilović has chaired the CEE Network since its establishment.