



# POLITICAL AUTONOMY

## Gender equality policies

The Gender Equality Policy Area supports public policies that signify substantial progress in the autonomy of a range of women in three areas: physical, economic and political. It also promotes cross-cutting policies, such as national or regional equality plans, the reinforcement of gender policies in sectoral institutions, the development of their institutional architecture and tools such as statistics and gender-sensitive budgets.

With regard to the line of action of political autonomy, the EUROsociAL+ accompaniment seeks to promote public policies that lead to removing the barriers to accessing participation in power, which includes political, economic, social and cultural space and, in the case of some countries on the subcontinent, this contributes to peace-building.

The region has set the firm priority of fighting for a life free of violence in its requests for support and exchanges with other countries in Europe and Latin America, due to the large number of femicides and other types of violence, and strong citizens' mobilisation. However, each of the processes for identifying demand in Latin American countries has discussed the importance of working in a cross-sectoral manner on political autonomy and on increasing the decision-making capacity of women at all levels of power.

The region has achievements that are considered exemplary worldwide on the effectiveness of the laws that have imposed parity quotas as an essential mechanism to change the reality and behaviour of parties and achieve effective results. Several countries have achieved parity or quasi parity in their national congress. But the emergence of other phenomena shows that this is not enough.



Photo taken from EPO.



### WHICH SDG DOES IT INVOLVE?



### EUROPEAN CONSENSUS

#### Initiative: Gender equality

The EU and its Member States will ensure that the gender perspective is systematically incorporated into all policies as a key contribution to the successful achievement of the SDGs. They will accelerate their efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Consortium led by:





II Meeting of AMEA where it was agreed to create the Network of Observatories for Democratic Parity in Latin America and the Caribbean. Photo taken from the IIHR.

On the one hand, new forms of violence and political harassment have appeared to prevent women candidates or elected representatives from exercising their mandates. And there are great regional differences, particularly in local elections and especially in the case of indigenous and Afro-descendant women. Work has therefore been done on giving support for the effective application of parity laws promoting the exercise of the mandate for elected women in various areas (economic, social, cultural and political), and, specifically, the fight against harassment and political violence.

## WHICH AREAS ARE INVOLVED?

The promotion of political parity is understood as a process that can take place in different scales, generating greater access for women to decision-making spaces of different types, until achieving equal representation between women and men in elective processes for access to public office, but also at managerial levels in institutions, organisations and/or companies.

This line of action also encompasses the fight against all forms of political violence aimed at preventing women from running freely, or from holding office once elected: corruption, fraud against parity laws, pressure to leave or give up the position, to prevent access to legal financial resources, intimidation, sexual or workplace harassment, which usually occur both within political parties and in public settings.

## EUROSOCIAL+ EXPERIENCES

The programme works both regionally and nationally. At both levels, it seeks to support reflection on political autonomy, through the co-construction of tools that allow laws to be applied, without ruling out their possible updating. In terms of specific national actions, the EUROsociAL+ programme accompanied two countries, Bolivia and Brazil, the actions of which have now been completed, and it is going to start an action in Ecuador, Peru and Argentina.

In Brazil, the EUROsociAL+ programme provided technical support to the National Secretariat for Policies for Women —NNPM— in

order to have inputs and exceed the current level of 10% women in the chamber. A diagnosis of the national situation was prepared to investigate the obstacles that have hindered women's more effective participation in Brazilian politics at the federal, state, and local levels, from the majority electoral system to campaign financing. The Portuguese experience has allowed the recommendations to be enriched, structured on the basis of several alternatives: an ambitious reform to achieve real parity and another more realistic aiming to improve opportunities to compete for elective positions under conditions of equality between different men and women. Proposals for a change towards a proportional system were highlighted, with a 40% share in "zipper" lists (alternating between women and men), a funding quota for women's campaigns, stronger sanctions for non-compliance, periodic monitoring of law enforcement and a fight against electoral violence.

In Bolivia, the programme accompanied the Supreme Electoral Tribunal to structure its observatory for Democratic Parity. A diagnosis and a proposal for its institutional strengthening were prepared. The implementation of a system for data production and monitoring of compliance with numerical parity has been supported, which has managed to bring about 56% participation by women in the Bolivian congress. The Observatory's consolidated information system has made it possible to document various topics, by collecting updated regulations and indicators:

- ▶ The participation and political representation of women, with indicators on the right to choose, the right to be elected as registered candidates, the right to access public service and participate in decision-making.

## EXPERT VOICES



The more feminist democracy is, the more democratic it will be...

"The proposal for parity democracy, which is being worked on in the region as a political horizon, has to do with a proposal to transform our states, our societies, but also to transform unequal relations between men and women, between indigenous and non-indigenous populations, the inclusion of Afro populations, but also youth and sexual diversities".

Katia Uriona, feminist activist, former president of the Supreme Electoral Tribunal in Bolivia.

- ▶ The participation of Indigenous Peasant Women (IOC)
- ▶ Parity democracy in political organisations

At the regional level, EUROsociAL+ collaborates with the Association of Electoral Magistrates of the Americas (AMEA) in association with the [Inter-American Institute of Human Rights \(IHR\)](#), and its CAPEL programme, to create and strengthen a regional observatory on democratic parity and violence. Reports were prepared from 15 Latin American countries that analyse the national situation regarding democratic parity and political violence. This regional initiative allows mutual learning, the dissemination of specific work tools and support for the efforts made by each country and the region to “democratise democracy” on an ongoing basis.

## FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

The political autonomy line has interesting work prospects for the second part of the implementation of the EUROsociAL+ programme. In addition to the examples in Brazil and Bolivia, and in connection with the regional work, the programme is extending its actions to Argentina, Peru and Uruguay.

In Argentina, EUROsociAL+ is accompanying two proposals for the creation of a Democratic Parity Observatory in the Ministry of the Interior and to promote the application of Parity Law No. 27.412 by the Honourable Chamber of Deputies of the Nation. The objective of the Observatory is similar to those that have already been supported, and bringing these institutions together will facilitate the preparation and publication of accessible and updated information on the political autonomy of women, and their real and effective participation in decision-making in different scopes.

With Peru, the EUROsociAL+ programme is defining its collaboration in promoting parity and the prevention of electoral violence with the National Office of Electoral Processes (ONPE) and the National Elections Jury (JNE). The aim is to provide all the tools to increase women’s political participation, from parties to institutions.

In Uruguay, although it is true that there are parity laws, in the last general elections the percentage of women participating in decision-making positions fell, as was observed in many countries throughout the electoral cycles. The joint efforts by the National Institute for Women and the Ministry of Social Development will be supported to co-build a platform that allows leaders to be trained with a gender perspective and brakes in need of lift to be identified.

## GOOD LATIN AMERICAN PRACTICES

Some Latin American countries are global examples when it comes to political parity, better even than various European countries. EUROsociAL+ is an ideal triangular platform to promote peer learning and to mobilise experts to facilitate the circulation of the best Latin American experiences.

When it comes to **women’s representation in legislative assemblies**, there are some Latin American good practices. For example, Cuba (53.2%), Bolivia (53.1%) and Mexico (48.2%) have the highest percentage of women in the national legislative body: Lower or single chamber. In 2019, 6 countries in Latin America exceed 40% of women parliamentarians. However, 13 Latin American and Caribbean countries do not yet reach 20% women’s participation in parliament.

In the executive branch, **women’s participation in the ministerial cabinets** has increased very little in recent years. In this sense,

the regional participation rates for women are higher in the social area. Only Costa Rica (55.17%) and Colombia (50%) have gender-balanced cabinets in the executive branch.

One of the levels where the participation of women is progressing more slowly is the **presence of female town or city mayors, both in rural areas and regions and in large cities**. The presence of female elected mayors has advanced at a slow pace. In most Latin American and Caribbean countries (26%), the percentage is below 15%, and the Latin American average was only 15.5% in 2018. Only Cuba (47%) and Nicaragua (42.5%) exceed the 30% threshold considered necessary to generate change.

## PARTNERSHIPS

- ▶ Association of Electoral Magistrates of the Americas (AMEA)
- ▶ Council of Ministers for Women in Central America (COMMCA) of the SISCA
- ▶ Inter-American Commission for Women (CIM)
- ▶ IHR/CAPEL
- ▶ ParlAMERICAS
- ▶ UN Women

## Publications

EUROsociAL LIBRARY

Diagnostic report on the situation in Brazilian politics

Report with recommendations for the preparation of a draft bill promoting gender parity

II CONFERENCE

Association of Electoral Magistrates of the Americas. Parity and intercultural democracy

See in

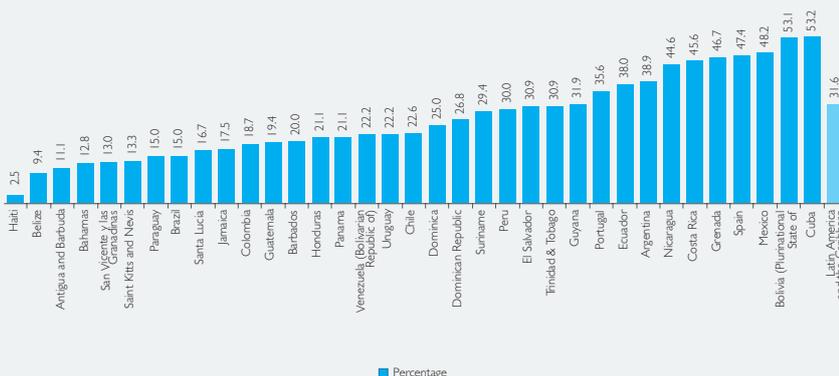
Rapporteur on the II Meeting of the EUROsociAL+ Programme: Trust and Social Cohesion

IN THE COURSE OF PUBLICATION:

Regional Observatory on Parity Democracy and Political Violence-AMEA Analysis of Comparative Indicators from 15 Latin American countries

### LEGISLATIVE POWER: PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN IN THE NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE BODY: LOWER OR SINGLE CHAMBER

Latin America, the Caribbean and the Iberian Peninsula (35 countries): Elected women in national parliaments, 2019 (Percentages)



Source: ECLAC, Observatory on Gender Equality in Latin America and the Caribbean